

University of Nevada, Reno

**Interracial Partnerships and Racial Centrality:
An Application of Social Identity and Intergroup Contact Theories**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology

by

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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thesis prepared under our
supervision by

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Abstract

Few studies on relationships have considered how racial centrality operates within interracial relationships. Considering the steady increase in the number of interracial relationships in the U.S., it is important to understand the ways in which racial identities are constructed and maintained in this context. Previous research on interracial relationships has explored race and identity in several ways but has yet to clarify how interracial relationships may affect racial centrality for the individuals involved. To investigate this empirically, I apply two theoretical approaches which have yet to be considered in this way in the literature on interracial relationships and racial centrality: social identity and intergroup contact theories. Through social identity theory, drawing and maintaining symbolic boundaries allows individuals to distinguish themselves apart from others by race, allowing racial identity to become more highly centralized. Meanwhile, intergroup contact theory complicates this process of boundary construction by promoting positive out-group attitudes, leading to a decrease in racial centrality. This research adds to previous work by making important theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of racial identity and identity processes. This research also looks more closely than previous studies at how individual racial identity operates within interracial relationships. Finally, I discuss the implications for future research and studies.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my family.

Without our storied past, my interest and passion in pursuing the study of racial identity and interracial partnerships would not be so fervent.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my gratitude and sincere thankfulness to all those who helped support my efforts and aspirations throughout this tiring but rewarding journey.

To my love, thank you for holding my hand (both literally and metaphorically) as I stumbled, fell, and struggled to stay on my feet. You were always there to catch me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgment	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 Racial Centrality: Prominence, Salience, and Group Identification	5
CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	9
3.1 Social Identity Theory.....	9
3.2 Intergroup Contact Theory.....	12
3.3 Hypotheses	16
Hypothesis 1 _A	17
Hypothesis 1 _B	18
Hypothesis 2.....	20
Hypothesis 3.....	23
Hypothesis 4.....	28
Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Theoretical Framework	29
Figure 2: A breakdown of Hypothesis 2 from Conceptual Model.....	30
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA AND METHODS	33
4.1 Dependent Variables	34
4.2 Independent Variables	35
4.3 Control Variables	36
CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS	38
5.1 Descriptive Statistics.....	38
Table 1: Summary Statistics of Variables Used in the Study (N=672)	39
Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Independent Variables Used in the Study (N=672)	41
5.2 Ordinal Logistic Regressions	41
Table 3: Ordinal Logistic Regression for Dependent Variables on Reduced Sample (N=672).....	43

Table 3 (continued): Ordinal Logistic Regression for Dependent Variables on Reduced Sample (N=672).....	44
Table 4: Ordinal Logistic Regression for Dependent Variables on Full Sample (N=1221).....	47
Table 4 (continued): Ordinal Logistic Regression for Dependent Variables on Full Sample (N=1221).....	48
5.3 Multinomial Logistic Regression.....	49
Table 5: Multinomial Logistic Regression for Racial Salience Across All Three Categories (N=672).....	51
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION	53
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	58
REFERENCES	63
APPENDIX A: VARIABLES	75
APPENDIX B: ODDS RATIOS AND P-VALUES FOR REDUCED SAMPLE	77
APPENDIX C: ODDS RATIOS AND P-VALUES FOR FULL SAMPLE	78

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	39
Table 2	41
Table 3	43
Table 3 (continued)	44
Table 4	47
Table 4 (continued)	48
Table 5	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	29
Figure 2	30

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At this moment in history, race relations are at the forefront of current research on race and ethnicity. Right now, racial identity matters more than ever for many people in the U.S., especially racial minorities. Our partnerships are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. For example, non-Hispanic whites partnered with Hispanics have experienced the largest increase in partnerships in the U.S. The percentage of married-couple interracial/interethnic households grew from 7.4 to 10.2% from 2000 to 2016 (Pew Research Center 2016). Even more so, partnerships are important to look at for their sustained quality. This sustained quality makes partnerships important because it is implied that positive contact and reinforcement occurs over time in a stable and healthy manner. If this is true that positive contact is sustained in such a way between partners, then there is little room for racial discrimination or differences. This is important when looking at how racially and ethnically diverse interracial partnerships have become.

The topic of racial identity has enjoyed an increase in scholarship over the past twenty years or so (e.g., Douglass, Wang and Yip 2015; French, Coleman and DiLorenzo 2013; Hurtado, Alvarado and Guillermo-Wann 2016; Quintana 2007; Steck, Heckert and Heckert 2003) especially with regards to racial identity construction and maintenance in social psychology. Racial centrality is an important social psychological concept, which considers the extent to which an individual places importance on their racial identity, and how, in the process, an individual normatively defines themselves in terms of their racial identity (Sellers et al. 2006). The majority of existing research on racial centrality has been qualitative. In terms of existing research, this is certainly very useful for exploring

the nuances of racial centrality and its importance. But because previous research on racial centrality does not tend to consider the quantitative approach as often, racial centrality is much more difficult to discern on a larger scale, especially with regards to how certain situations, such as being in an interracial relationship, may have direct or indirect effects on racial centrality for the individuals involved. As such, the current study contributes to the existing literature by considering a more quantitative approach.

Previous research has linked the importance of racial identity to participation in social movements. One such study suggests that individuals with weak racial identities (in terms of magnitude of importance) may be less likely to become involved in social movements that address racial and ethnic inequality directly (Vargas and Stainback 2016). Research has also looked at how racial identity affects individual mental health. Howell and Emerson (2017) believe that racial identity can have a significant impact on mental health, especially when looking at identity development during adolescent years. A negative impact on mental health, such as an increased feeling of racial bias towards specific racial groups or intense belonging to one's own racial group (bordering on a racist notion of racial pride), is but one possibility of having higher racial centrality, or a stronger racial identity. Additionally, feelings of internalized racism in terms of how a person experiences a personal conscious or subconscious acceptance of a dominant group's racist views, stereotypes, and biases about specific racial groups can occur when an individual's racial centrality is high. This tends to occur most often when adolescents are reminded of their racial differences (Saperstein and Penner 2012) or have opportunities denied to them because of their racial background and racial differences with others (Seaton, Yip and Sellers 2009). However, there are also positive mental

health outcomes and effects to consider. Hughes et al. (2015) find that African Americans who evaluate their racial identity positively tend to show greater self-esteem, greater mastery (or sense of control over one's outcomes), and fewer depressive symptoms than other African Americans.

Similar studies have also looked at academic outcomes, especially with how the importance placed on racial identification may predict student success rates and outcomes across racial groups and at different points in time. Doyle and Kao (2007) suggest that the importance placed on racial identification may change over time and when it does, this can have consequences on academic success and educational attainment, more generally. For instance, when an individual decides to change their self-identification from monoracial to biracial or mixed-race identification, this happens through a process of internalizing the idea of self-identification as an important and central aspect of who they are. This can bring about more academic benefits and opportunities such as eligibility for certain scholarships and the ability to participate in more activities and apply for certain memberships where scholarship and activities committees may specifically seek more diversity. It is important to note that these benefits otherwise may not have been available to their specific racial group and/or racial background prior to this change in self-identification. In terms of academic success, students who feel more confident about their racial identities generally tend to have greater success in school (Hughes et al. 2015). Stets (2006) finds that when students are placed into new situations and try and fit into new groups such as with academic clubs, sports, or other group activities, racial identification matters for the make-up of the group. The importance of one's racial identity can be the "make it or break it" factor for whether or not an individual is

accepted into a certain social group. For instance, an individual with higher racial centrality may find it hard to be accepting of others within a group made-up of people from different racial backgrounds; in this case, racial biases as a result of higher racial centrality may play a significant role. Consequently, this acceptance or denial can have an impact on an individual's mental health, greatly affecting future interactions where acceptance into a group matters, such as in school groups, in the workplace, or in other social group settings.

Despite these varying ways in which racial identification can have tangible social outcomes, when it comes to interracial partnerships, only a few studies have looked at the importance of racial identity as defined by the individual within an interracial partnership (e.g., Afful, Wohlford and Stoelting 2015; Steinbugler 2015). Interracial partnerships, in the current study, refers to two specific situations: when two individuals from different racial backgrounds are either 1) married or 2) unmarried and living with a partner (or cohabitating). There is therefore a need for scholarship that can better illuminate racial identity as a process both central to the individuals involved as well as the interracial partnership itself. Specifically, I argue that the process of identity construction that occurs through symbolically bounded group differentiation and evaluation of one's own racial identity is important for understanding the possible effects of interracial partnerships on racial centrality, and how racial centrality operates within the partnership itself.

Racial identity is not only a central part of one's self-concept, but a central aspect of any interracial partnership. Research on interracial partnerships has explored race in several ways (e.g., how couples deal with race, how race might shape these relationships, the role of race in promoting positive relationships, etc.) but has yet to clarify how

interracial partnerships may affect racial centrality for the individuals involved. The question that drives the present study is, how do interracial partnerships affect individual racial centrality? Broader implications for better understanding the dynamics of interracial partnerships and race relations more generally are discussed throughout.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Racial Centrality: Prominence, Salience, and Group Identification

There are several terms that have been used to describe the importance of racial identity in previous research. Rosenberg (1979) first proposed the general term psychological centrality as part of the individual self-concept—used for explaining the underlying importance of social and personal identities from the perspectives of the individuals themselves (see Stryker and Serpe 1994). Among these social and personal identities is one's own racial identity. Meanwhile, the term salience has been used to describe both the probability that a given identity will be invoked in social interaction (Stryker 1968) as well as a proclivity to define a situation as having the opportunity to invoke and perform one's identity (Stryker and Serpe 1982).

Similar in nature to Stryker's concept of identity salience, the concept of identity prominence focuses on the individual's subjective sense of worth or value of an identity to himself or herself (Ervin and Stryker 2001). McCall and Simmons (1966) first used prominence to refer to the importance of an individual's racial self-identification to their own subjective sense of worth and value. The concept of prominence is very similar to Stryker's salience, except that this deals with how important an individual feels a particular identity is to their overall self-schema, and without referring directly to the

existence of an identity hierarchy. In the social sciences, an identity hierarchy refers to the idea that each individual has multiple identities and that these identities are ordered based on importance or value placed by the individual. For example, a hard-working single mother may place higher value on her identity of being a mother than on her identity as a hard worker. Both prominence and salience have been used as equivalent, overlapping, and complementary concepts in research (Hogg, Terry and White 1995; Stets and Burke 2000; Stets and Serpe 2013; Stryker and Serpe 1994). However, for the purposes of the current study, these terms will be used separately, to refer to two distinct aspects of racial centrality.

Understanding the possible relationship between prominence and salience is important not only for operationalization and measurement in racial identity research, but also for reconciling two competing thought systems for dealing with racial identity importance of the self-individual. As pointed out by Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker (2014), the literature on identity salience and prominence consists of significant conceptual errors in which the waters have only been further muddied in recent years. There seems to be a generalized misunderstanding in the use of language of prominence and salience when it comes to research studies and providing correct and efficient ways of measuring these concepts. This is often the case with measures of self-identified racial identity importance or when dealing with racial centrality. Williams Jr. (1975) suggests that in general, race is a very salient feature for most individuals, especially when it comes to their identity. He also posits that ethnic and racial relations are characterized by variations in salience, importance, and identification among individuals. These ethnic and racial variations vary based on strength of symbolic boundaries for an individual (i.e., what is important to

them may not be as important to another individual). As such, both prominence and salience have been used to define a degree of importance to the individual and can help characterize racial centrality as a self-concept.

Roth (2016) argues that there are multiple dimensions of race worth considering when studying race and identity. Racial identity refers to an individual's subjective self-identification, or what they believe they should identify as, while racial group identification refers to the racial group which they identify with and belong to according to a pre-existing racial hierarchy and others' perceptions of their race. By conceptualizing racial identity and group identification as separate aspects of race, this provides the opportunity for a clearer understanding of how these dimensions can be studied.

Blake's (2018) recent study of multiracial emerging adults best demonstrates why these dimensions of racial identity should be kept as separate concepts. Blake explains that self-identification and group belonging differ, that the two may not necessarily be in agreement, and that care must be taken to avoid conflating these distinct dimensions of race. In her study of respondents from several different racial backgrounds including but not limited to whites, blacks, Hispanic/Latino(a)s, and Asians, she finds that several respondents' racial self-identity did not match their racial group identification label. This suggests that levels of importance for racial identity and group identification, as distinct dimensions within individuals, may differ. For example, one respondent identified as Asian on the racial self-identification question but also identified as being part of a white racial group and feeling most connected to whites due to greater cultural exposure to her white background (2018:143). Similarly, another respondent explained that their self-identified racial identity as a Puerto-Rican/Latino was more important than their racial

group identification as white (2018:144). Both of these examples are cases in which respondents' racial self-identification and racial group-identification did not align. Because of this, Roth provides the notion that these measure different dimensions of racial identity importance, as opposed to ways of racially identifying in general. Please take note that Hispanic/Latino is considered an ethnicity formally (on the U.S. Census and other surveys), but many individuals view this as their racial identity.

As expected, currently there is no single well-defined term for describing the overall importance that one places on their own racial identity. In the present study, I employ the umbrella term racial centrality as a description of the overall importance a person places on their racial identity and how this becomes central to their self-concept. This term has been used in prior studies (e.g., Hoffman et al. 2017; Kramer, Burke and Charles 2015; Okeke et al. 2009; Sellers et al. 1998; Seaton, Yip and Sellers 2009; Sellers, Chavous and Cooke 1998; Skinner et al. 2018) to describe both a sense of belonging to one's racial group as well as how central race is to the research topic (e.g., marriage, education, race relations). The most similar and already existing conceptual use of the term racial centrality is defined as the extent to which race is a central aspect of an individual's self-definition (see Okeke et al. 2009; Sellers et al. 1998;). I have chosen to use the umbrella term of racial centrality for several reasons. Firstly, it is more commonly used in social psychological and sociological literature, towards which the current study is most oriented. Secondly, when used appropriately, the concept of racial centrality tends to capture more of the meaning I am interested in, rather than the traditional definitions and uses of the concept. And lastly, I believe racial centrality best accomplishes the task

of encompassing all the above terms (prominence, salience, and group identification) into one single, easily recognizable concept.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I will be drawing on two distinct theoretical approaches in order to provide a holistic account of how racial centrality might operate for individuals within an interracial partnership. I first cover social identity theory, which deals with the evaluation and comparison of one's own in-group to another's out-group. In doing so, individuals draw and define symbolic boundaries. Social identity theory can ultimately help provide a better understanding of how these symbolic boundaries work, especially when it comes to boundaries based on race or racial identity. Additionally, intergroup contact theory helps provide a better understanding for how sustained intergroup contact matters for reducing prejudice and promoting positive out-group attitudes. Specifically, it considers those types of relationships built on or around race (i.e., interracial partnerships) that have sustained intergroup contact. The consensus among scholars is that sustained intergroup contact promotes more positive race relations. If this is so, then both theories may help to reveal just how important racial identity is in an interracial partnership.

3.1 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel 1981) deals with intergroup relations, looking at how people come to see themselves as members of a particular group/category (in-group) in comparison with another group/category (out-group) and the possible consequences of self-categorization and social comparison (Turner and Oakes 1986). In nearly all cases, social comparison favors the categories that comprise people's own identities, resulting in

the relative devaluation of out-groups as less positive than one's own in-group (Hogg, Terry and White 1995). In evaluating one's own group as particularly meaningful, this provides the opportunity for the development of a positive social identity through positive in-group distinction from out-group members (Abrams and Hogg 1988).

Social identity theory can provide insight into the boundary construction and maintenance processes that specifically occur within interracial partnerships, as opposed to just interracial interactions more generally. Social identity theory focuses on two specific and distinct individual socio-cognitive processes that occur: categorization and self-identification (see Hogg, Terry and White 1995). Through categorization, explicit social boundaries are constructed and maintained to build more in-group solidarity. Self-identification focuses on how making the choice to self-identify (racially or otherwise) creates opportunities for boundary construction and focuses on drawing boundaries between members of in-groups and out-groups. This is important when considering how interracial partnerships might affect individual racial centrality.

This process of self-categorization and social comparison involves drawing and defining distinct symbolic boundaries between in-groups and out-groups. Symbolic boundaries are the conceptual distinctions that serve to include some people, groups, and things while excluding others. This can include both internal distinctions (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, inherent interests) and external distinctions (e.g., cultural practices, social status, language difference) as well as even time and space (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Lamont, Pendergrass and Pachucki 2015). One of the most important ways in which symbolic boundaries are drawn in the U.S. pertains to race. Individuals can determine and choose for themselves a distinct and unique racial identity by considering and weighing (which

implies importance attributed by the individual themselves) social categories of race, which are central to their self-concept (see Rosenberg 1979). As individuals favorably self-evaluate over others through drawing and maintaining symbolic boundaries that distinguish themselves by race, they place a greater importance on racial identity. Through this process, racial identity becomes more centralized within the larger context of the 'self' (Rosenberg 1979). While there are a variety of opportunities for constructing and maintaining such symbolic boundaries, it is in interracial interactions and partnerships that these opportunities are most frequent.

Studies that have explored interracial interactions have generally found that differences of race (i.e., the things that allow people to distinguish themselves and others based on race) play an important role in producing a range of positive outcomes. For example, McGill, Way and Hughes (2012) found that in a comparison with intraracial (same race) friendships, interracial friendships had lower levels of conflict, especially for black and Hispanic/Latino youth. Additionally, individuals in interracial friendships exhibited more comfort and trust when talking about race. A similar study by Doerr et al. (2010) found that white individuals' positive racial self-efficacy (as measured by confidence about dealing with race in interracial interactions) contributed to a greater willingness to engage in future interracial interactions and accounted for more positive attitudes towards other groups. When looking at awareness of race, Bonam and Shih (2009) found that multiracial individuals tended to express higher levels of comfort and trust in interracial relationships. Although these studies demonstrate the importance racial differences play in interracial interactions, they have focused more on issues of a general

self-understanding of race relations, but less on the actual importance individuals themselves place on their racial identity.

3.2 Intergroup Contact Theory

Intergroup contact theory is useful for understanding how the boundary construction and maintenance processes, as highlighted by social identity theory, may be problematic. Intergroup contact theory deals with four unique cross-racial dynamics found within interracial partnerships: 1) learning to accept the out-group, 2) creating affective social ties with out-group members, 3) changing attitudes and behavior towards out-group members, and 4) in-group reappraisal, or the reshaping of one's views about their own in-group (see Pettigrew 1998:70-72). In the times of racial segregation in the U.S. and strictly defined 'Jim Crow Laws', Gordon Allport (1954) proposed the intergroup contact theory, which suggests that contact between members of different groups (under certain proposed conditions) works to reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict while building better intergroup relations. Results from the meta-analysis conducted by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conclusively show that intergroup contact can promote reductions in intergroup prejudice, which can ultimately lead to increased positive intergroup contact. Indeed, this idea that contact between members of different types of groups can reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations is woven throughout policy-making decisions and implementations all over the world (Pettigrew et al. 2011). For example, large-scale organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have asserted that contact between members of different groups is key to improving social relations (Tropp 2008). The intergroup contact theory has since been further researched, expanded upon, and explored

in situations with interracial contact, interracial friendships, and to a much smaller extent, interracial partnerships.

Many scholars believe it is unrealistic to expect that group members will have sufficient opportunities to engage in positive contact with members of different groups (Pettigrew 1998). In some cases, positive contact between group members is incredibly difficult, especially when historical background and context is at play, as with much of race relations in the U.S. (Hewstone et al. 2014). However, when it comes to being in an interracial partnership, there should be plenty of opportunities to engage in interracial contact, whether that be positive or negative. Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp (1997) proposed that just having knowledge that an in-group member has a close relationship with an out-group member can help to improve and build positive attitudes towards out-group members. Similarly, Crisp et al. (2009) found that by just imagining having contact with out-group members, more individuals were likely to proceed with building intergroup relations with members of different groups. Another study by Shook and Fazio (2008) looked at intergroup relations between roommates of different racial backgrounds. The researchers found that in interracial roommate relationships, with more opportunities for contact, their experiences were much more positive. These experiences included having less intergroup anxiety, exhibiting less out-group prejudice, and having more positive out-group attitudes in general. This was tested in comparison to same-race roommates, where even though conflict would not occur, their attitudes towards out-group members remained mostly negative throughout the study.

Much of the recent research on intergroup contact has looked at the importance of interracial friendships in reducing racial prejudice and promoting more positive out-group

attitudes (e.g., Briggs 2007; Fozdar 2011; McGill, Way and Hughes 2012; Northcutt, Bohmert and DeMaris 2015; Stearns, Buchmann and Bonneau 2009). For example, Bowman and Park (2014) found that people involved in interracial friendships as well as more casual cross-racial interactions were more likely to feel a sense of “closeness” to other races. Similarly, Chen and Graham (2017) examined three-different friendship types (same ethnic, interethnic, and interracial) and found that individuals in interracial friendships reported the lowest levels of out-group prejudice and better intergroup relations overall.

Several studies on intergroup contact have also explored the effect interracial marriage, dating, and cohabitation have in reducing prejudice and promoting out-group attitudes (e.g., Allen and Uskul 2019; Chan, Kiang and Witkow 2020; Harris and Kalbfleisch 2000; Hwang 2012; Levin, Taylor and Caudle 2007; Paterson, Turner and Conner 2015; Santana 2020). Allen and Uskel (2019) look at how much individuals identify with their in-groups and focus on how this has implications for their out-group dating preferences, specifically when it comes to racial preferences. Similarly, Chan, Kiang and Witkow (2020) look at ethnicity-related dating preferences among Asian American adolescents and what individual-level factors might contribute to their preferences. Harris and Kalbfleisch (2000) focus primarily on how race influences the communicative process when it comes to participating in an interracial relationship for the first time. Hwang (2012) found that willingness to date interracially was much lower than intraracial willingness, and that this was primarily influenced by racial social status. Similar to the previously mentioned studies here, Levin, Taylor and Caudle (2007) focused on interracial dating among college students and concluded that students who

exhibited lower levels of ingroup bias, intergroup anxiety, and group identification were more likely to date members of other racial groups during college. Paterson, Turner and Conner (2015) looked at out-group attitudes and how extended cross-group contact, specifically romantic contact, helped to provide more positive attitudes towards interracial dating and positive intergroup attitudes in general. Santana (2020) looks at how skin color relates to an individual's likelihood of dating others of another skin color, and more specifically, what implications this has for intergroup contact. Leslie and Letiecq (2004) recognize the importance to couples of not having their relationship defined solely by race, while at the same time investigating the relevance of race and racial identity in the functioning of their marriages. Given the range of negative social reactions to interracial relationships presented by the participants in their study, Leslie and Letiecq (2004) suggest that it is not surprising that couples may want to avoid emphasizing race as a factor in their marriages, yet more data is needed to explore and address more fully the significance of racial identity for both partners in interracial marriages. Similarly, Tucker (2013) finds that while certain factors such as age, gender, and education do influence attitudes towards interracial marriage, the most influential predictor is in fact race. Additionally, Tucker suggests that blacks are significantly more likely to approve of and support interracial marriages compared to non-blacks, which supports not only the idea of a racial divide between blacks and non-blacks, but also the idea that non-blacks (whites in particular) continue to express negative views towards engaging in interracial partnerships (2013:31). While each of these studies have made pertinent contributions to the literature on interracial relationships and dating, none of these studies solely focus on identity processes and racial identity as being important to

the individual. If racial identity is important to the individual, then this will also be important to the partnership and sustaining healthy interracial contact.

3.3 Hypotheses

Having discussed the relevance of both intergroup contact theory (IGT) and social identity theory (SIT) in interracial relations, especially partnerships, the remainder of this section explores their potential implications for racial centrality. Partnerships (in general) are important because of the implied sustainability of the partnership itself. Thus, if being in a partnership provides sustained contact, more so than not being in any kind of relationship, then being in an interracial partnership will provide plenty of opportunities for sustained interracial and or intergroup contact. In doing so, this will also provide the opportunity for boundary construction and maintenance, as informed by social identity theory. Although previous research does not mention this explicitly, it does attempt to address the idea of being in a sustained partnership and how this can provide these sorts of opportunities to the individuals within the partnership.

To understand how social identity theory fits within the theoretical framework of this relationship, it must be clearly understood how this theory deals with symbolic boundaries and how these may be defined within an interracial partnership. According to Killian (2001), one's own racial identity within an interracial relationship constitutes an important symbolic boundary which allows partners to negotiate their racial differences, thereby affecting one's own racial identity. A recent study by Ross and Woodley (2019) also looked at how participants in an interracial marriage talked and thought about race, especially in terms of their feelings of connection or disconnection to their own racial groups, further suggesting the underlying importance of racial identity in defining

symbolic boundaries in such interracial contexts. The suggested findings from these studies draw on the theoretical processes outlined in social identity theory.

It follows then that if individuals construct their identities through affiliations with social groups via the construction and maintenance of symbolic boundaries, then more interracial interactions should further emphasize how different oneself is in terms of race, thus propelling one's race into the foreground and increasing its level of importance to one's sense of identity. In this way, interracial partnerships should provide numerous opportunities for constructing and maintaining these boundaries, leading to greater racial centrality, as summarized in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1_A

H_{1A}: Being in interracial relationships will be positively related to the three different dimensions that comprise individual racial centrality: prominence, salience, and group identification.

While social identity theory's focus on opportunities for boundary construction and maintenance suggests this general positive association, other processes described by intergroup contact theory may simultaneously be at work that complicate this relationship. According to Pettigrew (1998), optimal intergroup contact (or positive contact) requires time for cross-group relationships to develop. Intergroup contact theory can help shed light on these dynamics by showcasing how, within an interracial partnership, individuals have more opportunities for optimal intergroup contact to occur than those not in partnerships. If this holds true, then optimal intergroup contact does not

end or begin with the partnership or marriage, and positive contact may happen both before and during the partnership or marriage. Intergroup contact theory may therefore help supplement and potentially counteract the notions set forth by social identity theory. If being in an interracial relationship helps promote positive out-group attitudes and trust, this may make it more difficult for the boundary constructing processes of social identity theory to work in the context of interracial relationships. An individual who draws and defines racial differences using symbolic boundaries between in-groups and out-groups will likely have a more difficult time evaluating their own in-group as more positive relative to out-groups if they begin to see out-groups more positively. If the underlying process of boundary construction and maintenance is weakened in this way, it may consequently weaken rather than strengthen the clarity of such racial boundaries. In this way, in contrast to the predictions of social identity theory, interracial relationships should produce less rather than more racial centrality. This alternative hypothesis is expressed as follows:

Hypothesis 1_B

H_{1B}: Being in interracial relationships will be negatively related to the three different dimensions that comprise individual racial centrality: prominence, salience, and group identification.

As discussed in the literature review, different dimensions of racial centrality must be taken into consideration when looking at how interracial partnerships may affect racial centrality. Because each of the three different concepts discussed (prominence,

salience, and group identification) measures and refers to a different dimension of racial centrality, the magnitude of the effects of interracial partnerships on individual racial centrality may differ for each of these dimensions.

Considering that social identity theory deals with symbolic boundary construction, and how racial identity becomes more centralized as a result of drawing and defining these symbolic boundaries, then it would follow that being in an interracial partnership makes individuals more aware of these boundaries, and in turn, more aware of differences based on racial background. Although interracial partnerships will have some effect on all three dimensions of racial centrality, it may affect racial salience most directly, because this process directly deals with awareness of one's racial identity. If being in an interracial relationship makes an individual more aware of racial differences between themselves and their partner, then this makes it easier to invoke one's racial identity. Therefore, the effects of interracial partnerships are most directly related to racial awareness, or in this case, the dimension of salience.

Similarly, in looking at intergroup contact theory and its alternative hypothesis, the more an individual interacts with others from different racial backgrounds, or those from out-groups, the less likely they are to construct boundaries separating themselves from others. Intergroup contact theory complicates the boundary construction process of social identity theory by providing more opportunities to create positive evaluations of others, leading to less of an ability to evaluate one's own group as relatively better than these others, and this results in less awareness of evaluative differences between one's in-group and out-groups, thereby decreasing awareness by a greater magnitude than if the intergroup contact was less sustained (e.g., in friendships or casual intergroup

interactions). Because again this deals directly with awareness of boundaries between oneself and others, salience is the most prominent dimension of racial centrality. These effects of interracial partnerships on racial centrality will not have as much strength on the dimensions of prominence and group identification, as these dimensions do not deal directly with awareness. Therefore, I expect that the effects of interracial partnerships will be strongest for the dimension of salience, followed by prominence and group identification. This is expressed by the following alternative hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2

H₂: The effects of interracial partnerships on racial centrality will be stronger for the dimension of salience relative to prominence and group identification.

Cross-group comparisons of racial groups also suggest that those who tend to deal with greater racial adversity have higher racial centrality (Charmaraman and Grossman 2010). Studies have found that adolescents of color who have faced racial discrimination and racial adversity tend to place a greater importance on their racial identity than their white counterparts (e.g., Charmaraman and Grossman 2008; Herman 2004), with African Americans reporting the highest levels of importance for racial identity (Jaret and Reitzes 1999). Other studies suggest that minority racial groups tend to develop their racial identities earlier in life due to facing higher levels of racial adversity and this may contribute to the overall importance these groups place on racial identity (Brown et al. 2011).

In their study of racial minority groups, Charmaraman and Grossman (2010) found that black and Hispanic/Latino participants reported the highest levels of centrality (measured as importance of race and ethnicity to an individual's identity), while Asian participants reported significantly lower levels, followed by multiracial participants with the lowest levels reported. These findings are consistent with previous research that found a stronger sense of ethnic identity among African Americans and Latinos, followed by Asians and multiethnic adolescents (Pellebon 2000). Shih and Sanchez (2005) also found that for multiracial participants, ambiguity about one's own racial identity and racial group membership, or lack of belonging to a well-defined racial community, may lower the importance of racial identity for these individuals. To further add nuance to this relationship, researchers have found that some Asians are more likely than other racial minority groups to identify with multiple racial groups. This includes mainly East Asians from areas such as China, Korea, and Japan, and excludes those mainly from South Asia, such as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. This is possible because of some Asians' abilities to experience honorary whiteness on account of a combination of both lighter skin color and higher social status compared to other Asians and other racial minority groups (e.g., Bonilla-Silva 2010; Gullickson and Morning 2011; Shiao 2017).

Honorary whiteness is a term that refers to the special condition where a non-white may be considered of higher rank within a racial hierarchy that has historically reserved the highest status for whites only. Lee and Bean (2012) find that boundaries of whiteness are beginning to expand to include new non-white groups such as Asians and Hispanics/Latinos, with Asians being the most widely accepted among non-white groups. Asians are more likely to experience honorary whiteness than any other racial minority

group, and because of this, they may face less discrimination and therefore, have lower racial centrality among minorities. This can have implications for the process of othering whereby a racial minority feels like an “other” or an outsider to their own racial group. Honorary whiteness can help explain lower centrality in terms of this process. Honorary whiteness can make certain members of racial minority groups, such as light-skinned Asians, feel like they belong to the majority and so, there is less of a sense of otherness. It is important to note, however, that Asians still experience discrimination, just somewhat less so than other racial minorities due to this access to honorary whiteness.

Based on these findings, those who have had a history of facing adversity due to their race/ethnicity, such as people who are black and Hispanic/Latino, should report higher levels of racial centrality. Additionally, an individual who has an ambiguous racial identity, or deals with the underlying complexity of being a part of multiple racial groups will likely report lower levels of racial centrality. Among those who historically are part of the multiracially self-identified population are individuals who are part-Asian, further suggesting that Asians will likely report lower levels of racial centrality. In looking at whites, previous studies on the importance of whiteness have suggested that approximately one-third of whites have a strong white racial identity (in terms of connection to their race) and nearly three-fourths of whites place some level of importance on their racial identity (Croll 2007), although the level of importance is found to be significantly lower than other racial groups (Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll 2009). Thus, it is expected that these individuals will have reported lower levels of racial centrality due to historically lower chances of racial adversity and discrimination, as well

as lack of ambiguity and complexity with their racial identities. This is expressed by the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3

H₃: Compared to whites, African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos will report the highest levels of racial centrality, followed by Asians.

Interracial partnerships can serve as a message of hope for a post-racial society. Relationships between two individuals of different races have the potential to signal the idea that racial barriers are beginning to disappear and that the act of crossing racial borders is no longer being considered taboo (Childs 2007). Previous markers of a possible post-racial society included Obama's presidency, which acted as a tangible sign of social progress given the historic oppression African Americans have had to contend with (Hunt and Wilson 2009). Other historic markers, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*, have helped to signal the possibility that racial discrimination may be slowly diminishing in strength, although the effects and the degree to which these occur are not easily noticeable. As interracial partnerships continue to increase in number, it is important to look at how these partnerships can affect the individuals involved, especially in terms of their status within the pre-existing racial hierarchy in the U.S. Understanding the role racial hierarchies play in structuring and representing the social disadvantage and perceived privilege experienced by diverse racial groups (see

Quiros and Dawson 2013) is essential to exploring how interracial partnerships may dampen the effects on racial centrality for certain racial minority groups.

Racial hierarchies are important because they establish differences in status between racial groups. These differences are defined by race, in a way where being at the top or bottom of the racial hierarchy can make all the difference in terms of access to resources and opportunities, both economic and social. These differences are further defined by class status (what economic class an individual belongs to) and racial social status (at what level in the racial hierarchy is their race). In the United States, the existing racial hierarchy is based on a past history of enslavement and racial oppression, with African Americans at the bottom, and white, European Americans at the top. In between, are Asians and Hispanics/Latinos, with Asians being the closest in status to whites, due to honorary whiteness. Song (2004) explains that in the past twenty years or so, social psychologists have been researching models of racial identity based on the experiences of African Americans from the perspective of being at the bottom of a racial hierarchy. Perhaps then, racial hierarchies may provide some insight into how racial identities are affected by interracial partnerships, especially between that of white and black partners. Lyle (2014) suggests that racial cues, or subtle cues that can happen often between interracial partners, can reveal how a racial hierarchy affects that relationship. For instance, a black partner may give the cue that they want to be seen as less than black and more equal to their partner, which shows how the racial hierarchy essentially governs their thinking as partners in an interracial partnership. In terms of interracial partnerships, racial hierarchies may serve to function as a mediator between both partners.

Being in an interracial partnership may have additional effects on racial centrality by conditioning the relationship between racial group identities and centrality. The degree to which an interracial partnership may dampen these effects depends on the race in question, however. Consider Asians, who receive racial discrimination from whites and other non-Asians, but to a lesser extent than their Hispanic/Latino and African American counterparts. For Asians, honorary whiteness helps to provide a status approaching, but not equal to that of whites. Shiao (2017) suggests that the positive effects of honorary whiteness for Asians allows them to reposition themselves on the white side of a white/Asian boundary. Although not all of Asians may be able to take advantage of honorary whiteness (Bonilla-Silva 2010), membership in this racial grouping still positions Asians higher up on the hierarchy on average and closer to whites than any other racial group. This is due to both their accessibility to honorary whiteness and what is known as the “model minority” myth (Chao, Chiu and Lee 2010). According to this stereotype, Asian Americans are often perceived as a high-achieving, hardworking, and more law-abiding than other racial minority groups. Gans (2012) suggests that through a process of whitening, certain racial minorities are cast into specific higher-status roles and this significantly has an impact on not only their racial status, but their performance as a member of a specific racial group within the American racial hierarchy, such as the case with Asians being casted as model minorities.

Honorary whiteness not only provides certain individual and partnership benefits, but also can dampen the effects of racial discrimination and lead to a more “color-blind” perspective. Because Asians experience racial discrimination to a lesser degree than Hispanic/Latinos and African Americans, they are more likely to believe that there may

be such a thing as a post-racial society (Vo 2010). Post-racial attitudes, which involve increasingly positive perceptions of interracial relations, especially among Asians, tend to focus on post-racial language such as “racism is a thing of the past” or “racism is not as bad as it used to be” (Lee 2011). Especially for those Asians in interracial partnerships and who are able to take advantage of honorary whiteness, racism may indeed seem to be a thing of the past in their minds, although racism is still very much a reality (Fritz and Stone 2009). In terms of racial centrality, such Asians may therefore think about their racial identity as less important when they are able to enjoy the prestige of honorary whiteness. I therefore predict that for Asians, racial identity may be less important in an interracial partnership because of the ability to apply honorary whiteness, or their casting as a model minority, which will both have dampening effects on racial centrality.

Hispanics/Latinos also have been shown to benefit to some extent from honorary whiteness (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Huante (2021) finds that new race and class formations are developed through casting and marking a majority of Hispanics/Latinos as honorary white, while Delgado (2016) finds that certain Hispanics/Latinos are able to navigate racism and racial hierarchies by being casted as token minorities, which is similar to the model minority myth. For Hispanics/Latinos in interracial partnerships with whites, being labeled as an honorary white brings them closer in status to their partners. For those Hispanics/Latinos in interracial partnerships with other racial minority individuals, their status is equal or perhaps even greater due to honorary whiteness. However, for Hispanics/Latinos, their honorary whiteness is less overall than for Asians for several reasons. For instance, many Hispanics/Latinos have darker-skinned features and as such, are not able to take advantage of honorary whiteness (Hollinger 2003). Discrimination

against darker-skinned Hispanics/Latinos has been associated with lower wages, job discrimination, and higher rates of depression (see Araújo and Borrell 2006). Language for Hispanics/Latinos may also serve as a barrier to repositioning themselves on the white side of a white/Hispanic-Latino boundary. For those who are able to take advantage of honorary whiteness, they are still less likely than Asians to believe in a post-racial society when in an interracial partnership, due to these barriers such as language and forms of discrimination, which have much stronger effects than honorary whiteness does.

Because of the long history of racial discrimination and prejudice against African Americans, even when in an interracial relationship, they are much less likely to believe in the notion of a color blind society, or a post-racial society. For instance, Childs (2007) finds that interracial partnerships differ when one of the partners is African American. In looking at both whites and blacks, and both intraracial (same-race) and interracial partnerships, Childs finds that a history of racial adversity, prejudice, and discrimination can have negative consequences on the partnership in regards to disagreements about post-racial attitudes and the possibility of a post-racial society in the U.S. I expect that for African Americans, the dampening effects of interracial partnerships on racial centrality will be weaker, relative to Hispanics/Latinos and Asians. Although an interracial partnership may provide hope for a post-racial society, African Americans are less likely to believe in this notion. Many African Americans in interracial partnerships may also find it hard to agree with the notion of a “color-blind” society when they feel as if their partners are higher up in racial status than they are, or when discrimination against themselves occurs, but not against their partner (Fritz and Stone 2009). Discrimination

against African Americans in interracial partnerships with whites tends to occur on a much larger scale than their white partners (Wise 2010).

After looking at how interracial partnerships might dampen the effects of individual racial centrality for the three different racial minority groups in question, I believe the dampening effects will be strongest for Asians, followed by Hispanics/Latinos, and lastly, African Americans. This is outlined in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4

H₄: The effect of interracial partnerships on racial centrality will be dampened (lessened in strength) depending on one's racial group. This dampening effect will be stronger for Asians relative to Hispanics/Latinos and African Americans.

The theoretical framework for hypotheses one through four is expressed in Figure 1, followed by Figure 2 which breaks down the process of hypothesis 2 in further detail.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Theoretical Framework

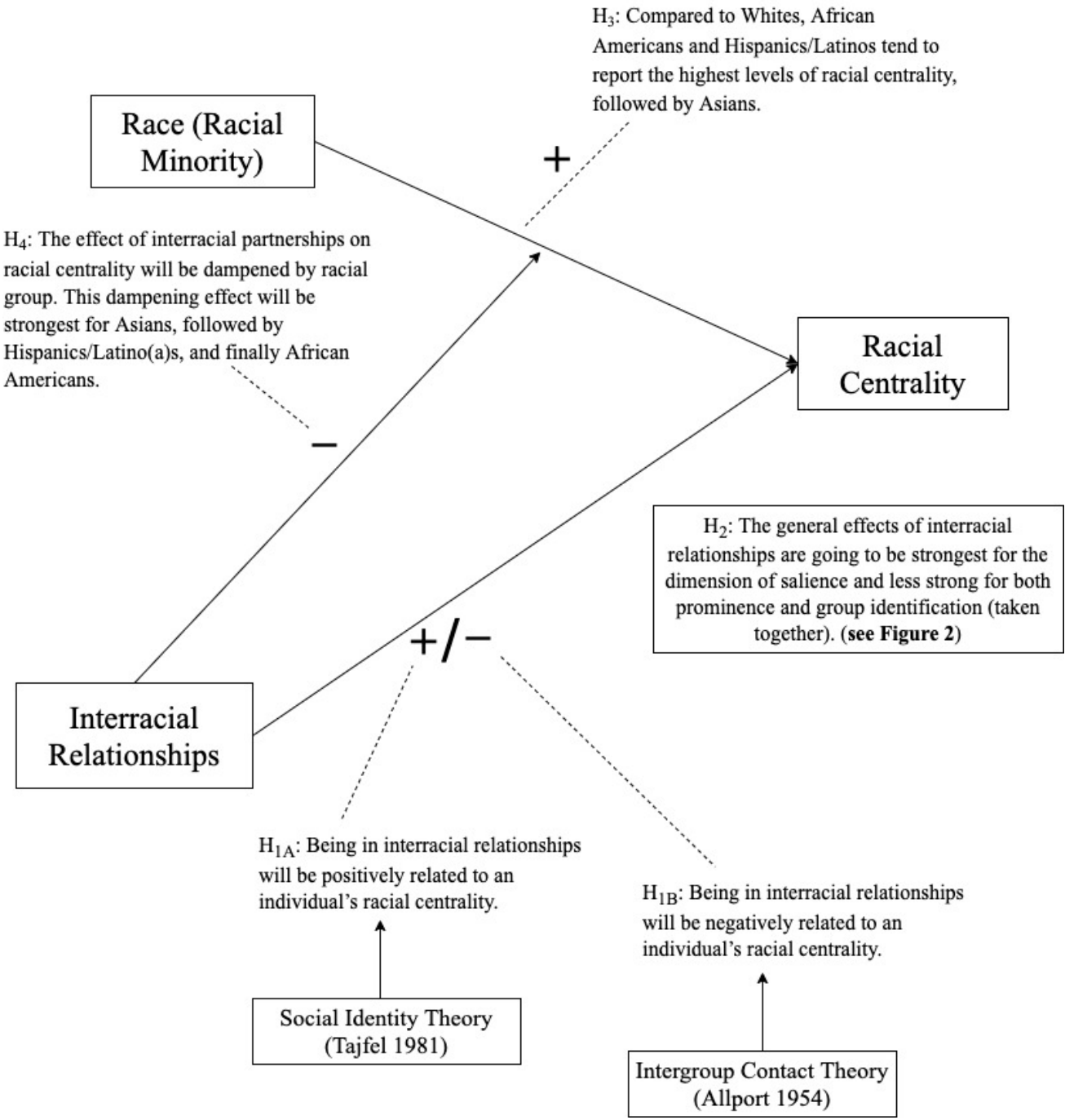
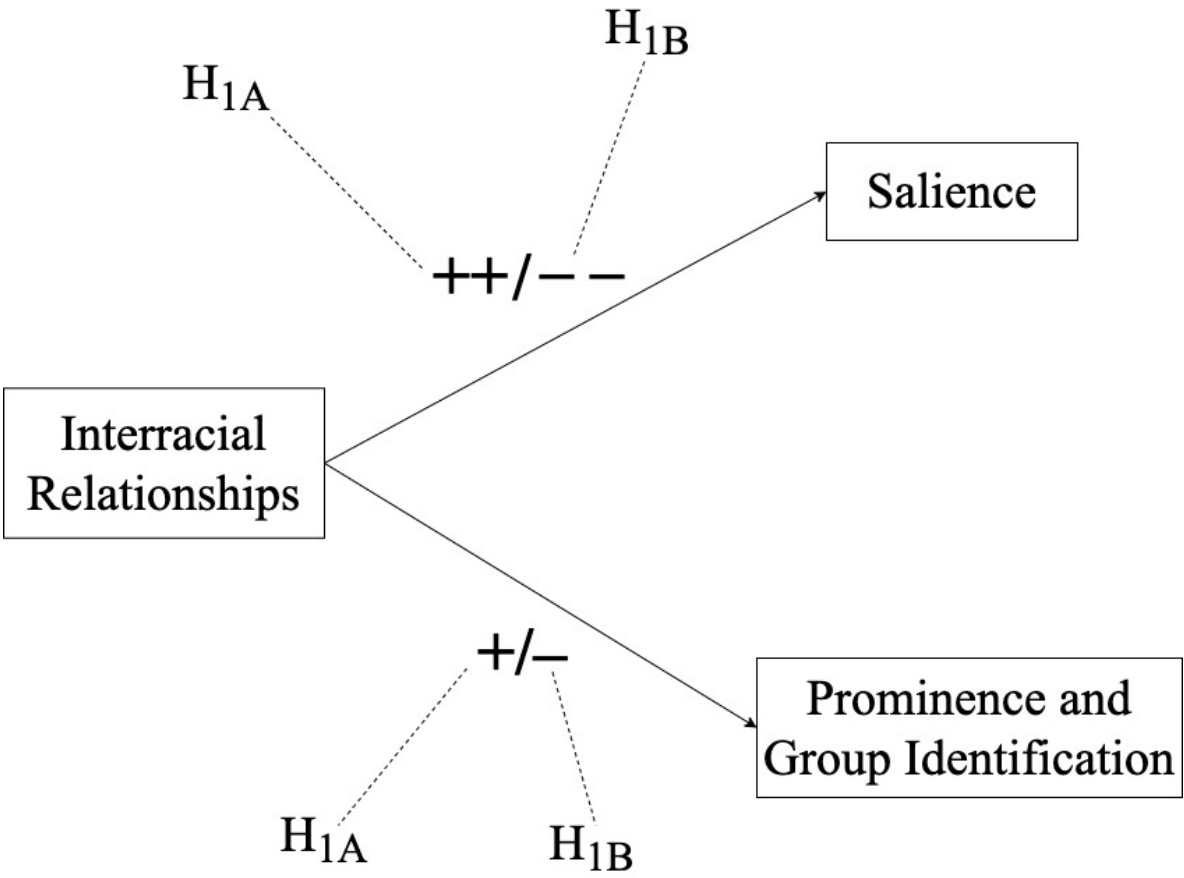


Figure 2: A breakdown of Hypothesis 2 from Conceptual Model



NOTE: This is a breakdown of hypothesis 2 from Figure 1. This shows more closely the effects of interracial partnerships on the three dimensions of racial centrality: salience vs. prominence and group identification.

Previous studies have also considered several demographic and background variables in their analyses of racial identity. In terms of gender, racial centrality is generally greater for women. This is especially true when women are part of a racial minority group. Charmaraman and Grossman (2010) found that female participants, particularly African American women, tend to place more importance on their racial background than did their male counterparts. These findings are consistent with previous

research that emphasizes a higher tendency for females to be socialized into maintaining relationships and kinship ties based on their racial backgrounds (Cross and Madson 1997), making racial identity all the more important. Studies that have considered age have found that younger ages are generally associated with having high levels of racial centrality due to constantly shifting and expanding symbolic boundaries as a result of identity exploration, particularly during key identity development stages in a young person's life (e.g. Lichter and Qian 2018; Morning and Saperstein 2018). For instance, in looking at consistency between self-identification and racial background of parents for bi-racial (both white and black) adolescents, Gullickson (2019) found that their racial identities were not consistent from ages 18-25 and shifted at points between white, black, and both. The importance of racial identity for adolescents also tends to shift depending on how much perceived discrimination they face, as negative experiences are typically linked to racial minorities, especially African Americans (Seaton, Yip and Sellers 2009).

As for educational attainment, studies have found that for certain races, higher educational attainment is associated with lower levels of racial centrality. Hurtado, Alvarado and Guillermo-Wann (2016) found that college students have a higher tendency to have shifting and changing racial identities, due to multiple experiences involving race on a college campus which results in lower racial centrality. On the other end, Hoffman et al. (2017) found that racial centrality from elementary through high school remained stable and did not decrease until college and young adulthood years. Other studies on educational attainment and importance of racial identity have found that race stereotypes that occur in academic settings, can greatly affect an individual's racial centrality. Okeke et al. (2009) found that among African American students, academic race stereotypes

were linked to negative academic performance and competence, which were also linked to lower racial centrality.

Studies that have looked at income and socioeconomic status have found that individuals with high income levels or a high socioeconomic status overall place less of an importance on race in their lives, which may also result in less importance placed on their racial identities specifically. Individuals with a high socioeconomic status are found to have a more nuanced understanding of their racial identities and why they matter, allowing these individuals to define and reshape their identities in a way that is different from previous generations who have dealt with socioeconomic status and class differences (Doyle and Kao 2007). Similarly, political party affiliation may matter as individuals from a more conservative political background may have less of a nuanced understanding of racial identities and may indeed only focus on a single aspect of identity: race. Finally, in terms of partnership happiness and satisfaction, it is important to consider whether these two aspects play a role in the importance of racial identity for an individual. If partnership happiness and/or satisfaction are high, the individual may not feel a need to focus on individual racial identity, and thus, may result in lower racial centrality. However, this could be the other way around. Therefore, both aspects should be looked at in terms of their effects.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA AND METHODS

This study uses the Portraits of American Life Study (PALS) dataset from the American Religion Data Archives (ARDA). PALS is an extensive, national-level panel study focused on religion in the U.S., with a special focus on capturing racial and ethnic diversity for individuals and families across their lives. PALS is unique because it includes questions of individual racial identity, which previous surveys and questionnaires lack. It currently includes two waves, collected in both 2006 and 2012.

For the current study, only wave two was used because it was the only wave that considered spousal race and the importance of race and racial identity in partnerships. After excluding missing cases from the sample, the full sample size for wave two was 1,221 cases. However, this sample size was notably smaller after excluding those respondents who are neither married nor unmarried and living with a partner, that is, those who are not in partnerships. Additionally, I dropped those racial minority groups whose sample size is too small to include in the analyses, which I expand upon in my discussion and conclusion sections. The final reduced sample size was 672 cases. Although the sample size was significantly reduced in size (roughly half of the original number of respondents) largely due to the cases of people who are single, the number of cases available was still sufficient to perform analyses.

I ran all my models on the full sample (N=1,221; original sample with all respondents included) to ensure if my results were robust. It follows that if interracial partnerships have a strong impact on racial centrality for those in interracial partnerships as compared to same-race partnerships, then it may also make an impact compared to

those not in partnerships more generally. It makes sense that the effect will be strong for both those who are married and those who are unmarried and living together.

I originally had proposed running an ordinal logistic regression, using Stata's ologit command, on my models. I proceeded to check my analyses further with the Brant test, or the parallel lines assumption test for ordinal logistic regressions. Brant gives tests for each individual independent variable, to see if the assumptions for ologit have been met. A significant test statistic provides evidence that the parallel regression assumption has been violated. If the assumptions of the ordered logit model are met, then the coefficients (other than the constants) should be the same for each logistic regression, i.e. the regression lines will be parallel, differing only in their intercepts (Williams 2018:9). Running the test showed that one of the three ordinal logistic models (for racial salience) did not fit the requirements. Therefore, I conducted an additional multinomial logistic regression instead (using Stata's mlogit command). This is similar to doing ordinal logistic regression, except that it is assumed that there is no order to the categories for the outcome variable (i.e., the categories are treated as if they were nominal).

4.1 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for the current study are as follows: racial prominence, racial group identification, and racial salience. In the PALS dataset, prominence is represented by the question, "when you think about yourself, how important to you is being [respondent race] to your sense of who you are?" This is a categorical variable measured by the following responses: "not important at all", "only a little important", "somewhat important", and "very important". Group identification is represented by the question, "how closely connected do you feel to your racial group?" This is also a

categorical variable measured by the following responses: “not close at all”, “somewhat close”, “very close” and “extremely close”. Salience is represented by the question, “how often, if at all, do you think about or are you aware of what race you are?” While also ordinal, this variable consisted of five possible responses: “never”, “less than monthly”, “about once a month”, “about once a week”, and “about every day”. I recoded the categories of “about once a week” and “about once a month” into a singular category of “weekly to monthly”, to make sure each of the dependent variables measured the same number of categories (four); this combination also makes more sense logically, than combining any other two categories together. I also reverse coded the categories in each of the original dependent variables so that higher centrality would refer to a higher number.

4.2 Independent Variables

To account for those who are in interracial partnerships, a dichotomous variable for interracial partnerships was created with 1 = yes, in an interracial partnership and 0 = no, not in an interracial partnership. I coded this as 1 if the respondent indicated that themselves and their partner have different races from each other. It is important to note that the question about partner race was posed to the respondent, not the partner themselves. From this coding, 103 out of 672 respondents were found to be in an interracial partnership.

Another independent variable for analyses is respondent race, which includes the categories “Black/African American”, “Hispanic/Latino”, and “Asian/Asian American”. These categories will be analyzed in comparison to the reference category, White/Caucasian/Angelo. I dropped those categories whose sample size is too small,

which included the following categories: “Pacific Islander”, “Native American”, “Mixed Race”, and “other”.

4.3 Control Variables

Aside from the typical demographic variables considered and controlled for in most studies, which include age, gender, education, and socio-economic status (measured as level of household income), other variables were controlled for that have been examined in previous studies, with regards to racial centrality. This includes controlling for the variable of marital satisfaction, as represented by two different variables from the study: partnership happiness and partnership satisfaction. Partnership happiness is measured using a seven-point Likert scale which asks, “all things considered, how would you describe your marriage/relationship? Would you say it is: “completely unhappy”, “mostly unhappy”, “somewhat unhappy”, “neither happy nor unhappy”, “somewhat happy”, “mostly happy,” or “completely happy”. The lower categories for unhappiness had a very low case size, so I recoded the seven categories into only three categories: “unhappy”, “neither happy nor unhappy”, and “happy”. Partnership satisfaction is measured using a five-point Likert scale and asks, “How satisfied are you with the love and affection you receive from your [spouse/partner]?” and considers the following categories: “completely dissatisfied”, “somewhat dissatisfied”, “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”, “somewhat satisfied”, or “completely satisfied”. Similar to partnership happiness, the lower categories for dissatisfied had a very low case size, so I combined the five categories into just three categories: “dissatisfied”, “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”, and “satisfied.”

I also controlled for whether an individual is married or unmarried but living with a partner. This considers the following possible categories: “married”, “living with unmarried partner”, “widowed”, “divorced”, “annulled marriage”, and “separated or never married” (which is coded as being single for purposes of analyses). This variable was recoded, and cases were dropped for the categories which indicated a “single status” for the respondent. This included: “widowed”, “divorced”, “annulled marriage”, and “separated or never married”. In doing so, a new variable was created, which considers only those cases where respondents are married or living with an unmarried partner. This was the variable ultimately used to help determine the number of respondents in the sample of 672 respondents.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 (shown on next page) details summary statistics for the variables used in the study. In terms of the dependent variables, they are very close in terms of “importance” as measured by an average mean of 2.3-2.6. For instance, the average respondent from the sample of those in interracial partnerships find prominence to be “somewhat important” to their racial identities, while closeness to their racial group (group identification) is considered “somewhat close” if not “very close”, and lastly, the frequency of awareness of their race as part of their racial identity is on average, “weekly to monthly”. This suggests that for the majority of respondents, each of these dimensions of racial identity are important in their own respective ways.

Looking at interracial partnerships, 103 (or roughly about 15%) of the 672 respondents are in an interracial partnership. In terms of the racial backgrounds of respondents, these can be compared to numbers reported nationally in the 2010 U.S. Census for each racial group. Roughly around 61% of the respondents self-identify as White/Caucasian/Angelo, which is slightly fewer than the 72% that self-identified nationally for the 2010 U.S. Census. Roughly 13% of the sample identify as being Black/African American, which mirrors the 13% identified in the 2010 Census. About 17% of the sample identify as Hispanic/Latino which also matches the most recent U.S. trends of this population increasing over the last decade, with the 2010 Census reporting Hispanics/Latinos accounting for 16% of the population. Finally, about 9% of the sample self-identified as Asian/Asian American, which is larger than the 5% reported in the 2010 Census.

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Variables Used in the Study (N=672)

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev	Min	Max
Racial Prominence	2.61	1.20	1	4
Racial Group Identification	2.60	0.94	1	4
Racial Saliency	2.33	1.16	1	4
Interracial Partnership	0.15	0.36	0	1
Race				
White/Caucasian/Anglo	0.61	0.49	0	1
Black/African American	0.13	0.34	0	1
Hispanic/Latino(a)	0.17	0.37	0	1
Asian/Asian American	0.09	0.28	0	1
Partner Happiness	2.83	0.53	1	3
Partner Satisfaction	2.72	0.66	1	3
Living with Unmarried Partner	0.13	0.33	0	1
Education				
Less than high school	0.06	0.24	0	1
GED or high school diploma	0.30	0.46	0	1
Vocational/technical diploma/associate's	0.21	0.41	0	1
Bachelor's degree	0.25	0.44	0	1
Graduate degree	0.17	0.38	0	1
Age				
20 to 29 years old	0.08	0.27	0	1
30 to 44 years old	0.34	0.47	0	1
45 to 59 years old	0.32	0.47	0	1
60 to 74 years old	0.21	0.40	0	1
75 years and older	0.05	0.22	0	1
Gender				
Female	0.58	0.49	0	1
Male	0.42	0.49	0	1
Income				
<\$5,000-\$24,999	0.14	0.35	0	1
\$25,000-\$49,999	0.20	0.40	0	1
\$50,000-\$99,999	0.36	0.48	0	1
\$100,000-\$149,999	0.18	0.38	0	1
\$150,000->\$200,000	0.13	0.33	0	1
Political Party				
Neither	0.14	0.35	0	1
Democrat	0.51	0.50	0	1
Republican	0.35	0.48	0	1

Turning now to control variables, respondents' partnership happiness and partnership satisfaction both leans towards being happy and satisfied with the partnership. In addition, a minority of respondents were living in unmarried partnerships (most were married). As for educational attainment, the majority of respondents who are in partnerships have at least a vocational/technical diploma or associates degree. The

smallest percentage is less than high school (about 6% of the sample). Most of those in partnerships are between 30 and 59 years of age. The majority of respondents are female, with around 42% of the sample being male and 57% being female. For household income, the largest group of respondents can be found within the “\$50,000-\$100,000” income bracket, suggesting that many of respondents in partnerships are most likely middle class. And lastly, in terms of political party preference, around 51% are Democrat, with 35% being Republican, and roughly 14% of the sample preferring neither party. In comparison to statistics from the 2010 U.S. Census on political party preference and race, most minority racial groups can be found in support of the “Democrat” political party, while the majority of whites are found to be “Republican”. This can help provide insight into how possibly being aligned with a certain political party can correlate with one’s racial group, and ultimately, may contribute to the importance individuals place on their racial identities. These are just some highlights and key findings from the summary statistics table.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Independent Variables Used in the Study (N=672)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Racial Prominence	1.00						
2. Racial Group Identification	0.45***	1.00					
3. Racial Saliency	0.48***	0.31***	1.00				
4. Interracial Partnership	-0.02	-0.17***	-0.05	1.00			
5. Black/African American	0.31***	0.22***	0.25***	-0.01	1.00		
6. Hispanic/Latino(a)	0.31***	0.06	0.2***	0.15***	-0.18***	1.00	
7. Asian/Asian American	0.12**	-0.17***	0.1**	0.09*	-0.18***	-0.18***	1.00

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

In terms of correlations (see table 2 above), none of the independent variables are highly correlated, suggesting that there are no multicollinearity problems. I also ran correlations on the control variables and similarly, no high correlations (nothing above 0.6). As for the racial centrality variables (my dependent variables), these are all significantly but only moderately correlated, meaning that they overlap but still measure different things, which is what I argued previously in my theoretical framework.

5.2 Ordinal Logistic Regressions

Table 3 shows the ordinal logistic regression for the reduced sample (see Appendix B for odds ratios and p-values). The main effects of interracial partnerships are non-significant in all but one model for the reduced sample. In the group identification model, it has both a negative and significant effect. When it comes to racial prominence and saliency, these main effects are not significant. However, the interaction effects are negative and significant in these two models, suggesting that the negative effects of interracial partnerships for racial prominence and saliency occurs only among Asians/Asian Americans. The interaction effects are non-significant for all other minority groups. When looking at the race variables independently, the effects are strongest for

blacks/African Americans, as indicated by higher magnitudes on the coefficients (3.07 for prominence; 1.53 for group identification; 1.95 for salience), followed by Hispanics/Latinos, and finally, Asians. Looking closer, the independent direct effect of being Asian loses its significance for group identification because the magnitude of the coefficient is very small (0.12). The Betas—the standardized coefficients in each model—are y-standardized in accordance with what Mood recommends in order to allow for more accurate comparability between the different models. Mood (2010) explains, “because y-standardization divides coefficients by the estimated standard deviation, it neutralizes this increase and rescales coefficients to express the standard-deviation-unit change in y^* for a one-unit change in the independent variable” (2010:73). It is also important to note that all tests of significance are two-tailed.

Table 3 (continued): Ordinal Logistic Regression for Dependent Variables on Reduced Sample (N=672)

	Racial Salience		
	b	s.e.	β
Interracial Partnership	-0.29	0.29	-0.14
Race (Excluded: "White/Caucasian/Anglo")			
Black/African American	1.95***	0.28	0.95
Hispanic/Latino(a)	1.70***	0.27	0.83
Asian/Asian American	1.40***	0.32	0.68
Interactions			
Interracial Partnership x Black/African American	-0.60	0.65	-0.29
Interracial Partnership x Hispanic/Latino(a)	-0.55	0.49	-0.27
Interracial Partnership x Asian/Asian American	-1.55*	0.68	-0.76
Partner Happiness	-0.07	0.16	-0.04
Partner Satisfaction	0.00	0.13	0.00
Living with unmarried partner	0.25	0.24	0.12
Education Level (Excluded: "< high school")			
GED or high school diploma	0.54	0.37	0.27
Vocational/technical diploma or associate's	0.68	0.38	0.33
Bachelor's	1.00*	0.39	0.49
Graduate degree	1.06*	0.41	0.52
Age (Excluded: "20 to 29 years old")			
30 to 44 years old	-0.36	0.29	-0.18
45 to 59 years old	-0.43	0.30	-0.21
60 to 74 years old	-0.89**	0.31	-0.43
75 years and older	-1.14*	0.44	-0.56
Male	0.40*	0.15	0.19
Income (Excluded: "<\$5,000-\$24,999")			
\$25,000-\$49,999	-0.13	0.28	-0.06
\$50,000-\$99,999	-0.18	0.26	-0.09
\$100,000-\$149,999	-0.07	0.30	-0.03
\$150,000->\$200,000	0.00	0.33	0.00
Political Party (Excluded: "Neither")			
Democrat	-0.10	0.23	-0.05
Republican	-0.29	0.24	-0.14
Log Likelihood		-832.73	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Cutpoints not shown in the table

In terms of controls, having a bachelor's degree or higher education level is significant only for racial salience. The effect is positive for higher education levels, which suggests that the more educated a person is, the higher their racial salience. This is evidenced by not only the significance among the higher educated categories, but the increase in magnitude from a bachelor's degree (1.00) to a graduate level degree (1.06). When looking at age, the pattern is the opposite as it was for education, suggesting that the older a person is, the less salience they are likely to have. This is shown by the increasing negative magnitude from 60 to 74 years old (-0.89) to 75 years and older (-1.14). Turning to gender, being a male was significant only for group identification and salience. What is interesting between the two models, is that men tend to have higher salience than women, but lower group identification. This may suggest that men focus more on their racial background and racial identity, and less on being part of a group and identifying in such a way than women often do. For all three models, income and political party affiliation are non-significant, but also take note that perhaps if republican or democrat was used as a reference group, then there may be a significance. However, for the purposes of this study and staying true to what was asked in the original PALS survey, "neither" is used as the reference group. Interestingly, partner happiness and partner satisfaction were previously thought to have some sort of effect but are instead entirely non-significant across all three models.

After running an ordinal logistic regression on the reduced sample, another was run on the full sample to see how these two samples compare. Only the controls for partner happiness and satisfaction were excluded (as they would have registered as missing values for people not in a partnership). Table 4 shows the ordinal logistic

regression for the full sample (see Appendix C for odds ratios and p-values). The full sample was used in comparison to the reduced to allow for a fuller picture of what is going on. The results were nearly the same across all three models in terms of direction and significance of effects. The one exception was that the negative interaction between interracial partnerships and being Asian/Asian-American became marginally significant with a p-value of exactly 0.05, which was just above the $p < 0.05$ threshold for significance.

Table 4: Ordinal Logistic Regression for Dependent Variables on Full Sample (N=1221)

	Racial Prominence			Racial Group Identity		
	b	s.e.	β	b	s.e.	β
Interracial partnership	-0.12	0.27	-0.06	-0.61*	0.28	-0.32
Race (Excluded: "White/Caucasian/Anglo")						
Black/African American	2.73***	0.19	1.23	1.36***	0.16	0.70
Hispanic/Latino(a)	2.41***	0.20	1.09	0.78***	0.17	0.40
Asian/Asian American	1.99***	0.23	0.90	0.08	0.22	0.04
Interactions						
Interracial partnership x Black/African American	0.11	0.67	0.05	-0.51	0.60	-0.26
Interracial partnership x Hispanic/Latino(a)	-0.56	0.46	-0.25	-0.51	0.46	-0.26
Interracial partnership x Asian/Asian American	-1.46*	0.58	-0.66	-0.53	0.58	-0.28
Living with unmarried partner	-0.04	0.05	-0.02	-0.11*	0.04	-0.06
Education (Excluded: "< high school")						
GED or high school diploma	-0.47	0.27	-0.21	-0.10	0.22	-0.05
Vocational/technical diploma/associate's	-0.19	0.28	-0.08	-0.06	0.23	-0.03
Bachelor's	-0.32	0.28	-0.14	-0.26	0.24	-0.14
Graduate degree	0.01	0.30	0.00	-0.18	0.26	-0.09
Age (Excluded: "20 to 29 years old")						
30 to 44 years old	-0.03	0.18	-0.01	-0.06	0.18	-0.03
45 to 59 years old	0.25	0.19	0.11	0.10	0.17	0.05
60 to 74 years old	0.30	0.20	0.13	-0.04	0.19	-0.02
75 years and older	0.58*	0.27	0.26	0.37	0.25	0.19
Male	-0.23	0.12	-0.10	-0.26*	0.11	-0.13
Income (Excluded: "<\$5,000-\$24,999")						
\$25,000-\$49,999	-0.03	0.17	-0.01	0.08	0.15	0.04
\$50,000-\$99,999	-0.37*	0.17	-0.17	-0.07	0.16	-0.04
\$100,000-\$149,999	-0.33	0.22	-0.15	0.06	0.21	0.03
\$150,000->\$200,000	-0.47	0.25	-0.21	-0.59*	0.25	-0.30
Political Party (Excluded: "Neither")						
Democrat	-0.03	0.17	-0.01	0.29	0.16	0.15
Republican	0.12	0.19	0.05	0.30	0.18	0.16
Log Likelihood						
				-1391.36		-
						1531.94

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Cutpoints not shown in the table

Table 4 (continued): Ordinal Logistic Regression for Dependent Variables on Full Sample (N=1221)

	Racial Salience		
	b	s.e.	β
Interracial partnership	-0.33	0.28	-0.16
Race (Excluded: "White/Caucasian/Anglo")			
Black/African American	1.75***	0.17	0.87
Hispanic/Latino(a)	1.32***	0.18	0.66
Asian/Asian American	1.09***	0.23	0.54
Interactions			
Interracial partnership x Black/African American	-0.45	0.60	-0.23
Interracial partnership x Hispanic/Latino(a)	-0.27	0.45	-0.13
Interracial partnership x Asian/Asian American	-1.23	0.63	-0.61
Living with unmarried partner	-0.05	0.04	-0.02
Education (Excluded: "< high school")			
GED or high school diploma	-0.01	0.24	0.00
Vocational/technical diploma/associate's	0.28	0.25	0.14
Bachelor's	0.39	0.25	0.19
Graduate degree	0.48	0.27	0.24
Age (Excluded: "20 to 29 years old")			
30 to 44 years old	-0.26	0.17	-0.13
45 to 59 years old	-0.41*	0.17	-0.20
60 to 74 years old	-0.86***	0.19	-0.43
75 years and older	-0.51*	0.26	-0.25
Male	0.35**	0.11	0.18
Income (Excluded: "<\$5,000-\$24,999")			
\$25,000-\$49,999	-0.02	0.16	-0.01
\$50,000-\$99,999	0.03	0.16	0.01
\$100,000-\$149,999	0.12	0.21	0.06
\$150,000->\$200,000	0.13	0.25	0.06
Political Party (Excluded: "Neither")			
Democrat	0.14	0.16	0.07
Republican	-0.26	0.18	-0.13
Log Likelihood		-1542.27	

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Cutpoints not shown in the table

Next, Brant Tests were conducted on all three models on the reduced and full samples in order to test for the parallel lines assumption, which would help offer a more accurate analysis. After running a Brant test for significance, results indicate that, as with the reduced sample, the racial salience model in the full sample does not meet the parallel lines assumption for ordinal logistic regression.

5.3 Multinomial Logistic Regression

Table 5 shows the multinomial logistic regression for racial salience across all three categories of salience in the main sample comprising only respondents who were in partnerships. When looking at the multinomial logistic regression, we are comparing the effects of a variable on a particular outcome in a categorical dependent variable when compared to a reference category in the same dependent variable. These results are comparing the various levels of frequency with which people are aware of their race, as compared to the “never” category. According to the multinomial logistic regression, interracial partnerships have no significant independent effects on racial salience, which is consistent with the ordinal logistic regression models for salience. So, even after accounting for the fact that the parallel lines assumption was not met, the results are still pretty much the same for the direct effect (or lack thereof) of interracial partnerships. Furthermore, interracial partnerships seem to operate through racial identity, but only through Asians/Asian Americans. This effect for Asians/Asian Americans is only significant for the mildest form of racial salience (less than monthly) and it should be noted that this is a negative effect with a high magnitude (-2.45). Lastly, racial identity as an independent variable is significant for the highest level of salience (almost every day), when looking at the three minority group effects (i.e., being black, Hispanic/Latino, and

Asian). These effects are similar to the previous models where the strongest effects are for blacks (2.51), followed by Hispanics/Latinos (2.35), and finally, Asians (2.16).

Table 5: Multinomial Logistic Regression for Racial Salience Across All Three Categories (N=672)

Racial Salience	Less than monthly vs Never		Weekly to monthly vs Never		Almost every day vs Never	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
Interracial Partnership	0.29	0.76	-0.73	-1.20	-0.62	-0.92
Race (Excluded: "White/Caucasian/Anglo")						
Black/African American	-0.19	-0.39	0.82	1.61	2.51***	5.95
Hispanic/Latino(a)	0.15	0.33	1.42**	3.12	2.35***	5.65
Asian/Asian American	0.37	0.68	0.91	1.53	2.16***	4.14
Interactions						
Interracial Partnership x Black/African American	-0.60	-0.55	0.67	0.59	-0.44	-0.42
Interracial Partnership x Hispanic/Latino(a)	0.05	0.06	0.10	0.11	-0.28	-0.30
Interracial Partnership x Asian/Asian American	-2.45*	-2.35	-1.28	-1.08	-1.63	-1.48
Partner Happiness	0.18	0.73	-0.05	-0.19	-0.17	-0.67
Partner Satisfaction	0.03	0.14	-0.20	-0.92	0.10	0.47
Living with unmarried partner	-0.32	-0.88	0.29	0.75	0.23	0.61
Education Level (Excluded: "< high school")						
GED or high school diploma	1.36*	2.21	0.86	1.30	0.64	1.33
Vocational/technical diploma or associate's	1.40*	2.21	1.42*	2.09	0.80	1.56
Bachelor's	2.05**	3.19	2.19**	3.17	1.20*	2.20
Graduate degree	2.17**	3.26	1.94**	2.64	1.27*	2.17
Age (Excluded: "20 to 29 years old")						
30 to 44 years old	-0.56	-1.16	-1.15*	-2.29	-0.53	-1.05
45 to 59 years old	-0.53	-1.11	-1.30*	-2.54	-0.61	-1.18
60 to 74 years old	-0.69	-1.40	-1.73**	-3.19	-1.52**	-2.67
75 years and older	-1.05	-1.63	-2.83**	-3.08	-1.33	-1.82
Male	0.14	0.62	0.63*	2.38	0.60*	2.38
Income (Excluded: "<\$5,000-\$24,999")						
\$25,000-\$49,999	-0.31	-0.77	0.51	1.02	-0.25	-0.60
\$50,000-\$99,999	-0.26	-0.67	0.26	0.55	-0.28	-0.72
\$100,000-\$149,999	0.13	0.29	0.41	0.75	-0.04	-0.09
\$150,000->\$200,000	-0.45	-0.94	0.23	0.39	0.13	0.25
Political Party (Excluded: "Neither")						
Democrat	0.33	0.94	-0.26	-0.69	-0.01	-0.04
Republican	-0.06	-0.17	-0.70	-1.77	-0.30	-0.75
Constant	-1.70	-1.66	-0.67	-0.63	-1.15	-1.17

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Looking at controls, for education, it is significant across all three categories for salience, with the mildest category of salience being the most significant. Similar to the previous models, the magnitude for education positively increases from bachelor's (2.05) to graduate degree (2.17) and this increasing trend also occurs with the highest category of salience. What is interesting here, is that for the mid-level category of salience, the opposite effect occurs, where the effect increases in magnitude from vocational/technical diploma or associate degree to bachelor's, but then decreases slightly from bachelor's to graduate degree. As for age, the mid-level category of salience is the most significant, with an increasingly negative effect. For gender, the least significant category of salience is the mildest (less than monthly). Once again, income and political party are non-significant across all three categories for salience. Finally, both partner happiness and satisfaction are non-significant across all three categories.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

This study has provided a framework for looking at how interracial partnerships might affect racial centrality and in what ways racial centrality can operate within an interracial partnership. It was originally proposed, with Hypothesis 1_A, that being in interracial partnerships would be positively related to the three different dimensions that comprise individual racial centrality: prominence, salience, and group identification. Looking at the results, there is not enough evidence in favor of this hypothesis. Because the models show that it is not all positive across the three different dimensions, this cannot be proven. In fact, even though there is some significance for group identification (in the primary reduced size sample), all the coefficients for interracial partnerships (significant or not) are negative. This suggests then that theoretically, while interracial partnerships provide numerous opportunities for constructing and maintaining symbolic boundaries, as discussed in the theoretical framework, this does not necessarily lead to greater racial centrality. What does this lead to then? According to Hypothesis 1_B, being in interracial partnerships may indeed have the opposite effect of being negatively related to the three different dimensions that comprise individual racial centrality. After looking at all three models, we see that, at first glance, while interracial partnerships do have a negative relationship with each measure of racial centrality (both in the reduced and full sample), the effect is only significant for racial group identification. However, this only provides part of the picture due to the inclusion of the interaction effects. If models were created and considered without the interactions, this might be a different case.

As we look closer, we find that racial prominence and salience only seem to operate among Asian/Asian Americans. This is an important theoretical implication, suggesting that in contrast to the predictions posed by social identity theory and Hypothesis 1_A, interracial partnerships produce less, rather than more racial centrality. This further may hint at the idea that an individual who draws and defines racial differences through the use of symbolic boundaries, may certainly have a more difficult time evaluating their own in-group as more positive relative to out-groups, if these out-groups are seen more positively. This alternative hypothesis can be accepted, but it is important to consider that there are in fact, mixed results.

Looking to Hypothesis 2, it is proposed that the effects of interracial partnerships on racial centrality are going to be strongest for the dimension of salience and less strong for both prominence and group identification. Unfortunately, because the racial salience model failed the Brant test, I cannot reliably compare the standardized Betas, and thus, I need to look at the odds ratios (included in the appendices). However, there is no real difference between the strength of the effects of interracial partnerships for salience vs prominence and group identification. When looking at the ordinal logistic regressions on both the reduced and full samples, even if we do compare the standardized Betas for the interracial partnership variable, it is smaller in magnitude than for group identification. In the multinomial logistic regression, the direct effects of interracial partnerships are not significant in any of the category comparisons. As such, there is little indication that interracial partnerships have the largest effect (in terms of size) on salience. If anything, it seems to be racial group identification, where interracial partnerships have the strongest general direct effect.

Turning to Hypothesis 3, it was proposed that as compared to whites, African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos tend to report the highest levels of racial centrality, followed by Asians. This is because of Asians having access to honorary whiteness, placing them closer to whites in status within the racial hierarchy in the U.S. This also includes the possibility that many of those who self-identify as multiracial may have come from the Asian/Asian American population, or at least those who tend to pick Asian as some part of their multiracial identity. This suggests that Asians are likely to report lower levels of racial centrality. The models show that, compared to whites, African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos have the highest reported levels of racial centrality, with Asians having the least among minority groups. It is important to note that this is true across the board for all three racial centrality variables and in both the reduced and full samples. This is important because theoretically speaking, the uniqueness of being Asian, in that Asians are considered a minority yet are closer to status with whites than any other racial group, and that Asians are more likely to consider themselves as part of the multiracially self-identified population, suggests underlying complexities might be at play. This requires future research on multiracial self-identification, in order to assess exactly how being multiracial in an interracial relationship may affect racial centrality.

Lastly, we must look at Hypothesis 4, which is an extension of hypothesis 1 and suggests that the effect of interracial partnerships on racial centrality will be dampened by racial group, where the dampening effect is strongest for Asians, followed by Hispanics/Latinos, and lastly, African Americans. Similar to Hypothesis 3, we see these results vary by racial identity. The dampening effects only really seem to occur for

Asians/Asian Americans and not blacks or Hispanics/Latinos (i.e., none of the interaction coefficients are ever significant). Even among Asians/Asian Americans, the dampening effect is significant and negative for prominence, negative but not significant for racial group identification, and only significant for the mildest form of salience (less than monthly vs never). Theoretically, this suggests that African Americans tend to focus on racial centrality the most, especially when in an interracial partnership. This could be because discrimination against African Americans in interracial partnerships with whites tends to occur on a much larger scale than their white partners, although, we cannot assess as to how this occurs in other types of interracial partnerships such as blacks with Hispanics/Latinos. According to the results, it is safe to assume that African Americans will usually focus on racial centrality more so than their partners, most likely due to the intensive nature of historic racism and adversity that African Americans have faced in the past. Finally, it follows that Asians will incur the strongest dampening effect on racial centrality, because of their status and association with honorary whiteness, as perceived within the racial hierarchy in the U.S.

Because there are mixed results for Hypothesis 1_B, it is important to consider why this difference may have occurred. It looks like interracial partnership does reduce racial centrality in general, but only when it comes to group identification. When it comes to prominence, this only happens for Asians/Asian Americans. And, when it comes to salience, it only happens for Asians/Asian Americans but only for mild levels of salience (less than monthly as compared to never). So, the puzzling question posed here is, why does interracial partnership lower group identification in general, but only for Asians/Asian Americans when it comes to prominence (and to a lesser degree, salience)?

Perhaps, it is because intergroup contact theory only really applies to matters of “group” identification specifically. This makes sense logically, because this shows effective thinking of one’s partner’s racial group as the same as one’s own group, hence providing a deemphasis on identifying with one’s own racial group. Now, when it comes to prominence and placing value on one’s racial identity, interracial partnerships alone do not give off the post-racial vibes mentioned earlier in general. This effect only seems to apply to Asians/Asian Americans. This is in line with what was proposed for H4, but now this belief in a post-racial society only seems to really apply to prominence, and perhaps to a much lesser extent, to salience. This is in line with the notion where Tucker (2013:31) suggests that the claim that the U.S. is a post racial society may not be as substantiated as originally thought by scholars. Lastly, for salience, interracial partnerships do seem to make Asians/Asian Americans invoke their racial identities less often on a weekly basis (as compared to never), but that is about the extent of it. Therefore, it seems that it is not influential enough to make Asians/Asian Americans think more or less about their identity on a more frequent basis. In sum, it is important to consider these mixed results and try and make sense of it. This shows (especially for H1_B and H4) that these different racial centrality concepts do operate in different ways when it comes to interracial relationships.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it seems that each of the three racial centrality concepts do operate in different ways when it comes to interracial relationships. However, because of the mixed results and lack of concrete evidence, the effects of each aren't quite conclusive, and are instead contingent, in some instances, to the self-identified race of the respondent.

As with any study, there are certain limitations that must be addressed. The first of which is that the data is cross-sectional. Due to its cross-sectional nature, it is not possible to know empirically that interracial partnerships affect racial centrality, and in what specific ways these effects occur. It is also not easy to tell that the causality would not be reversed; that racial centrality affects interracial partnerships, or that racial centrality influences whether or not people get into interracial relationships. If I had access to longitudinal data, I might have been better able to determine a clearer direction of a causal effect. Studies looking at interracial partnerships and their effects on racial centrality would benefit greatly from having access to a longitudinal dataset, so that looking at changes over time are possible. Given the nature of the PALS dataset used for this study, and how it is one of the only publicly existing datasets to ask questions about racial centrality, future survey waves should focus on asking these same questions but take a longitudinal approach. However, this was not possible because I was only able to use the second wave, due to the second wave being the only wave to ask about spousal/partner racial identification. Nevertheless, in theory it is much more plausible that interracial partnerships affect racial centrality, as opposed to it being the other way around. Considering that racial centrality does not necessarily mean mistrust in other

racism, racial group bias, or a particular affection for other races, it is important to look at how racial centrality is possibly being affected by interracial partnerships, in that being in an interracial partnership may cause individuals to place more importance on race in the partnership.

My analysis depicts that being in an interracial partnership causes individuals to think about and consider the importance they place on their racial identity. In contrast, the importance a person places on their race does not necessarily imply positive or negative attitudes towards other race groups. For instance, there are many white people who have a high level of racial centrality but are not necessarily racist and/or in support of white nationalist politics or other associated racist outlooks (Croll 2007). In other words, placing importance on racial identity does not necessarily result directly in an increased (or decreased) likelihood of being in an interracial partnership. Although there is little research suggesting this causality, the lack of research suggests that more attention is needed for future research that may uncover specific conditions under which this may be true; for instance, whether there may indeed be some cases where centrality causes some whites to also be mistrustful of other races. These are possibilities that can certainly be explored with future research.

Another limitation of the data is that it does not distinguish between lighter and darker skinned Hispanics/Latinos. As a result, based on the data, one can only generalize about Asians vs Hispanics/Latinos based on the assertion that more Asians than Hispanics/Latinos can draw on honorary whiteness. This is considerable because if the data did distinguish between the two skin-tones for Hispanics/Latinos, it might be clear that lighter skinned Hispanics/Latinos are those who have access to honorary whiteness.

This supports the idea that lighter skinned minorities in general, will be closer in status to whites than their darker skinned counterparts.

Another limitation to consider is that the type of interracial partnership may matter greatly. For instance, when in an interracial partnership, Asian/Asian Americans may feel more equal to their partners if these partners are white, or even higher status if they are Hispanic/Latino or Black/African American. Because there were only 103 people in interracial partnerships in the sample, it was not possible to differentiate such partnerships during the analyses. This can subsequently have an effect on racial centrality for the individuals involved. A common example is a black and white interracial partnership, in which the statuses are very unequal and racial identity matters significantly, due to both historic racism and levels of racial adversity and discrimination, as well as contemporary race relations in the U.S. What this example suggests is that black partners may feel a greater sense of centrality by being in an interracial partnership with a white partner. Because there are not enough cases to address every possible racial combination for each interracial partnership contained in the dataset (there are < 20 cases for those smaller racial groups), I am limited to only theorizing about interracial partnerships more generally, rather than providing statistical evidence for these different types and their different effects.

Future directions in scholarship on interracial partnerships and racial centrality must expand the literary canon even further, looking to what degree each effect occurs, and in what types of interracial partnerships these effects occur. Additionally, future studies might address how bi-racial and multiracial individuals in these interracial partnerships may be affected. Although the PALS data contains a mixed race category,

there is a low number of respondents, and it is virtually impossible to distinguish between multiracial people who have two races versus three races versus four races, etc. As such, it is unclear whether both the respondents and their partners might be bi-racial or multiracial. This also is not possible to distinguish because as mentioned previously, the respondents were asked to report on their partner's race(s), as opposed to having the partner report their race themselves.

Future studies may also be interested in looking at how the importance of racial identity matters to members of the Black Lives Matter movement. This is worth focusing on because of the increasing traction of Black Lives Matter in the public sphere and among liberals who are focused on change, especially. In doing so, researchers might even consider interracial partnerships and how being in one or not being in one can have direct effects on the individuals involved in the movement. For instance, perhaps being in an interracial partnership will make an individual's racial identity much more important, thereby boosting their activity within the movement. Or, it could be the other way around, where being in an interracial partnership may decrease participation, because these individuals are not as aware of the importance of racial identity, due to less inequality within their own lives, especially in relation to their spouse/partner who exhibits great influence over them.

Something even more recent to consider is how honorary whiteness for Asians/Asian Americans may have been impacted by anti-Asian discrimination that emerged during the COVID pandemic. For instance, if Asians/Asian Americans were being discriminated against in these times, perhaps then their access to honorary whiteness and subsequently, their status boost obtained from having access to honorary

whiteness, would not be the same. Asians/Asian Americans might be considered much less in status as compared to the original PALS survey, where they were considered close to the status of whites.

The topic of interracial partnerships and racial centrality is a fairly new one in the literature on race and ethnicity, as well as the literature on intimate relationships, family, and marriage. As interracial partnerships continue to increase in number, it is important to study the effects that these types of partnerships have on the individuals involved. Given the nature of an interracial partnership, race and interactions at the level of race and racial identity are by far the most important components to assess when studying these unique partnerships and their effects. Interracial partnerships will continue to serve as an important marker for social progress in terms of race relations in the U.S.

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APPENDIX A: VARIABLES

Variable	Variable Label	Categories
Dependent Variables		
raceProm	Prominence Question: When you think about yourself, how important to you is being [race] to your sense of who you are?	(1) Not important at all (2) Only a little important (3) Somewhat important (4) Very important
raceGroup	Group Identification Question: How closely connected do you feel to your racial group?	(1) Not close at all (2) Somewhat close (3) Very close (4) Extremely close
raceSal	Salience Question: How often, if at all, do you think about or are you aware of what race you are?	(1) Never (2) Less than monthly (3) Weekly to monthly (4) About every day
Independent Variables		
RespRaceQ	Respondent's race	(1) White/Caucasian/Anglo (2) Black/African American (3) Hispanic/Latino/a (4) Asian/Asian American
PartnerRaceQ	Partner's race as recorded by the respondent	(1) White/Caucasian/Anglo (2) Black/African American (3) Hispanic/Latino/a (4) Asian/Asian American

InterRaceQ	Interracial Partnership Is respondent in an interracial partnership?	(0) = No (1) = Yes
Criterion and Control Variables		
PrtnHappyQ	Partner Happiness “How would you describe your marriage/relationship? Would you say it is:”	(1) Completely or mostly unhappy (2) Somewhat unhappy (3) Neither happy nor unhappy (4) Somewhat happy (5) Completely or mostly happy
PrtnSatQ	Partner Satisfaction “How satisfied are you with the love and affection you receive from your spouse/partner?”	(1) Completely dissatisfied (2) Somewhat dissatisfied (3) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4) Somewhat satisfied (5) Completely satisfied
ageQ	Age of respondent (measured in years–categorical)	(1) 20 to 29 years old (2) 30 to 44 years old (3) 45 to 99 years old (4) 60 to 74 years old (5) 75 years and older
educQ	Education of respondent (measured in highest degree/level achieved)	(1) Less than high school (2) GED or high school diploma (3) Vocational/technical/associate degree (4) Bachelor’s degree (5) Graduate degree
maleQ	Gender of respondent (Male = reference category)	(0) = Female (1) = Male
incomeQ	Household income as recorded by respondent	(1) <\$5,000-\$24,999 (2) \$25,000-\$49,999 (3) \$50,000-\$99,999 (4) \$100,000-\$149,999 (5) \$150,000->\$200,000

APPENDIX B: ODDS RATIOS AND P-VALUES FOR REDUCED SAMPLE

	Racial Prominence		Racial Group Identity		Racial Saliency	
	Odds Ratio	p-value	Odds Ratio	p-value	Odds Ratio	p-value
Interracial Partnership	0.873	0.628	0.509	0.022	0.752	0.318
Race (Excluded: "White/Caucasian/Anglo")						
Black/African American	21.522	0.000	4.627	0.000	7.032	0.000
Hispanic/Latino(a)	15.716	0.000	1.869	0.012	5.455	0.000
Asian/Asian American	7.731	0.000	1.137	0.674	4.037	0.000
Interactions						
Interracial Partnership x Black/African American	0.977	0.974	0.536	0.337	0.549	0.355
Interracial Partnership x Hispanic/Latino(a)	0.485	0.158	0.708	0.488	0.574	0.257
Interracial Partnership x Asian/Asian American	0.234	0.021	0.514	0.289	0.212	0.022
Partner Happiness	1.196	0.273	1.028	0.860	0.930	0.656
Partner Satisfaction	0.941	0.632	1.067	0.608	1.003	0.980
Marriage/Partner Status	1.036	0.883	1.119	0.629	1.286	0.290
Education Level (Excluded: "< high school")						
GED or high school diploma	1.206	0.624	0.825	0.574	1.722	0.142
Vocational/technical diploma or associate's	2.112	0.061	0.746	0.416	1.971	0.077
Bachelor's	1.590	0.245	0.617	0.185	2.721	0.010
Graduate degree	1.820	0.158	0.730	0.417	2.881	0.010
Age (Excluded: "20 to 29 years old")						
30 to 44 years old	0.977	0.940	0.755	0.341	0.697	0.214
45 to 59 years old	1.215	0.534	0.810	0.483	0.648	0.143
60 to 74 years old	1.137	0.692	0.756	0.376	0.412	0.005
75 years and older	2.174	0.093	1.228	0.636	0.321	0.010
Male	0.803	0.163	0.679	0.011	1.485	0.010
Income (Excluded: "<\$5,000-\$24,999")						
\$25,000-\$49,999	1.006	0.985	1.235	0.437	0.881	0.646
\$50,000-\$99,999	0.674	0.159	1.189	0.509	0.833	0.481
\$100,000-\$149,999	0.688	0.242	1.355	0.318	0.934	0.820
\$150,000->\$200,000	0.730	0.355	0.627	0.160	1.003	0.993
Political Party (Excluded: "Neither")						
Democrat	0.741	0.205	1.097	0.681	0.908	0.671
Republican	0.931	0.768	1.287	0.282	0.747	0.221

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .0001

Cutpoints not shown in the table

APPENDIX C: ODDS RATIOS AND P-VALUES FOR FULL SAMPLE

	Racial Prominence		Racial Group Identity		Racial Salience	
	Odds Ratio	p-value	Odds Ratio	p-value	Odds Ratio	p-value
Interracial Partnership	0.884	0.652	0.541	0.031	0.719	0.234
Race (Excluded: "White/Caucasian/Anglo")						
Black/African American	15.339	0.000	3.889	0.000	5.778	0.000
Hispanic/Latino(a)	11.144	0.000	2.186	0.000	3.760	0.000
Asian/Asian American	7.330	0.000	1.083	0.720	2.987	0.000
Interactions						
Interracial Partnership x Black/African American	1.120	0.866	0.603	0.399	0.636	0.453
Interracial Partnership x Hispanic/Latino(a)	0.573	0.231	0.602	0.267	0.767	0.553
Interracial Partnership x Asian/Asian American	0.232	0.012	0.587	0.355	0.292	0.050
Living with unmarried partner	0.958	0.358	0.898	0.016	0.956	0.301
Education Level (Excluded: "< high school")						
GED or high school diploma	0.623	0.076	0.905	0.654	0.993	0.976
Vocational/technical diploma or associate's	0.831	0.505	0.938	0.784	1.319	0.264
Bachelor's	0.728	0.260	0.770	0.278	1.472	0.127
Graduate degree	1.010	0.975	0.837	0.497	1.619	0.078
Age (Excluded: "20 to 29 years old")						
30 to 44 years old	0.971	0.873	0.944	0.744	0.770	0.134
45 to 59 years old	1.288	0.173	1.110	0.552	0.664	0.019
60 to 74 years old	1.346	0.137	0.959	0.827	0.422	0.000
75 years and older	1.787	0.032	1.454	0.139	0.600	0.048
Male	0.795	0.051	0.772	0.021	1.423	0.002
Income (Excluded: "<\$5,000-\$24,999")						
\$25,000-\$49,999	0.971	0.862	1.082	0.613	0.978	0.886
\$50,000-\$99,999	0.690	0.032	0.935	0.679	1.028	0.865
\$100,000-\$149,999	0.718	0.134	1.061	0.780	1.129	0.557
\$150,000->\$200,000	0.623	0.062	0.556	0.020	1.134	0.612
Political Party (Excluded: "Neither")						
Democrat	0.969	0.855	1.333	0.074	1.149	0.395
Republican	1.128	0.517	1.356	0.084	0.772	0.144

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .0001

Cutpoints not shown in the table