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An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Black Women and White Men Towards Interracial Marriage in America

Guerdy Sauvignon Markowski

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An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Black Women and White Men Towards
Interracial Marriage in America

by

Guerdy Sauvignon-Markowski

A Dissertation Presented to the
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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2021

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**Nova Southeastern University
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences**

This dissertation was submitted by Guerdy Sauvignon-Markowski under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Halmos College of Arts and Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and children George, and Stephanie. I am heartily grateful to my dear friend Jacqueline Louis for her continuous encouragement, emotional support, spiritual guidance, and told me that I am the spit image drawn from the dissertation topic. I am grateful as well to all my colleagues whose steadfast support towards the dissertation topic and enabled me to build up an awareness from the start throughout the final level. Thanks to everyone who participated in the research, I deeply appreciated the time and effort.

Special dedication to *Loving V. Virginia* 1967 for paving the way for the legalization of interracial marriage and to all that fought for anti-miscegenation laws.

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Abstract

More than a century has passed since the United States Supreme Court made laws forbidding interracial marriage unconstitutional. The 1967 landmark case *Loving v. Virginia* legalized and arguably, legitimized interracial marriages and is considered as one of the most significant legal decisions of the civil rights era. Interracial marriage in United States continues to be controversial. The opposition to black and white interracial relationships is historically positioned in the American struggle with slavery, Jim Crow laws, and white supremacy. While interracial marriages are growing more common in United States, many people still do not approve of them interracial. Interestingly, approval rates vary by race, gender, and region. The purpose of this study was to understand how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Through an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, this dissertation examines some of the lived experiences of interracial couples, that have impacted interracial marriage in the U.S., focusing on Black women and White men marriages. Results in this study indicated that Black woman married to White men often suffer more societal rejections and stereotypes than their spouses. The data also shows that power, white supremacy ideologies, prejudice, privilege, fear, and ignorance are the driving forces of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men in the United States.

Key Words

Interracial marriage

Qualitative study

Interpretive phenomenological analysis

Black women and White men

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Problem Statement

After more than half a century since the Supreme Court of the United States threw out laws forbidding interracial marriage unions between interracial couples across racial lines are on the rise. The history of race relations in the United States is present in every period of American history dating to the colonial era. Welch (2002) stressed that, as far back as colonial era, colonies created strict rules to preserve racial boundaries. Laws were enacted to prohibit interracial relationships, because interracial marriages would contaminate the superior White race with inferior genes. This view is beyond interracial intimacy. In the 19th century, white supremacist lawmakers, prosecutors, judges, police officers and other officials have tried to outlaw open interracial relationship between blacks and whites with the view that the white race risked of being diluted by inferior people and that laws were necessary to support white purity (Kennedy, 2002; Romano, 2009; Obasogie, 2017). Oh (2018) succinctly argues, “segregationists feared that school integration would normalize social relations between whites and blacks, especially romantic social relations, and over time, there would be an exponential increase in mixed-race children and a decrease in the number of white children” (p. 2765).

Views like this all stretched in the United States during the period of slavery and subsequently in the Civil War. The introduction of institutionalized slavery changed the nature of race relations entirely in the United States. Perhaps, one of the reason interracial relationship continues to carry stigma is their connection with societal rejection, negative stereotypes, hostility, criticism, and violence. Lewis (2013) went further by arguing that, “differential treatment, negative perceptions from the public, and the lack of social

acceptance were seen as three major issues facing interracial marriages. As a result, a number of interracial spouses saw their unions as marginalized by some segments of society” (p. 9). Steinbugler (2014) succinctly explain the challenges interracial couples face. She implies:

There is little chance that they might lose their jobs, get kicked out of their church, or be denied housing simply because one of them is black and the other is white. While injustices like these still occur, when they do, they are noteworthy. Undisguised discrimination against interracial couples is no longer typical. Nor do relationships like theirs inspire the raw disbelief that Sidney Poitier and Katharine Houghton famously elicited when they portrayed a young couple in the 1967 film, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner.*” (p. 33)

West (2017) made the same argument. She writes, “by associating with blacks in such an intimate way, whites would open themselves up to increased job insecurity, social and familial rejection and less legal protection including the loss of death benefits” (p. 2). Some of the discrimination and racism are structural in nature because they produce marginalization and propagate inequality on many levels—both for individuals and communities. Race was a unique tool, and continues to be constructed in the United States, and has affects interracial relationships (Novkov, 2008; Kaba, 2012; Oh, 2018).

For example, one of the negative stereotypes against interracial relations, according to Lewandowski and Jackson (2001) is: white men married to black women were considered less competent and as less likely to be professionally successful than were those married to white women. On the other hand, black men married to white women were seen as less competent, less traditional, and having a weaker racial identity,

than were those married to black women. Moreover, there are still longstanding stereotypes that depicts the relationships between Blacks and Whites as “vulgar,” purely sexual or “immoral.” Another widespread stereotype is, in both the Black and White communities, Blacks marry Whites to achieve a higher social status (Childs 2005; Qian, 2005; Baars, 2009). Childs (2008) went further by arguing that, “A white woman involved with a black man is viewed as tainted and less desirable, while a white man involved with a black woman is not lessened and is possibly even seen as having enhanced sexual prowess” (p. 2781). Gullickson (2006) adds, in 1899, W.E.B. Du Bois once wrote in the Philadelphia Negro that, “It is often said that only the worst Negroes and lowest whites intermarry” (p. 1). In some quarters, religion is used to decry interracial relationships as sinful and ungodly. Mathabane & Mathabane (1992) argues that “interracial marriages are unbiblical and immoral. God created different races of people and placed them amongst themselves... There nothing for white Americans to gain by mixing their blood with of other peoples. There will only be irreversible damage for us” (, p. 186). A similar view is echoed by Southern (1998). He mentioned that:

Catholics argued strenuously that it was necessary to keep blacks out of their parishes in order to sustain morals, prevent crime, and deter neighborhood decay. But perhaps the most powerfully racist factor inciting Euro-American Catholics to resist the “invasion” of blacks was the dread of interracial sex and marriage, a fear long sensationalized by the native white Protestant culture. (p. 69)

Fowler (2019) adds that, “an interracial Mississippi couple was turned away from a wedding venue with the owner citing her refusal based on her Christian belief” (p. 1). This traditional pattern of societal separation had existed throughout this country’s

history. It is imperative that a comprehensive understanding of the history, policies, politics, and current issues of race within the U.S. These significant features entail a history of white supremacy and the overarching policies it shaped.

With that said, the U.S. is becoming a culturally diverse society even with the history of struggles related to ethnic and race relations. The November 4, 2008 election of Barack Obama, the first African American president of the United States was symbolic and symbolizes a change in attitudes in views of race relations. As the mixed son of a white woman from Kansas and a black man from Kenya, his rise to the presidency was a symbol of hope and, many Americans had anticipated that the election of a Black man to the presidency would offer opportunities for breakthroughs in race relations and understanding.

As the U.S. get more diverse, there is a broader shift toward acceptance. For example, a study done by the Pew Research Center acknowledges that, generally, there are increase in interracial marriage mainly fueled in part by growing intermarriage rates among black newlyweds and among white newlyweds.

Fryer (2007) asserts:

Rates of interracial marriage between blacks and other racial groups remained flat from 1880 to 1970. Between 1970 and 2000, black men exhibit a more than six-fold increase in intermarriage with whites. Currently, over 7 percent of black male marriages are with whites. Black females exhibit similar trends, although the timing of the increase is later, and the raw prevalence of interracial marriages is less for black females. (p. 8)

Further, in 2015, more than 670,000 newlyweds had entered a marriage with someone of a different race or ethnicity. By contrast, in 1980, the first year for which detailed data are available, about 230,000 newlyweds had done so (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Cherlin (2008), Douglas & Yancey, (2004) also argues that interracial marriage has been a topic of interest and controversy in American history. Farley (2010) posit that there is a trend towards higher rates of interracial marriages for Whites, Blacks, and American Indians. By 2000, about one out of seven Black men married a White woman; Black women are also increasingly marrying White men. The approval of interracial marriages rates has increased than the actual interracial marriages over the last twenty-five years and left many with the impression that the social distance difference has closed significantly. To support this notion, Kennedy (2002) argues:

There are other signs that black-white romance has become more widely accepted; indeed, it is quite fashionable in some contexts. One is advertising. When advertisers addressing general audiences use romance to deliver their messages, they most often depict couples of the same race. But now at least occasionally one sees interracial couples deployed as enticements to shop at Diesel or Club Monaco, or to buy furniture from Ikea, jeans from Guess, sweaters from Tommy Hilfiger, cologne from Calvin Klein, or water from Perrier. (p. 104)

As the phenomenon increases, it is important to note successful, prominent interracial couples. For example, William Cohen, the former Secretary of Defense under Bill Clinton, who is white and his black wife, Janet Langhart. Tennis star Serena Williams and Vice President. Kamala Harris, both black women are married to white men. Kamala Harris, the first black women to color to be elected as Vice President of the

United States was an important groundbreaking history. Vice President Harris is the first candidate in an interracial relationship to be elected to the White House. Even though the focus of this study was to examine the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men, it is important to briefly examine the present-day realities surrounding race relations in the United States. The election of Donald Trump as president, the killing of George Floyd and other violent actions towards unarmed black people, and the Black Lives Matter protest across the country, these issues are deemed central to race relations, but mainly to interracial relationships. Blake (2021) argues, “as President Barack Obama's mere presence in the White House provoked discussions on biracial identity and Black marriage, Harris' marriage could lead more Black women to talk openly about this taboo.” (p. 2). Further, “Harris is the first female, Black and South Asian vice president of the United States, but she could also become another type of pioneer. She could inspire some Black women to reexamine a racial taboo that has shaped many of their private lives.” (Blake, 2021, p. 2).

Figure 1

Vice President Kamala Harris and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff



Source: ABC News

Furthermore, in May 2018, Meghan Markle, a black woman married Prince Harry. Their marriage was described as “groundbreaking” and considered as a “cultural revolution”. Although, on March 8th, 2021, Meghan Markle and Prince Harry revealed that a royal family member raised a question regarding how dark-skinned their son Archie’s might be before he was born. This shed a light on the structural racism within the British monarchy and the racist attack against Meghan Markle is far too common for Black woman.

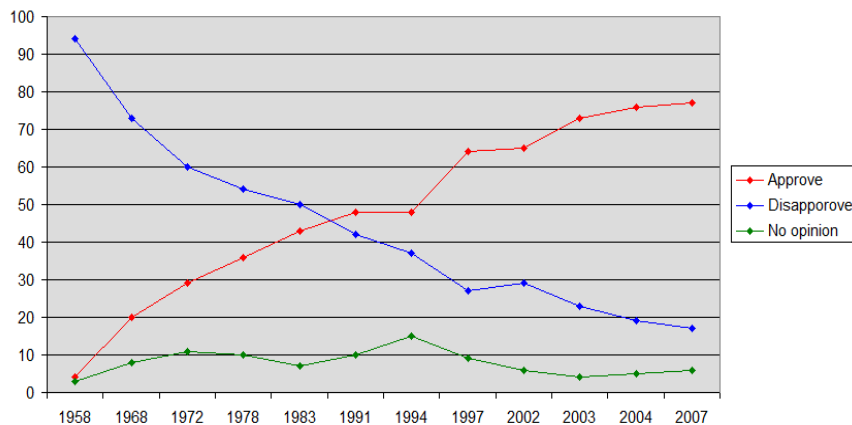
From a historical point of view, Gullickson (2006) describes sexual affairs between Blacks and Whites were more widespread than marriage in the 1800’s and early 1900s due to miscegenation laws, historical abuse and invalidation of Black women’s bodies, and societal disapproval of interracial marriage. In recent years, one could argue that changes in social customs and raw demographics have contributed to the increase in intermarriages. Figure one explains the opinions about interracial marriage over the years, which has risen over time.

Figure 2

Historical public opinion of approval/disapproval of interracial marriage in the US

Historical public opinion of approval/disapproval of interracial marriage in the United States

source: Gallup, Inc., 2007



Source: Gallup, Inc., 2007

Livingston & Brown, (2017) believes that “the continued rise of intermarriage is likely being driven by changing attitudes and the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the country” (p. 5). Many scholars believed that changing attitudes regarding race, education and migration patterns are important factor driving the rise in intermarriage (Farely, 2010; Spencer, 2010). Some scholars such as Gordon (1964) posit that intermarriage serves as a main indicator of the level of assimilation of one ethnic or racial group into another. Lewis (2014) argues, “Interracial marriage is seen as a barometer for understanding the fabric of relations between racial and ethnic groups in America” (p. 18). The assimilation viewpoint underscores that all racial minority groups ultimately become part of the majority group via assimilation. Racial discrimination and racism become less significant and eventually dwindle during the assimilation progression (Francis, 1976; Gordon, 1991; Alba & Nee, 2003).

Even with the increase in interracial marriages, some people still do not approve of interracial marriage. For example, views of older generations, some of which still have negative opinions of interracial marriages, stems from generational differences. Strong societal opinions against this union makes interracial marriage couples feel disadvantaged and socially rejected. Couples in interracial marriages are often from different cultural and societal concepts and racism can be displayed as either negative or positive. (Gordon, 1991; Childs, 2005; Childs, 2008; Perry & Sutton, 2008). Perry & Sutton (2008) sums up how interracial relationships often evoke positive or hostile, even violent reactions. They argue:

An interracial relationship is a public display imbued with symbolic meaning in certain communities, or for certain individuals. While one or both parties to

relationship may believe their relationship is nobody else's business, it is often interpreted by others, and then labelled, commented, or acted upon—sometimes positively sometimes negatively, sometimes violently— whereby others seek determine who is and who is not a suitable intimate or sexual partner. (p. 244)

Such reactions sent direct messages about the relative significance of whiteness above people of color. Moreover, Wardle (2009) believe that interracial marriage is a conspiracy by the mainstream society to destroy individual cultural and ethnic groups, and to make every American part of mainstream America. Skinner & Rae (2018) study revealed that there is “evidence of implicit and explicit bias against Black–White interracial couples among respondents in the predominantly White sample and the Black sample” (p. 828). For Bonilla-Silva (2002), Qian (2002), Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan (1990) they all believe that the continuing importance of skin color for Blacks and social distance from Whites is visibly clear in America’s marriage patterns.

The groundbreaking case of *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967, which legitimized interracial marriages, was a real historical tragedy of racial relations in the United States that such marriages were ever illegal. Given the widespread public opposition where 94 percent of white Americans opposed interracial marriage in 1958, most civil rights groups did not place repealing marriage bans at the top of their agendas (Viñas-Nelson, 2017). In 1958, Richard Loving, a white man and Mildred Jeter, a black woman from Virginia, had tried to sidestep the law by marrying legally in the District of Columbia. However, they were later locked up and given a year in prison, with the sentence suspended on the condition that they leave Virginia. The *Loving v. Virginia* case declared anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional. This groundbreaking decision terminated bans

on interracial marriage and remains a signature case and the first to use the words “white supremacy” to define such racism (Cashin, 2017; Bialik, 2017; Cheryl, 2016). Viñas-Nelson (2017) asserts:

Figure 3

Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving.



Source: AP/File

Today, few would publicly admit to opposing interracial marriage. In fact, most Americans now claim to celebrate the precepts behind *Loving* and the case has become an icon of equality and of prejudice transcended. Accordingly, individuals across the political spectrum, from gay rights activists to opponents of Affirmative Action who call for colorblindness, cite it to support their political agendas. (p. 3)

Before the *Loving v. Virginia* case, an interracial marriage between a Black man and a White woman, if attempted, was in some states banned and the Black spouse probably faced sanctions such as fines up to imprisonment for the ‘Negro’ (Avins, 1966; Arnes 1966). Additionally, a Black woman married to a White man will suffer more societal rejections than the White man in the union. A White woman marrying a Black

man, on the other hand, may have leniency due to the racial construction of United States society. But as different ethnic groups have had contact with each other, interracial relationships are still a remarkable cultural phenomenon with individuals from other ethnic groups. Because such relationships often rooted deep into possibly racist beliefs of other individuals in society (Childs, 2008). Nevertheless, a considerable social distance remains between blacks and whites (Qian & Lichter, 2007).

Figure 4

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle; Alex Ohanian & Serena Williams



Source: AP/File

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological study is to explore interracial marriages between Black women and White men. In this study, the terms “Black” and “White” will be used as racial groups. The central phenomenon of this study will be an exploratory investigation considering the aspects of different racialized stories and experiences that contribute to interracial couples apart from other groups. There is a discrepancy in racial history between Europe and the United States. This issue can create conflict in and between the interracial couples for its external casual conditions in managing societal disapproval. The focus of this research is to examine how the unique

history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. The complexity or impact of interracial marriages in some countries have been considered as normal and legal. However, in the United States it is still debatable depending on the region where the racism ideology still exists.

A preliminary analysis of the literature indicated that a steady decline of interracial marriage prejudice, fundamental link between education and intermarriage and economic status and intermarriage were key motivating factors for interracial marriage between white men and black women. From this conceptualization, the main purpose of the study emerged: to understand how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Understanding this phenomenon is extremely important because how race relations in this country affects interracial marriage. The other purpose of this study was to use conflict resolution approaches and analytical theories to expand research into and knowledge of circumstances of the stigma faced by interracial couples, particularly white men, and black women relationships. The proposition that guided this study is that the rise in interracial marriages between white men and black women is likely being propelled by increasing racial and ethnic diversity and changing attitudes in the country. The goal of the study was to provide results that would enhance new theoretical standards and offer recommendations for assessing future conflicts associated with white men and black women relationships.

Historical Overview of Interracial Marriage in the U.S.

Interracial marriages have been controversial since the founding of the country and continue to be controversial even today, and opposition to black and white interracial relationships is historically positioned in America's struggle with its racist history. It is important to reference that, from 1660s to the 1960s, forty-one states, colonies or territories passed laws against interracial marriages and sex between blacks and whites, and some states made marriage across racial line a felony (Viñas-Nelson, 2017; Cott, 2001). Zinn (2003) indicates that, the first ever case to reveal any constraints on "interracial relationships can be seen in 1630 in Jamestown court records, which indicates that a white man was "to be soundly whipt" for having sexual relations with a black woman. Laws against interracial marriages went as far as ensuring that blacks could not have access to inheritance (Fryer, 2007). Under Jim Crow law, in Florida, interracial marriage was regulated. It stated that, all marriages between a white person and a negro, or between a white person and a person of negro descent to the fourth generation inclusive, are hereby forever prohibited" (Cott, 2001; Wallenstein, 2002; Pascoe, 2009; Lewandowski and Jackson, 2001). For instance, Cott (2001) states that, in Mississippi, the punishment for interracial marriage was life imprisonment. And in 1872, the Alabama Supreme Court charged minister James Burns for presiding over the marriage of an interracial couple, and thus violating Alabama law (Wallenstein, 2002). Viñas-Nelson (2017) adds that:

In 1664, Maryland sought to stanch potential interracial marriages by threatening enslavement for white women who married black men. Two years earlier, Virginia had enacted legislation to profit from white men's sexual relationships

with black women. Children would inherit the social status of their mother, not their father, meaning the children of slave women would be born slaves regardless of the father's status. (p. 6)

To fully understand anti-miscegenation laws or restrictions on interracial marriages in the United States, one must first start with White supremacy and its effect on racial hierarchy and categorization. The history of miscegenation laws is deeply rooted in white supremacy and America's tendency to frequently chastise and degrade black people (McDuffie, 2017). This according to Rosenblatt (1999) and Baars (2009), essentially drove the main reason in the low rates of interracial marriage, which may basically be the historical relationship between Blacks and Whites. Because of the protracted legal and social separations of the two groups, which prolonged well into the last century, relations between Black and Whites remain vastly different than the relations between Whites and other minorities. To buttress this viewpoint, Childs, (2005) and Baars (2009), posit, "even now, many Whites describe that they think relationships with Blacks are "less acceptable" than relationships with Latinos or Asians. Between 1890 and 1948, 90 percent of the white population supported miscegenation laws. Laws against interracial marriage indicate that marriage played an essential role in the establishment of Jim Crow structures of racism and white supremacy. Additionally, a 1958 Gallup survey discovered that 1% of southern whites and 5% of whites outside the south favored interracial marriage. White families seemed often to decline to have anything to do with children who entered interracial marriages. This common view cut through educational, class, and regional lines (Gordon, 1964; Romano, 2003; West, 2017).

A study by Gordon (1964) about interracial marriage reveals that, “the belief in the greater sexuality of both Negro women and Negro men is a psychological factor which may have influenced some whites in their choice of a marriage partner” (p. 268). Perry & Sutton (2008) adds that, “anti-miscegenation laws were primarily intended to police the line between blacks and whites, thereby preserving elite white privilege white purity” (p. 245). Clearly, the basis of post-Civil War white supremacy rested firmly upon opposition to interracial marriage. At the core of white supremacy, there is a notion that the White race is considered superior to all other races, and it is important that its genetic mutation is not contaminated through interracial marriage (Wallenstein, 2002; Pascoe, 2009; Perry & Sutton, 2008). To elaborate more, Viñas-Nelson (2017) writes:

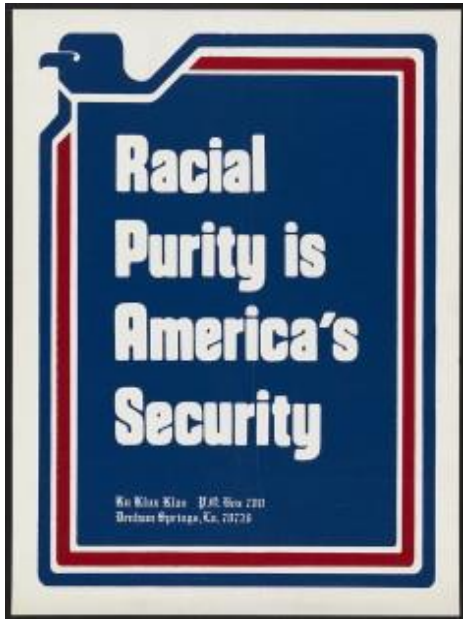
The concept of racial “purity” evolved through interracial marriage law. In post-Civil War Arkansas, a black delegate to the state’s constitutional convention—William H. Grey—mocked a white delegate's insistence that interracial marriage be banned by questioning how such a feat could even be accomplished given that “the purity of the blood, of which the gentleman speaks, has already been somewhat interfered with. (p. 2)

For instance, Cott (2001) acknowledges that laws regulating marriage were tailored to restrict non-whites from marrying white people. “These laws did not concern all mixed marriages. They aimed to keep the...legitimate white race unmixed—and thus only addressed marriages in which one party was white” (p. 41). It is also important to mention that, while White supremacy was at the core of miscegenation laws, a segment of African Americans, “opposes interracial marriage, on the grounds that it expresses racial disloyalty, suggests disapproval of fellow blacks, undermines black culture,

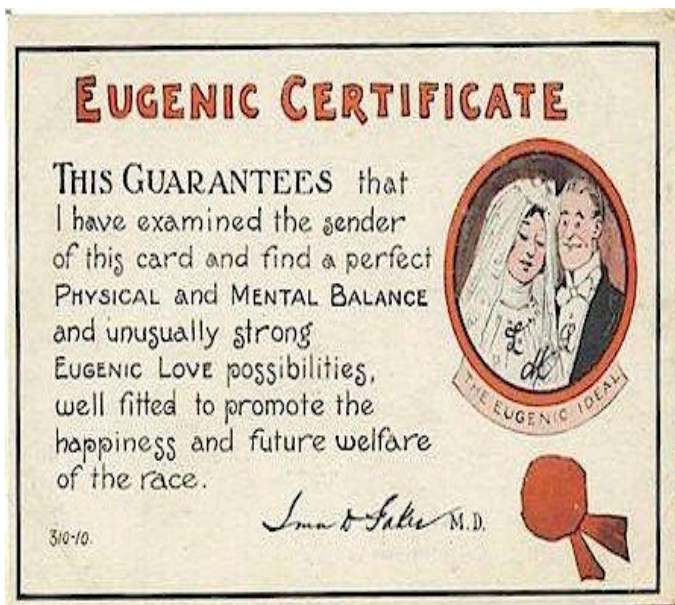
weakens the African-American marriage market, and feeds racist mythologies, particularly the canard that blacks lack pride of race” (Kennedy, 2002, p. 8). West (2017) and Romano (2003) suggests, in contrast to whites, most blacks were not worried about racial purity since they already had mixed backgrounds, nor was it a problem of being discriminated against because that was obviously a fact of life. Blacks perceived whites as “oppressors and persecutors, cruel and untrustworthy. Sentiments and opposition like this have always been a powerful undercurrent among African Americans. And, in some instances, black disapproval to interracial relationship played a role in ending a marriage. For example, the breakup of Everett LeRoi Jones (now known as Amiri Baraka) and Hettie Jones (Kennedy, 2002, p. 12). Some of the main reason for black opposition to interracial marriage is that, most African Americans were uncertain about interracial marriage because they see the meaning of earning the legal right to it in principle, and interracial marriage undermined racial cohesion over the years; and intermarriage by Black men weakens Black women in the marriage pool (Viñas-Nelson, 2017; Kennedy, 2002).

Figure 5

A Ku Klux Klan flyer published in 1972 promoting the idea that race mixing would threaten America's wellbeing

**Figure 6**

A certificate from 1924 mockingly "guaranteeing" a person's racial "purity" (right).



Source: Viñas-Nelson 2017

Both Wallenstein (2002) and Pascoe (2009) agrees that, the constraints on interracial marriages were part of a “divide and rule” scheme on the part of affluent white landowners, creating and supporting the racial caste system in the United States. Viñas-Nelson, (2017) writes that, “the first laws prohibiting interracial marriages occurred when wealthy planters were transitioning from using European indentured servants as their primary labor to African slaves” (p. 8). For Gullickson (2006), he argues that:

Interracial sexual contact likely peaked sometime during the early colonial period, when white indentured servants and black slaves were in close contact in large numbers. The practice of keeping white indentured servants was on the decline and African slavery was on the rise, leading to a transitional period in which the two groups often lived and worked in close quarters. (p. 290)

Following the end of slavery and shortly after the Civil War, there was an increase in Black men and White women marriages and cohabitation, particularly in the Southern states. This was because many white men were killed in the war (Spickard, 1989). Further, Spickard (1989) explains:

The 1880 census found 209 mixed marriages in New Orleans, 29 of them pairing Black men with White women....by far the more common pattern, however, coupled Black women with White men. Before the war, a White master could often compel his slave to submit his affections. (p. 270)

Rapes committed against African American women by plantation owners and other powerful whites during this period have paint an ugly picture on relationships between black women and white men. Kennedy (2003) stresses that, in the “antebellum South, the rape of enslaved black women by enslaved men or by white men was

commonplace, but it was not a crime (p. 1). For instance, Mortz (2010) suggest that, during slavery, “frequent mixed-race births, many resulting from the rape of enslaved black women by white slave owners. Between 1850 and 1860, the mulatto slave population increased by 67 percent; in contrast, the black slave population increased by only 20 percent” (p. 2). The connection of race and rape mainly, how Black men accused of raping a White woman is treated differently under the law than a White man accused of raping a black woman. In this case, if interracial sex stayed out-of-wedlock and occurred between Black women and White men, warranted minimal legal or social consequences. An example that illustrates this point is the case of a 19-year-old enslaved black woman named Celia. Celia was sentenced to death and hanged on December 21, 1855 for killing the White man who owned her and was trying to rape her. The murder of 14-year-old Emmett

Till in 1955 also shed light on the double standard. Emmett Till was just 14 years old in 1955 when a white woman accused him of wolf-whistling at her in a store in Mississippi. This alleged act would cost Emmet Till his life just a few days later when the woman’s husband and his half-brother beat him so severely that he was unrecognizable before shooting him in the head (Kennedy, 2003; Novkov, 2008; Perry & Sutton, 2008). Additionally, throughout the 1800s, many whites perceived black men who were in relationship with white women as lawbreakers who had to be dealt with to safeguard the “purity” of white womanhood. Since interracial relationships were generally alleged to be nonconsensual, white women were seen as victims of black rapists. Rape claims frequently sparked mob violence, especially after the Civil War. (Kalmijn 1998; Hodes 1999; Flores, 2020).

The legal and social double standard that allowed White men to commit sexual violence against black women with impunity, while the most baseless fear of sexual contact between a Black man and White woman resulted in deadly violence, continued after emancipation. Nearly one in four black people lynched from 1877 to 1945 were accused of improper contact with a white woman (Novkov, 2008; Pascoe, 2009; Feagin, 2006; Wallenstein 2002). Additionally, the “rape of enslaved women also had a powerful economic justification: a child inherited the legal status of its mother, not its father—rape thus became a tool for increasing the labor force” (p. 1). In terms of the role of abolitionists in dismantling anti-miscegenation laws, there was a longstanding support of interracial marriage amongst black and white abolitionists. Accordingly, many abolitionists believed that dismantling the racial barriers, particularly, support for interracial marriage was essential part of the struggle to liberate African Americans and end racial bigotry in America (Pascoe, 2009; Viñas-Nelson, 2017). Viñas-Nelson (2017) writes, “one of the few known interracial marriages between abolitionists William King and Marry Allen (1853) resulted in their fleeing the country in fear for their lives” (p. 13). In response, defenders of slavery and anti-interracial marriage accused abolitionists of supporting interracial marriages. Most white northerners showed themselves adamantly opposed to any suggestion of black equality through their rejection of interracial marriage or even the mere hint of its occurrence. Not coincidentally, public hysteria against interracial marriage grew louder in the 1830s when the rights of black people were being contentiously debated and a more vocal and inclusive abolitionist movement emerged (Viñas-Nelson, 2017; Pascoe, 2009; Wallenstein 2002; Perry & Sutton, 2008).

Furthermore, even where interracial relationships were legal, derogatory depictions—like E.W. Clay’s popular series of lithographs—linked it in the white public’s imagination with bastardy, debauchery, and immorality (Viñas-Nelson, 2017, p. 13). The social isolation endured by Blacks, even before the end of slavery, has persisted through African Americans history in the United States. Thus, interracial marriage between Black women and White men was infrequent, noticeable, and inappropriate in comparison to other type of marriages. In particular, the histories of slavery and legal segregation in the U.S. have affected relationships between Blacks and Whites all the way into the twenty-first century (Feagin, 2006). After years of bigotry, marginalization, and violence, anti-miscegenation laws were overturned in 1967. It took more than 300 years for the United States to allow interracial marriages, and this landmark was not reached by an act of legislation in Congress, but rather by a Supreme Court ruling. As states above, since 1967, interracial marriage has been legal in the U.S. That year, the Supreme Court ruled in *Loving v. Virginia* that prohibiting people from getting married because of their race is a violation of the 14th amendment. This amendment states that all U.S. citizens have some basic rights including the right to marry. The Supreme Court's unanimous decision struck down the Virginia law and similar statutes in roughly one-third of the states. Some of those laws went beyond black and white, prohibiting marriages between whites and Native Americans, Filipinos, Indians, Asians and in some states all non-whites (Feagin, 2006; Wallenstein 2002). In some states, it took decades to remove interracial marriage bans from their state constitutions after the Supreme Court’s unanimous verdict to struck down the Virginia law. For example, in 2000, Alabama formally removed the miscegenation clauses out of their state constitution. In 1987,

Mississippi removed interracial marriage ban, and South Carolina did in 1998 (Wallenstein 2002).

Over the decades, acceptance for interracial marriages grew exponentially. It seems clear that the increase in interracial marriages underlines a long-running trend as the country grows more racially and ethnically diverse. One could argue that the more diverse the population, the higher the share of interracial marriages. With the acceptance and increase in interracial marriages, some interracial couples still experience societal rejection, bias, negative stereotypes, hostility, criticism, and violence.

Hate Crimes Against Interracial Couples

The fear of interracial marriage was a key reason used to support racial segregation from the founding of the colonies and during the Jim Crow era. Jim Crow laws were founded in the late 19th century, which aimed to uphold the false sanctity of whiteness while simultaneously marginalizing an entire group of people. Even after black people were supposedly guaranteed separate but equal public facilities because of 1896 groundbreaking Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, discrimination and violence intended to spread white supremacy continued. Violence and hate crimes against interracial relationships has been documented in American literature for centuries, and even with continual rise in interracial marriage and the change in social customs that made it possible since the Supreme Court ruled on *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967, interracial couples still face hostility from strangers and sometimes violence. Violence against black women was longstanding during slavery and propagated under Jim Crow and beyond. By creating and enforcing laws that prohibit interracial relationships, racial discrimination became more exacerbated (Viñas-Nelson, 2017; Perry & Sutton, 2008).

Many scholars argued that interracial couples continue to face humiliation, bias, aggression, which has sometimes led to violence and hate. Over the years, many violent incidents were recorded against interracial couples in the United States. For Skinner (2016), she argues, “although most white Americans self-report little to no racial bias against black people, they tend to show robust implicit, or unconscious, biases” (p. 1). Perry & Sutton (2008) believes that “among the potential effects of the popular tendency to stigmatize or demonize intimate interracial relationships is that it contributes to a culture that bestows ‘permission to hate,’ indeed, permission to engage in hate crime” (p. 254). In addition, Viñas-Nelson (2017) adds that, around the 1830s, interracial marriage had become a proxy for white fears that the social order they had built upon racial division might be threatened, this led to targeted violence against abolitionists and black institutions. Viñas-Nelson (2017) further elaborated:

Rumors spread in 1834 that abolitionist ministers had married an interracial couple, 11 days of racial terror erupted in New York City. A mob attacked a mixed-race gathering of the American Anti-Slavery Society and continued to menace, burn, and destroy the homes and churches of leading abolitionists. The mob’s wrath targeted black churches, homes, schools, and businesses. A similar riot, with similar instigation and targets of violence, occurred in Philadelphia in 1838. (p. 9)

Throughout its history, interracial marriage has produced some negative levels of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. West (2017) detailed how some whites communicated their condemnation of interracial relationship. She argues:

The ways in which whites expressed their disapproval ranged from deep displeasure or disappointment to severe physical punishment. A white father in Virginia found a *Life* article on interracial marriage so distasteful he wrote to the magazine saying that, if his daughter ever so much as entertained the idea of intermarrying, “I would personally kill her and then myself, thus saving the state the expense of a hanging”. Another parent told their daughters black fiancé that he would be “signing [their] daughter’s death certificate. This sentiment rang true for many whites as intermarriage was social suicide. (p. 2)

The individual’s experience of discrimination and violence has led to many interracial couples to feel isolated. In the past decades, several hostile incidents, which in some cases led to violent hate crimes against interracial couples were recorded. Perry & Sutton (2008) asserts that, “the most dramatic illustration are the murders committed by Joseph Franklin—it is estimated that between 1977 and 1980 he took the lives of thirteen the black and white victims, all of whom had been involved in interracial relationships” (p. 254). Moreover, “the idea of an interracial relationship so angered two Florida men that when a black man began regularly visiting a white woman who lived on their block, they burned a cross in the couple's front yard and on Tuesday both racists were sentenced to prison for the hate crime” (Saul, 2017, p. 1). Further, in April 2016, a Mississippi landlord evicted a family after he found out the couple was interracial. Then in August, a man stabbed an interracial couple in Olympia after seeing them kiss in public. (Skinner, 2016). On another hate crime, Billeaud (2018) writes, a neo-Nazi named Travis Ricci began angrily howling a racial slur and harassing an interracial couple. “Ricci rushed back to a home where other white supremacists were partying, grabbed a shotgun and

returned in a sedan driven by an associate. Ricci leaned out the car and fired two buckshot blasts, missing the black man, the intended target and killing his girlfriend (p. 1). In addition, Wang (2017) adds, “hours after a “White Lives Matter” rally unfolded Saturday in Shelbyville, Tennessee and resulting in lots of counter protesters, but no violence, a fight broke out between a smaller group of white supremacists and an interracial couple at a restaurant in Brentwood, about 50 miles to the north (p. 1). In addition, in Eugene, Oregon, an interracial couple discovered a noose placed on top of their trash can and their car spray painted with a racial slur. (Lindsay, 2021).

Even after the 1967 Loving decision, some people are still trying their best to keep interracial couples from marrying by using violence against them. These series of violent and hate crimes are systematic in nature. That is, violence is used as a justification against rapid political, social, and demographic transformations. The agents of these hate crimes are predominantly White men who firmly hold the belief that they are protecting their culture, race, and way of life. It is also important to note that, White-supremacist belief are centered on the idea that there is an existential threat against the white race and this motives people to defend their violence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological study is to explore interracial marriages between Black women and White men. The central phenomenon of this study will be an exploratory investigation considering the aspects of different racialized stories and experiences that contribute to interracial couples apart from other groups. The complexity or impact of interracial marriages in some countries have been considered as normal and legal. However, in the United States it is still debatable depending on the

region where racist ideology still exists. Also, the purpose of the study is to examine interracial marriage between white men and black women using a conflict resolution framework. In previous studies, this topic was examined from a legal, political science and sociological perspectives.

Relevance of the Study

In recent years, race relations have been tensed and passionately debated across the U.S. With the election of Obama in 2008 as the first African American president, the result of racial prejudice had steady declined of over time. A study done by Maniam (2016) of Pew Research Center, argues that “Obama’s election eight years ago, 52% of voters expected race relations to improve, while just 9% said they would be worse; roughly a third (36%) said there would be little change” (p. 1). In the same study, “nearly half of U.S. voters (46%) expect Trump’s election to lead to worse race relations, while just 25% say they will improve (26% say there will be no difference).” (Maniam, 2016, p.1). Marriages between blacks and whites are still the rarest form of interracial marriage, and interracial couples still face a host of social humiliations associated with being an interracial couple (Douglas & Yancey, 2004; Qian, 1997).

Despite the social stigma towards interracial marriages, the approval of interracial marriages rates has increased than the actual interracial marriages over the last twenty-five years and left many with the impression that the social distance difference has closed significantly. The lack of research on Black Women and White Men Towards Interracial Marriage in America has not been exhaustively researched (Wallenstein, 2002; Romano, 2003; Qian & Lichter, 2007). In some cases, in which efforts to study this topic have occurred, the views were basically outlined within sex differences in interracial marriage.

For example, previous research by Monahan (1976) examines sex differences in interracial marriage, which found out that black men are more likely to marry white women than black women are to marry white men. Downey (1999) pinpoint on assimilation between minority and majority groups in the United States. For Kalmijn (1993) mainly explored the tendency for white women to marry African American men with higher levels of education. Qian (1997) study interracial marriages among whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. Yancey and George (2004) focus at how the existence of intermarriage connects with attitudinal formation on cultural diversity.

While these scholars provide key data and understanding of interracial Marriage in America, their results and conclusions have been limited to social stigma, economic and political constraints. To diversify the research on Black Women and White Men Towards Interracial Marriage in America, it is important to examine the issues around interracial marriages through the views of the field of conflict resolution. The current research and literature need development for a more in-depth understanding of the situation. Thus, for the present study, the aim is to implement an analytical background that started with the historical, political, legal, and social issues that have impacted Black Women and White Men Towards Interracial Marriage in America with the aim that results of the study will be valuable, in the field of conflict resolution and peace studies, for addressing disputes and conflicts related to structural racism and race relations.

The aim of this study was not to make broad generalizations about interracial marriages in the United States, though, the emphasis was on Black Women and White Men Towards Interracial Marriage in America, but insights came from other interracial

marriages across the United States. The researcher chose Black women married to White men because interracial marriages between Black women and White men relationships have grown more frequent, and this phenomenon has created conflict in and between the interracial couples for its external casual conditions in managing societal disapproval.

Research Questions

Since the focus of this dissertation was to shed light on the issues surrounding interracial marriage between white men and black women, it was appropriate to formulate a research question to help inquire into the historical, political, legal, and social issues that have impacted interracial marriage in the United States. To understand this phenomenon, it was appropriate to ask the following questions:

1. What are the factors guiding interracial marriages that are unacceptable in some societies?

Sub-Questions:

1. What are the perceptions of U.S. population regarding interracial marriages?
2. What are the challenges experienced by interracial marriages between Black women and White men?

These questions, as well as the literature review, facilitated the interview questions.

Organization of the Study

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One examines several of the historical, political, legal, and social issues that have impacted interracial marriage in the United States. The chapter offered a historical overview of interracial marriage in the United, which set the basis for this research. Chapter One also examined the overarching

issue with violence against interracial couples. Chapter Two reviews the literature and discusses the main concepts relevant to the topic. The literature review is divided into four sections. The first section covers the interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Section two examines interracial marriage between Black men and White women, which is more common than interracial marriage between white men and black women. Section three looks at the perceptions of interracial marriages in western Europe. Section four analyzes the theoretical framework used to explain and explore conflict. Critical race theory, Status-caste Exchange theory, and structural violence theory can all shed light on the issues surrounding interracial marriage between Black women and White men in the United States. Chapter Three describes the methodological style used in this study and examines the data collection methods, data analysis methods, and validity and reliability checks, and the ethical issues. Chapter Four features the examination of the data and presents the research results. Chapter Five is a summary of findings is presented, followed by discussions, the conclusion of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Definition of Terms

Anti-miscegenation: anti-miscegenation laws made it a crime for two people of different races to get marriage or engage in intimate activities.

Assimilation: The process of receiving new facts or of responding to new situations in conformity with what is already available to consciousness

Culture: The customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group

Explicit bias: Refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level.

Implicit bias: Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect ones understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

Interracial marriage: A marriage with someone of a different race or ethnicity.

Race: A group or set of people or things with a common feature or features

White Supremacy: Is an ideology which believes that white people, their ideas, beliefs, thoughts, actions and culture are superior to people of color.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter Two reviews the literature and discusses the main concepts relevant to the topic. The literature review is divided into four sections. The first section covers the interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Section two examines interracial marriage between Black men and White women, which is more common than interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Section three looks at the link between educational background and intermarriage. Section four analyzes the theoretical framework used to explain and explore conflict. Critical race theory, Status-caste Exchange theory, and Structural violence theory can all shed light on the issues around interracial marriage between white men and black women in the United States.

Interracial relationships between blacks and whites in the U.S. are complicated. History has shown that these two groups were generally far from equal. A Black woman married to White men will suffer more societal rejections than the White man in United States. Most of the research conducted reveals that, since the U.S. Supreme Court after (*Loving v. Virginia, 1967*), interracial marriages, particularly between Black women and White men relationships have grown more frequent in the past fifty years, and rates of interracial marriage differ intensely by racial category. (Baars, 2009; Cheryl, 2016; Chalabi, 2018). Research has been shown that Blacks and Whites are least likely to interracially marry relatively to all other American ethnic/racial groups (Kreager, 2008). The point that Blacks and whites are least likely to be involved in interracial relationships is not overwhelming because a social distance and the extent to which individuals or groups are excluded or removed from addressing, paying attention to each other's lives

and between these two groups is greater than between any other groups (Cheryl, 2016; Yancey, 1999).

With the rise of interracial marriages over the five decades, some scholars believe that the election of President Trump would stain race relations in the U.S. For example, Major et. al (2018) argues that “the changing racial demographics of the United States are at the core of support for Trump and his policies among White Americans” (p. 932). For Bobo (2017) he, too, believes that “the primary factor in Donald Trump’s electoral success and much of what so far appears to be his policy agenda rests on deep-rooted racism and white supremacist presumptions in US institutions and culture” (p. 86). Further, a survey by Pew Research finds that, “President Donald Trump’s handling of the issue – are also negative. About six-in-ten Americans (58%) say race relations in the U.S. are bad, and of those, few see them improving” (Menasce-Horowitz et. al 2019, p. 1). With that said, it is important to conduct a research centered on the marriages between Black women and White men because this phenomenon has created conflict in and between the interracial couples for its external casual conditions in managing societal disapproval. And most importantly, interracial marriage is not the same for black men and white women relationships as it is for black women and white men relationships.

Much of the existing literature on interracial relationship focuses on black men in interracial relationships with white women and little consideration of the same issues around black women in relationships with white men. This comparative lack of interest in and gender issues particularly impact upon black women. The research is designed to further develop our understanding of how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial

marriage between Black women and White men. Understanding this topic is crucial because the race has been, and continues to be, constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage.

Interracial marriage between Black women and White men

To understand interracial marriage between Black women and White men, one must look at the history of anti-miscegenation laws that existed from the colonial era to the 20th century. Interracial marriage between blacks and whites was highly illegal. Romano (2003) and West (2017) claims that framing blacks as “hypersexual” made interracial marriage and/or relationship immoral to many whites. A few whites believed that God made the races so that they would not intermix, but many viewed it as tainting the white race and harmful to family honor. Although the laws were intended to stop black and white people from marrying, it also prohibited whites from marrying any other minorities. Perry & Sutton (2008) and Kennedy (2003) points out that, anti-miscegenation laws were mainly established to prevent blacks and whites from marrying, thereby maintaining the white purity. Also, rapes committed against black women by plantation owners and other powerful whites during this period have paint an ugly picture on the relationships between black women and white men. The notion of sexual relationship between black men and white women offended whites, whereas casual and regularly abusive sexual relationships between white men and black women was overlooked or accepted as it was normalized during slavery when the white master did what he pleased with his property. This added to a seditious, repressive rape culture giving white men power over black women’s bodies (Daniels, 1997; Hodes,1999; Romano, 2003; West, 2017). The fetishization of black women started during colonial

era, where white male slave masters raped their black female slaves. These actions were justified by classifying black women as hypersexual (West, 2008). The “stereotype of the hyper-sexualized black woman has become fetishized within modern American media and sex culture. Black female bodies and black sexual practices are essentialized and fetishized as a continuation of their exploitation within the American imperialist narrative” (Holmes, 2016, p. 7).

Also, many of the long-held myths and misconceptions about Black women that exist today are deeply rooted in stereotypes created decades before. This permeates every facet of black women lives, including love and marriage (Johnson, 2019). Similarly, these societal stereotypes have negative consequences, and affects perceptions of Black women. Johnson (2019) elaborates on the misconceptions, which stem from historical struggles.

Arguably:

I believe that these myths go all the way back to slavery, and [have] followed black women into their fight for justice and equality. It has to do with the ways in which black femininity has always been pitted against white femininity as a way to strengthen white supremacy and to justify black women’s oppression in the United States. (p. 4)

Overtime, these stereotypes and rhetoric have essentially become an ideology about blackness, particularly black womanhood. For instance, in academic study on interracial relationships, together with popular discourse such as film and television, Black women are frequently depicted as angry and opposed to interracial relationships (Childs, 2005; Baars, 2009).

Although, in recent decades, there has been a substantial rise in the number of academic works on interracial marriages in the United States. Mostly, research in this field is centered on interracial marriage between Black men and White women. Extraordinarily little research is aimed towards marriages between Black women and White men. The recent increases in interracial marriages with whites presumably reflect positive changes in American race relations. For example, Cheryl (2016) argues that interracial marriages between Blacks and Whites in the United States are the less common of all interracial marriages, with marriages between Black women and White men being the less common of the two groupings. However, during the 1990s, growing numbers of Black women have been marrying White men. A similar view is echoed by Banks (2011), Romano (2003) and Kaba (2012) regarding the dramatic jump in the rate of interracial marriages between black women marriages to white men despite falling behind Hispanic and Asian newlyweds. Johnson (2019) writes:

In 2015, 12 percent of newlywed black women were intermarried, which is an increase from the past. While it's not at the same rate as black men, which is at 24 percent. There's this notion out there that black women are resistant to dating and marrying outside of their race, but this data suggests to me that they are doing so, and they are open to interracial relationships. (p. 3)

Another pressing issue concerning interracial marriage between Black women and White men is that couples that engage in in this kind of marriage do so by advancing their socioeconomic standings. Sociologists have long been interested in this topic because it falls at the intersection of race and class. From the standpoint of social stratification and mobility, the exchange between Black women and White men would be that minority

women are thought to exchange beauty and sexual access for white men's income (Sassler and Joyner, 2011). Monahan (1970) adds that, Black women marry White men to advance their social status. Thus, interracial marriages have positive economic effects and produce better socio-economic status. Engaging in such tradeoff means that both partners see whiteness as superior and more desirable, this suggests at least some level of internalized racism (Monahan, 1970; Childs, 2005; Sassler and Joyner, 2011).

Several studies on Black women marriages to White men have focused on the factors that are causing this phenomenon. For instance, Porter and Bronzaft (1995) posit that Black woman are finding it difficult to locate suitable marriage partners of any race due to high their education levels and high paying jobs. Wilson (1987), Charles & Luoh (2010) suggested that characteristics of the black male population, and specifically the lack of marriageable black men due to high rates of unemployment and incarceration, are a key factor driving black women and white men marriages. Likewise, Luke and Oser (2015) adds that, "African American women who have these perceptions about the limited availability of same-race partners and the greater availability of partners outside their race may be more likely to engage in interracial relationships" (p. 3). However, Kaba (2012) reveals that, "There has been very little, or no attention paid to the fact that Black women in the United States might actually be the ones rejecting or turning down romantic relationship requests from Whites or non-Black men" (p. 407).

Moreover, in recent years, there have been calls that urges black women to date and marry outside their race to tackle the dilemma of successful educated black women who cannot find black husbands (Romano, 2018; Cheryl, 2016) For his review of

Is Marriage for White People? Banard (2011) argues:

What to do about the black family is a dilemma that has preoccupied sociologists, Psychologists, journalists, screenwriters, novelists, and ordinary people for decades. Few have unreservedly advocated the refreshing solution Banks offers interracial marriage. While black men have long felt free to choose white mates, he notes, black women are more segregated in the intimate marketplace than any group in American society.” (p. 90)

Historically, Black women’s disapproval to interracial dating/marriage is not merely deep-rooted in jealousy and resentment toward white women but is solely grounded on white racism. And black internalization of racism, and what interracial relationships represent to Black women and signify about Black women’s worth (Kaba, 2012; Childs, 2005). Kaba (2012) extensively detailed eight correlated dynamics that have contributed to Black women opposing interracial relationship, including marriage from White men and other non-Black men in the United States. they are:

- 1) History of Slavery and Rape/Forced Relationships; 2) Concubinage/Politics/Laws Preventing Blacks from Interracial Marriages; 3) Harsh and Cruel Punishment of Black Males and Females; 4) Maintaining Racial Cultural Heritage and Communities; 5) Fear of Perception of Being a Prostitute; 6) Physical Appearance or Attraction/ Body Hair; 7) Education and Financial Success and Concern about Transfer of Wealth; and (8) Religion/Religiosity. (p. 413)

The interracial relationships between Blacks and Whites have been controversial because of the history of slavery and Jim Crow laws. If we consider the point of view of a Black woman marrying a White man in constructing a family, that can be a sensitive

issue for American society to grasp compared to other societies, such as in Europe. Fewer Black women seen in United States leads to them being more closely observed and are anticipated to have obstacles in their personal lives and problems (Cheryl, 2016; Wilson, 1987; Romano, 2018; Kalmijn, 1993; Monahan, 1976; Qian, 1997).

Further, Kaba (2012) observes that, “the tiny fraction of Black women who marry White men in the United States is that a significant number of those Black women actually marry foreign-born White European men and Jewish men. Also, a significant number of foreign-born Black women tend to marry White men in the United States” (p. 413). Additionally, Kalmijn (1993) points out that marriages involving Black women and foreign-born White men comprised a significant proportion of interracial marriages involving Blacks. In 1986, such marriages represented 28 percent (p. 140).

The impact of racism, sexism, and cultural distrust are clear; with Black women undervalued by white benchmarks of attractiveness, and the availability of marriageable Black men may dictate those Black women look outside their racial group for potential partners. One could conclude that Black women inclination to date or marry black men could be linked to their experiences of racism, discrimination, and marginalization, which may result in feelings of cultural distrust (Childs, 2005; Feagin, Vera & Batur, 2000; Luke, & Oser, 2015). Also, the dehumanization and objectification of black women continues today, although, more shrewdly than in past decades. The literature here presents several controversial yet important theme necessary to reveal the historical, political, legal, and social issues that have impacted Black women and White men towards interracial marriage in America.

Interracial marriage between Black men and White women

While this research examines interracial marriage between Black women and White men, it will be unfair not to investigate interracial marriage between black men and white women. Interracial marriage between Black men and White women is a longstanding and well-documented part of America's cultural fabric and has continuously drew public scrutiny and skepticism. Literature on this topic has received a great deal of attention from academics and has uncover several factors such as the black women opposition to black men and white women marriages, black men marrying up in social status, and sexualization of Black men. Interracial marriage/relationship between Black men and White women was treated differently for men and women and triggered different responses in the white and black communities (Hodes 1993 & 1999; Ferber, 1999; Hou & Myles, 2013; Baker, 2014).

Much of the current literature on interracial relationship centers on Black men in interracial relationships with White women; little attention is given on the same issues surrounding black women in relationships with white men. Steinbugler (2014) "Black/white relationships, especially those between white women and black men, drew the harshest condemnation. Black communities treated such couples as disreputable; white communities often threatened, physically harmed, or ostracized them." (p. 33). Kalmijn, (1993), Monahan, (1976) and Qian (1997) adds that, black-white interracial marriages typically involve black men and white women, and black men are more likely to marry White women than Black women are to marry white men. In 1960's, more than 70% of black/white marriage involved black men and white women. In addition to this, Livingston & Brown, (2017) also writes:

Black men are twice as likely as black women to have a spouse of a different race or ethnicity (24% vs. 12%). This gender gap has been a long-standing one—in 1980, 8% of recently married black men and 3% of their female counterparts were married to someone of a different race or ethnicity.” (p. 4)

It is abundantly clear that Black men relationships with White women are far higher than White men relationships with Black women.

Moreover, Black women opposition to interracial marriage between Black men and White women are centered on several reasons. For example, one of the reasons is black men marriage to white women further constrains the pool of potential partners for black women, particularly for well-educated Black women. West (2017) writes, in a 1951 issue of *Ebony*, one black woman stated that, “Every time we lose a man to a woman of another race, it means one more Negro woman will be husbandless” (p. 5). Another charged that “black male-white female marriages were unhealthy manifestations of the sexualized racial hierarchies that defined white women as more beautiful than black women” (West, 2017, p. 5). In some instances, interracial marriage was viewed “as a lack of pride in the black identity, a form of assimilation than rather than “pitch in and make the race worth belonging to” they escaped to a race that’s “already made” (West, 2017, p. 5). Furthermore, Black women often view black men’s choices to partner with white women as sellouts, betrayal and rejection of black women as a group, this has fueled their opposition to interracial relationships. The rise in interracial marriage between black men and women of other races further depletes the “male marriageable pool” for Black women (Blakely, 1999; Baars, 2009; Childs, 2005). Baker (2014) delineates the impact of interracial marriage/relationship on culture and society. He expressed:

The concept of a black man in a relationship with a white woman is a “thing” that people have an opinion on, and that opinion comes with an entire set of stereotypes, fueled by racist ideology, a complicated past, and sometimes even pop culture. Kanye West once rapped about how successful black men will “leave your ass for a white girl,” and then put himself into that box by marrying a white woman, furthering the pervasiveness of flawed, generic ideas about interracial relationships. (p. 1)

In terms of marrying up, black men are viewed as acquiring the benefits linked with the racial status of a potential white partner. For example, Gullickson (2005) indicate that, Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) both held that “this process of status exchange was only applicable to black male/white female unions because a black man’s educational characteristics would be tied to future potential earnings and prestige in a way a black woman’s educational characteristics would not be” (p. 3). Similarly, Rosenfeld (2005) argues that African American men of higher socioeconomic but “lower” racial status can exact an exchange from White women of lower socioeconomic but “higher” racial status (p. 1318). In 1980, a white woman was 109 % more likely to marry a black man with more education than herself than she was to marry a black man with less education (Baars, 2009). Status-caste exchange theory explains that black men trade off their education to increase their chances of “marrying up”, which means, marrying someone with a high racial status. As mentioned earlier, most black women see black men and white women relationships as a betrayal and rejection of black women as a group or view them as undesirable. However, opponents of status-caste exchange theory note that black women are generally more educated than black men, nonetheless it

is black men who marry or partner with white women at a higher frequency than black women (Moran, 2001; Rosenfeld, 2005).

Another important factor or reason for Black men and White women relationship/marriage is sexual objectification of black men. A growing body of research has examined sexual objectification experiences of black people, which has diminished over time, though, the perceptions still exist. Historically, fetishizing the black male body, specifically Black man, are more generally, superior in sexuality and genitalia. This perception has spilled over to the 21st century and remains to hold influence in the American societies whether true or imagined (Murstein et al. 1989; Qian, 1997; Hodes, 1999; Nagel, 2003). Moran (2001) for example, implies that exoticism is the reasoning for interracial relationships, which lies simply in lustful fascination to the “exotic and foreign ‘other’ ‘racial’ differences become a: ...source of sexual titillation” (p. 115). Further, Nagel (2003) description of interracial relationships is expressed along the lines of what she termed as “ethnosexual imaginings” that essentially appears to suggest that so many black men are in relationships with white women in America because they follow to the European standard of beauty and are “eroticized as past forbidden fruit.” Besides, Nagel (2003) suggestion is that white women select their black partners because they are eroticized as “hypersexual, hyper masculine.” Holmes (2016) also highlight that “racial fetishization is a practice of reproductive and sexual management of that began before the slave era and has been reproduced in policy and societal norms throughout all of American history (p. 7). Perceptions such as this one, find their way into the popular culture.

It is important to state that, White supremacists are masters of the perpetuation of controlling images of black men that describe them as “animal-like” or “less than human” in their sexual appetites. In the antebellum South, sexual relationships between black men and white women threatened the foundation of racial slavery in a way that sex between white men and black women did not (Hodes, 1993; Daniels, 1997; Blakely, 1999; Moran, 2001; Nagel, 2003; Gullickson, 2006). Gullickson (2006) posit that Southern Whites, “responded to the imperatives of this new system with an almost paranoid zeal, although concern focused heavily on the “purity” of white women, while white men were apparently given more leeway to engage in sexual relations with black women” (p. 291). Black male sexuality is generally constructed as a threatening, powerful, and uncivilized power that is harmful to White women and a severe threat to White men (Daniels, 1997; Moran, 2001; Nagel, 2003). For example, in Jim Crow South, particularly when allegations of rape were used as battle cries for white male masculinity, was a death sentence declared upon black bodies, especially Black male bodies. Maintaining white male patriarchy included controlling sexual access to white females, and during Jim Crow, the protection of white female sexuality became central to justifying segregation. Thus, the black body has always been the object around, which white identity is constructed (Hodes, 1993; Daniels, 1997; Blakely, 1999; Nagel, 2003; Gullickson, 2006).

Interracial marriage between Black men and White women has constantly drew public scrutiny and skepticism on both side of the racial fence. What is clear is that Black men marry or partner with White women at a far higher rate than White men marry or partner with black women. Clearly, interracial relationship/marriage between White men

and Black women were treated differently than interracial relationship/marriage between Black men and White women (Romano, 2003; Qian & Lichter, 2007).

Link between level of education and interracial marriage

The link between educational level and interracial marriage has always been a topic of interest for social scientists for decades. It is widely argued that the probability of interracial marriage amongst minorities with at least a college degree to have a spouse of a different race or ethnicity increases than those without some college experience or less education. The literature on this topic uncovered several arguments ranging from how an individual educational level could influence his or her probability of interracial marriage, to how education is seen as a major force for assimilation.

For instance, Fryer (2007) asserts, “in 2000, white men with some college education or more than a college education had an intermarriage rates above .4 percent, and white women in these education categories had intermarriage rates above .25 percent” (p. 12). By 2000, blacks with some college educations were the most likely to intermarry, with an intermarriage rate of 2.5 percent for black men and 1.1 percent for black women (who are generally less likely to intermarry than black men) (p. 13).

Accordingly, Bialik (2017) argues:

Since 1980, an educational gap in intermarriage has begun to emerge. While the rate of intermarriage did not differ significantly by educational attainment in 1980, today there is a modest gap. In 2015, 14% of newlyweds with a high school diploma or less were married to someone of a different race or ethnicity. In contrast, 18% of those with some college experience and 19% of those with a bachelor’s degree or more were intermarried.” (p. 4)

Several scholars such as Qian (2005), Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) argued that interracial marriages between black/white partners often comprise of a trade of status or status exchange, where white partner uses his or her racial status to attract a minority partner with higher education. That is, people marry up in education by marrying down in social status or the white partner attain upward mobility by marrying socioeconomically advantaged black men (Qian, 2005; Gullickson, 2006). Qian (2005) posit that:

Most interracial couples also have relatively equal educational attainments.

However, when interracial couples do differ in their education, a hierarchy of color is apparent. The darker the skin color of racial minorities, the more likely they are to have married whites “below” them, that is, with less education than themselves.” (p. 35)

Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) argued, “Highly educated blacks would trade their educational status to reap the benefits associated with the racial status of a potential white spouse. Similarly, whites with low levels of education would trade their racial status for the educational status of a potential black spouse” (Gullickson, 2006, p. 2-3). To further support their theory, both Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) believed that “this process of status exchange was only applicable to black male/white female unions because a Black man’s educational characteristics would be tied to future potential earnings and prestige in a way a black woman’s educational characteristics would not be” (Gullickson, 2006, p. 3). This theory, according to many scholars, fails the test because most interracial relationships, like interracial marriages, are educationally homogamous, and fails to meet the status exchange theory test (Monahan 1976; Porterfield 1978; Rosenfeld 2005; Gullickson, 2006). To some, “engaging in race-status exchange means

that both partners perceive whiteness as better and more desirable—which implies at least some degree of internalized racism (McClintock, 2014, p. 2). The arguments advanced by Qian (2005), Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) may be true several decades earlier, nonetheless, the pattern has overturned itself. Black women continue to pursue higher education at increasing rates in the last decade than any other group including white women, Asian women, and white men (Reeves & Guyot, 2017; Davis, 2016). To further dispute Qian (2005), Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) argument, Clark (2011) alludes that college-educated black women experience far lower levels of marriage, but also lower levels of romantic relationship and voluntary sexual activity compared to other racial groups.

Moreover, education is seen as a major force for assimilation according to Chalabi (2018), Gordon (1964) and Kalmijn (1998). For Gordon (1964), he suggests that education is a main force in the structural assimilation (including marital assimilation) of different races. Further, these scholars believed that education would play a strong role in reducing intergroup negativism, because it promotes universalistic and democratic norms which tend to break down group barriers. From this standpoint, the tendency to marry across racial lines will rise with educational level, because people become more exposed to such marriages as their own education increases. In line with this argument, geographic patterns, too, also affects interracial marriage. Areas with higher educational attainment (suburbs and urban areas) are more likely to have more interracial couples living there than rural areas (Sassler & Joyner, 2011; Chalabi, 2018).

Overall, the literature on this topic reveals the differences between a black spouse's education and the likelihood of interracial marriage. The argument here is that

interracial marriages are increasingly common at higher educational levels for both blacks and whites. While some of the arguments made here may be true in some instances, it is important that researchers thoroughly examine the underlying theoretical rationalizations of “status exchange” considering the increasingly rates of black women educational achievements in the last decade.

Theoretical Framework

This research will utilize three theories to capture the concepts that are relevant to the phenomenon under study and relate it to the broader areas of knowledge being considered. The theoretical framework will help to address questions, describe a phenomenon and the ability to generalize different characteristics of that phenomenon. Critical race theory, Status-caste Exchange theory, and Structural violence theory will all examine the issues around interracial marriage between white men and black women in the United States.

Explaining the interracial marriage with Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed out of a legal scholarship, and in recent years, it refers to a comprehensive social scientific approach to the study of power, race and racism. Derrick Bell, Kimberly Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and Alan Freeman have been accredited to start CRT. The central tenet of CRT is that racism is far more than bigotry, individual prejudice and rather, racism is a systemic feature of social structure. CRT also aims to understand, challenge, and undo systems of racism. CRT acknowledges that racism is embedded in the fabric and system of the American society. Racism has been part of the American history mostly since the beginning in the 17th century. Blacks and other minority groups have dealt with racism, displayed in

unfair laws and social practices directed toward a target group. Laws that prohibited interracial marriage in the United States were one of those unfair laws (Christian, Seamster & Ray, 2019; Hill, 2018; Guess, 2006). Additionally, Delgado & Stefancic (2001) emphasizes that historically, race has been a unifying principle in the U.S. and remains to be. This challenges multicultural color-blind type ideas that downplay the significance of race and deny the deep penetration of racism. This perception fails to ignore the importance of colonization, similar racial characters understanding various social positions, identities, and loyalties of race.

According to CRT, racial inequality emerges from the social, economic, and legal differences that white people create between “races” to maintain their political importance of “race” and whiteness in America (Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado, & Stefancic, 2001; Bell, 1993). Further, institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture. This is the analytical lens that CRT uses in examining existing power structures. CRT identifies that these power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color (Christian, Seamster & Ray, 2019). One of the most helpful features of CRT is its clear analysis and idea of white supremacy—mainly, the superiority of white people over blacks. CRT view that race, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is socially constructed and that race, as a socially constructed concept, functions to maintain the interests of the white population that constructed it (Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado, & Stefancic, 2001; Bell, 1993). From a CRT point of view, the notion of interracial marriage was a threat to white supremacy. For that reason, anti-miscegenation laws were enacted primarily to promote and preserve white supremacy. The prohibition of interracial marriage—a fundamental

drive of racial segregation was to avoid the expansion of intimate social relationships between blacks and whites (Delgado, & Stefancic, 2001).

Racism is a systemic feature of social structure. This socially constructed notion of race, which was used to exercise and reinforce white supremacy, was the backbone of Jim Crow laws in the U.S. Jim Crow laws were based on the theory of white supremacy, and it governed everyday life in America, prohibiting black and white interaction. For instance, The *Loving v. Virginia* case was an achievement over the hate that pervaded life in the 1950s when laws prohibiting interracial marriage were part of the wider legacy of legalized racism and segregation born out of white supremacist ideology (Cole, 2009; Liu, 2017; Newkirk, 2017). The Loving case is widely praised as ceding to the power of love in the face of astonishing harassment and bigotry endured by interracial couples. CRT provides a highly generative perspective for studying racial phenomena. CRT is important because it challenges institutional and systemic racism within policies and laws.

Explaining the interracial marriage with Status-caste Exchange Theory

Since its formation in the 1940's, Status-caste Exchange theory has been a theoretical framework for the analysis of interracial relationship/marriage in the United States. The concept was coined by Kingsley Davis (1941) and Robert Merton (1941), which proposes that relationships or marriages involving black and white in the U.S. are based on a trade of status or status exchange, where a white partner uses his or her racial status to attract a minority partner with higher education or socioeconomic status (Davis, 1941; Merton, 1941; Rosenfeld, 2005; Qian, 2005; Gullickson, 2006). From this viewpoint, minorities, in this case, Blacks can counterbalance their lower

position on a racial arrangement by using their education and socioeconomic status to enhance their chances of “marrying up”: that is, marrying someone in a higher position on the racial hierarchy, conventionally a white person with a lower status exchange status (Merton, 1941). Rosenfeld (2005) extensively explains both Merton (1941) and Davis (1941) reasoning behind their theory.

He implies:

Merton and Davis based their theory on the literature about the Hindu caste system of India. Both Merton and Davis argued from purely theoretical grounds that status-caste exchange should have substantial relevance for marital choices in the United States, especially marriage between whites (the high-caste group) and blacks (the presumed low-caste group). According to Merton, blacks with low SES would hardly ever marry whites with high SES, but blacks with high SES might sometimes marry whites with low SES. According to Merton, marriage between high-status blacks and lower-status whites would represent a kind of informal exchange; that is, the higher SES of the black spouse would directly compensate the white spouse for the loss of social standing that the white spouse would experience for having thrown their lot in with black society. (p. 1285)

Clearly, status-caste exchange theory examines the role race plays in interracial relationships and how it effects interracial relationships (Davis, 1941; Merton, 1941; Qian, 2005; Gullickson, 2006; Torche & Rich, 2017). This theory seems to put more emphasis on interracial relationships between black men and white women, which in essence argues that white women of lower educational and economic status trade their racial status, by benefit of being white, for a greater socioeconomic status and financial

safety, by marrying educated and well-off black men (Schoen & Wooldredge 1989; Qian, 2005; Sassler, & Joyner, 2011; Hou & Myles, 2013).

Additionally, this theory contends that:

Because physical attractiveness is an important variable in interpersonal attraction, it was argued, in accordance with exchange theory, that in a racially prejudiced society Blacks would have to offer more to Whites than vice versa to participate in an interracial romantic relationship. It was hypothesized, therefore, that Blacks would exceed their White partners in physical attractiveness. (p. 325)

Arguably, status-caste exchange theory has three shortcomings, for example, it's a one-sided view of tradeoff; it fails to take into account other attributes such as the physical attractiveness, masculinity, and over-sexualization of black men, which has oftentimes been idolized and fetishized by white women. And it fails to address the exoticization and fetishization of black women (Murstein, Merighi, & Malloy, 1989; Yancey & Yancey, 1998; Holmes, 2016). To further support this notion, Holmes (2016) expressed that, these opinions towards black men are not new; accordingly, they are an extension of the hypersexualized colonial description of black people in general. Fetishization “paved the road for the dehumanization and sexual exploitation imposed upon black men and women brought to the New World (p. 2). Qian (2005) also argues that the “racialized sexual images also encourage marriages between white women and black men” (p. 36).

Accordingly, this theory also fails to consider the role and characteristics black women brings into interracial relationships/marriage with white men. For instance, this theory seems to put more emphasis on the tradeoff between black men and white women

marriage. Sassler & Joyner (2011) suggest that status-caste exchange perceptions put emphasis on resources usually valued in men (i.e., education and income), they are less pertinent to relationships concerning white men and black women. Critics such as Moran (2001), Rosenfeld (2005), Qian and Lichter (2007), Belot and Fidrmuc (2010) all speculated that, seeing marriage as a market, “marrying up” was more realistic for black men than black women. Accordingly, this created the inequalities in black and white marriages for the last 70 years, and these asymmetries continue to this day. Further, these scholars observe that, Black women are more educated than Black men, but it is Black men who marry out at a higher level than Black women and, little disparities exist in the educational achievement of Black men who marry White women. Rosenfeld (2005) is especially critical of Status-caste Exchange theory by arguing that, “because black-white marriages are such a small fraction of the overall married population, differences in how intermarriage is modeled at the general level can have an inordinate impact on findings for the special case of black-white intermarriage” (p. 1288).

Arguably, Status-caste Exchange theory advances that minorities, in this case blacks trade off education and socioeconomic resources against the social disadvantages of their race. That is, hierarchical barriers exist between blacks and whites. As such, this theory continues to offer a one-sided view of exchange.

Explaining interracial marriage with Structural Violence Theory

The theory of structural violence provides a useful framework for understanding the structural inequalities that systematically deny marginalized citizens from achieving their basic human rights. Johan Galtung coined the phrase Structural violence. Galtung (1969) argued that structural violence described the negative power of social institutions

and systems of social organization among marginalized communities. Since structural violence is a root cause of conflict, it impacts the structure of relationships and shed light on a complex picture of inequality in terms of social, economic, political, and human rights. Galtung (1969) used a triangle to describe three types of violence, placing structural and cultural violence at the base, one on the left angle, and the other on the right of the triangle, with direct violence at the top of the triangle. The issue of interracial marriage has all the attributes of structural, cultural, and direct violence. Oliver (2001) writes the connection between cultural and interpersonal structural violence. He asserts, “racism contributes to the construction of motives and justifications among individuals who have committed acts of structural violence, including, lynching, hate crime and police violence against African Americans” (p. 1). Essentially, structural violence unearths how racism and white supremacy are infused in all aspects of society, including the history, culture, politics, economics, and our entire social fabric of the United States.

Structural violence theory serves as a basis to understand the inequities and suffering frequently explain within a broader history of marginalization, and this theory provides a critical framework for understanding the present and its relationship to the past. Structural violence in this case must be examined in the context of American history that have fostered inequalities for centuries. Additionally, structural violence are social forces that harm certain groups of people, creating and prolonging inequality. Arguably, racism is a form of both visible and invisible violence. Galtung (1969) has shown that violence is cultural, structural, and direct. For example, interracial marriages between blacks and whites were met with both direct and cultural violence. Welch (2002) asserts that early in colonial history, colonies began to enact stringent rules to maintain racial

boundaries. Laws were passed to ban interracial relationships, because these would contaminate the superior White race with inferior genes. Another example of structural violence is during the age of abolition, “most white northerners showed themselves firmly opposed to any suggestion of black equality through their rejection of interracial marriage or even the mere hint of its occurrence” (Viñas-Nelson, 2017, p. 7).

According to Galtung (1969), structural, or cultural violence cause direct violence. Throughout America’s existence, blacks and other minorities have endured series and centuries of direct violence. Direct violence reinforces structural violence. For example, during slavery, the rape and sexual abuse of enslaved women and men at the hands of white people occurred without any punitive repercussions during and after the time of slavery in the United States. During slavery, black women were subjected to structural violence, which results from rape, psychological violence, and other acts of violence resulting from the social structure. Structural violence theory says direct violence comes in different forms, which may include “physical force, killing, torture, rape, sexual assault, beatings, and verbal violence” The established structures and systems—social, political, economic, and legal were established to support the privileged who had the bargaining power to circumvent and go around these structures with impunity (Galtung, 1969). Direct violence, according to Galtung (1969), has also given birth to the physical violence that has been noticed all over the U.S. In recent years, there has been a series of violence directed at interracial couples. For example, Riess & Andone (2019) states, “a Louisiana man has been arrested and booked on charges including committing a hate crime after he allegedly accelerated his truck toward an interracial couple in a suburban New Orleans parking lot, according to the local sheriff’s

office (p. 1.). This act of violence is a symptom of a long history of a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate violence.

Furthermore, Boboltz (2019) adds, “a massive explosion that leveled the home of an interracial couple in Sterling, Ohio, this week is being investigated as a possible hate crime after officials found a crude swastika and misspelled anti-Black slur spray-painted next to the scene” (p. 1). Arguably, these actions can be traced to the structural violence since they were motivated by institutional direct violence. King (2013) “Three white men were prosecuted recently for beating the couple (a black woman and white man) without any provocation” (p. 1). King further added that, “it is unfortunate that in today’s society people are still offended by seeing interracial couples. King (2013) went further to add, what is even more unfortunate is when someone’s displeasure escalates into a physical reaction” (p. 1). Hager (2019) “A Cincinnati man who pleaded guilty to spray-painting racist graffiti throughout a rental home owned by an interracial couple was sentenced to prison Wednesday. Samuel Whitt, 43, was sentenced in U.S. District Court to 4-and-a-half years” (p. 1).

Galtung (1969) articulates that, structural violence has the capacity to form and direct violence. Legal bans on interracial marriage, direct violence shows that marriage played a fundamental role in the creation of Jim Crow structures of racism and white supremacy. In the case of interracial marriage, structural violence reveals that public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforced ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of America’s history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness”

and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural violence underlines the social structures and historical roots of inequality and injustice that loom large in American society.

Chapter Two uncovered several dynamics of interracial marriage between black women and white men. The theories also underlined several controversial viewpoints on social inequality, racial stratification, structural violence, ethno-racial hierarchy, and race and racism. The literature generally shows that interracial marriage between black and white has increased since the Supreme Court lifted the marriage ban in 1967. Many academics view the increasing number of interracial marriages as a barometer for race relations. However, marriages between black and white, particularly Black women and White men remain rarer than those that between Hispanic and white or Asians and whites. Perhaps, the stronger racial identities of Blacks, driven by protracted inequality and discrimination along with prolonged white resistance, will slow down the increase in marriages across the black and white division.

Gaps in the Literature

The topic of interracial marriages in United States between Black women and White men has generated diverse arguments, concepts, dynamics, however, gaps exist in the literature. For instance, most of the theories and arguments presented in the literature review predominantly emerged from legal and sociological perspectives. Also, most of the opinions seems to come from Eurocentric perspective, which is one-sided. An Afrocentric perspective would complement and balanced the phenomenon under study and the topic in general. Moreover, most of the literature only looked at this subject from a sociological viewpoint. Even after the groundbreaking case of *Loving v. Virginia* in

1967, which legitimized interracial marriages, most interracial couples encounter or experience violence and hate crime. To bridge the gap, it is important to examine this issue through the prism of the field of conflict resolution, which examines strategies and practices for resolving conflict.

While previous studies have examined interracial marriages in United States, the literature has rarely explored the perceptions of Black women and White men regarding interracial marriages in United States. Conceptually, this study adds to the emerging literature on interracial marriage and how families in this union can find ways in dealing with prejudice, societal rejections, bias, stereotypes, and conflict.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The literature review discusses the main concepts relevant to the topic and set the foundation for the study. Chapter 3 contains an overview of the research purpose and methodologies applied in data collections and data analysis stages. This chapter covers the outline of the philosophical framework for the research, Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research design and rationale, research question, suitability of phenomenology, sample and instrumentation, and quality control.

Overview of Research Methodology

In this study, the researcher picked qualitative approach to explore and understand how the experiences, history, politics, current realities of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. It is argued that qualitative research methods are mainly helpful for exploring the deep meaning of a specific experience and to understanding that people link these experiences to their lives (Creswell, 2005).

Research Design and Rationale

This study used phenomenology as the research methodology to understand how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. The problem statement is positioned on the opinions of race relations in the United States from a subject matter expertise. The problem statement is positioned around the perception and issues around interracial marriage between White men and Black women in the U.S. through detailed examinations of personal lived experience. Based on the lack

of research this area, it is appropriate to formulate a research question to help inquire into the historical, political, legal, and social issues that have impacted interracial marriage in the United States. To understand this topic, it was fitting to ask the following questions:

1. What are the factors controlling interracial marriages that are unacceptable in some societies?

Sub-Questions:

1. What are the perceptions of US population regarding interracial marriages?
2. What are the challenges experienced by interracial couples?
3. What meanings do they find in those experiences?

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, including a naturalistic and interpretive method to its subject matter. In qualitative study, researchers apply a range of methods to advance deep understandings of how people see their lived experiences and in value, how they act within the social world. Several scholars argued that qualitative research methodologies are generally imperative for discerning the meaning that people give to the events they experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Yin, 2009). Also, Patton (2001) asserted that qualitative research examines a “real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (p. 39). Stake (1995) argues that qualitative methodology is essential when the types of research questions involve thorough analysis. Also, qualitative research gives the researcher an across-the-board backdrop to what is going on relative to the subject (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991).

Moreover, Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasized that qualitative research allows the researcher to study experiences, such as feelings, which are hard to reveal or study via quantitative research methods. Qualitative research is also interested in studying ‘what’ ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions, as opposed to ‘how much’ and ‘how many’ preferred by quantitative studies (Finlay, 2011). In total, qualitative research includes the use and collection of a mixture of first-hand experiences—interview, historical, case study, life story, personal experience, observational; that define meanings in individuals’ lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). While quantitative research has strength in providing answers to questions regarding the occurrence of a phenomenon, or the degree to which the phenomenon affects a sample population. However, qualitative research studies provide and understands the meanings people assign to their experiences that quantitative studies cannot provide (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Yin, 2009).

Additionally, qualitative research in general, and phenomenology as the methodology particular, provides flexible and all-around method to understand people’s lived experiences. According to Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009), they argue that IPA is concerned with the detailed analysis of particulars, first providing an in-depth account of each case before moving to look for patternings of convergence and divergence across cases. Creswell (2007) adds that, phenomenology takes a psychological approach in analyzing cases and as well as using various participants who share similar experiences. Furthermore, Eatough & Smith (2017) adds that the IPA aims, and objectives are to grasp the “texture and qualities of an experience as it is lived by an experiencing subject. The primary interest is the person’s experience of the phenomenon and the sense they make of their experience rather than the structure of the phenomenon itself (p. 3). Additionally,

what appeals to researchers in these diverse fields is IPA's explicit commitment to understanding phenomena of interest from a first-person perspective and its belief in the value of subjective knowledge for psychological understanding (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In this way "people form new meanings and new ways to respond and thus are active in shaping their own future through the process of interpreting meaning" (Benzies & Allen, p. 544). The main theoretical underpinnings of IPA are phenomenology, hermeneutics, idiography. These three different approaches are part of a family of phenomenological psychology, all of which are different to some level in their theoretical significance and methodological commitments but are in general agreement about the importance of an experiential perspective for the discipline (Tuffour, 2017).

Appropriateness of Phenomenology

The researcher selected phenomenology as a philosophical approach to explore and understand how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Creswell (2013). IPA helps explore more of the lived experiences of participants because of its extended methodology to acquire more data for analysis. Phenomenology is an approach began by Edmund Husserl and later developed by Martin Heidegger that seeks to study the lived human experiences and the way things are perceived and appear to the consciousness (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Accordingly, phenomenology is the study of experience and how we experience. Its studies structures of conscious experience as experienced from a subjective or first-person point of view (Eatough & Smith (2017; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Phenomenological research has two broad categories: descriptive and hermeneutic. In this study, the researcher chose descriptive phenomenology approach to examine the essence, experiences, history, politics, current realities of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Giorgi (1986) and (2009); Moustakas (1994) have advanced descriptive phenomenology approaches by describing lived experiences through obtaining raw data from research participants. Thus, descriptions of the experiences are anchored rigorously to the data without the influence of any external theory. This approach is based on the philosophy of Husserl's phenomenology which involves the principles of epoché, intentional analysis and eidetic reduction (Shinebourne, 2011; Flowers & Larkin, 2009) Simply put, the researcher implemented a phenomenological attitude and bracket and put aside past knowledge or presuppositions about the phenomenon under study. Given the factors involved in interracial marriages between White men and Black women in the United States, IPA research adds considerable existential significance, it is likely that the participants will link the specific topic to their sense of self/identity. Also, descriptive phenomenological approach will emphasize profoundly on both on the research as well as the research question.

Sample and Instrumentation

The sampling approach to recruiting participants for this study will follow the theoretical account of the epistemology of IPA. Since the main concern of IPA is with a detailed account of individual experience, IPA studies usually benefit from an intensive focus on a small number of participants. Sample size can vary according to the research question and the quality of data obtained (Roulston, 2010; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin,

2009). In the process, “IPA researchers usually try to find a fairly homogeneous sample, for whom the research question will be meaningful. Sampling, therefore, will address the actual phenomena under study (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 48). Smith, Flowers and Larkin, (2009) further postulates that, “Sampling must be theoretically consistent with the qualitative paradigm in general, and with IPA’s orientation in particular”. This means that samples are selected purposively (p. 48).

The researcher used snowball sampling to recruit participants for this study. Snowball sampling refers to a method of selecting participants based on referrals from initially sampled participants to other people believed to have the characteristic of interest (Johnson, 2014). Parker et al. (2019) adds that the researchers usually start with “a small number of initial contacts (seeds), who fit the research criteria and are invited to become participants within the research. The agreeable participants are then asked to recommend other contacts who fit the research criteria.” (p. 3). The participants in the interviews were drawn from a group of people who share characteristic or set of characteristics. That is, participants from this study included Black women and White men interracial couples. Moreover, the problem statement of the research was designed based on the literature review. Moreover, the researcher explained relevant information regarding the main purpose of the study, together with information about herself, with each participant to build the trust and rapport. The researcher also asked each participant if he or she has additional questions and concerns about the background of the study or research techniques.

Potential participants in this study were contacted via phone and e-mail specifying the description of the study and recruit participants who meet the criteria. The interview

sample size was 20 participants between the ages of 21 to 65 year at the time of taking part in the interview. Participants included 10 males and 10 females. The participants came from 9 states (1 from Georgia; 2 from Virginia; 2 from Indiana; 5 from New York; 3 from Tennessee; 2 from Philadelphia; 1 from Washington D.C.; 2 from Baltimore, and 3 from Florida). It is recommended that phenomenological study recruit between 2 to 10 participants to make sure that data collection would yield comparable results and help to corroborate emerging themes and conclusions (Creswell, 1998; Boyd, 2001).

Seventy-two hours before the interview, the researcher sent consent forms to the interviewees describing the type and summary of the study, and the potential risks of participating in the study. Participants were encouraged to ask questions before taking part in the study. And before starting the interview, participants were provided with written consent forms expressing their agreement before taking part in this study. Research participants were additionally asked to verify they are over 21 years of age. Also, participants were informed that if they decided to leave before the end of the study, any data obtained will be kept for 36 months after the conclusion of the study, and then destroyed. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed them following each interview. Interviews were around one 58 minutes to 45 minutes on average. All interviewees in this study voluntarily agreed to interviews about the phenomenon. The inclusion criteria for this study were participants who could speak and write English, Black women married to White men, White men married to Black women, willingness to participate. The only exclusion criterion for the study included participants who do not speak or read English. Interview participants were asked to answer 11 interview

questions about their experiences with interracial marriage. The questions were as follows:

Demographic questions

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your race?
4. What is your occupation?
5. What is your level of education?
6. How long have you been married?

Interview Questions

1. What was your perception of your partner upon first meeting her?
2. How do you believe your first impressions of your partner have impacted the development of your relationship?
3. How do you feel being in an interracial relationship?
4. Do you think people treat your relationship differently due to the fact that your partner is from a different race?
5. In some societies, interracial relationships are viewed as unacceptable—what do you think are the reasons for this? Why?
6. As an interracial couple, have the experiences for the both of you been negative or positive?
7. Do you believe that being in an interracial couple has given you a unique perspective on racial relationships and how people treat those of other races? And why?

8. Have you experienced any race-based prejudice or aggression towards you or your partner?
9. What are some of the stereotypes that have been directed at you or your partner?
10. Do you believe in the notion that Black people with higher education and status tend to marry white women or white men?
11. Is there anything else you would like to offer that I did not ask?

Data Collection Method

The main data collection methods were interview data. IPA research design entails a data collection method, which will invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first person account of their experiences. Smith, Flowers & Larkin, (2009) proposes that, IPA also recognizes that, “A qualitative research interview is often described as a conversation with the purpose. This purpose is informed, implicitly at least, by a research question” (p 56-57). For this study, the researcher used open-ended, in-depth interviews. The interview questions were centered on the lived experience of interracial couples, mainly marriages between White men and Black women in the United States. For the interview portion, the researcher used open-ended, semi-structured interviews, and the interview questions were centered on the lived experience of the phenomenon under study. Munhall (2007) adds that, when using the phenomenological approach during the interviews, the main objective is to gain a greater understanding of the nature or significance of everyday experiences. The interview comprised of 11 questions. The best way to collect data for an IPA study is through semi-structured interview. This form of interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants’ responses and the researcher is able to probe interesting

and important areas which arise (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003; Roulston, 2010). Additionally, Smith and Osborn (2003) argue that semi-structured interview “facilitates rapport/empathy, allows a greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interview to go into novel areas, and it tends to produce richer data” (p. 59). The researcher used follow-up with questions when needed to encourage the participants to elaborate on a response. At the initial stage of this study, the researcher had planned to conduct a face-to-face interview, but due to Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher conducted all her interviews via Zoom video calls. Participants were interviewed individually, and the researcher explained to the participants that it was important for them to offer as thorough an account of their experience associated with interracial marriage.

After the interviews, the researcher obtained a USB drive to store the recordings in a secure cabinet, which the researcher only has access to and transcribed the interviews on a password-protected computer. The researcher informed the participant that three years after the completion of the study, the recordings and interview transcripts will be deleted, and the USB drive will be destroyed. Interviewees’ personal information will be omitted and replaced by an assigned code numbers to safeguard their privacy and safety.

Data Analysis

Data analysis allowed the researcher to explore the concepts in a rich and productive way to express its finding. In this sense, data analysis, in connection to transcription and interpretation of human experiences can be incredibly challenging. As a researcher, the step-by-step approach to data was manageable. Creswell (2013) stated, “The process of analysis is much more. It also involves organizing the data, conducting a

primarily read-through the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them” (Creswell, 2013, p. 179).

After each interview, the researcher transferred the transcripts into a Nvivo for analysis. The researcher applied a robust thematic coding of the interview data. The researcher applied several stages to data analysis. This includes, Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, (2009) six-step approach to data analysis. (I). Reading and re-reading (II). Initial noting (III). Developing emergent themes (IV). Searching for connections across emergent themes (V). Moving to the next case (VI). Looking for patterns across cases (pp. 82-107). These steps helped the researcher with engaging with the transcript in close analysis, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, which included, integrating, isolating, or rejecting themes. This steps also helped the researcher define, name the themes writing the report by using themes extracted from the data (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This step-by-step data analysis method helped the researcher to understand the lived experiences of the participants.

Bracketing

Moreover, given my views on this topic, the researcher applied numerous bracketing and journaling techniques to mitigate my biases. Gearing (2004) described bracketing as “a scientific process in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the phenomenon” (p. 1430). Chan, Fung & Chien (2013) adds that “bracketing is a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate putting aside one’s own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or

what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation” (p. 1).

To also avoid biases, during the data collection stage, the researcher wrote memos and abstract notes that clarified her thoughts and views. Writing down memos and notes following each interview enabled the researcher to deeply engage with data and helped her to document any personal biases about the subject under study. The researcher used bracketing during each interview session and each transcription to expand her understanding and engagement with the participants and the data.

In total, bracketing offers a valuable methodological technique to establish validity in phenomenology. Comprehensive preparation for doing bracketing in the phenomenology research was vital before the data collection and analysis stages; and the researcher put aside her beliefs, values, and experiences to precisely explain the participants life experiences.

Phenomenological Reduction

The data analysis stage will entail coding and categorization of the transcript. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested, qualitative research studies entail a constant collaboration between data collection and data analysis. This includes reducing and organizing significant amounts of collected data to understand their meaning. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, (2009) mention that, IPA provides a flexible background of processes and strategies for analysis. Analysis in IPA is an iterative, multifaceted, and creative process, which involves the researcher’s reflective engagement in a dialogue with a participant’s narrative and meanings.

The categorizing stage included using categorical grouping to create themes and sub-themes. By organizing groups for comparison, the researcher gave each group of words a theme applying Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis program, enabling themes and sub-themes to emerge. Interviewees' personal information were omitted and was replaced by an assigned alphabet letter to safeguard their privacy. Using both computer-assisted data analysis coupled with manual checks improved the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. The findings section showed a detailed report of the coding and theme development.

Quality Control

Researchers are often faced with biases, ethical implications, such as participants' safety, confidentiality, potential benefits, and prejudices; the use of samples and instruments to collect the data, and the designing of questions. During this study, quality control will be important to the research process. Creswell (2009) suggests, "Researchers need to anticipate ethical issues that may arise during their studies" because research "involves collecting data from people, and about people. Protecting research participants, gaining their trust and confidence will 'promote the integrity of research.'" (p. 87). For Berg (2009), and Guillemin and Gillam (2004) they described ethics in research as following procedures of acceptable and unacceptable conduct in research, which comprises of matters of privacy, the safety, and the confidentiality of data.

The researcher upheld participants' rights to confidentiality and privacy and right to be free from physical and mental harm during and after the study. Therefore, during the interview, the researcher summarized the purpose of the study, how she would protect the research participants' anonymity, and what measures would occur to secure interview audio recording when the study is concluded. Research participants were informed that

they had the option of either stop the interview or withdraw from the study. Additionally, throughout the process, participants were given the chance to review the transcribed interview transcripts, with the ability to add to and delete from the transcripts, to guarantee credibility and accuracy.

Another potential limitation included the researcher's own biases on this topic. As a Black woman married to a White man, the researcher is extremely interested in prejudices and biases against interracial couples in the United States. To help with her own biases and other ethical issues related to research, the researcher completed the mandatory Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Ethics Training Program offered through Nova Southeastern University. Also, bracketing helped eliminated any bias inherent in researcher beliefs and attitudes (Creswell, 2009).

In terms of dependability and credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness in research. Further, Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize the close relations between credibility and dependability, claiming that, in practice, a validation of the former goes some distance in certifying the latter. Dependability also refers to the methods of selecting participants and detail the participants' main characteristics so that the transferability of the results to other contexts can be assessed. Moreover, selection of the sample size is essential in safeguarding the credibility of content analysis study (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

Summary and Conclusion

Chapter 3 provided a summary of the methodology applied in the study and shed light on IPA research design, research question, data collection and analysis, and

sampling and ethical issues. The chapter provides a discussion of employing semi-structured interviews, and document review as the main data sources. Chapter Three also provides an explanation of the approach use for the study. The researcher also explained the ethical concerns of the ethics protocol specified by Nova Southeastern University's IRB committee. The researcher addresses specific issues with interviewing, transcribing, and coding and analyzing interview and document data. Also discussed in the chapter were methodological triangulation, ethical issues during the transcribing, coding, and analyses processes. In Chapter Four, the findings of the study are presented.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Discussion of the Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how the unique history, politics, and current realities of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Grasping this phenomenon is particularly imperative because race relations has been, and lingers to be, constructed in the United States, and it affects interracial marriage. Through an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, this dissertation examines some of the lived experiences of interracial couples, historical, political, legal, and social issues that have impacted interracial marriage in the U.S., focusing on Black women and White men marriages. The participants in this study are subject matter experts because they are all in interracial marriages.

Chapter Four covers findings of the research conducted through one-on-one virtual interviews; it also presents participant demographics information. Chapter Four also addresses the following research question and sub-questions:

1. What are the factors guiding interracial marriages that are unacceptable in some societies?

Sub-Questions:

1. What are the perceptions of U.S. population regarding interracial marriages?
2. What are the challenges experienced by interracial marriages between Black women and White men?

These questions, as well as the literature review, facilitated the interview questions.

Interview Data Analysis

The data collected offered the researcher with a comprehensive examination of subject matters. Of the 28 people invited to participate, 20 agreed to take part in this study. Of the 20 interviewees, 10 were black women and 10 were White men. The goal here is to get an even number. Tables 1-3 feature gender and age distributions of participants.

Table 1

Gender of Participants

Range	Frequency	Percent
Male	10	50
Female	10	50
Other	0	0
Total	20	100

Due to the privacy, participants were assigned numbers to shield their identities, however, the numbers have no association to the participants that would make their identity known. The average age for participants in this study is 36.35 years old. Out of the twenty participants interviewed, only 2 were couples. The couples were interviews separately. Sixteen of the other participants (8 Black women and 8 White men were in interracial marriages). The participants came from 9 states (1 from Georgia; 2 from Virginia; 2 from Indiana; 5 from New York; 3 from Tennessee; 2 from Philadelphia; 1 from Washington D.C.; 2 from Baltimore, and 3 from Florida). All the participants met the criteria of this study. The average interview time was 38 minutes.

Table 2*Age Distribution of Black Participants*

Range	Frequency	Percent
18-25 Years old	1	10
26-35 Years old	4	40
36-45 Years old	4	40
46-55 Years old	1	10
56-65 Years old	0	0
66 or older	0	0
Total	10	100

In regards of age breakdown of participants, six categories were created (18-25 years old; 26-35 years old; 36-45 years old; 46-55 years old; 56-65 years old; and 66 and older). For Black women participants, the largest age groups were 26-35 years ($n=4$, 40%); 36-45 years ($n=4$, 40%). The second largest groups were 18-25 years ($n=1$, 10%) and 46-55 ($n=1$, 10%). There were no respondents aged 56 and older. The average age of black participants was 36 years old.

Table 3*Age Distribution of White Participants*

Range	Frequency	Percent
18-25 Years old	1	10
26-35 Years old	4	40
36-45 Years old	3	30
46-55 Years old	2	20
56-65 Years old	0	0
66 or older	0	0
Total	10	100

For White male participants, the largest age group was 26-35 years ($n=4$, 40%); the second largest 36-45 years ($n=3$, 30%); the third largest group was 46-55 ($n=2$, 20%). The fourth largest group was 18-25 years ($n=1$, 10%). There were no respondents aged 56 and older. The average age for white participants was 36.35 years old.

Table 4*Education Level of Black Participants*

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
High School	2	20
Technical/Vocational Training	0	0
Associate Degree	1	10
Bachelor's Degree	4	40
Master's Degree	3	30
Professional Degree	0	0
Doctoral Degree	0	0
Total	10	100

Tables 4-5 highlights level of education for both participants. Of the 10 Black women interviewed, ($n=2$, 20%) had High School certificates; ($n=1$, 10%) holds an Associate degree; ($n=4$, 40%) attained bachelor's degrees. Moreover, ($n=3$, 30%) attained master's degrees. There were no professional and doctoral degrees. For the 10 White men interviewed, ($n=4$, 40%) had High School certificates. Half of the participants, ($n=5$, 50%) had bachelor's degrees.

Table 5*Education Level of White Participants*

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
High School	4	40
Technical/Vocational Training	0	0
Associate Degree	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	5	50
Master's Degree	1	10
Professional Degree	0	0
Doctoral Degree	0	0
Total	10	100

Only one (10%) had a master's degree. No participants had either a professional or doctoral degree. Tables 6-7 shows occupational levels of both participants. For Black women participants, ($n=2$, 20%) are business owners; ($n=1$, 10%) office manager; ($n=2$, 20%) in the health care industry.

Table 6*Occupation of Black Participants*

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Business Owner	2	20
Retail	0	0
Office Manager	1	10
Health Care	2	20
Legal Services	1	10
Service Provider	3	30
Server/Bartender	1	10
Total	10	100

Also, ($n=1$, 10%) in the legal services; ($n=3$, 30%) in service provider space, and ($n=1$, 10%) as a server/bartender. For White men participants, ($n=3$, 30%) are business owners, ($n=2$, 20%) are in the service provider industry, ($n=1$, 10%) retail manager, ($n=1$, 10%) health care provider, ($n=1$, 10%) server/bartender; ($n=1$, 10%) office manager, and ($n=1$, 10%) mechanic.

Table 7*Occupation of White Participants*

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Business Owner	3	30
Retail manager	1	10
Health care	1	10
Server/bartender	1	10
Office manager	1	10
Service provider	2	20
Mechanic	1	10
Total	10	100

The researcher followed Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) recommendations for conducting IPA research, which generated stages of coding that led to the unearthing of emergent and subordinate themes throughout the data. The researcher applied Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) to code the qualitative data collected since that method fits questions connected to participants' experiences or participants' opinions and

perceptions. Interview participants in this study were asked to answer 11 interview questions about their experiences with interracial marriages between Black women and White men in the United States: The questions were as follows:

1. What was your perception of your partner upon first meeting her?
2. How do you believe your first impressions of your partner have impacted the development of your relationship?
3. How do you feel being in an interracial relationship?
4. Do you think people treat your relationship differently due to the fact that your partner is from a different race?
5. In some societies, interracial relationships are viewed as unacceptable—what do you think are the reasons for this? And why?
6. As an interracial couple, have the experiences for the both of you been negative or positive?
7. Do you believe that being in an interracial couple has given you a unique perspective on racial relationships and how people treat those of other races? And why?
8. Have you experienced any race-based prejudice or aggression towards you or your partner?
9. What are some of the stereotypes that have been directed at you or your partner?
10. Do you believe in the notion that Black people with higher education and status tend to marry white women or white men?
11. Is there anything else you would like to offer that I did not ask?

After each interview, the researcher transferred the transcripts into a Nvivo for analysis. The researcher applied a robust thematic coding of the interview data. The data analysis produced six main themes. (I) generational differences, (II) power & status quo, (III) white supremacy, (IV) ignorance and lack of education, (V) cultural experience, and (VI) love matters. It is important to mention that the six themes were treated independently, however, some of the answers to interview questions underscored the relations between the themes and sub-themes. Table 8 displays a summary of the themes and sub-themes obtained from the interview data. Data are presented with research participants' words from interviews. Participants in this study were subject matter experts on interracial marriage and they described their lived experiences from a personal, historical, political, and social issues lenses.

Table 8

Themes and Sub-Themes from Interview Transcript

Themes	Sub-themes
Generational Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Racism by older people ▪ More acceptance from young people ▪ Disapproval from older people ▪ Interracial marriage as a trend ▪ Good old days ▪ Culture and way of life ▪ Older population disapproval ▪ Geographical differences ▪ Rejection from family
Power & status quo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preserved whiteness ▪ Maintain power ▪ Power and control ▪ Jim Crow laws ▪ Keep us down ▪ Fear of losing power ▪ Afraid of diversity ▪ Violent tactics ▪ Sexism ▪ Increased racism

White Supremacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sexual harassments ▪ Violence and hatred ▪ Blacks are inferior ▪ Whites are superior ▪ Jim Crow laws ▪ Keep the white race clean ▪ Keep the white race pure ▪ America is a white country ▪ Segregate blacks and whites ▪ Fear of others ▪ Racism on the rise ▪ Increased bigotry
Ignorance & lack of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Racial slurs ▪ Marrying for money ▪ Wrong perceptions ▪ Stereotypes about black women ▪ Negative stereotyping ▪ Lack of education ▪ Stupidity and ignorance ▪ Uneducated bigots ▪ Sexism ▪ Biases and stereotypes ▪ Double standards
Cultural experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multicultural learning ▪ Multicultural perspective ▪ Learning moment ▪ Better understanding of cultures ▪ Cultural differences ▪ Different cultures ▪ Race relations education ▪ A sense of isolation
Love matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Love has no skin color ▪ Society's view of our relationships ▪ It's our life ▪ Happy together ▪ Love is love ▪ We all bleed red ▪ Same blood ▪ Skin color doesn't matter ▪ Love has no boundaries

Themes were categorized within individual transcripts as well as connected across cases. Additionally, themes were noted as being related to individual cases as well.

Interview Themes

Theme I: Generational Differences

The first theme that came out of this study was generational differences between how young and old people perceived interracial marriage between Black women and White men. From a contextual meaning, generational differences mean differences in preferences, beliefs, values, and opinions between different generations of people. Eighteen out of the twenty participants mentioned generational differences in terms of how people view interracial marriage. There was a common feeling amongst the participants about the generational gap. While some of the dynamic driving generational differences are rooted in the political realm, most of the participants in this study agrees that that the rising racial and ethnic diversity is good for race relations in the United States. Many participants mentioned how their own family members cautioned them about marrying outside of their own race. Participant 1 was outright candid about her family's take on her fiance. She revealed:

I had people in my family tell me to be careful about my fiance. They were not being racist or anything. They just wanted to make sure his family or friends were not racist or will accept me. They are from a different time as racism was often seen. But what I realized is, now the younger people are more approving of interracial marriages or relationships. To some people, it's cool to be in an interracial relationship or they want to have mixed babies. (Age 37)

A similar notion is repeated by Participant 17. He disclosed:

My mother used to tell me that don't ever try to date or be engaged to a black woman because I see that it is a trend now. It is either a black man with a white woman or a black woman with a white man constantly. You can tell she is from an older generation where interracial marriage was shunned on. My mom is not racist, but that idea was programmed on them and that's how it was. She loves my wife...her beliefs system was a societal view of black people. (Age 26)

Both participants 1 and 17 mentioned how their families were careful or disapproved of their partners. The researcher additionally elicited more answers in regard to this point. Participant 1 noted, "they see him as a human being...I think what worries them is the racism I may, or we may encounter. They don't think he is bad person and they actually loved him after meeting and getting to know him." For participant 17, he said:

Actually, thinking about it more, I think lots of people will take that as a racist comment. If a black person had said that, it will be seen as a racist comment.

Honestly, I think it's more of a bias comment than racist. She means well, but her generation is taught to see black people differently and interracial marriage was an outlawed in many states in America. (Age 26)

For Participant 7, she stated, "I was worried about what my immediate family would say. My folks lived through the Jim Crow and racism. I think they were more worried not because he was white, but the racism I may encounter from white people" (Age 34). This, too, was reiterated by Participant 8. She stated:

I had an uncle who was very uncomfortable with it and my mom wasn't too happy about it, but they are not racist. I think it because of the history behind it.

They just wanted me to be safe and not hurt. They are from a different generation. (Age 51).

The researcher further asked Participant 8 what others might perceived about her statement about her uncle and mom “are from a different generation, but they are not racist.” She explained that “they are not discriminating against white people and they don’t believe that blacks are superior to whites or just hate someone based on their skin color. It’s the painful history of how white men treated black women during slavery”

Participant 12 accurately detailed his frustration and racism from his family. He writes:

They often asked if I am doing better with my wife. I think they asked because she is a black woman. They have all the stereotypes about black woman in their minds. They wanted me to marry “Elna” my last girlfriend, she was white. I was never in love with her. I get tired of the comments and criticism from my family. Since after high school, they were never supportive of me. Now it’s time for me to construct my life with whoever I love, and I love my wife. I want them to stop the racist comments and stop ignoring her presence. Sometimes I think they are not racist because they are from a different generation. I didn’t expect that coming from my mom and dad (Age 31).

Participant 13 also explained his frustrations with his family. He argues that:

People who are racist live in outdated societies. We are in 2020 and people still hate based on the color of skin. I get upset sometimes when I see or hear about racism. I understand why black women are uneasy about dating white men. I know people in my family were very uneasy when they found out I was dating a

black girl. I had to put a stop to some of the borderline racist and stereotypes they were saying. I can see why many black people feel about racism. I am hopeful that people around my age will see interracial relations as a bridge. The older people are from a different generation. We are all the same and part of the same humanity (Age 25).

In addition, some of the participants mentioned how the young generation accepts interracial marriage more than the older generation. Participant 20 agrees that “the young generation or millennial are more open to interracial marriage than the older generation. Segregations, Jim Crows are the reasons why, I think” (Age 33). Participant 3 even went further:

The young people treated us as normal as there is no difference between me and my husband as a couple. The new generation is more adaptable than the elderly. The elderly remembered how things used to be back in the days when blacks and whites were segregated. I guess that was the good old days. This is a completely different century... there is nothing they can do about it. We just carry on with our lives (Age 26).

Also, Participant 5 went into great details about the connections between interracial marriage acceptance within geographical locations and generational differences. She elaborates:

It's positive depending on the settings. That can mean a lot...like back in the days, interracial marriage was not very popular in the South. The stares my husband and I get are discomfoting sometimes. I see it here more than other places. We visited California...people don't look, but it's a different look. I can

tell the differences. Some of the looks are hateful looks. But I think now a days, young people accept it more. The older people remembered when they were segregated... that black people were only servants and are supposed to serve the master the white men. Yes, the young generation see it differently, but we have a long way to go. Racism is still alive; it will be difficult process to remove. You will not change people who are racist, that's how they are (Age 45).

Participant 16 argues:

It is not the union, but it is what it represents. Seeing a White man with a Black woman of course for some, it is acceptable and others unacceptable, specifically most of the racist clan and older people. They see it as unacceptable for their culture and way of life, especially in the South. It really is a crazy view. My wife and I noticed it often when we are out and about. When we travel to other places, it's there, but not as bad as here. Racism is still a problem in America, but I think it's more of a problem here in Virginia. People are still stuck in that era. We are just two loving people. (Age 42)

Participant 11 also added:

“we travel to several states and people don't seemed to care. In Tennessee, we get looks of disapproval. We had the same experience in Mississippi while visiting friends. It's definitely an issue here. (Age 39).

Moreover, some participants shed light on the relationship between interracial marriage and structural and systematic racism. For example, Participant 19 “I think for black and white unions, there was more structural racism back then and it was more out

in the open. I think people around my age group are more progressive and less likely to be outwardly racist” (Age 27). Participant 10 adds:

I can think of a few cases where we were probably treated differently by some older individuals... I think older people are inclined to be more against interracial relationship than my generation. It’s systematic racism. They system was created to treat minorities as second-class citizen. That’s my understanding or the reason for different generations in accepting interracial relationships. (Age 32)

Participant 11 noted a similar statement and stated:

I think some people have a problem with it, especially older people. Some have even said that they aren’t racist, but interracial marriage isn’t right. That doesn’t even make sense. They are just trying to hide their racism. Whether they think some races are inferior to others or reject people who look different. (Age 39).

Though, some participants argue that there are generational differences, but they believed that the younger generational perceived interracial marriage as a trend or it’s in style. Participant 4 commented, “The younger people tend to accept it more. It’s a trend or it’s in style, I guess. I hear all the time how mixed-kids are so cute.” But in the South, it was more forbidden than other places” (Age 42). Participant 9 also believes that, “people in my age group or the Gen X and Z whatever its call accepts and take part in interracial relationship more than older people. I think it because of social media and people see mixed babies as cute. (Age 25). For Participant 18, he argues, “I still don’t understand why interracial relationships are viewed as unacceptable. I would say that my children and his generation are more tolerant about interracial marriage than the baby boomer generation and before. Interracial relationships are a trend now” (Age 51).

Participant 14 also agreed that, “today’s generation view interracial marriage with a positive view, which is good. They also see it as cool and trendy... this is due to the social media culture. There is a huge difference in generational thinking about this topic” (Age 43). Again, Participant 19 added, “in my opinion, older people are more against interracial marriage than young people. Times have definitely changed.” (Age 27).

Generational differences elicited different views from the participants. From the viewpoint of participants, the younger generation as most of them called it, are more accepting of interracial marriage or relationships. Most of them alluded to interracial marriage as a trend, whereas the older generation view interracial marriage as a risk to the good old days and status quo. All in all, the participants view interracial marriage as a good thing to increasing ethnic and racial diversity. The next theme broadly looked at power and status quo and its implications to interracial marriage.

Theme II: Power & Status Quo

The second theme in this study is power and status quo. Most of the participants alluded to this theme in different context. Though, the meaning seems to be common amongst participants. Power and status quo simply mean to maintain and preserve the existing values, including political, social, cultural structures. In this framework, it simply means monopolizing power and keeping things the way, they are. Most of the participant spoke from a historical perspective about the systematic segregation and overpowering of minorities, which rooted structural racism. For example, some of the black women participants tended to view opposition to interracial relationships as being rooted in people in power trying to control minorities to preserve their own power. In this way, they seem to emphasize the institutional and structural sources of racism that underly any

opposition to interracial relationships. Thus, the focus is on those who are most influential in society and how they impact all others, instead of the focus being on the individual actors in a society who have conditioned to be racist, perhaps by society or their families. Some of the white men participants, however, tended to view opposition to interracial relationships as rooted in deep racism, fueled by ideas of power, and keeping the status quo. Eighteen out of the twenty participants commented on this theme in different perspectives ranging from the idea of preserving whiteness, maintaining power and control to Jim Crow laws. In her view, Participant 1 grasps it as:

The majority race in any society seeks to preserve its monopoly on power so that they can control minorities. It's been going on for centuries. From slavery, segregation to Jim Crow. The intermixing of races was prohibited because they wanted to keep the white gene pure. This is all because they want to maintain power and the status quo. I've often heard that racism against blacks started with the idea that blacks were inferior. Maybe some people held this view, but I don't think that's where it started. I think it also has to do with white people wanting to maintain power over minorities. (Age 37)

This view is also shared by Participant 9. She observed:

My husband and I had conversations about why so many people are narrow-minded about interracial marriages back in the days and even now. We look at it from different angles, but honest to god, and it's really unfortunate to say this, but some white people are afraid of losing being majority, which takes power from them and undo the status quo. Some of the people who are anti-interracial wanted to control black people from having power. (Age 25)

For Participant 6, she also believed that interracial marriage posed a threat to the power base of white people. She argued:

Well, it's very clear that interracial marriage challenges the status quo and the power base of people who believe blacks are inferior. I say this because look at all the racist things you see today. Some people want to keep America a majority white country. It's a control strategy that is programmed into generations. (Age 40)

Participant 4 view this issue based on structural racism. She argued:

For me, I know I have not experienced racism like my parents and grandparents did. Don't get me wrong, I have seen racism and experienced it. But what my parents and grandparents went through was terrible. People say, its better now, but when is it going to be not okay to be racist? I am tired of seeing black people being killed. People always look at me and my husband differently. I think the people who don't want to see black and white couples are racist. I think some time people are racist because they feel like they are losing control. Black people have been controlled in this country for centuries and its not okay. My husband gets so annoyed by some of his friends because they think they will lose power and control of this country because how this country is getting diverse. (Age 42).

Participant 7 also acknowledged that:

I think we just used to be so segregated and separated that people just thought in terms of people within their groups and out of their groups. It was important for people to only marry within their clans, so to speak. Maybe this is a form of racism, but I think it just started with people wanting their clan members and children to only have relationships with people within their clans. This was especially true for more dominant clans, like bigger and more powerful clans. They didn't want to merge their clans or groups. There are remnants of this kind of thinking in America even today. Looking at this and talking about it makes me think that white people who are oppose to interracial marriage see it as a threat to their status quo and power. (Age 34)

Participant 16 had a similar point of view. He implied:

The history of this country going back to slavery, to segregation to Jim Crow laws.... that's all you need to know about why certain people wanted to keep certain segment of the population under their control. I can go on and on. I was oblivious about these things...but being in an interracial marriage opened my eyes to many prejudices. Recently, I've heard people say this country is changing so fast. Those people are worry about their losing power to minorities. (Age 42)

Participant 14 also critically pointed out the historical and political dynamics of interracial marriage. He stated:

Of course, interracial marriage is seen as a threat to the status quo and the power structure of people who wants to go back to how things were. Look at all the politics that's been going on in the last 4 years. We see people freaking out

because they are worried that white people will be minorities. They see interracial marriage as something of a problem to their power structure. The history of interracial marriage in this country can tell you a whole lot about why white people, mainly white men are against interracial marriage. We should celebrate diversity. That is what makes this country unique. We need to challenge the status quo in terms of equality for all (Age 43).

Participant 15 had the same view but used a different lens to argue his point. He looked at how blacks were sexualized by mainstream America to how the status quo benefitted only certain part of the population. He writes:

For many years, the majority in this country, by that I mean white people gained a tremendous amount of advantage over minorities. But to make it simple, history tells us how black men were portrayed as hypersexual and black women were considered as promiscuous. Lots of black men were lynched for being in a relationship with a white woman or tried talking to a white woman. But slave owners sexually abused their slaves. Our history is laced with lots of hypocrisy. But again, the point I am trying to make is white men want to control black people to continue with the status quo that only benefitted them (Age 50).

Additionally, Participant 12 contended that:

“When we read or hear about major racist events, like black people being targeted by white supremacy groups, that tells us that some people want to keep the white race separate. It all comes down to power and control” (Age 31).

The researcher pressed the Participant 12 to elaborate more: He indicated that, “a fair share of people in this country want to keep power and the status quo. I say mostly

white men. Keeping blacks and whites apart...they think that this country is changing so fast when it comes to diversity” Participant 20 also has a similar line of perspective. He stated, “white people are afraid of the word diversity. When some of them hear that, they think of losing control of their power and way of life” (Age 33). Participant 8 had the same line of argument. She suggested, “diversity is a dirty word, and before, interracial marriage was viewed as promoting diversity.” (Age 51).

Participant 3 believed that:

They want to keep us down making us feel that we are not a perfect union. They think that if we get into relationships and have children then somehow, we are being empowered or are equals, while they want us to remain in line and fulfill roles, they have assigned for us. That is sexism, but as a Black woman, I have seen it play out a lot. (Age 26)

Participant 11 simply believed that, “it’s all about politics to maintain power over the minorities” (Age 39). The researcher asked the participant what he meant by “maintain power over the minorities”, the participant explained that:

White people want to maintain majority to control political power. Whoever has the power, has the means. I believe that’s why interracial marriage was opposed by many and even interracial relationships are popular, but some people are still opposed to it. For some, it’s probably just out of hate or against their values. Some people used religion as a reason for their opposition, but that is the most ridiculous argument. We are all children of God. I think there is a big fear factor here.

Further, Participant 8 adds:

Whether they think some races are inferior to others or are just been conditioned to reject people who do not look like them, when they oppose our relationship on those grounds, they are racist and want to keep their majority and control us.

There's no getting around it. As an educated Black woman, I don't let that bother me, you cannot convince everyone, especially people who are downright racist.

(Age 51)

Participant 19 also believed that the political structures this country are meant to keep minorities below. He suggested:

I have read quite bit on the history of interracial marriage well before I met my wife. I think I know more about this topic than my wife. The people who are opposed to interracial relationships are not only discriminating, but they are going against love. When two people fall in love, there is nothing people can do to stop them. Like the Loving case in the 50's in Virginia. I think they set an example. I think most white people are fear of losing the majority. Look at the people who support the president (Age 27).

Couple of the white male participants advocated for equality by changing the status quo. Participant 17 observed:

The white people are mostly empowered, comparing to access of being interracial couple; fundamental change may occur. Even though I am white, however, status quo will certainly be an imbalanced status quo. Most white people are comfortable the status quo impounded in them manipulating the race under no circumstances., but the status quo needs to be changed for equality. (Age 26)

Participant 13 commented:

Status quo will be the perfect solution for other race to gain power other than the whites. Racism is extreme having to combine or even link it to power and status quo, it is unimaginable. The White people 'white people which I am' already have the power so to change the flow of the white privilege. It will probably be the residual that will be left. I am an adult matured white man, and I have seen and observed a lot, but there is still enough inconsistency or inequality. (Age 25)

Participant 10 raised an important difference between a Black man marriage to White woman than White man married to a Black woman. She observed:

Society has normalized white men relationships to black women than black men relationships to white women. I say this as a matter of fact or as an example. My husband and I even see the differences. Black men with white women tend to get more hatred and disapproval than white men with black women. Look at the history behind the differences. This is the power of white men. (Age 32)

Participant 2 also had a similar belief. She noted, "There is a double standard in interracial marriage. White men can easily date and marry black women without and societal issues. On the other side, black men with white women are viewed otherwise" (Age 28). Further, participant 2 detailed another double standard coming from her family, which she argued was sexist. She commented:

Some people have a problem with us being in this relationship. There are a few members of my family who originally disapproved very strongly. They hated the idea of me being with a white guy. But they view relationships and marriages as the man being dominant over the woman. So, they think the white guy managed

to dominate me and it wasn't like that at all. The thing is, they are also fine with my brother having a white girlfriend. It's unfair that they think like that, but to them it's good when black guys manage to get white girls rather than white guys getting black girls. It's sexist more than racist maybe, but definitely race plays a part (Age 28).

In a similar argument, Participant 15 raised the same double standards within interracial marriage. He believed that "a white man can easily date a black women and most white people won't see that as an issue as supposed to a black man dating white woman. That show the power and privilege white man has. It's hypocritical." (Age 50)

One common premise that surfaced often was the fact that most white people in this country wants to keep power and control minorities. The demographic shift is a threat to the status quo and their power base of some white people, but mainly white men. A common view that was also brought up was that some white people are opposed to interracial marriage or relationships because they want to preserve the white race and fear of losing power due to the increasing diversity. This perception is in fact in line with white supremacy belief system. The next theme addresses this.

Theme III: White Supremacy

The third theme in this study is White Supremacy. From a historical standpoint, white supremacy centers around the believe that white people are genetically and culturally superior and should have dominance over other races. Also, this ideology believes that, white people should live by themselves in a white only-society. And the white race is in danger of extinction due to immigration and rising number of minorities. Nineteen out of the twenty participants alluded to white supremacy in a distinctive basis,

either in opposition or reference to interracial marriage. Some of the views in this section, brought up the historical context of white supremacy and Jim Crow laws. Participant 6 commented:

For many years, Black people were told that White people are better than us, they tell us that we are not as smart as white people. They tell us that whites are the superior race. They don't want to mix the white race with any other. That's why White people are worried about interracial marriages and mixed kids. They think interracial marriage will produce more minorities. The more I think about the history of this country and what is currently going on with Trump and his supporters, I definitely think American was founded on white supremacy and we see that a lot today. This is nothing but racism. (Age 40).

Participant 11 also pointed to this notion by stating that:

The idea that white people are superior to black people is ridiculous. This whole idea is based on controlling and having power over black people... it's white supremacy to the core. I think that's maybe one reason some of them are opposing interracial relationships. (Age 39)

Participant 1 used white supremacy ideology to argue against interracial marriage, which she believes increased diversity. She argued that the demographic changes of this country are a threat to the tenants of white supremacy. She added, "This country is changing, and some white people want to slow it down and interracial marriage is seen as increasing the number of minorities. Look at what Trump says" (Age 37). The researcher further inquired more from participant 1 about what diversity has to do with interracial marriage and white supremacy. She implied, "I mean they think that mixing races will

make white people inferior. They want to keep the white gene pure. They don't want blacks and whites to be married because that will bring in more minorities.”

Participant 16 had this to say. He asserted:

Being a white man and married to a black woman has shown me a lot of racism and white privilege. I have always seen racism, but recently, white supremacy has surfaced a lot in our country. I believed most whites are uncomfortable about the way the country is turning into in terms of diversity because some of them see this country as a white country. That is the reason Trump became president. He spoke to their emotions, their fears and feelings. Some whites think that they are losing their culture. And the people who believe in white supremacy of hate it when they see black and whites in relationships. It's pretty sad the way people think about others that don't look like them” (Age 42).

Participant 12 used the same line of argument by implying that:

As a white man, I see many people argue about how this country is changing. They are in fear of the unknown. We see lots of it in our current affairs. White people are afraid of the changes and that's why some are against interracial relationships. Some feel like they need to keep the white culture. Look at Trump's supporters. They believe in these kinds of ideologies. (Age 31)

Participant 17 indicated:

After work I stopped at a bar just for one drink and while I was there, I overheard a few guys having a conversation saying that “we are enraged white men; white people should remain purely white with no mixture and therefore we are fighting in keeping the white supremacy intact.” Mostly the ones that are involved, are

racist to the core and it is threatening. There is not anything new that will surpass racism. They are in fear of being the minority. (Age 26).

Participant 15 also stated:

I tell people the way it is. Racist people are tired of other cultures or other races just the “White Power” White and all White nonsense. I tell people my wife is a beautiful black woman and as you see I am white and there will be a time racism will end and white people will be the minority. People don’t like to hear that. The racist ones believed that this country should remain a white country, others don’t like the idea of diversity and black and white relationships. (Age 50)

Participant 19 also mentioned the same perspective. He suggested, “I believe some white people, but mainly white men don’t like the way things are changing and they want to maintain the status quo. This is why we see overt racism all over the country” (Age 27). Furthermore, participant 19 mentioned that:

People who opposed to interracial marriage believe in the idea that America is a white country, and they don’t understand or don’t want to accept the fact whites will be minorities in 10 or 20 years. This diversity of this county doesn’t sit well with them. People are openly being racist. (Age 27)

This seems to be a common thought process amongst participants. The idea that America is a white country was refuted by couple of the participants. Again, Participant 6 added, “this country is not a white country. It belongs to the native Americans. This idea is based on racist ideas and white supremacy mainly” (Age 40). Participant 8 argued, “now we see all the racist people out supporting Trump and his racist ideas. White people are terrified of the changes in the country. They are terrified losing power to minorities.

But this country belongs to all of us.” (Age 51). Participant 17 also added, “This country is majority white, but it’s not a white country, if we want to go by history, Native Americans are the owners. Racist people don’t like to hear that. They avoid the truth about our country. (Age 26). Participant 20, contented that:

I had to tell several of my friends and even some family members that America is not a white country and was never a white country. Their history is twisted and based on white supremacy ideas. And I don’t think they even realized what they’re saying is based on white supremacy ideas. Is the same idea that believes that black people are inferior. We try to avoid these kinds of nonsense. It is Jim Crow laws mentality. We have been programmed to believed that white people are superior to other races. The systems were created to favor white people. There is a systematic problem of racism in America. (Age 33)

Participant 5 drew a connection between white supremacy, religious beliefs and the hypocrisy within the connections. She implied:

The idea that black people or people of color are inferior, and the opposition of intermixing of blacks and whites all points to white supremacy ideas. I hear all the time people say, this country is a white and Christian country. How can you be Christian and hate at the same time? That’s the hypocrisy that gets me. What kind of Christian are they? Being Christian means you accept people. Love one another. No, this country belongs to the Native Americans and we should teach the real history of this country. (Age 45)

Participant 2 had this view:

But I guess thinking back to the history of this country, a lot of people seemed to think interracial relationships would lead to inferior children. They want to keep the white race pure. Pure from what? Some of the people who believe in this BS called themselves Christians. White supremacy ideas are opposite of what God stands for. We are all equal. Idiotic idea now, but that's just what they thought. This idea is white supremacy beliefs. We made a point to avoid these types of conversation with family and friends (Age 28)

Participant 13 had this thought, but he believes that:

Most Americans are themselves not racists, I know history reveals a lot of things that occurred between blacks and the whites but that was a while ago, we no longer live in the 1800's or 1900's and that was outrageous in those days. We made progress with Obama and other things, but we see lots of white supremacy ideas come to light. People being racist and hateful for no reason. I do believe that people who have this idea that blacks and whites shouldn't be together have lots of other motives. They want to keep the white race pure as they called it. They are uncomfortable with being the minority someday. They want this country to stay mostly for white. That's why some people are against interracial marriage...and they want to keep the white race pure. These are terrible ideas, but people believe in them. (Age 25)

Participant 18 had this to say:

I will not mince my words. It's really miserable seeing white supremacy plays out around the country, especially with the current administration. For a while, I

thought America is changing for better when it comes to race relations, but after Trump got into office, we see people celebrating white supremacist and violence.” We see interracial couples getting attacked. Violence and hatred all over the place. It’s depressing and we try our best to stay positive and avoid instances like these. People with racist ideas are made to believe that the white race is superior. Laws were made to support this idea and the systems upheld this belief. This is why we have systematic or institutional racism. (Age 51)

Participant 7 added:

I have always connected racism to white supremacy. I have studied the history of racism and how it affected people of color economically, politically and socially. Racism is ingrained in America’s political, social and economic systems. It was designed that way to favor white people over other races. A good example of this is Donald Trump. He understood the system and he has used it to gain support from all kinds of people. Trump has supported and promoted white supremacy openly. America made progress with President Obama, but I think Obama scared some white people about the direction of America. Some white people are in fear of how the country is changing. That’s why when Trump came into office, we see how people were comfortable with racism and white privilege. I really don’t understand why people would be opposed to when two people are in love. It’s the fear in them. ...nothing but pure racism. (Age 34)

Participant 9 believe that, “Racist ideologies can be learned and adopted. The idea that white people are superior, and they are under threat tells you how they want to keep power. It saddens me to hear this idea.” (Age 25). Additionally, Participant 20 suggested,

“people with these kinds of belief systems ought to seek help from God. White people are not superior to any race. We are all equal.” (Age 33). In addition to this perspective, Participant 14 emphasized, “no marriage or relationship should face racism, bigotry and hatred. Racist people who are against interracial relationships, I think still believed in segregation of races. Their mindsets are based on white supremacy and fear” (Age 43).

Participant 10 also believed that:

People who are anti interracial marriage either black or white people are in fear of something they cannot control. Some of them are racist and some are just uninformed. Once in a while, I hear people bring religion in opposition of interracial marriage because of keeping the white race pure and clean. I laugh sometimes, but this idea is based on white supremacy. (Age 32)

Participant 4 argued:

Racism and bigotry can be unlearned. America is not a white country; it is a country of immigrant. People who hate interracial relationships because it will bring more of diversity or want to keep the white race pure needs to go back to school. I know we need to have these sorts of discussion as groups, individually and nationally, but we have avoided to talk about the past because its uncomfortable to many people (Age 42).

This theme centers around or originated from the struggle to deny equal rights to African Americans. White supremacy beliefs and ideas are centered on the idea that white people and culture are superior to others. From the perspective of the participant in this study, the current political climate has emboldened people to be openly racist,

especially when the president says and supports. Some of the participants see these standpoints as ignorance and lack of education. The next theme will focus on this.

Theme IV: Ignorance and lack of Education

The fourth theme underlines what many of the participants see as ignorance and lack of education, which greatly contributes to some of the current realities of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White. Several of the participants tied racism to ignorance and lack of education. To define Ignorance and lack of Education from the perspective of participants in this study; it simply means, the inability to understand or lack of knowledge of the history of racism, bigotry and so on. The ignorance and lack of education creates stereotypical views, which most of the participants extensively discussed. Nineteen of the participants discussed ignorance and lack of education around interracial marriage.

For example, Participant 2 revealed, “we are living in a world full of ignorant people and their ignorance will never change because they’re racist and stupid. Looking at us as a couple should matter, not the skin color, but as a loving couple. (Age 28). Participant 12 agreed. He argued, “those people are ignorant bigots. They have the wrong perception about interracial marriage. We need to re-educate people about racism. I get it, some people will not change the way they see us. It’s either stereotyping or being racist.” (Age 31). Participant 1 added this view:

It’s just ignorance. Its people living in their own little bubbles and treating people who are different than them poorly.... that says a lot about them and how they think. Its 2020 and people still have these kinds of hatred. But now we see all

kinds of people coming out in the open and hating people that don't look like them. It's racism, ignorance and lack of education. People say dumb stuff about black and white marriage. I don't have time to teach everyone (Age 37).

Participant 4 stated, "there is a lot of reasons why people hate interracial marriage. Racism, ignorance, raised with the wrong philosophy, bad religious beliefs. I don't know, but I don't pay attention to these people. They are ignorant and stupid." (Age 42). Participant 15 agrees, "there is persistent racism and people being uncomfortable with those who are not like them. I can always tell how people look at us...hateful stares sometimes...it's just bunch of stupid people. They are clueless and ignorant" (Age 50). Participant 7 noted a similar statement and stated, "there's no explanation other than just bigotry and people being stuck in their ways and blocked somebody else's path. Other people may not understand it, but that's the ignorance in them" (Age 34). Participant 8 added this account:

My husband told me that when we first met that there will be time that you will be discussed it with humanity, and he says don't worry that society has enough room to carry confusions and disappointments. They will find a reason to hate someone who isn't like them. People in this country are ignorant of history. I am old enough to know what it is like to be discriminated based on your race. (Age 51).

Participant 10 argued, "our relationship is based on the love we have for each other, and we don't care what people think outside our circle. Why would I entertain ignorance and stupidity? It's annoying, but it's the education system." (Age 32).

Moreover, several of the participants mentioned the stereotypes around their marriage, which are based on ignorance and lack of education. Participant 11 asserted:

That's just insane now. There's no reason this should be happening. I guess it's just racism. Some people are racist, and some people are raised racist. But there's no excuse. I know people with over conservative parents and who were taught to hate people who aren't just like them, but that's ridiculous. Stereotypes like you married a gold digger. It's too much to mention. Definitely ignorance and racist beliefs. I bet I won't get these stereotypes if I married a white woman. My wife actually is well educated. She has a great job. These racial stereotypes are based on ignorance. Sometimes my wife and I feel obligated to teach people, but it's too much work. (Age 39).

Such accounts reflect Participant 13 views. He stated:

Ignorance and lack of education has a lot to do with racism we see today in this country. But we shouldn't give that as an excuse. I see people who are very educated and are very racist. People think that my wife is married to me because I am rich. She is after my money. I am not rich, and she is not after my money. Racism and these stereotypes are learned, but we can teach people to accept others. (Age 25)

Participant 9 recalled an episode where a white woman walked towards her and her husband and said:

He is too white; he needs to tone down a little bit" can you imagine? This is a different kind of stereotype; you are too white. I think the point here is that he is too white to be walking around with a black woman. Like they say, you can't fix ugly, but you can't fix stupid (Age 25).

Participant 20 also mentioned:

I've definitely seen a lot more of it since I've been in an interracial relation. The stereotypes are sometimes stupid and funny. But that shows the lack of education and ignorance in this country. Nobody seems to care that we are together as couple, all people see is black and white. We are a couple. (Age 33).

Participant 19 also mentioned the stereotypes he gets from people about his wife, which he thinks, "are stupid and ignorant. People assume that I couldn't get a white girl and they usually asked where I got my wife from. Did you find your wife from Africa on a Safari?" (Age 27). Again Participant, 1 noted the same view. She writes, "ignorance is bliss" People have this idea that my husband married me from Africa." (Age 37).

Participant 2 added, "the looks we get are sometime disgusting looks. Someone before asked my husband whether I was entertaining him. My husband told me about it later and was pretty upset. These are stereotypes interracial couple deals with." (Age 28). Again, Participant 6 mentioned that, "when a black woman is seen with a white man, people immediately think of so many stereotypes." (Age 40). Participant 4 further stated, "there are so many sexism and double standards. All the stereotypes are directed towards me. Just because I am a black woman. My husband never got any stereotypes about our relationships." (Age 42)

Participant 18 also alluded to the constant stupid questions he hears from friends. He stated:

People assumed that black women are aggressive, strong and loud. My wife is none of that, but she's a very strong woman and I love her for that. We taught our children about the stereotypes they will face; it's unfortunate, but we live in a

country full of ignorant people. The stereotypes are kind of racist if you asked me. Even educated people make these kinds of bullshit. One time a lady from a grocery store thought that my wife was from Africa. (Age 51)

Participant 16 gave a similar account. He asserted:

There needs to be a lot of learning and teaching about racism in this country. We have come a long way, but we are dealing with increase racism. Hate and violence around race relations. So many ignorance and stereotypes around interracial marriage. People always asked about my wife. Is she aggressive? Couple of my friends and family asked whether she was a gold digger. What they don't know is my wife is educated and makes more money than me. These stereotypes are programmed in mainstream culture. (Age 42)

Participant 3 commented on the aggression that was directed at her husband. She indicated that:

I have had several encounters with people that reverted to racist slurs including with aggression. When we were dating, my husband was called an n-word lover by a white man. The racism was directed towards me, but he was on the receiving end of it...People assuming ignorance and stupidity mainly. The negative stereotypes are worst. Lack of education is the problem for all these hates. (Age 26).

In addition, participant 6 argued that, "I don't understand why people are hateful. Interracial marriage should have been accepted centuries ago...its people that are in love, all people see is color of our skins. (Age 40). Participant 14 shared his view by stating that:

I don't understand this concept, that individuals are deliberately ignored reality, unaware of important information or facts linking to interracial relationships. Ignorance is part of the culture that is being unwind because people still do not see what attributes to diversity. It's all black and white that people see. So many uneducated bigots. The stares and looks my wife and I get are sometime aggressive and hateful (Age 43).

Participant 5 also implied:

We still live in a world where people judge us based on our skin color and this sometimes comes from black people also, but the majority of the bizarre questions comes from white people. People often ask, can you tell me how you feel about your relationship with a white man? My response often is you should try it sometimes it is a great relationship. That is just ignorance in any shape and form. (Age 45)

These accounts demonstrate a rich and diverse perspective of the participants. Ignorance and lack of education was perceived as a problem, though, some of the issues within this theme is connected to racism. The views from this theme showed, for the most part the stereotypes, the double standards within interracial marriage. Participants referred to their cultural experience, which helped most of them navigate the stereotypes and lack of education from people around and society in general.

Theme V: Cultural Experience

The sixth theme in this study recognized the significance of cultural experience that many of the participants are exposed to. From the perspective of participants, cultural experience is defined as the ability to experience the shared values

and practices that influences views. It is an active learning process of resolving differences. Most of the participants indicated that there are different cultural values between Black and White families; this, has helped the participants to understand each other from different cultural lenses. Being in an interracial relationship, the participants often expressed an appreciation for being able to learn more about and experience, the unique cultural values of their partners. Overall, twenty of the participants alluded to cultural differences. For example, Participant 1 stated:

In general, I think our relationship have been positive. We have some differences culturally, which I believe contribute significantly to our relationship. I make very different food than he does. I have certain tastes and preferences that he does not share. While we share many cultural similarities, there are enough differences for many of our experiences to be uniquely interesting. The interracial status of our relationship likely contributes to these experiences; so, I believe we certainly gain net positives because of this... I think this is what I was getting at. I think we have unique experiences and areas of cultural distinction. I think being in an interracial relationship can help people understand the differences in how people of different races are treated. For example, my husband may express an opinion on someone, and I may have a very different opinion, based on my experiences with that person. When we see that person together, one of our opinions may change. They may act differently in front of both of us. These may be partially explained by our racial differences, but also by our status as an interracial couple. This is the positive thing, the cultural differences make us appreciate each other, but we still have people who hates us for being in an interracial relationship. (Age 37)

Likewise, Participant 2 stated:

I feel like I'm part of my husband's family now. I get to learn about the ways that they do things and how they are different than the ways my family does things. Our families are similar economically, but there are still these cultural differences. I think I've learned a lot about their heritage and culture and stuff. My husband has probably learned a lot more. He's really come to appreciate a more multicultural perspective and I love him more for his openness. We see things from different cultural backgrounds. (Age 28)

This account demonstrates how the participant strongly appreciated the unique cultural values of the family of her partner. Similarly, Participant 3 stated:

I've learned a lot more about how people in interracial relationships are treated. I've also learned a lot about other cultures, and I guess the white culture, I'm not sure. What I'm trying to say is that I had this idea about what the sort of typical life of a white family would be like, based on the sort of mainstream culture in society. On the outside, that's how they look too, but when you become part of the family, you find the nuances. You find that they are actually all unique. My husband's mom's side of the family is very different from his dad's side. They are like opposites almost, culturally and socially. Yet, they are all white. I've always thought that black people were assumed by white people to be all the same. But the same seems true of me with white people. I kind of assumed they shared certain cultural and social qualities, but they don't. I've learned a lot from this relationship about race and culture. (Age 26)

The theme follows among most of the Black women participants. As such, Participant 6 stated:

I think I have a better understanding of more people now. I always thought everything in the world was done in one way. What I mean is that it always seemed like people had roughly the same values and means of accomplishing things. I knew some people were privileged and had major advantages over others, but I never thought the values were fundamentally different. We all want to live in big houses with shiny things. In reality, many of the things that I grew up valuing in my family were not valued by my husband or his family. Music. I love music. My family loves music. We always play music to pass the time, when cooking, and pretty much anything else. But in this family, they don't really listen to music, ever. So, there's this fundamental difference in what we value. It's obviously not a deal breaker, but it is interesting. Certain things that I have taken for granted, simply aren't true of all people. I have learned a lot from my husband and his family. He has learned about issues that affects black people in general. He understood the privilege he has as a white man. But he gets how I see things. (Age 40)

Participant 8 identified that:

Being in an interracial marriage has opened my eyes to many things. It has been positive, but no relationship is perfect. My husband has learned more about the black culture than I have learned about his culture. Growing up, all I hear and see was everything white dominated. My husband was surprised about all the stereotypes about black people and our culture. He's come to accept more of the

black culture than his own because our kids are black. I think that's the reason.

(Age 51)

However, there are also indications that this theme carries over to the White men participants as well. For example, Participant 12 indicated:

I also think I've learned a lot from her family, and she has learned a lot from mine. There are big cultural differences. I didn't know if there would be, especially given our community, but there really is. I've learned to embrace their culture and my wife has embraced my culture. The weird thing is that I never really viewed my family as having a culture. But I guess we do. Learning and just experiencing the different cultures has been great for us. But I'll say that the black culture has more meaning to me than the white culture. (Age 31)

Similarly, Participant 16 stated:

This is my first interracial relationship and I think I've learned a lot. Getting to know her family has opened my eyes. Learning about their hardships and experiences has shown me a lot about what others go through. I have also been introduced to new food, music, new games and phrases. They have unique religious ideas and perspectives too. It's been amazing. They've been completely open to me and I'm eternally grateful. I really think black culture is what America is about. Many people won't agree with that, but without black culture, there's no America. The culture is so rich. Today I understood a lot and see things differently being with a black woman. I called multicultural learning. I think we need this in our schools. (Age 42)

Participant 14 mentioned:

I believe interacting with many different groups is great. This relationship has helped me see things from the perspective of others if that makes sense. I see our relationship as a pathway to open doors for others who are afraid of bringing their relationship to the full view of society or they feel isolated. One of the beauties is our cultural differences; it has taught us to view problems from two or more views. I have a better understanding about how my wife's opinion on race relations (Age 43)

This experience was also shared by participants 19. He explained:

While we share some cultural similarities, there are enough differences for many of our experiences to be uniquely interesting. The interracial status of our relationship likely contributes to these experiences, so I believe we certainly gain a net positive because of this. I've learned quite a bit to understand how most Blacks feel. The covert racism, institutional racism and so on. The cultural experience has been really helpful too.... you can call it multicultural perspective. I really appreciate her culture. (Age 27).

Three additional participants gave similar accounts Participant 5 adds:

I've also learned a lot about other cultures, and I guess the white culture, I'm not sure. What I'm trying to say is that I had this idea about what the sort of typical life of a white family would be like, based on the sort of mainstream culture in society. Our cultural differences help us understand each other. My husband always listened to what I had to say when it comes to race issues. Because our

kids will one day face discrimination based on their race. We called it our multicultural (Age 45)

Participant 17 has this to say:

I have learned about black culture and history and stuff. She has a lot of smart friends who are very active in the community. We should celebrate black people and culture...they have contributed a lot in this country. I see things in a different light now. When it comes to black and white issues, I always listened to what she has to say. Mostly, she was teaching me about the do's and don'ts. This marriage has offered me a different worldview. I definitely appreciate her culture and the way she thinks. She has as well. (Age 26)

Participant 11 detailed:

I've been integrated into groups and communities with people of different races, I definitely believe that my perspective has opened up. I can understand the experiences of different people much better now. My relationship has probably contributed to this as well. I understand and see things differently. Our kids are black, so it's important that I put away my white privilege and see things in a differently way. My appreciation for black culture and its contribution to the American experience has also grown. (Age 39)

Moreover, Participant 20 also asserted, "I get to understand someone of a different race politically and socially. She has opened up to me about so much. I also think that interracial relation is a window to see things differently (Age 33). Participant 10 echoed the same concept. She stated, "Perhaps my view is completely different. My husband was definitely shocked about our culture. He has developed a better

understanding of how people perceive race and how black and white people see issues differently” (Age 32). Participant 9 also alluded the same views about her husband’s experience. She adds, “my husband appreciates how I view things, especially race issues. He understands black culture, the struggles, and the stereotypes black people face daily. We had several learning moments. He listened and learn about my struggles with racism.” (Age 25). Participant 13 also indicated that, “my wife and I had a learning moment here and there. She was my teacher...I listened and asked questions. Someday, we plan on having children and I want to be able to be prepared to teach them too.” (Age 25).

Participant 4 also mentioned how his husband transitioned in their marriage. She commented:

There is a lot of misunderstanding out there about black culture and racism. My husband couldn’t understand what it's like to experience racism and stereotypes. He sees the covert racism now. I’m not going to spend my time trying to educate people about who Black people are, our culture, racism and stereotypes. I didn’t want to waste my time and energy teaching white people about racism or dealing with offensive BS from others. After a while, he gets the stares and the racism. I guess he couldn’t believe what black people had to go through every day. He learned my culture, why I do certain things. How he sees racism is now different...before he gets mad at why someone would be racist. My husband has learned a lot about these issues. (Age 42)

Participant 15 mentioned:

At the end of the day, I am married to her culture and she is married to my culture. Both of us had to learn about our traditions and values. I did most of the learning. My wife knew a lot of the white culture and traditions. It's surprisingly how many of the things people talk about black culture is based on stereotypes. (Age 50).

Participant 7 claimed, "at the beginning, it was hard because of the differences, but we learned about each other's culture and values. I also gain some understandings. His opinions on things have changed because now he checks his white privilege." (Age 34). Participant 18 had the same perspective. He argued:

As a privileged White man, I came to the realization that, my understanding of black culture was based on mainstream views. Lots of the stereotypes people had about black people are dead wrong. Black culture is diverse and very rich. I had to learn because I respect and love my wife. (Age 51)

Participant 17 also mentioned his white privilege and how he was oblivious about many things. He stated, "as a white man, I took lots of things for granted. Being in this relationship has opened my world views on many issues that affects people of color." (Age 26). Participant 12 also indicated, "my privilege as white man gave me various things that other people don't have. One of the things I appreciate about my wife is the cultural experience I am exposed to. It definitely opens up my world view." (Age 31).

Many of the participants, both Black women and White men, acknowledged the cultural differences and the importance of becoming partially integrated into their partner's culture. Also, they often expressed an appreciation for being able to learn more

about and experience the unique cultural values of their partners. Interracial marriage accorded some of the participant a different view, they see the world very differently and their love for their partners. The next theme focuses on the love that participants share with each other, which helps grow together.

Theme VI: Love Matters

The last theme in this study acknowledged the love that all the participants have for their spouses. With all the political and social challenges that affects interracial marriage, the participants in this study shared the bond that keep them going and strong. To the participants, love means the deep connection and commitment they have for their spouses regardless of who they are. These appears to be a general frustration amongst the participants about the significance of their union in the eye of the public. Almost 54 years since the *Loving v. Virginia* case, many participants want to see interracial marriage as equal to other marriages.

Above all, eighteen out of the twenty participants alluded to the importance of love. For instance, Participant 12 “our relationship is based on the love we have for each other, and we don’t care what people think outside our circle.” (Age 31). Likewise, Participant 16 stated the same view. He argued, “we want equality for all. It doesn’t matter if she was yellow or green, what should matter is love. Isn’t that the reason people get married?” (Age 42). For Participant 7, she also mentioned, “we get stares, judgements, and bad looks from strangers all the time. We find it funny sometimes. But that’s Society’s view of our relationship. Our love is stronger than their bad looks and hate.” (Age 34).

Furthermore, Participant 11 revealed:

My love for my wife is based on who she is, not her skin color. She is black and I'm white, but our bloods are red. This whole thing about race is absurd. It's all politics. Love has no skin color. It's been more than 50 years since the Supreme Court decided on the Mildred and Richard Loving case, but we still face bigotry and harassments. We are very aware of the challenges we face daily as a couple, but we manage to overcome them with our love for one another. Society's view of or relation is not going to change, racist people will not change. We often avoid racist people or areas that are toxic. (Age 39)

Participant 5 shared the same point of view. She added:

I do appreciate our relationship, because love is implanted everywhere within the relationship where the roots are so deep. I understand that, I am married to white man but tried to stay away from the racist system completely. It is not easy task because sometimes we challenge ourselves in weighing the relationship. There is nothing wrong with the relationship and we love and care for one another. Skin color doesn't matter. If people disapproved our relationship, that's their business. (Age 45).

Similarly, Participant 1 reflected the same view:

I just think that people are insecure if they worry too much about interracial marriage or relationships. What should matter is love. As long as people are in love, then to me, it's not their business. Love has no skin color. The stares don't bother us anymore. My husband has noticed it more than me lately. I don't pay attention to people with their comments or looking at us. (Age 37)

For Participant 6, she too argued:

Being from different race isn't a problem, the people who questioned our union are awkward. Love has no boundaries, and no one can fight love. Love will win at the end. My husband and I tell our children about the challenges they will face being mixed. We show them how we love each other and how they should appreciate other. This is the lesson every parent should teach their children. We are all human beings and have the same blood color. (Age 40).

Participant 3 added:

Race is a problem to many people. They see your color first before they see the human in you. We have a special and a strong bond. Society's perception or any label cannot break that. We love each other. My husband is who I go to sleep with at the end of the night, and he is the only one that matters when it comes to how he sees me. (Age 26).

Several of the participants referenced our collective humanity. Participant 15 stressed:

Our skin color seems to be an issue to many, but we love who we are. We share the same values, it took a while to get there, but it was done because we love each other. And that's what matters to us. Love always wins. Just like Milred Loving and Richard Loving, they fought and won. Because of them, interracial marriage is possible across the country. As human beings, we all came from god and have the same red blood running in us regardless of our race, gender and sex, we all have red blood. (Age 50)

Participant 9 also mentioned:

We deal with bigots every day. Some are in the open and some are covert, but at the end of the day, our love for each other will prevail. People are so preoccupied with things that are meaningless, like our skin color. It is a problem, but we don't dwell on it. To us, we love each other and our family. At the end of the day, we all bleed red (Age 25).

Participant 19 emphasized:

The black and white thing is irritating, we are all just human with different skin color. I have to remind people that, we may be different, but we all have red blood. I really don't know when racism will end, people just have to appreciate others just like you appreciate yourself. What really matters to me and my wife is our love for each other. (Age 27)

Participant 2 detailed:

The problem here in the United States is that's the population see the skin color of human beings more than anything else. Yes, racism is all over the world, but I feel like it's a big problem in this country based on the history of slavery and segregation. What people forget is we all have the same blood regardless of your race. (Age 28).

Moreover, some of the participant cited how the media portrayed interracial couples in loving manner, which they perceive as painting a positive light on interracial marriages. Participant 13 mentioned:

Lately we have seen interracial couples everywhere even on television commercials. It shows them in a loving way. Thinking people are different than

them and are in love with each other. It is different because you have two different races joined together to create one. I love my wife and my wife loves me and it is vice versa and that is it of course. Love stands no matter what. We are happy together (Age 25).

Participant 10 added:

In today's America, we see mixed couples on TV in a positive way. TV commercials of black and white couples in love. Black and white families in love. We are just like human being holding the relationship and that's all.... just like any other relationship whether it's an interracial relationship or any other relationship, they are all the same, just a couple of people loving one another (Age 32).

Participant 8 cited, "we see people in the media that are well-known with partners that are from different races really in love. It kind of changes people's outlook about interracial marriages...in a positive way. All I care is the love we have." (Age 51).

Participant 3 added, "interracial marriage is becoming more accepted because of the media and it's viewed as cool. It is trending and shows a positive image of interracial couples." (Age 26). Several of the participant commented on public perceptions, which brings them closer together. Participant 17 implied:

My wife's first and everybody else behind her. And everybody knows that. I don't deal with stupidity, if you have something to say just come out and say it. All the hate from people who are against interracial marriages makes us stronger and have each other's back. (Age 26)

Participant 14 stated, “every time we are out in public, strangers look at us like something is wrong. We know what they are looking at. It makes us stronger. It’s gets old, but I love my wife.” (Age 43). Participant 4 also revealed, “I don’t get it. I had people who are closed to me made comments about our race. It’s sad that people don’t see love. All they see is black and white.” (Age 42).

This theme explained the challenges participants face from society about their relationship with their partners. Most of the participant cited their love for each other regardless of their respective races.

Summary of Chapter

Chapter 4 presented demographic information of the 20 participants and findings of the study. All the participants described individual lived experiences of unique history, politics, social and current realities of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. The participants collectively shared common perspectives of interracial marriage between Black women and White men. The findings of this study revealed the negative societal perceptions about interracial relationships. The findings generated six themes, which, in essence answered the research questions and purpose of the study.

Participants were very honest with sharing their lived experiences, feelings, challenges, anxieties about interracial marriage. The researcher used Nvivo for data analysis. The researcher applied a robust thematic coding of the interview data. The data analysis produced six main themes. (I) generational differences, (II) power & status quo, (III) white supremacy, (IV) ignorance and lack of education, (V) cultural experience, and (VI) love matters. Analysis of data in this section revealed that while there are

improvements in race relations in the United States, nonetheless, some strict societal lines have been drawn that still divide American society by race. In chapter 5, the results are widely discussed, connected to the literature and the theory. Moreover, a conflict resolution framework, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research will be presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Grasping this phenomenon is particularly imperative because race relations has been, and lingers to be, constructed in the United States, and it affects interracial marriage. This study bridged a gap in the literature by focusing on interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Previous studies looked at more of interracial marriages between Black men and White women, White men, and Asian women. This study also used conflict resolution approaches and analytical theories to expand research into and knowledge of circumstances of participants lived experiences, the stigmas, challenges, stereotypes, faced by interracial couples, particularly Black women married to White men.

Furthermore, this study added to the field of conflict resolution by examining the lived experiences of interracial marriages between Black women and White men, which has the potential to help people understand race relations, avoid biases; design and manage conflicts from stemming racism. The findings of the study answered the following research questions:

- 1 What are the factors guiding interracial marriages that are unacceptable in some societies?

Sub-Questions:

1. What are the perceptions of U.S. population regarding interracial marriages?
2. What are the challenges experienced by interracial marriages between Black women and White men?

These questions, as well as the literature review, facilitated the interview questions. In this study, Nvivo was used to conduct thematic analysis of the data collected. After each interview, the researcher placed transcripts into Microsoft Word documents and thoroughly re-read the transcripts line-by-line to make sure that they are detailed and correct. Nvivo was useful because it helped with organizing the data, transferring the interview transcripts from Microsoft Word to Microsoft Excel. The interview schedule asked open-ended questions about racism and prejudice to draw experiences concerning negative reactions to their interracial relationship. The 20 participants were also asked regarding negative effects and experiences from an interracial marriage.

The researcher applied several stages to data analysis. This includes, Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, (2009) six-step approach to data analysis. (I). Reading and re-reading (II). Initial noting (III). Developing emergent themes (IV). Searching for connections across emergent themes (V). Moving to the next case (VI). Looking for patterns across cases (pp. 82-107). These steps helped the researcher with engaging with the transcript in close analysis, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, which included, integrating, isolating, or rejecting themes. This steps also helped the researcher define, name the themes writing the report by using themes extracted from the data (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This step-by-step data analysis method helped the researcher to understand the lived experiences of the participants.

The researcher conducted descriptive coding on the 20 transcripts based on the preliminary themes. During the coding procedure, themes were developed and combined into clusters. Also, the researcher used bracketing prior each interview session and each

transcription to expand her understanding of the data. Each theme was reviewed for credibility and uniqueness. At the data analysis produced six main themes from the 59 sub-themes. Table 8 gives a detailed description of the themes and sub-themes. (I) generational differences, (II) power & status quo, (III) white supremacy, (IV) ignorance and lack of education, (V) cultural experience, and (VI) love matters. It is important to mention that the six themes were treated independently, however, some of the answers to interview questions underscored the relations between the themes and sub-themes.

Discussions and Interpretations of Findings

The data shows that Black woman married to White men often suffer more societal rejections and stereotypes than their husbands. The data also shows that power, prejudice, privilege, fear, and ignorance are the driving forces of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men in the United States. As mentioned in chapter 1, there is a major shift in America towards how people perceived interracial marriage. The shift is due in part to change of opinions and favorable view of interracial marriage. In a study conducted by Djamba, & Kimuna (2014) about how family members of black and white perceived interracial marriage. Their results show that more than half (54%) of Black Americans are in favor of their close relative marrying a White person compared with nearly one-in-four (26%) White Americans who said they were in favor of their close relative marrying a Black person. Such results suggest that questions about how individuals feel when close relatives engage into Black-White marriage (p. 528).

Littlejohn, J. R. & Schlitz, H. T. (2020) writes:

As one of the fastest growing demographics in the country, mixed Americans are broadening the discourse on race, identity, and the American experience. Harris's intersectionality—as a woman of mixed race and culture, in a mixed-raced, blended marriage—signals something important to us today: That Black people are a growing part of a larger community; interconnected to broader cultures, religions and ideas that will shape this country for generations to come. (p. 8)

Even with the rise in interracial marriages across the United States, interracial couple face mountains of social and political challenges from their friends, family and society in general. The six themes explain these challenges in detail.

For generational differences, this theme explains the differences between the younger and the older generations, it also addressed how different regions in the United States perceived interracial marriage in general. In one study, the author argued that the younger generation are by far the most diverse generation when associated to older generations (Frey, 2015). Moreover, Frey (2018) adds, “this generation is set to serve as a social, economic, and political bridge to chronologically successive (and increasingly) racially diverse generations” (p. 1). Participant 16 believed that, “I think the younger people are around people with different race today than before. That makes a big difference in how they see interracial relationships” (Age 42). As America becomes more diverse, younger people are becoming progressively multiracial in their identities and affections. Participant 7 also agreed. She commented: “There are many more interracial couples today than they were a decade ago. The increased diversity, the media, all gives interracial relationships a favorable view from young people” (Age 40). Participant 19

gave a detailed description why younger generation tend to accept interracial relationship/marriages than older people. He writes:

I think people around my age group are more progressive and less likely to be outwardly racist. There are many reasons to these changes of view on interracial relationships. I think the more people are educated the likely there are to accept interracial relationship. The rise in social media use by young people. All these influences young people to see interracial marriage in a good way. You know the older generation, some of them are not racist, it's just how things were in their times. Interracial marriage was a taboo to many people in America. America is getting more diverse, which is very important for equality (Age 27).

In a study done by Pew Research Center, Parker, K., Graf, N., Igielnik, R. (2019)

When it comes to views on race, the two younger generations are more likely than older generations to say that blacks are treated less fairly than whites in the United States today. And they are much more likely than their elders to approve of NFL players kneeling during the national anthem as a sign of protest. The younger generations are also more accepting of some of the ways in which American society is changing. Majorities among Gen Z and the Millennial generation say increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the U.S. is a good thing for society, while older generations are less convinced of this. And they're more likely to have a positive view of interracial and same-sex marriage than their older counterparts. (p. 2)

In addition, some of the participants mentioned regional perceptions about interracial marriage. Participant 5 added, "it's positive depending on the settings. That

can mean a lot...like back in the days, interracial marriage was not very popular in the South” (Age 45). Participant 16 also mentioned, “they see it as unacceptable for their culture and way of life, especially in the South. It really is a crazy view (Age 42). This view is supported by Gullickson (2006). He writes, “When disaggregated by region, the results suggest a process of “latent” racism in the non-South, and one of unequal gender suppression in the South” (P. 289). Similarly, Chalabi, (2018) writes, “there’s huge geographic variation in where intermarriage happens; it’s more common in metropolitan areas than rural places (18% compared to 11%).” (p. 1). Baars (2009) also argues, “this geographic variance is reflective of regional differences in attitudes and norms. Research done in the 1980’s found a 25 percentage-point difference in opinion between those in the South and those in other regions (p. 224). Additionally, in their study, Bell and Hastings (2011) explain how their participants perceived regional differences. They argued:

Elizabeth, the Black partner in her marriage, offered similar sentiments about not anticipating racism because of her geographical location, “I don’t know if you have ever researched places to live, or diverse places to live. But Austin [Texas] is pretty diverse. I think this conversation would be a little bit different if we lived in a larger city that was more socially, economically polarizing” (p. 250).

Moreover, Bell and Hastings (2011) add, “Interviewees also explained that they encountered stares and comments less in certain parts of the country than in others. For example, Kendra explained the difference between living in central Michigan from her current home in Los Angeles” (p. 250). Participant 11 agreed with these views. He added, “we travel to several states and people don’t seemed to care. In Tennessee, we get looks

of disapproval. We had the same experience in Mississippi while visiting friends.” (Age 39). Participant 16 further added:

My wife and I noticed it often when we are out and about. When we travel to other places, it’s there, but not as bad as here. Racism is still a problem in America, but I think it’s more of a problem here in Virginia. People are still stuck in that era. We are just two loving people. (Age 42)

Gullickson (2006) details the discrepancies between the south and north in terms of interracial marriage. He argues, “Because of the smaller size of the black population in the non-South, blacks in this region should have higher outmarriage ratios for basic compositional reasons... black outmarriage ratios have been higher in the non-South throughout this period” (p. 302-303). The differences between the two regions are likely the effects of Jim Crow and segregation. The participants from states that are considered the south agreed with these assessments. Most of them pointed out to the challenges they faced compare to the participant from other states.

The Jim Crow laws in the south was long-drawn-out to avert any contact between Blacks and whites. Its political implication has some key aspects of keeping the status quo and power amongst white people. Oh (2018) “thus, during Jim Crow, because whites justified their superior position in the racial hierarchy based on their whiteness, they strictly enforced racial endogamy to preserve whiteness and required whites to marry only other whites” (p. 2766). As Ray and Aja (2020) suggests “the architecture of American racism is not an unfortunate accident: It was created intentionally to acquire and keep power” (p. 3). Rosado (1996) suggest that “at the heart of racism (as well as sexism) lies the concept of group competition—the quest for power (p. 6). The black

women participants tended to view opposition to interracial relationships as being rooted in people in power trying to control minorities to preserve their own power. For example, participant 4, maintained that, “there is so much racism...but it is about power and control” (Age 42). Participant 1 contended, ‘the intermixing of races was prohibited because they wanted to keep the white gene pure. This is all because they want to maintain power and the status quo (Age 37). Maintain Power and status quo was keeping and preserving the existing values, including political, social, cultural structures. As some scholars framed it as controlling power and keeping things the way things has always been done (Rollock, 2006; Grimes, 2002; Ansley, 1989). It is important to mention that keeping power and maintaining the status quo involves controlling the political and economic systems. Rosado (1996) “When you have control of the socioeconomic and political system, you will use this power to retain your privileges when you see these being eroded” (p. 11).

Participant 6 believed that maintaining power and status quo basically posed a threat to the power base of people who wants to maintain how things are done. She argued “this is all about politics to maintain power over the minorities. It’s a control strategy that is programmed into generations” (Age 40). Obasogie (2017) used the *Loving v. Virginia* case of 1967 to paint a picture of preserving power. He argued:

The Supreme Court, in *Loving*, euphemistically referred to the time when these laws were passed as a “period of extreme nativism which followed the end of the First World War.” Tied closely to this nativism was the eugenic rearticulation of old entrenched biases that were not only skeptical of foreigners, but deeply

invested in controlling reproduction as a means of preserving power for a particular slice of White America. (p. 3)

Participant 16 added, “certain people wanted to keep certain segment of the population under their control” (Age 42). Robin (2018) revealed that there is an implicit understanding to safeguard White privilege and advantage amongst white people, though, some participants argued that the status quo is plagued by institutional racism and needs to be challenged. Participant 14 asserted, “we should celebrate diversity. That is what makes this country unique. We need to challenge the status quo in terms of equality for all...there are so many institutional racisms in this country (Age 43). Participant 18 also cited the deep-rooted structural racism in America. He mentioned, “the systems are built for white people and the elites to hold on to power and maintain the status quo. I am glad the BLM movement is challenging racist system. It’s about time (Age 51).

In this way, some participants seem to emphasize the institutional and structural sources of racism that underly any opposition to interracial relationships. Thus, the focus is on those who are most influential in society and how they impact all others, instead of the focus being on the individual actors in a society who have conditioned to be racist perhaps by society or their families. The white men participants, however, tended to view opposition to interracial relationships as rooted in deep racism, fueled by ideas of white supremacy and superiority over other.

Moreover, White supremacy theme stimulated a wide series of topics that the participants had discussed. White supremacy and power and status quo themes are quite interconnected in that they share some similar characteristics. Liu (2017) defined white supremacy as a system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and significant

resources, and in which white supremacy and non-white inferiority persists across political, economic, social, and cultural settings. (Robin, 2018) argued, white supremacy defines the decision-making process and who exerts power in the country's political, economic, social, and cultural settings with white people mostly indisposed to even recognize the continuation of these power undercurrents (Robin, 2018). Interracial marriage was viewed as a threat to safeguarding the white race. Vena-Nelson (2017) writes, "the foundation of post-Civil War white supremacy rested firmly upon opposition to miscegenation" (p. 2).

The study participants cited many features of white supremacy. For example, the argument that mixing black and white would produce inferior children; and whites are superior to any other races are key component of white supremacy. Cashing (2017) eloquently theorize that in United States "one drop of nonwhite blood" warranted alienation from citizenship. This structure was put in place to divide whites and minorities. Further, Cashing (2017) argued, in the Supreme Court case of Dred Scott in 1857, Chief Justice Roger Taney wrote, "in a civilized portion of the white race, black people were altogether unfit to associate with the white race. He cited the many laws prohibiting intermarriage" (p. 74). The idea that white people are superior to black people was academically advanced in the early 19th century. Shotwell (2019) confirms that, "dihybrid cross, was employed to support claims of the racial superiority of whites over blacks and to provide a "scientific" rationale for laws prohibiting interracial marriages" (p. 3). Several books and articles on race and genetics, posit that people of color are both inferior to Whites and the intermixing of black and whites produce children of lower intelligence; and will lower the White race (Popenoe, & Johnson, 1918; Davenport,

1917). This point of views was discussed by the participants in this study. Participant 6 remarked:

Black people were told that White people are better than us, they tell us that we are not as smart as white people. They tell us that whites are the superior race. They don't want to mix the white race with any other. That's why White people are worried about interracial marriages and mixed kids. They think interracial marriage will produce more minorities (Age 40).

To many people, especially people who prescribe to white supremacy, this view is true to them and is used to oppressed people of color. Participant 17 also suggested, "for many years, black Americans were told that they are inferior, which is based on white supremacy ideology. This is a biased ideology, not based on science" (Age 26). In last three decades or so, these notions are refuted by other scholars, but some people continue to argue that Blacks are genetically inferior to Whites. Participant 5 stated:

White supremacy is very toxic. Look at the people who supports Trump. People still believe in that thinking. They think they are the perfect gene and are superior to any other races. The people who wrote these ideas were racist and the views are Eurocentric. With Trump in office, we have seen people with these beliefs. The belief that other immigrants from African and brown countries should not come to the United States. They want to keep America white. (Age 45)

Participant 6 commented: For many years, Black people were told that White people are better than us, they tell us that we are not as smart as white people. They tell us that whites are the superior race. They don't want to mix the white race with any other.

That is why White people are worried about interracial marriages and mixed kids. They think interracial marriage will produce more minorities (Age 40).

In his book, *White man falling: Race, gender, and white supremacy*, Ferber (1999) studies white supremacists' strong conviction that white men are falling victims and the implications of their efforts to declare white male power. This belief was supported by Participant 19. He argued, "I believe some white people, but mainly white men don't like the way things are changing" (Age 27).

In some corners, White supremacy and religion were intertwined. Religion was often used to shun interracial marriage Perry, et al. (2021). "that the convergence of religious and national identities serves to reinforce in-group boundaries, thereby fortifying notions of white purity, and consequently, strengthening whites' discomfort with potential race-mixing in marriage" (p. 759). Participant 5 agreed, "I hear all the time people say, this country is a white and Christian country. How can you be Christian and hate at the same time? That's the hypocrisy that gets me. What kind of Christian are they? Being Christian means you accept people" (Age 45). Participant 2 also commented "some of the people who believe in this BS called themselves Christians. White supremacy ideas are opposite of what God stands for. We are all equal" (Age 28). Power and status quo and white supremacy are interconnected. White supremacy culture dictates that power is limited and that very few (whites) should be involved in decision-making and the desire to maintain power and the status quo.

By the accounts of many of this study participants, they believed that ignorance and lack of education greatly contributes to some of the current realities of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial

marriage between Black women and White. And interracial relationships can stimulate all kinds of strong and differing sentiments. When some people see a Black and White couple, they don't see two people, they see a forecast of their own racial mythologies, uncertainties and imaginations (Blake 2021). This view was widely mentioned amongst the participants. Ignorance and lack of education, for instance, was quoted by participant as leading people to hold stereotypes against interracial couples. One of the common stereotypes that was discussed is what Childs (2005) asserts, "When Black women are discussed in these studies of interracial couples, they are often depicted as angry and opposed to interracial relationships" (p. 546). To answer this belief, Blake (2021) believe that "many Black women have traditionally shunned White men for a variety of reasons. Some say they can't be with a White man because he wouldn't understand what it's like to experience racism (p. 6). Participant 9 see it as, "the Black women I know are not opposed to dating or marrying white men, I think most white men don't understand racism" (Age 25). Participant 4 also revealed "there is a lot of misunderstanding out there about black culture and racism. My husband couldn't understand what it's like to experience racism and stereotypes" (Age 42).

In addition to this, most of the Black women participants mentioned the constant stereotypes. Flores (2020) in her study found that "women in interracial relationships continue to feel public animosity in the form of negative stereotypes" (p. 272).

Participant 16 mentioned, "So many ignorance and stereotypes around interracial marriage. People always asked about my wife. Is she aggressive? (Age 42). Participant 18 stated, "people assumed that black women are aggressive, strong and loud. My wife is

none of that, but she's a very strong woman and I love her for that" (Age 51). Participant 12 detailed his frustration with his family. He claimed:

They often asked if I am doing better with my wife. I think they asked because she is a black woman. They have all the stereotypes about black woman in their minds. They wanted me to marry "Elna" my last girlfriend, she was white (Age 31).

Stereotypes about black women comprise of lack of moral values, are less physically beautiful and less feminine than other women; and are loud and aggressive (Weitz and Gordon 1993, Flores, 2020). Blake (2021) believes, "this country's history, though, is filled with examples of how people have allowed skin color to blind them to other people's humanity" (p. 15). To many of the participants, the stereotypes are socially constructed because of mainstream beliefs. Rosado (1996) agreed that stereotypes are "generalizations are maintained because they are a shared belief receiving strong support from one's reference groups" (p. 2).

Another important thing that emerged from this theme is that some of the black women participants take on the role as teachers. Blake (2021) adds some "Black women reduce their reluctance to dating White men to one thought – it's too much work. For example, they don't want to expend energy teaching White men about racism or dealing with derogatory comments from friends, family and others" (p. 7). Participant 1 mentioned, "it's racism, ignorance and lack of education. People say dumb stuff about black and white marriage. I don't have time to teach everyone (Age 37). Flores (2020) added, "when women date men outside their race, negative stereotypes are activated, especially among older white men" (p. 270). Participant 11 contended:

Stereotypes like you married a gold digger. It's too much to mention. Definitely ignorance and racist beliefs. I bet I won't get these stereotypes if I married a white woman. My wife actually is well educated. She has a great job. These racial stereotypes are based on ignorance. Sometimes my wife and I feel obligated to teach people, but it's too much work (Age 39).

In their study, Bell, and Hastings (2011) mentioned some of the challenges faced by interracial couples. They argue:

The two types of face threats interviewees commonly described were stares and unkind comments. Stares were the most commonly cited face threat. While friends' stares and comments occasionally were noted, interviewees more commonly described face threatening stares and comments from strangers in public (p. 247).

This view is shared by Participant 15. He revealed "I can always tell how people look at us...hateful stares sometimes...it's just bunch of stupid people. They are clueless and ignorant. We do our very best to avoid people like that." (Age 50). Participant 14 added, "it's all black and white that people see. So many uneducated bigots. The stares and looks my wife and I get are sometime aggressive and hateful" (Age 43). Participant 6 also gave an example. She disclosed, "we get stares all the time. They are hateful and disgusting stares. There is a big difference between when someone admires or hate. It's easy to see the differences (Age 40). Some of these stereotypes partly stemmed from lack of education. But most of the participants agreed that interracial marriage is seen as a vehicle to drive diversity, increase understanding of race issues and cultural learning.

In terms of learning experiences, this theme highlighted learning experience as beneficial to interracial marriage. Participants in this study overwhelmingly agreed that with their cultural differences, they were able to learn their partner's culture. Though, majority of white male participants spend more time learning about black culture or the cultural differences than their black women counterparts. This view is highlighted in Bell & Hastings (2011). They argued:

Each interviewee was specifically asked about her or his knowledge of their partner's culture and whether there was a need to educate the partner about her or his own culture. Although none of the interviewees mentioned Whiteness Theory, their responses were consistent with the premise that Whiteness becomes the assumption and the system of normalcy. Our data suggest that Black interviewees felt fairly confident in their knowledge of their partner's culture. Examples of White participants teaching their partner about White culture included fairly small examples, such as explaining a "White" TV show or explaining why the family celebrates St. Patrick's Day. For many couples in this study the White partner had to learn quite a bit about the experiences and perspective of Blacks. Nikole described teaching her White boyfriend saying, "I have to educate him about how my parents are, how he should act in front of my parents, and how he should not act. If we are out with my friends, what he should and should not say. He cannot correct them [Black people] in public" (p. 248).

This view is shared by many of the participants. Participant 2 mentioned, "at the beginning, we went through a list of things that are NO's the sensitive things that will provoke black people" (Age 28). Participant 9 also alluded to the same view. She

indicated, “my husband knew a lot about Black history, the do’s and don’ts, but I was very clear about certain things. I think most black people are used to the white culture, so, he had to learned” (Age 25). Likewise, participants 17 offered the same argument. He agreed, “I see things in a different light now. When it comes to black and white issues, I always listened to what she has to say. Mostly, she was teaching me about the do’s and don’ts (Age 26). Participant 9 also shared the same experience. She adds, “my husband appreciates how I view things, especially race issues. He understands black culture, the struggles, and the stereotypes. We had several learning moments. He listened and learned about my struggles with racism” (Age 25). Foeman & Nance, (1999) discusses how interracial couple navigate the interpersonal and cultural experiences. They believed that:

As any two individuals become acquainted, they must become familiar with the similarities and differences between them and develop a shared belief that a relationship is possible. For same-group couples, growing awareness may require a subtle process of learning individual patterns and idiosyncrasies and making intentions known. To the extent that a couple does not share similar group membership (i.e., religious, socioeconomic, political), the process may be more tentative, even grinding. When the couple is of different races, differences are immediately obvious. Interracial couples that survive likely learn in this early stage to develop an awareness of at least four concurrently operating sets of perspectives: (a) their own, (b) their partner’s, (c) their collective racial groups, and (d) their partner’s racial groups. (p. 549).

It is suggested by some scholars that interracial marriage or relationship bridge the gap for social change and helps enhanced race relations. It also creates an avenue

where cultures are valued, preserved and a better understanding of each other's culture. (Yancey, G. & George, 2004; Yancey, 2007). The rise in interracial marriage seem to be a gauge of a transformation in intergroup relations.

The last theme, which most of the participants believed should be key determining factor in their relationships. For the participants, it is love that binds them despite all the societal struggles they encounter. *Loving v. Virginia* case fought against overwhelming discrimination, intimidation, and prejudice encountered by interracial couples Obasogie (2017) emphasized, "understanding *Loving v. Virginia* from this perspective highlights exactly why it is important, 50 years later, to recognize the Court's decision in ways that go beyond affirming that love knows no racial boundaries." (p. 6). This view is shared some of the study participants. Participant 1 added "what should matter is love. As long as people are in love, then to me, it's not their business. Love has no skin color (Age 37). Participant 6 also argued, "love has no boundaries, and no one can fight love. Love will win at the end. (Age 40). Participant 15 stressed, "we love each other. And that's what matters to us. Love always wins. Just like Mildred Loving and Richard Loving, they fought and won. Because of them, interracial marriage is possible across the country" (Age 50). Likewise, Participant 11 revealed:

It's all politics. Love has no skin color. It's been more than 50 years since the Supreme Court decided on the Mildred and Richard Loving case, but we still face bigotry and harassments. We are very aware of the challenges we face daily as a couple, but we manage to overcome them with our love for one another (Age 39).

In one of her interviews, former Senator from California and now Vice President Kamala Harris also had to defend her marriage to her husband, Douglas Emhoff by

stating “Look, I love my husband, and he happened to be the one that I chose to marry, because I love him—and that was that moment in time, and that’s it. And he loves me” (Blake (202, p. 3). Also, some of the participants cited how the media paints a positive and loving picture of interracial couples. Kennedy (2002) stressed:

There are other signs that black-white romance has become more widely accepted; indeed, it is quite fashionable in some contexts. One is advertising. When advertisers addressing general audiences use romance to deliver their messages, they most often depict couples of the same race. But now at least occasionally one sees interracial couples deployed as enticements to shop at Diesel or Club Monaco, or to buy furniture from Ikea, jeans from Guess, sweaters from Tommy Hilfiger, cologne from Calvin Klein, or water from Perrier (p. 6).

Participant 8 mentioned, “we see people in the media that are well-known with partners that are from different races really in love. It kind of changes people’s outlook about interracial marriages...in a positive way” (Age 51). Participant 3 added, “interracial marriage is becoming more accepted because of the media and it’s viewed as cool.” (Age 26). As diversity seems to be increasing on television, positive portrayals of interracial relationships have followed the same path (Graves et al., 2017). Even with the rise of interracial marriage and relationships across the country, many of the research participants expressed their daily challenges they face from society. Their challenges and struggles continue to be relevant to contemporary discussions on interracial intimacy.

Connection to Literature Review

While interracial marriage and relationships in the United States have been a passionately discussed subject, most of the current research mainly focused on interracial marriage between Black men married to White women. Interracial marriage between

Black women and White men hardly offers across the board study of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the unique history, social, political, economic, and cultural significances of interracial marriage and relationships are significant reminder of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men in the United States. In modern American society, black and white couples are regularly proclaimed as a symbol that racial difficulties have diminished, and intersection of racial boundaries is no longer outlawed (Foeman & Nance 1999; Kennedy, 2003; Yancey & George, 2004; Yancey, 2007; Childs, 2008; Bell & Hastings, 2011; Obasogie, 2017). Although, this may be factual in some respects, but interracial couples across the country continue to face marginalization, stereotypes, violence, and prejudice.

The findings from this study substantiated scholarly findings on interracial marriage between Black women and White men. The result from this study highlighted that Black woman married to White men often suffer more societal rejections than their spouses. Much of the studies and theories on interracial marriage was conducted during the 1960s and 1970s. The studies and theories on this phenomenon were infused with stereotypes of interracial marriage at that time. Many of these studies and theories have neither been reexamined nor questioned since then (Foeman & Nance, 1999). For example, Flores (2021) argues that women in interracial relationship endure more public animosity in the form of negative stereotypes than their male counterparts. She further argues that “the activation of these stereotypes has a reputational cost that could negatively affect women’s experiences in the romantic market as well as in other life domains” (p. 270). The participants from this study supported this view. Participant 6

mentioned that, “when a black woman is seen with a white man, people immediately think of so many stereotypes.” (Age 40). Participant 4 stated, “All the stereotypes are directed towards me. Just because I am a black woman. My husband never got any stereotypes about our relationships” (Age 42). There is definite double standard in terms of the stereotypes, which affects black women’s experiences.

About black and white acceptance of interracial marriage, Kennedy (2002) argued, “the great but altogether predictable irony is that just as white opposition to white-black intimacy finally lessened, during the last third of the twentieth century, black opposition became vocal and aggressive” (p. 2). Kennedy’s (2002) notion about black opposition to interracial marriage became “vocal and aggressive” is somewhat factual; though, white participants spoke about their acceptance of interracial relationships, discrimination, and racism to a degree, it was the black participants who detailed systematic racism and history of mistrust as one the reasons for Black women reluctant to be intimately involved with white men. For example, Participant 7, she revealed, “I was worried about what my immediate family would say. My folks lived through the Jim Crow and racism. I think they were more worried not because he was white, but the racism I may encounter from white people” (Age 34). Participant 8 echoed this by stating that:

I had an uncle who was very uncomfortable with it and my mom wasn’t too happy about it, but they are not racist. I think it because of the history behind it... the painful history of how white men treated black women during slavery (Age 51).

Participant 1 was outright candid about her family's take on her fiancé. She revealed, "I had people in my family tell me to be careful about my fiancé. They were not being racist or anything. They just wanted to make sure his family or friends were not racist or will accept me" (Age 37). Also, some of the white participants acknowledged some reservation from their families, but those reservations were laced with stereotypes.

Participant 17. He disclosed:

My mother used to tell me that don't ever try to date or be engaged to a black woman... you can tell she is from an older generation where interracial marriage was shunned on. My mom is not racist, but that idea was programmed on them and that's how it was. She loves my wife...her beliefs system was a societal view of black people (Age 26).

Participant 12 accurately detailed his frustration and racism from his family. He writes, "they have all the stereotypes about black woman in their minds. They wanted me to marry "Elna" my last girlfriend, she was white" (Age 31). Participant 13 also added frustration:

I get upset sometimes when I see or hear about racism. I understand why black women are uneasy about dating white men. I know people in my family were very uneasy when they found out I was dating a black girl. I had to put a stop to some of the borderline racist and stereotypes they were saying (Age 25).

There are obviously differences in how Black women accept interracial marriage as supposed to White male participants. Childs (2005) agreed with the data from this study. She argued, "Black women's opposition to interracial dating is not simply rooted in jealousy and anger toward white women but is based on white racism" (p. 544). Moran

(2001) and Baars (2009) added that another big dynamic in the low rates of interracial relationship between blacks and whites is basically the historical relationship between Blacks and Whites. As a result, the relations between Black and Whites is much different than the relationships between Whites and other minorities. Considering this argument, the literature on interracial marriage confirmed what some of the participant mentioned. This section categorizes several of the themes and explains their different dynamics in areas touched by implicit bias and explicit bias and how people are inclined to hold biases that are favorable to the group that they belong to. For example, in generational differences, power & status quo, white supremacy, ignorance and lack of education; all these themes touched on the conscious and unconscious biases and stereotypes participants faced. In some of the interviews, both black and white participants mentioned instances where their friends or family members made conscious and unconscious remarks regarding their relationship. Several academic work over the decades have paid close attention to implicit and explicit bias against interracial couples. There is plausible evidence of implicit and explicit bias against Black and White interracial, and the biases and racial stereotypes seem to shape their dating experiences (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Skinner & Rae, 2019; Flores, 2021). In their study of bias against interracial couples, Skinner and Hudac (2017) their study “provide evidence that interracial couples elicit disgust and are dehumanized relative to same-race couples. These findings are particularly concerning, given evidence of antisocial reactions (e.g., aggression, perpetration of violence) to dehumanized targets” (p. 68). As some of the participants mentioned, ignorance and lack of education are some of the reasons why people are opposed to interracial marriage. In some of the interviews, ignorance and lack

of education were also connected to white supremacy ideology. These ideas are somewhat connected in a sense that, people who are racist or against interracial marriage are ignorant and are afraid of the political and social changes in the United States. The perception also confirmed what Rosado (1996) mentioned about ignorance and fear of others. He detailed:

Thus, we are all prejudiced, and virtually none are exempt. Most of what passes for prejudice in society is the result of ignorance of other groups and their way of life and social condition. Because of the way American society is presently structured, most Whites have almost no conceptual idea nor first-hand experience of life in the African American and Latino communities” (p. 1).

Further, Rosado (1996) added:

The other factor is fear, and this one goes much deeper than ignorance, for it strikes at the root of prejudice, the issue of privilege and power. What makes racial prejudice so sinister is not just the act of prejudging a person or a group (p. 1).

This view was collaborated by some of this study participants. In terms of ignorance, for instance, Participant 2 revealed, “we are living in a world full of ignorant people and their ignorance will never change because they’re racist and stupid” (Age 28). Participant 12 agreed. He argued, “those people are ignorant bigots. They have the wrong perception about interracial marriage. We need to re-educate people about racism” (Age 31). Regarding fear, Participant 12 implied that, “as a white man, I see many people argue about how this country is changing. They are in fear of the unknown” (Age 31). Participant 7 added, “America made progress with President Obama, but I

think Obama scared some white people about the direction of America. Some white people are in fear of how the country is changing.” (Age 34). Interestingly, the participants tend to argue that fear of losing power is at the heart of white supremacy ideology. Rosado (1996) writes, “at the heart of prejudice lies two concepts: ignorance and fear” (p. 1). To better understand the opposition against interracial marriage, one must look at the root causes of bias and the question of privilege and power.

At the center of privilege and power lies white supremacy. White supremacy ideology is a historically, socially, and artificially constructed idea which expresses that white people and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs are superior to other races. Rosado (1996) emphasized, “in its essence, racism is culturally sanctioned strategies that defend the advantages of power, privilege and prestige which Whites have because of the subordinated position of racial minorities” (p. 3). Moreover, Childs (2008) also stressed:

While interracial unions have simultaneously been heralded as a way to erase racial difference and as a sign of racial progress, they are also perceived as the ultimate problem of race relations: a symbol of racial impurity among whites or an internalization of racism among blacks. (p. 2773).

Oh (2018) elaborately detailed white supremacy’s opposition to interracial marriage by arguing that:

One main reason for opposition to interracial marriages is the fear of the children produced from those unions. Opposition to interracial marriages is opposition to multiracial children based on the fear that the production of multiracial children will lead to the end or “genocide” of a physically distinctive race of white people. At the heart of white backlash toward diversity, multiracialism, and immigration

is a deep-seated anxiety about the destruction of whites as a physically distinct cultural group and the loss of power and privilege such destruction entails (p. 2762).

During interviews, both black and white participants referenced white supremacy's opposition to interracial marriage. Participant 11 mentioned that white supremacy is "based on controlling and having power over black people... I think that's maybe one reason some of them are opposing interracial relationships (Age 39). Participant 1 also added, "they think that mixing races will make white people inferior. They want to keep the white gene pure" (Age 37). Participant 5 implied: The idea that black people or people of color are inferior, and the opposition of intermixing of blacks and whites all points to white supremacy ideas (Age 45). Interracial marriages were presented as a threat and destruction of the white race itself. Oh (2018) affirmed, that interracial marriage was view as "corruption of blood" in that "the corruption of blood probably meant the mixing of white and nonwhite blood through reproduction. A child born from a mixed-race couple would be a child with corrupted or mixed blood, blood that was no longer purely white" (p. 2764). Banning interracial marriages was a main norm and part of the broader legal, social, and political system of racial exclusion designed at inhibiting blacks and whites from relating on conditions of social equity.

In principle, the idea of white supremacy is a structural problem. To simply put, this means that the ideas and beliefs systems are embedded in America's social structures. Kennedy (2002) concisely explains that "over the years, legions of white-supremacist legislators, judges, prosecutors, police officers, and other officials have attempted to prohibit open romantic interracial attachments, particularly those between

black men and white women” (p. 1). Obasogie (2017) also noted the 1967 case of *Loving v. Virginia* in which the Supreme Court struck down the Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act because “it was designed to prevent the perceived dilution of white racial purity. Rather than celebrating love, the Court’s opinion states that laws against interracial marriage are unconstitutional because they are “measures designed to maintain White Supremacy” (p. 3). Racial segregation warranted that blacks and whites did not intermix on terms of reciprocal respect and equality. This was the Jim Crow system of racial segregation.

With a large majority of Americans coming to grips with the profoundly entrenched historical legacy of racist structures and ideas, Childs (2008) argue that “the experiences of black-white couples also can serve as a miner’s canary because they reveal racial problems that otherwise would remain hidden, especially to whites” (p. 2772-2773). This is the view of many of the research participants. Their interracial marriage has offered them a different lens or a worldview. Participant 17 agreed “this marriage has offered me a different worldview. I definitely appreciate her culture and the way she thinks. She has as well” (Age 26). Participant 19 went on to say, “I’ve learned quite a bit to understand how most Blacks feel. The covert racism, institutional racism and so on” (Age 27). Likewise, Participant 7 claimed, “at the beginning, it was hard because of the differences, but we learned about each other’s culture and values. I also gain some understandings” (Age 34). These views are supported by the literature. Several academic scholarships based on this topic has argued that interracial marriage is an engine of social, cultural diversity, and racial enlightenment. And interracial marriage has the probability to change society, which could improve equality (Kennedy, 2002; Yancey, G. & George, 2004; Yancey, 2007; Lewis, & Ford-Robertson, 2010; Bell & Hastings,

2011). From the experiences of this study participant, the results give us a viewpoint through which to comprehend present-day race relations.

Connection to Theory

The theoretical frameworks that guided this study acknowledged the importance of race relations in the United States. The findings from this study reinforced some of the theoretical framework used to understand the unique history, politics, and current realities of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. This study used critical race theory, status-caste exchange theory and structural violence theory to grasp this phenomenon. Critical race theory and structural violence theories supported the arguments of the lived experiences of participants in this study. However, the researcher did not find enough data to support the status-caste exchange theory, which argues that a white partner uses his or her racial status to attract a minority partner with higher education or socioeconomic.

As mentioned in the literature review, CRT examines power structures and how it affects race relations. One of the tenants of CRT is that power structures are grounded on white privilege and white supremacy, which propagates the marginalization of people of color and in which white supremacy and non-white inferiority persists across political, economic, social, and cultural settings (Kennedy 2002; Liu, 2017; Robin, 2018; Oh, 2018; Christian, Seamster & Ray, 2019). Also, CRT argues that racism is deeper than individual actions; instead, racism is embedded in America's institutions, culture and systems. Racism is pervasive, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are restructured across a broad range of institutions and social settings. And a large part of the American society has no concern in doing away with it because it

benefits white elites and the working class (Gillborn, 2006; Newkirk, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Pascoe, 1991). Participant 20 agreed with this assessment. He added, “it is Jim Crow laws mentality. We have been programmed to believe that white people are superior to other races. The systems were created to favor white people. There is a systematic problem of racism in America (Age 33). Participant 18 argued, “people with racist ideas are made to believe that the white race is superior. Laws were made to support this idea and the systems upheld this belief. This is why we have systematic and institutional racism (Age 51). Participant 7 also asserted, “I have studied the history of racism and how it affected people of color economically, politically and socially. Racism is ingrained in America’s political, social, and economic systems. It was designed that way to favor white people over other races (Age 34). Evidently, from the experiences of this study participants, racism is a systemic feature of America’s social systems and it is strengthened by white supremacy.

This theory provides a way of viewing the world that helps people acknowledge the effects of historical racism in modern American life. One of the most helpful features of CRT is its clear analysis and idea of white supremacy mainly, the superiority, interests and perceptions of white people are constantly placed over people of color (Pascoe, 1991; Gillborn, 2006; Cole, 2009). This theoretical framework about interracial marriage substantiated the lived experiences of participants. CRT view that race, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is socially constructed and that race, as a socially constructed concept, functions to maintain the interests of the white population that constructed it (Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado, & Stefancic, 2001; Bell, 1993).

Furthermore, status-caste exchange theory suggests that romantic relationships between black and white in the U.S. are established on a trade of status or status exchange, where a white partner uses his or her racial status to attract a minority partner with higher education or socioeconomic status (Davis, 1941; Merton, 1941; Rosenfeld, 2005; Qian, 2005; Gullickson, 2006). In this case, this means, a black woman can offset her race by using her education or socioeconomic status to enhance her chances of marrying a white man in a higher racial hierarchy with a lower education or socioeconomic status. Merton (1941), Davis (1941) and Kalmijn (1993) defined this kind of exchange as hypergamy where women “marrying up” in caste and hypogamy as men “marrying up” in caste, so interracial marriage between black and white would either be hypergamy or hypogamy depending on whether the wife or husband was black.

Most black and white racial interracial marriages are educationally and socially compatible throughout the 20th century (Wirth & Goldhamer, 1944; Bernard 1966; Liang and Ito 1999; Rosenfeld, 2005). This is view factual with the study participants. Participant 16 mentioned, “my wife and I had the same education level. Matter of fact, our family structures are similar. We both came from middle-class background” (Age 42). For participant 4, she also revealed that, “both my husband and I only graduated high school. We never went to college. Our families were hard-working people and we both used that values to achieve our dreams” (Age 42). Rosenfeld (2005) argued that the empirical “support for status-caste exchange is not as strong as it appears to be. Simple educational homogamy (i.e., the tendency for mates to have similar educational backgrounds) is the dominant educational marriage pattern, regardless of the race of either spouse” (p. 1285). In another study done by Fu (2008), the findings indicated that,

interracial couples have “similar statuses in all types of marriages, either endogamous or exogamous, and there is no evidence of status-caste exchange in intermarriage to Whites, except in Asian husband–White wife marriages in income (not in education or job prestige (p. 132). The status homogamy of participants in this study shows that most of the participants have the same level of education and social status with their partners.

Hence, research in this area is often limited and this theory falls short of examining the role and characteristics black women brings into interracial marriage with white men. For example, this theory appears to put more weight on the exchange between black men and white women marriage. For example, Gullickson (2006) emphasized that in status exchange theory, “women’s economic potential is less valued on the marriage market, and therefore high-status black men have a more exchangeable commodity than black women” (p. 300-301). Additionally, Kalmijn’s (1993) research on this topic supports the hypergamy view, which is focuses on interracial marriage between Black men and White women and, largely ignoring interracial marriage between Black women and White men, which characterize a more multifaceted pattern.

This is one of the flaws of status-caste exchange theory. The theory’s one-sided view of tradeoff, which fails to consider other attributes such as the physical attractiveness. The core tenants of status-caste exchange theory are inconsistent with the results from the study data. In fact, the education and social status of participants with their partners are compatible, and this is indeed a significant factor in picking their partners. Status-caste exchange is not a driving factor in terms of a white partner uses his racial status to attract a minority partner with higher education or socioeconomic status.

Structural violence theory looks at the how some structural factors harm certain groups of people, creating and perpetuating inequality. The inequalities are created through a practice rooted in systematic of racism, politics, economic and social classes. These systems shape the social, economic, and political practices that manifest in social exclusion (Galtung, 1969; Kent 2011; Winter, 2012). According to Galtung (1969) there are two types of structural violence: direct and indirect violence. Galtung discerns the distinctions between direct violence, where the perpetrator can be identified. Structural, or cultural violence cause direct violence. And in indirect violence, the structures, and systems, which include social, political, economic, and legal all indirectly harm certain people or groups. Structural violence and direct violence are linked. These kinds of violence include hate crimes, political violence, police violence, gender-based violence, and racial violence (Galtung, 1969). Kent (2011) wrote:

With direct violence there is a specific event, an identifiable victim and an identifiable perpetrator. In contrast, structural violence is not visible in specific events. Its effects are most clearly observable at the societal level, as systematic shortfalls in the quality of life of certain groups of people. In direct violence there is physical damage to the human body occurring in a distinct time-bound event, and individual victims and perpetrators can be identified. In structural violence, however, people suffer harm indirectly, often through a slow and steady process, with no clearly identifiable perpetrators (p. 135).

Throughout America's existence, blacks and other minorities have suffered series and centuries of direct and indirect violence. Both direct and indirect violence creates circumstances where structural violence is sanctioned indirectly by hierarchal structures

and belief systems, which legitimize marginalization, bigotry, and discriminatory practices. This legitimization can take a variety of forms including unfair laws and policies that in turn can influence popular beliefs and negative attitudes and behaviors toward targeted groups (Galtung, 1969; Benson, 2008; Kent 2011; Winter, 2012). Moreover, some participants shed light on the relationship between interracial marriage and structural and systematic racism. For example, Participant 18 claimed, “People with racist ideas are made to believe that the white race is superior. Laws were made to support this idea and the systems upheld this belief. Therefore, we have systematic or institutional racism (Age 51). Participants 19 claimed, “I think for black and white unions, there was more structural racism back then and it was more out in the open. I think people around my age group are more progressive and less likely to be outwardly racist” (Age 27). Participant 17 stated that, “racism in this country is structural because it is within the systems of political and cultural. Many people don’t understand this but it’s true. This is covert racism” (Age 26). Participant 9 stated, “interracial marriage was seen as a threat to certain segment of the population. That’s why they made laws to banned it until 1967” (Age 25). These are forms of indirect violence perpetuated by a broad social reproduction process that generates not only recurring patterns of discrimination within institutions that exercise power over interracial marriage between blacks and whites.

In terms of direct violence, interracial couples have experienced a series of hate and violence in the United States. Participant 7 mentioned that, “my husband was called a N-word lover by another white man. It was devastating for him to go through that” (Age 34). Moreover, in Eugene, Oregon, an interracial couple “discovered a noose placed on

top of their trash can,” and their car “had been spray painted with a racial slur” (Lindsay, 2021, p. 1). Wang (2017) adds, as the White Lives Matter rally unfolded in Tennessee “a fight broke out between a smaller group of white supremacists and an interracial couple at a restaurant in Brentwood” (p. 1). In Bowie, Maryland, a “suspect allegedly attacked a young, interracial couple, screaming that the Black man was betraying his race by dating a White woman” (Leshan, 2020). Couple of the participants mentioned their experiences with direct violence. Participant 16 stated:

Once, a black guy told me that you couldn't find one of your own race why did you have to go over the wall grab one of ours. On the other hand, the same thing happened to my wife. This woman saw her coming out of the car to purchase something and the woman followed her into the store and said to her that “your kind of people much, don't tell me that, this white man is your husband (Age 42).

Participant 9 mentioned, “at the beginning of our relationship, my husband faced hostility and intimidation from another individual. It was because I'm black and he's white. We knew that was the reason. He had so much hate” (Age 25). These acts of violence are an indication of a long history of a structure in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate structural violence. Basically, structural violence reveals how racism and white supremacy are infused in all aspects of American society, including the history, culture, politics, economics, and the entire social fabric.

Conflict Resolution Framework

The purpose of this study was to examine how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Understanding this

phenomenon is particularly imperative because race has been, and continues to be, constructed in the United States, and it affects interracial marriage. The issue of interracial marriage, and racism, has a long and ugly history of division, resentment, anger, violence, and deaths. During several of the interviews, some of the participants had mentioned how they avoided discussion on race relations to their friends, families, and strangers. Avoidance as a conflict resolution method has not been affective in resolving issues related to racism and race relations in United States. The protracted nature of racism and race relations in United States deserves a well-defined conflict resolution mechanism. To better grasp the social, political, and cultural nuances of racism and race relations, the researcher proposed that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) be established to address and reveal past wrongdoing by individuals, communities, and government policies. The framework of the TRC must be centered on healing and national unity. TRC as a conflict resolution, peacebuilding and national reconciliation frameworks have become important in resolving inter-group conflicts in the last decades.

Over the past decades, TRC has become one of the most important conflict resolution tools in healing national division. TRC has been used in several countries, including Canada, South Africa, Chile, Ecuador, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and Rwanda. TRC have the capability of facilitating societies to at least start to move past intractable issues such as ethnic conflict, civil war, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, human rights violations, and other crimes (Stanley, 2001; Stanton, 2011; Tutu, 2019; Ibhawoh, 2109). In the United States, TRC was first mandated in Greensboro, North Carolina, to investigate the effect of the 1979 violent attack against organizers who were while leading a racially integrated work to establish a labor union in

a local plant. At the time of the killings, they were leading an “Anti-Klan Rally” to “push back” against the Klan and Nazi effort to threaten workers from joining the union (Young, 1990; Jovanovic, & DeGooyer, 2005; Green, 2020). The Greensboro’s TRC was hailed as an innovative model for seeking truth, transitional justice, and healing. Green (2020) emphasizes that the goal of the Greensboro TRC was to “heal relations between opposing sides by uncovering all pertinent facts, distinguishing truth from lies, and allowing for acknowledgement, appropriate public mourning, forgiveness and healing.” (p. 5). With the rise of racism and race related violence, a TRC model for national reconciliation is needed to ease issues around race relations. There has been a growing number of calls for national dialogue on race relations in the United States. Aboueldahab (2020) agreed that:

As the United States contends with the historic Black Lives Matter movement, several U.S. politicians have renewed their calls for truth commissions—public inquiries into past grievances and human rights violations. Members of Congress, including Rep. Barbara Lee, Rep. John Larson, Sen. Marco Rubio, Sen. Cory Booker, and Sen. Kamala Harris, have emphasized the importance of such hearings in achieving a society-level understanding of the root causes of violence, inequality, and racism, and also in beginning the processes of accountability, healing, and reconciliation (p. 1).

Additionally, Souli (2020) adds that, “the depth of division over race in the United States and the growing calls for change—suggest to some activists that the moment demands something bigger than a “national conversation” (p. 2). Ibhawoh (2019) also contends that the United States needs a “national truth commission of some

kind to address hundreds of years of injustice suffered by Black Americans. There, centuries of enslavement, state-sponsored racism, denial of civil rights and ongoing economic and social disparity have yet to be addressed” (p. 7). Truth commissions are not perfect; however, they can be a starting point for national dialogue. The last 4 years has brought a nationwide reckoning on America’s long history of structural racism, discrimination, and white supremacy. For a national unity and healing to take hold, the United States must start the process of dealing with the past and recognize how protracted injustices continue to drive structural racism and discrimination in the United States. This can be done by a legislation from congress. As Aboueldahab (2020) “local-level commissions are important, but they failed to galvanize American society at large, as their mandates to address structural racism were limited to a specific event or policy” (p. 6). Firstly, for a TRC to be effective at the national level, the commission must be mandated to investigate the effects of slavery, state-sponsored racism, ongoing civil rights violations, economic and social disparity and how laws and policies perpetuates institutional racism, and discrimination.

The commission must support a mechanism to address the injustices throughout United States history, with the aim of achieving reconciliation and national unity. The researcher proposed that the mandate of the TRC must involve the following goals and objectives:

- The commissions ought to create the facts about civil rights violations that are still debated or denied. The goal and objectives must include examining the facts to establish the social and historical circumstances that gave rise to the civil rights violations, and how to address them.

- The truth commissions should involve African American civil society at the planning phase and throughout the course of the commission. And a victim-centered method should be used to produce a different model reforms to key institutions.
- The commission should view reconciliation as a political process of national unity and transformation. The commission must also focus on policy proposals for reforming institutions and address the root causes of racism, civil rights violations to prevent their recurrence.
- The final goal and objectives of the truth commission ought to inform policy and advocate for change in groups and institutions, consequently contributing to social and political transformation.

TRC as a conflict resolution method has played a key role in resolving root causes of all kinds of conflict. It is important to mentioned that TRC should be perceived as a short-term social process that is tasked with addressing past wrongdoings; however, lawmakers can work along the commission to draft legislation to address structural racism and discrimination in the United States. Likely, the truth commissions can assist in facilitating a better environment for reconciliation by supporting institutional reform and changes in the social, political, and economic culture of America.

Limitation to the Study

Several limitations existed in this study. Despite the contribution this study presented in filling the gap in the literature, there continue to be limitations that must be examined in the framework of their potential implications. Firstly, a potential limitation identified was that this study only focused on the interracial marriage between Black

women and White men. This study only examined marriage; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to cohabitation or relationships between Black women and White men.

A second potential limitation was data collection method. Initially, the researcher had planned to conduct face-to-face interviews, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all the interviews were conducted via Zoom Video conferencing. As such, the researcher was not privy to experienced body languages and non-verbal clues, which might have added additional insight on the lived experiences of the participants. Thus, the data collected could only be examined from an auditory viewpoint.

The third limitation of the study was the researcher's personal beliefs on this topic. As a Black woman married to a White man. To address this issue, bracketing was first performed before the selection of participants. Subsequently, bracketing was both performed during the interview and data analysis phases. Also, the researcher continued self-awareness during data collection, data analysis, and interpretation stages of the study. Therefore, the result of the data from the 20 participants interviewed on interracial marriage between Black women and White men, identified certain topics regarding interracial marriage between Black women and White men would benefit from further in-depth review.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of the study offered an important lens into the lived experiences of interracial marriage between Black women and White men. A study this like was needed to be taken to understand the history, politics, and current realities of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Grasping this phenomenon is mainly crucial since race

relations has been, and lingers to be, constructed in the United States, and its effects on interracial marriage.

The need for more research on this subject is needed to really understand the across-the-board racial divides between blacks and whites in America. Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends the following studies:

- A complete study with an emphasis on divorced couples who were in interracial marriage
- The role of the social media in acceptance of interracial marriage amongst younger people
- A study with a focus on comparing interracial marriage in the United States and Europe
- A study with emphasis on rates of interracial marriage between African American and whites with that of Africans and whites.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Interracial marriage in United States have been controversial since the founding of the country and remain to be controversial even today, and opposition to black and white interracial relationships is historically positioned in America's struggle with slavery, Jim Crow laws, and white supremacy. Results in this study indicated that Black woman married to White men often suffer more societal rejections and stereotypes than their spouses. The data also shows that power, prejudice, privilege, fear, and ignorance are the driving forces of how race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage

between Black women and White men in the United States. As such, Black women cannot fully identify with themselves as black women without deeper acknowledgment of the struggle of inequality, gender, other racial predicaments.

Many scholars believed that varying mindsets regarding race, education and migration patterns are key reason driving the rise in intermarriage. Even with the increase in interracial marriages, some people still do not approve of interracial marriage. For example, views of older generations, some of which still have negative opinions of interracial marriages, stems from generational differences. Strong societal opinions against this union makes interracial marriage couples feel disadvantaged and socially rejected from their larger racial group. Couples in interracial marriages are often from different cultural and societal concepts and racism can be displayed as either negative or positive.

This study used phenomenology as the research methodology to understand how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. The researcher applied a robust thematic coding of the interview data. The data analysis produced six main themes. (I) generational differences, (II) power & status quo, (III) white supremacy, (IV) ignorance and lack of education, (V) cultural experience, and (VI) love matters. Analysis of data in this section revealed that while there are improvements in race relations in the United States, nonetheless, some strict societal lines have been drawn that still divide American society by race.

These findings also confirmed earlier studies on interracial marriage between Black women and White men. According to the literature review, interracial marriage

between blacks and whites in the U.S. are problematic. History has indicated that these two groups were mostly far from equal. The literature also emphasizes on the racial identities of black people, which is driven by persistent inequality and discrimination along with continued white resistance. The theories presented in the literature review made numerous assertions about social inequality, racial stratification, structural violence, ethno-racial hierarchy, and race and racism. The literature generally shows that interracial marriage between black and white has increased since the Supreme Court lifted the marriage ban in 1967. Many academics view the increasing number of interracial marriages as a barometer for race relations. Critical race theory, Status-caste Exchange theory, and Structural violence theory can all shed light on the issues around interracial marriage between white men and black women in the United States. Critical race theory and structural violence theories supported the arguments of the lived experiences of participants in this study. However, the researcher did not find enough data to support the status-caste exchange theory, which argues that a white partner uses his or her racial status to attract a minority partner with higher education or socioeconomic.

As stated earlier, racism can be implicit in the way we portray ourselves in society when failing to consider others as human beings. In United States, interracial marriage often reveals deep-set viewpoints and racist thoughts that simmer under the surface. This can be a difficult problem due to lack of self-reflection on whether someone can recognize their own racism. Instead, we can try to put ourselves in other people's shoes and express that feeling differently.

The conflict resolution framework offers important proposals for explaining the root causes of America's long history of structural racism, discrimination, and white supremacy. TRC as a conflict resolution, peacebuilding and national reconciliation frameworks have become important in resolving inter-group conflicts in the last decades. A robust TRC could address and reveal past wrongdoing by individuals, communities, and government policies.

Aside from the "White Supremacy" issues surrounding this research, perhaps, most of this research participants would recommend their relatives into marrying a different race. Additionally, the white man takes their Black woman partners as their pride possession. Their partners considered them as holding several gold bars in their hands. That is how precious they considered their wives, and it is vice versa.

The agreed participants were thrilled to take part in the study. The interview process on average was around 45 minutes to 58 minutes, which was sufficient time to conduct the interview. Participants surely appreciated the research topic and passionately express it.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Introduction and demographic information

How old are you?

What's gender?

What is your race?

What is your occupation?

What is your level of education?

How long have you been married?

1. What was your perception of your partner upon first meeting her?
2. How do you believe your first impressions of your partner have impacted the development of your relationship?
3. How do you feel being in an interracial relationship?
4. Do you think people treat your relationship differently due to the fact that your partner is from a different race?
5. In some societies, interracial relationships are viewed as unacceptable—what do you think are the reasons for this? And why?
6. As an interracial couple, have the experiences for the both of you been negative or positive?
7. Do you believe that being in an interracial couple has given you a unique perspective on racial relationships and how people treat those of other races? And why?
8. Have you experienced any race-based prejudice or aggression towards you or your partner?

9. What are some of the stereotypes that have been directed at you or your partner?
10. Do you believe in the notion that Black people with higher education and status tend to marry white women or white men?
11. Is there anything else you would like to offer that I did not ask?

Appendix B: Appendix B: Interview Participation Consent Letter

Interview Participation Consent Letter for the Research Study entitled:

An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Black Women and White Men
Towards Interracial Marriage in America

Funding Source: None

IRB protocol #: 2020-284

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This is a research study. Please read and decide if you would like to participate. Feel free to ask questions at any time.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this study was to examine how the unique history, politics and current realities of race continues to be constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage between Black women and White men. Understanding this phenomenon is particularly imperative because race has been, and continues to be, constructed in the United States, and how this affects interracial marriage. Through an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, this dissertation examines some of the historical, political, legal and social issues that have impacted interracial marriage in the U.S., focusing on Black women and White men marriages.

Why are you asking me?

Because you are in an interracial marriage with firsthand lived experience. Because of this, your participation in this study is imperative to the researcher in understanding more about the historical, political, legal, and social issues that have impacted interracial marriage in the U.S., focusing on Black women and White men marriages. Your participation in this interview is solely voluntarily and is really appreciated.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?

If you agree to participate, Guerdy Sauvignon-Markowski will interview via teleconference for no longer than 60 minutes. You will be presented with the interview guide ahead of time (see attached interview guide for complete list of questions). The interview covers 11 questions about your lived experience of interracial marriage. Your participation will last for the amount of the time the interview takes.

Is there any audio or video recording?

The full interview will be via teleconferencing and recorded on a digital voice recorder.

What are the dangers to me?

There are risks associated with this study such as psychological discomfort, distress, harassment, or employability if their identities are revealed. Participants could face physical harm if their identities are made public. That is, collecting information about personal information and disturbing events may bring psychological issues to the surface. If you are uncomfortable, you may skip answering a question or stop participation, either temporarily or permanently. If you have any questions about this study, your research rights, or have experience physical and psychological harm as a result of your participation in this study, please contact Guerdy Sauvignon-Markowski at (954)-937-7211 or email me at markowsk@mynsu.nova.edu You can also contact the IRB office with questions as to your research rights at (954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790 or email IRB@nsu.nova.edu

Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits; however, your participation will help the researcher gain additional understanding of the phenomenon under study. Also, the result of the study will help advise policy design as well as serve as guiding material for future research and interventions.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

You will not be compensated for taking part in this study, nor will it cost you anything for taking part in the study.

Participant Rights

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time or decline to participate. During the interview, you may avoid any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study and will not be part of the study.

How will you keep my information private?

All the information gathered in this study is strictly confidential except disclosure is required by law. Nonetheless, the Internal Review Board (IRB) or my co-Investigator may review research records if deemed necessary. Any information obtained during this research will be confidential; the real names of the participants will not be used. All electronic correspondence, consent forms, interview transcripts, and data analysis will be password-protected, and all printed material will be locked. All data files will be destroyed 36 months from the conclusion of the study. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time or decline to participate. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study and will not be part of the study.

Participants Signature

Your signature below indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (Printed).....

(Participant's Signature)..... (Date).....

Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Consent to Conduct Study

MEMORANDUM

To: **GUERDY S MARKOWSKI**

From: **Ransford Edwards, Ph.D.,
Center Representative, Institutional Review Board**

Date: **June 9, 2020**

Re: **IRB #: 2020-284; Title, “An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
of Black Women and White Men Towards Interracial Marriage in
America”**

I have reviewed the above-referenced research protocol at the center level. Based on the information provided, I have determined that this study is exempt from further IRB review under **45 CFR 46.101(b) (Exempt 2: Interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations of public behavior, and other similar methodologies)**. You may proceed with your study as described to the IRB. As principal investigator, you must adhere to the following requirements:

- 1) **CONSENT:** If recruitment procedures include consent forms, they must be obtained in such a manner that they are clearly understood by the subjects and the process affords subjects the opportunity to ask questions, obtain detailed answers from those directly involved in the research, and have sufficient time to consider their participation after they have been provided this information. The subjects must be given a copy of the signed consent document, and a copy must be placed in a secure file separate from de-identified participant information. Record of informed consent must be retained for a minimum of three years from the conclusion of the study.

- 2) **ADVERSE EVENTS/UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS:** The principal investigator is required to notify the IRB chair and me (954-262-5369 and Ransford Edwards, Ph.D., respectively) of any adverse reactions or unanticipated events that may develop as a result of this study. Reactions or events may include, but are not limited to, injury, depression as a result of participation in the study, life-threatening situation, death, or loss of confidentiality/anonymity of subject. Approval may be withdrawn if the problem is serious.

3) AMENDMENTS: Any changes in the study (e.g., procedures, number or types of subjects, consent forms, investigators, etc.) must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please be advised that changes in a study may require further review depending on the nature of the change. Please contact me with any questions regarding amendments or changes to your study.

The NSU IRB is in compliance with the requirements for the protection of human subjects prescribed in Part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46) revised June 18, 1991.

Cc: Dustin Berna, Ph.D.
Ransford Edwards, Ph.D.