

Quote - “Communication shapes and reshapes the relationship between couple and culture”
(Foeman & Nance, 2002)

Important Definitions

- It is important to note that the terms “interracial,” “interethnic,” and “intercultural” have typically been used interchangeably in the literature
- An **intercultural relationship** can be defined as a relationship (i.e. association or connection) that is formed between individuals from different cultures (Martin & Nakayama, 1999).
 - Intercultural relationships, therefore, are particular types of connections existing between people from dissimilar cultures (Docan, 2003).
- More specifically, **culture** is “a learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, and symbols that are passed from one generation to the next and are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.10).
- **Interracial relationship** refers specifically to relationships between people of different social and/or historical backgrounds that may have different physical characteristics (Docan, 2003)
 - **Interracial romantic relationship (IRRs)**- relationships in which romantic partners assume different racial identities
- An intercultural romantic relationship can be defined as an intimate connection existing between people of different cultures that comprise involvement, sharing, disclosure, and/or love (Martin & Nakayama, 1999; Robertson, 1988).
- **Interracial families** are those in which the parents come from different racial backgrounds than their children (Cardwell, 2021)
- **Multiracial individuals** are those with parents from different racial backgrounds (Cardwell, 2021)

General Romantic Relationships

- Romantic relationships fundamentally provide stability and security (Holt-Lunstad, 2017)
- Maintenance strategies are important to the stability and quality of relationships (Punyanunt-Carter & Rodriguez, 2020).

Historical Context / Perceptions of Intercultural Romantic Relationships

- Antimiscegenation laws, or “laws prohibiting miscegenation in the United States date back as early as 1661 and were common in many states until 1967” (Cruz & Berson, 2001). According to Orbe and Harris (2008), these laws were introduced in an attempt to prevent intermixture through intermarriage; legislation was introduced that prevented interracial/interethnic contact through marriage and preserved ‘racial purity’ and the existing racial order

- Forty-one states adopted antimiscegenation laws (Lopez, 1997; Price, 1998; Weinberger, 1966),
- It was not until 1967 in the United States that the Supreme Court fully nullified laws against interracial marriage (*Loving v. Commonwealth of Virginia*, 1967). Up until 2000, numerous states, such as Alabama and South Carolina, had written laws in their state constitutions that prohibit interracial marriage. Although these laws were not enforceable after 1967, they remained as a part of their state constitutions for nearly 30 years after the Supreme Court ruling struck down these provisions which prohibited interracial marriage (Docan, 2003).
- By the time most individuals reach adolescence in the United States, they have been taught that it is better to date within one's ethnic and racial group (Lampe, 1982).
- Families instill negative attitudes regarding interracial romantic relationships (Kouri & Lasswell, 1993; Mills, Daly, Longmore, & Kilbride, 1995).
- "Race, education level, and the degree of racially-based income inequality in a region significantly influence attitudes toward interracial marriages" (Yancy, 2001, p. 635).
- Dealing with pressures from both family and society is often a major factor in deciding whether to pursue romantic relations with a person from another culture (Docan, 2003).
- Trends are changing, though, and more college students express a desire to date someone from another race than their own and do not rule out interracial marriage (Clark, 1986).
 - Males have been found to have more interracial dating experiences than females (Clark, 1986).
- Studies have shown that the higher the educational levels of the interracial couple, the more stable and long-lasting the relationships will likely be (Billingsley, 1992), thereby creating the sense that these relationships are successful and acceptable. Today, there are over 1.3 million mixed marriages in the United States (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).
- Past perspectives that suggest that interracial couples must give up one culture to function in another are inaccurate (Gaines, 1995): many interracial couples we speak of gaining insight into their own as well as the other's background and behaviors because of their interracial status (Foeman & Nance, 2002)
- Interracial unions are strained and have the potential to dissolve when pressure is exerted on the partners from variables such as family and societal disapproval, language barriers, logistics, cultural barriers and traditions, and children (Donovan, 2004)

Current Trends in Interracial Romantic Relationships

- The data suggest that because there is increased racial and ethnic diversity in the general U. S. population, our demographic landscape will change, thereby changing the racial composition of our interpersonal networks (Harris & Trego, 2008)
- An inevitable result is an increase in the number of heterosexual interracial romantic relationships, and the U. S. Census Data offers evidence of this change, revealing that IRRs have grown from 1% to 5% as of 2000 (Lobe, 2005).
 - It is assumed that by being in closer proxemics with racially different others, people are very likely to have their preconceived notions dispelled, thus

engendering a more favorable attitude about and increased likelihood of involvement in an IRR (Lobe, 2005).

- While the racial compositions of such pairings are becoming more and more varied, the most common is between Whites and non-Whites.
 - Consider the following findings: (1) the lowest intermarriage rates occur between Whites and Blacks, and highest rates occur among American Indians, Hawaiians, and multiple-race people; (2) Black women are less likely to marry interracial than are Black men, Asian women are more likely to do so than Asian men, and men and women representing other racial groups "are equally likely to intermarry" (Lobe, 2005, p. 32); (3) "younger and better-educated people in the US are more likely to intermarry than older and less-educated citizens"; and (4) Asians and Hispanics born in the U. S. and Whites and Blacks who reside in the U. S. but were born in foreign countries are more likely to marry interracial than Asians born in foreign countries and Whites and Blacks born in the U. S.
- According to a 2003 Gallup Poll (Lobe, 2005), 86% of Blacks, 79% of Hispanics, and 66% of Whites were accepting of a child or grandchild's choice to interracially marry.

Stats Interracial Romantic Relationships

- United States Census data indicate an increase in interracial unions among Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, and Asians from 3 million or 5% of all marital couples in 2000 to 4.5 million or 8.4% in 2010 (Levin, Taylor, & Caudle, 2007; Wang, 2012)
 - However, acceptance of interracial couples still varies across demographics, including age, political affiliation, and race.
 - The social climate toward IRRs might be generally improving, but scholars conclude that "increasingly positive attitudes toward interracial relationships will not necessarily lead to a global shift in personal engagement in interracial relationships" (Herman & Campbell, 2012, p. 356).
 - Acceptance of interracial marriages is growing, especially considering that the number of African American and European American marriages have increased since the 1970s (Zebroski, 2000) however, discrimination regarding interracial marriages still persists (Root, 2002).
 - Attitudes towards racial difference and interracial communication are improving (Knox, Zusman, Buffington, & Hemphill, 2000), to which Lobe (2005) attributes increased interracial interactions, more education and knowledge about race (Lobe, 2005), and an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse populous
 - IRPs continue to represent the minority compared to those of same-race status (Wang, 2012)
- "In 2015, 17% of all U.S. newlyweds had a spouse of a different race or ethnicity, marking more than a fivefold increase since 1967" (Livingston & Brown, 2017, p. 1).
- According to Korolewicz and Korolewicz (1985), a high percentage of college students who become involved in interracial relationships do not inform their parents.

- Strong feelings of in-group versus out-group may make some individuals unlikely candidates for an interracial relationship (Foeman & Nance, 2002)
- it is predicted that by the year 2050, the racial/ethnic majority in the U. S. will be people of Hispanic descent, which means a significant increase in the number of interracial relationships (Wellner, 2005).
- Many individuals involved in interracial couples do not feel they fit neatly into their racial groups anyway (Gaines, 1995; Porterfield, 1982). Partners may actually find a more comfortable place with each other than they did with their “own kind” (Foeman & Nance, 2002).
- Bratter and King (2008) found that interracial couples have higher rates of divorce than same-race couples, and 66% of interracial marriages were found to end in divorce (Gaines & Brennan, 2001), compared to 40–50% for all marriages (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992).
 - However, Zhang and Van Hook (2009) emphasized that even if they found interracial marriages to be less stable than endogamous marriages, these results did not hold true consistently across all races.
 - For example, African-Americans in general were more likely to divorce, a factor that was true whether the union was inter or intra-racial (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010).
 - One of the reasons for Zhang and Van Hook’s findings is that interracial couples could be defined on a continuum of acceptance. Neuliep (2009) cites a survey that found 66% of Whites would accept Hispanics or Asians, but only 55% would accept a Black person.
 - Among Hispanics and Asians, Blacks were also the least-accepted race
 - The same study indicated that 65% of White-Black couples said they had problems when the relationship started, while only 24% of White-Asian or White-Hispanic couples reported issues.
 - Based on these findings, it is reasonable to assume that different racial pairings may experience different levels of pressure and challenges (Lawton & Foeman, 2012)
 - AND in contrast to the higher divorce rate among interracial couples relative to their intraracial counterparts, Troy and colleagues (Troy, Lewis-Smith, & Laurenceau, 2006) found no difference in levels of relationship satisfaction in their college-aged sample.
- Troy, Lewis-Smith, and Laurenceau (2006) found that interracial couples who are dating have higher rates of relationship satisfaction compared to homogamous couples, but one possible cause of difference is the “newness” of these relationships, leading to a “honeymoon effect
- Compared to individuals in intracultural relationships, individuals in intercultural relationships reported greater conflict related to differences in cultural beliefs/practice, but intercultural partners were also more likely to report that exchange of cultural values with their partner helped their relationship grow (Reiter & Gee, 2008)

- Instances of black and white interracial marriages are increasing, yet they remain relatively infrequent compared to occurrences of other intercultural marriages (Rosenblatt et al., 1995).
 - Statistics reported in the most recent United States Census (2000) revealed that less than 0.7 percent of all married couples identified as black and white partners and less than 0.2 percent of Census respondents indicated marriages composed of a black woman and a white male (U.S. Bureau of Census, Table of Interracial Marriage, 2000).

General Interracial Romantic Relationships

- Interracial romantic relationships tend to encounter more stresses in their relationships compared to intraracial relationships (Brummett & Afifi, 2019). These stresses might be due to the public stigma of interracial relationships (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2007) and possibly more communication regarding feelings of being marginalized and/or oppressed (Orbe & Harris, 2014). Interracial relationships typically involve more understanding from both partners' cultural complexities and how they can coexist together (Foeman & Nance, 2002).
 - Interracial romantic partners (IRPs) are known to experience additional hardships in their relational functioning compared to same-race partners (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
- Interracial romantic relationships (IRRs) in the United States are known to experience public stigma and familial disapproval (Bell & Hastings, 2011), relational stress (Bratter & Eschbach, 2006), and conflict (Lawton, Foeman, & Braz, 2012).
 - The public stigma surrounding these relationships is typically accompanied by feelings of disapproval from close others and the fear of general societal judgment and censure, or relational marginalization (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2007). Scholars have found that these partnerships require additional discursive work to maintain (Orbe & Harris, 2014) as a result of experienced and perceived marginalization.
- There is increased demographic growth of interracial couples (Wang, 2012), and a shortage of methodical communication studies research on this topic (Dainton & Myers, 2019; Stafford & Canary, 2006)
- Interracial couples have to deal with perceptions of racism and different racial ideologies (Dainton, 2015)
- Wang et al. (2006) looked at the longevity of married and dating couples and found that intraracial couples, on average, stay together longer than interracial couples.
- Society has been very slow in accepting interracial relationships in general (Livingston & Brown, 2017), and interracial romantic relationships have been stigmatized by the public (Childs, 2005)
- When barriers are broken, lines of communication can be opened up and understanding, respect, and acknowledgement are likely to occur, and individuals will be given the opportunity to interact with other cultures (Docan, 2003)
- Interracial couples have been subject to social marginalization from the general public (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Skinner & Hudac, 2017) as well as relational marginalization and

stigma from close others, including family and friends (Bell & Hastings, 2015; Rosenthal et al., 2019) as a result of external and internal conceptualizations of 'otherness.'

- Interracial romantic partners (IRPs) do not always perceive themselves as engaging in a non-normative relationship due to their racial differences, and relationship hardships or dissolution do not necessarily follow those who do (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - ****IRPs may or may not be prone to experiencing marginalization and stigma. They could be vulnerable, however, to increased relational stressors if those experiences subsist (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
- “Coming together” and building a shared relational culture are important in developing harmonious interracial/ethnic relationships” (Byrd & Garwick, 2006)
- IRPs’ communicative exchanges with others about their romantic relationships are often complex and ridden with opportunities for conflict and personal risks (Miller et al., 2004)
- One of the ways where interracial couples may differ in the way they manage their relationship is the way they react when they have conflicting ideas with their spouses (Lawton & Foeman, 2012)
 - Married interracial couples may face challenges as a result of different perspectives on issues brought by partners to the table
 - Crippen and Brew (2007), in their review of intercultural literature, stated that parenting is a main source of conflict in interracial marriages. There are numerous studies on the impact of race on specific dependent variables, such as disciplinary style (Berg-Cross, 2001; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Quah, 2003)
- Interracial couples have been shown to negotiate who they are in their relationships over time within changing contexts (Thompson & Collier, 2006)

Interracial Relationship Development

- Foeman and Nance (1999) argue that the literature suggests four stages to interracial relationship development in which relational partners negotiate their individual racial identities and their identity as a romantic unit: (1) Racial Awareness, (2) Coping, (3) Identity Emergence, and (4) Maintenance, which are all comprised of various communication strategies (***make into infographic or chart**)
 - *Each phase of a couple's life together brings new opportunities for racial awareness, development of new coping strategies, emergence as a reconstructed unit, and ongoing relationship maintenance:
 - Stage 1: Racial Awareness
 - Racial awareness is the first stage of relationship development. At this stage, individuals become aware that they are attracted to one another and that the possibility for an intimate involvement exists. Racial awareness likely begins with the couple's initial (1) Attraction and can quickly bring about (2) Sensitivity to each partner's racial "place" (status).
 - The Awareness stage brings into focus social images of race and may create pressure on the couple
 - **Attraction** - Attraction for an interracial couple is both an interpersonal and cultural experience.
 - As the couple works through their interpersonal attraction, they must simultaneously address (a) Social frames for their attraction and determine how to (b) "Come out of the closet" to significant others.
 - Fundamentally, at the attraction phase of the relationship, communication will shape how, in the social context, the couple will frame and articulate their attraction to one another. They will begin to learn that their relationship with others must be carefully negotiated, lest they be ostracized from one or both groups for behaving or explaining their behaviors in unacceptable ways, or both.
 - **Sensitivity** - sensitivity stems from attraction; The concept of sensitivity refers to the growing concern one partner feels to the other's racial experience
 - Emerging racial sensitivity is an important subphase because it fosters the development of understanding that previously would have been unattainable to either partner in a single race relationship. Such insight will probably change each partner's view of the world regardless of the future course of the relationship (Foeman & Nance, 2002)
 - The couple's communication choices at this early stage set the trajectory for the evolution of their entire relationship. Sensitivity to (a) status differences between the partners' racial groups and (b) partners' loyalties to these groups are likely to be themes of sensitivity

- At the end of the awareness stage, interracial couples recognize their attraction for each other and their increased sensitivity to the function of race in their lives. They must now decide how to integrate this new information into their long-term relationship
- Stage 2: Coping (“weaving two disparate stories into one fabric”)
 - Requires that the couple pull together and, to some extent, away from others, to analyze and integrate all they are beginning to learn, generating sets of reactive strategies to ensure the survival of the relationship (*early success in the coping process will increase the likelihood for survival)
 - Their communication must be used strategically to insulate them from others when necessary and negotiate situations as their communication skills sharpen and their ability to read and manage challenges improves
 - While many members of interracial couples describe this process as enriching and rewarding, some couples are forced into this stage (Foeman & Nance, 2022)
 - While a couple from different backgrounds may need more time to work through their complex attraction, they may be pushed into deeper commitment than they had intended. Those around them may criticize or predict negative outcomes or challenge the couple’s choices and, in response, the couple may draw together to learn to respond to these assaults.
 - During the Coping stage, the couple develops reactive and proactive strategies.
 - Couples indicate that they learn to *insulate* when possible from people and situations that are potentially harmful or to *negotiate* potentially threatening situations as necessary.
 - They also learn to turn to each other for new perspectives
 - **Insulating** - involves buffering the couple from outside influences. This may mean avoiding situations that may be problematic.
 - For example, a couple may choose not to attend a family reunion or have only one partner attend. They may select public places that are more diverse and welcoming. They may learn where to turn for support and common perspective or to develop new networks. They may join a support group.
 - **Negotiating** - the active behavior required when difficult circumstances cannot be avoided; may also include learning to communicate in ways that conceal feelings rather than revealing them: partners say that they learn to respond to questions about their loyalties in de-escalating or measured ways, and the use of humor is common.

- Choices about how to respond to attacks in public may have to be negotiated
 - Partners also learn to insulate and negotiate by recognizing and, as appropriate, disregarding covert attacks on their relationship (Foeman & Nance, 2022)
 - They may learn to ignore people who view the couple's every problem as racial. They may learn to ignore perspectives that read their relationship as a failure or disappointment.
 - Insulation and negotiation are partially dependent upon how the couple sees itself:
 - A **static identity** exists when an individual identifies in the same way all the time.
 - A **fluid identity** shifts with the context
 - But while safety is important, healthy relationship life demands more than simple defense from a racially charged culture. A healthy life together rethought requires that restrictive and inaccurate descriptions of interracial couples be or reframed, or both. This is the work of the couple as they emerge as a unit
- Stage 3: Identity Emergence
 - Couples begin to develop behaviors that are self-sustaining. Instead of looking at their differences as obstacles to be overcome, interracial couples view the unique racial configuration of their families as a positive source of strength
 - The couple begins to develop a vocabulary and perspective to help them and others reconstitute the images of race and interracial couples in the current social construction. They are challenged to communicate creatively lest they reinforce the same systems based on race and color that has damaged so many already
 - They are better able to place race in the context of other aspects of their lives
- Stage 4: Maintenance
 - The couple must see their vision through for a lifetime. Their communication can become a natural part of how they present themselves and how others speak about them.
 - While each couple will probably begin with their own sense of awareness, individuals within couples may be at different beginning points
 - If and when couples begin to rear interracial children they may need to recycle through stages in light of their children's experiences as well as their own (Nance and Foeman, 1998)

Interracial Dating: The Implications of Race for Initiating a Romantic Relationship

- Currently, two theories exist that articulate why most individuals might become involved in an interracial romantic relationship (Kouri and Lasswell, 1993):
 - Structural theory** - posits that demographics (i.e., socioeconomic status, education, occupation, residence) and mutual attraction contribute to the initiation, development, and maintenance of an interracial marriage.
 - Racial motivation theory** - hypothesizes that interracial marriages occur *because* of racial difference, whereby at least one partner finds the racially different other more appealing *because* of her or his race.
- When race is introduced in the dating context, norms and perceptions (i.e., stereotype, attitudes) remain critical factors in influencing strategy choice in the date initiation process (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000).

>While this study was done between European American / African Americans, it is possible that similar strategies may apply to other interracial contexts as well

Same-race dating tactics	Interracial dating tactics
1. Strategic Active a. Hinting strategies to initiate a same-race relationship b. Allow them to subtly communicate interest in a romantic relationship c. Date initiation strategies include: (1) discussing mutual interests and related events, (2) determining target availability, (3) mentioning a group activity, (4) mentioning an event and asking the target to go, (5) inviting the target to study and get something to eat afterward, and (6) flirting with the target by letting her know he finds the target attractive 2. Strategic Assertive a. Prefer direct strategies to initiate a romantic relationship, followed by hinting strategies b. (1) Asking the target out on a specific night, (2) finding out the target's availability by asking if she is dating someone, (3) asking if the target is interested in dating someone and if the target is	1. Strategic Passive a. Prefer to use waiting strategies to initiate an interracial date b. Most preferred tactics represent a waiting strategy : (1) waiting for the target to ask him or her out, (2) letting the target flatter him or her, (3) waiting for the target to indicate interest in him or her, (4) trying not to let the target know about his or her interest in the target, (5) discussing mutual interests and an event, (6) just hoping the target asks him or her out, and (7) flirting with the target about his or her attractiveness but avoiding direct date initiation 2. Strategic Contextual a. preference for using hinting and direct strategies b. prefer to communicate attraction by creating social interactions where they are (1) discussing mutual interests, (2) inviting the target to an event and hoping the target expresses interest in going, (3)

interested in the initiator, (4) getting to know each other better, (5) calling the target on the phone to ask her out, (6) asking the target if she wants to go out, (7) mentioning a certain event and then asking the target to go, (8) flirting with the target and letting her know he finds the target attractive, and (9) asking the target to study and get a bite to eat.

- i. *reflect gender role expectations

3. Strategic Passive

- a. Prefer to wait for the target to initiate or indicate romantic interest in them. By engaging in waiting behaviors, Strategic Passives avoid using any strategies that denote interest in becoming involved in a romantic relationship; avoid behaviors that would reveal their attraction
- b. (1) letting the target ask her out, (2) waiting for the target to indicate interest, (3) talking to friends but not mentioning interest, (4) hoping the target would ask her out, (5) strategically placing herself where the target will be, and (6) talking about mutual interests and a related event

mentioning a group activity to the target, (4) mentioning an event and inviting the target to go, (5) inviting the target to study and get a bite to eat, (6) calling the target to say hi, (7) asking the target out on a particular night, and (8) asking if the target is currently dating anyone

- c. The verbal content of these tactics is neutral in communicating romantic interest in the target
- d. appear careful in determining the target's level interest before asking for a date
- e. in an effort to create a communication climate conducive for the two to get to know each other without ego threat taking place
- f. It is also possible that stereotypes and negative attitudes toward interracial romantic relationships may directly influence the use of passive verbal strategies

3. Strategic Flexible

- a. appear flexible in their use of date initiation strategies, which may be attributed to the participants' comfort or personal experience with interracial interactions
- b. These participants prefer using both hinting and direct strategies to initiate an interracial date, which may be indicative of openness to dating interracially or approaching someone from a different race "on the surface." The most preferred tactics are (1) hinting about the target's attractiveness, (2) asking the target out on a specific night, (3) inquiring about the target's availability, (4) inviting the target to study and get a bite

	to eat later, (5) asking if the target is presently dating anyone and would he like for the two of them to get to know each other better, (6) discussing mutual interests and an upcoming event, and (7) telling the target she has been watching the target for a long time 4. Strategic Intervention a. they prefer using a third-party, particularly a friend, to initiate an interracial date b. European American male most prefer (1) talking to friends about interest and wait for a response, (2) mentioning interest to a friend and hope the target would initiate, (3) flirting by letting the target know the respondent finds her attractive, (4) having a friend arrange a double date, (5) having a friend mention the respondent's interest to the target and wait for the target to initiate, (6) having a friend mention the respondent's interest and then ask the target out himself, and (7) waiting for the target to ask him out. c. By using a third-party, participants may be attempting to provide a buffer in the event they are rejected. The third-party may minimize the emotional trauma of direct rejection by acting as a go-between for both initiator and target
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Benefits of Intercultural Romantic Relationships

- Sharing personal stories and experiences is a common way that partners become closer (Docan, 2003). Couples sharing of information promoted cultural learning and interpersonal growth (Rangel, 1999).
- Three “relationship blessings” were consistent among these couples (Rosenblatt, Karis, & Powell, 1995). The first blessing is the enrichment of the self, partner, and children that come from the uniting of different cultures, races, and perspectives. Second, a weathering of racist opposition occurs. Here, partners are able to overcome racism from doubting family members and build stronger relationships. The third blessing of interracial partnerships is healing. Individual hurts and pains from racism are restored to health
- Greater feelings of connectedness with others, positive intercultural communication skills, learning new languages, ideas, perceptions, and skills are just some of the benefits of intercultural romantic relationships (Docan, 2003)
- Couples may find that their old rigid categories may be shattered as they see the other through the eyes of an intimate (Foeman & Nance, 2002)
- As a couple works its way through experiences that shape their perceptions of their union, they draw closer together (Foeman & Nance, 2002)
- Having traveled their own unique road, successful interracial couples are in a position to share their experience with the culture at large (Foeman & Nance, 2002)

Challenges of Intercultural Romantic Relationships

- Individuals in intercultural and interfaith unions are suggested to experience distinct relational challenges, due to cultural and religious differences (Jones & Chao, 1997; Perel, 2000).
- Interracial romantic relations require partners and families to be racially tolerant, democratic, and open (Root, 2002)
- Navigating “racial place” - the way each racial group is treated in society; what is seen as that group’s natural role and profile, what are seen as members’ personal and professional options (Foeman & Nance, 2002)
 - Each racial “category” has implications regarding each individual's place, and this place may be revealed in discussion as a couple talks directly about race, or indirectly as a couple addresses daily life.
- In the context of a relationship, each partner may find that she or he has to make explicit to the other lifelong perspectives on topics such as the role of race in society, how one deals with new situations, what it means to be a man or woman, how to interact with strangers, or how to expect to be treated by various service providers (Foeman & Nance, 2002).
 - Both partners must explain their basic assumptions to a paradoxically unfamiliar and intimate other, and both must develop sensitivity to a sometimes uncomfortable alternate outlook.

- In couples where backgrounds and attitudes are most challenged by an interracial relationship, the partners may have a difficult time reconciling inconsistent worldviews, cultures and goals in maintaining their relationship (Foeman & Nance, 2002)
- The interracial couple may find coping and shaping an identity complex and must ultimately turn inward for new definitions and perspectives that are out of the box (Foeman & Nance, 2022).
- The road to creating and framing a new culture for an interracial couple has many twists and turns. The couple must manage many competing images: within their own minds, with each other, and with the outside world (Foeman & Nance, 2002)
- Interracial couples must navigate boundary work at the private/public divide - defines the acceptable values and practices within dating life (Jonahs, 2021)
- Multiethnic/racial families, racial/ethnic differences may, at times, be salient and act as a barrier to positive family functioning (Soliz, 2009).
- Many IRP participants experienced relational uncertainty as a result of having to teach partners about “Blackness” or feeling compelled to monitor communication about race in order to reduce opportunities for conflict (Brummett & Afifi, 2019).
 - Nevertheless, the same participants also noted their continued efforts to manage those stressors and their desire for prolonged relationship maintenance.
- Individuals involved in interracial romantic relationships are sometimes forced to “normalize” the relationship and justify its existence to themselves, family, and a race-consumed society (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000).
- Partners are placed in the precarious position of deciding whether or not to withstand social pressure and work towards preserving and maintaining the relationship and are challenged to adopt a different mental model or way of thinking about love and marriage (Harris & Trego, 2008)
- The pressures to maintain “political correctness” render most discussions of race “taboo” (West, 2001).
- **While all couples negotiate and construct unique relational meanings (Burger & Kellner, 1964) in order to cope with society (Montgomery, 1992), in the case of interracial marriage, partners are required to negotiate societal understandings of race to cope or resist the pressures of the larger social world
- As a result of social forces from outside of their marriage, interracial couples’ relationships may become the site in which the historical and social structures pertaining to their racial identities intersect with their identities as partners in an intimate relationship. Likewise, the relational identifications of committed partners who identify as racially different from each other may change over time (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996)

Related Concepts / Relationship things

- Rusbult's Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) notes that satisfaction level, comparison of alternatives, and investments, together, can predict commitment between romantically involved partners and, in turn, positively predict the use of maintenance behaviours.
- Four general principles why a relationship begins (Docan, 2003)
 - Proximity, similarity, complementarity, and physical attractiveness
 - Intercultural and interracial friendships seem to begin with a simple element: proximity or personal contact with a person from another culture or race
 - Personal contact between differing races "has been effective in the development of interracial friendships" (Sachdeva, 1972)
 - By the year 2000, it was predicted that the demographic makeup of the
 - U.S. population will consist primarily of people of color (Masini, 1993), which lends itself to higher levels of interpersonal contact among those from diverse backgrounds. For those consumed with the social significance of race, such relationships are often perceived as a threat to the racial social order. For others, this increased proximity and potential for interracial relationships is perceived as a positive interpersonal experience (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000).
 - Similarity
 - We tend to be attracted to others that are similar to ourselves (Osbeck & Moghaddam, 1997; Tan & Singh, 1995). For instance, similarities in beliefs or values, such as a belief in God or a certain political stance may help begin a friendship (Docan, 2003)
 - When people find similarities, they usually have increased expectations for future interactions (LaGaipa, 1987).
 - Complementarity
 - This principle holds that we may be attracted to others who are different from us, which creates a sense of balance in the relationship (Docan, 2003)
 - Although partners of an intercultural relationship may be attracted to one another because of differences, some similarities must be established for the relationship to successfully grow (Hatfield & Rapson, 1992).
 - Physical Attractiveness
 - Specific standards for physical attraction are individually and culturally based (Docan, 2003)
 - In the United States, physical attraction may be the most important aspect in the early stages of a relationship (Martin and Nakayama, 1999). Positive traits that are associated with what is attractive may differ from culture to culture, but the judgments among cultures in favor of "what is beautiful" are rather consistent (Wheeler & Kim, 1997). (*and include...)
- Conflict Styles

- Collectivists tended to use avoiding and obliging to maintain harmony with others, while individualists might be more likely to opt for dominating or directing styles to protect themselves (Ting-Toomey et al., 2001).
 - Collectivists generally include Asian, Latino, and African-American groupings, while Whites in the United States are usually categorized as individualists (Black, Dimino-Mrasek, & Ballinger, 2003; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Lustig & Koester, 2010; Parke & Buriel, 1998).
 - But these generalizations have some limitations and nuances as
 - Bermudez et al. (2006) looked at Latino couples' (generally considered collectivist) conflict styles, and concluded that contrary to literature that showed Latinos to prefer avoidant styles, they found couples used validating styles, where spouses listen and interact positively with each other.
 - Kochman (1983) said that black people are both collectivist and individualist, displaying both attachment to the group and desire to creatively express individuality at the same time.
 - AND literature is conflicting on age/conflict style and age/gender because couples have other identifications that may affect how they negotiate an issue (Lawton & Foeman, 2012)
- Four social forces have been found to have a direct impact on mate selection:
 - In short, a partner places emphasis on partner and/or self attributes deemed critical to the process of choosing a mate (Orbe & Harris, 2008).
 - First, there are **cultural resources**, which refer to value placed on a shared cultural or racial/ethnic background between both partners.
 - Second is a **preference for marriage candidates** and refers to the resources marriage candidates are able to offer each other.
 - Third is **socioeconomic resources**
 - Fourth is **social group influence**, or the influence from a third party (Orbe & Harris, 2008, p. 171).
- Culture (West, 2001) - culture is itself a structure of sense making and values that are "rooted in institutions" (p. 19).

Black/White Couple's Identity Negotiations

- Toward Contingent Understandings of Intersecting Identifications among Selected U.S. Interracial Couples: Integrating Interpretive and Critical Views (Thompson & Collier, 2006)
 - West (1999) noted that how people identify "has to do with protection; association and recognition. People identify themselves in certain ways in order to protect their bodies, their labor, their communities, their way of life; in order to be associated with people who ascribe value to them, who take them seriously, who respect them; and for purposes of recognition, to be acknowledged, to feel as if one actually belongs to a group, a clan, a tribe, a community. So that anytime we talk about identification of a particular group over time and space, we have to be very specific about what the credible options are for them at any given

moment” (p. 501)

- West, C. (1999a). On black-brown relations. In C. West (Ed.), *The cornel west reader* (pp. 499–512). New York: Basic Civitas Books.
- Creating a positive face for the relationship is accomplished through the management of the dialectic of being both ordinary and unique.
 - Couples negotiate identifications of being “just a couple” and being unique as individuals with particular personalities.
 - During the interviews, the couples continually emphasize being a couple rather than being a product of different racial or ethnic identifications or being interracial. Some couples actually chose not to identify with the label “interracial” and collaborated to define themselves as “ordinary” and “just us.”
 - Couples also manage the dialectic of both similarity and difference in various group and individual identifications (race, class, sex, profession, family member, etc.) by prioritizing their similar commitment to the relationship
 - this discursive move allows them to pre-empt any presumed status and power differentials contained in racist practices in the workplace, small towns, and social events

Intersection with Family

- “Experiences of race and racism become salient family stories, and overarching unspoken narratives about race get built into the family canon and woven into the fabric of family identity” (Cardwell, 2021).
- Interracial families can either reproduce or challenge common social laws about race (Cardwell, 2021)
- Parents play a large role in mitigating the psychological effects of racial discrimination experienced by their multiracial children at the hands of family members (Cardwell, 2021)
 - Parents and other family members can step in and help multiracial individuals challenge a monoracial paradigm of race by practicing **cultural humility**, which can be defined as “having an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented rather than self-focused, characterized by respect and lack of superiority toward an individual’s cultural background and experience” (Cardwell, 2021)
- Interracial families can harness the power of family ties to have productive conversations about racial division (Cardwell, 2021)

Social Support

Quote: “Social support networks can have a substantial impact on interracial romantic partners’ well-being and their romantic satisfaction” (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)

- Couples might enlist the support of their family and friends to help them navigate relational stressors (Brummett & Steuber, 2015)
- Social networks play a pivotal role in the development, maintenance, and everyday lived experiences of romantic partnerships (Duck, 1988; Parks & Eggert, 1991; Surra, 1988), and these findings are particularly true for interracial couples (Clark-Ibañez & Felmlee, 2004; Payne, 1998).
- One factor that can influence interracial romantic partners’ (IRPs) relational experiences is social network support (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - A primary means of managing relational stressors is to seek support from network members. However, network members can serve as sources of social strain as well (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - The absence of network support for IRPs, as well as expressive network opposition, is thought to contribute to IRPs’ relational hardships (Miller, Olson, & Fazio, 2004; Rosenthal & Starks, 2015).
 - There is an overwhelming presence of research pointing to the historical lack of social and familial support of IRPs (see Brummett, 2017 for review).
 - Positive support from close others, however, can help buffer adverse effects of life stressors (Feeney & Collins, 2015; Lee & Goldstein, 2016) and stressors for IRPs more specifically (Bell & Hastings, 2015).
- Expectations are not about the support individuals *want*, but rather what they *expect* to receive (Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991).
- Many IRPs need support to combat racially motivated relational stressors. Yet, other

IRPs might not experience stress unique to their relationship at all. There are likely variations in the type and degree of marginalization felt by IRPs based upon the support they expect and receive from their family networks (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)

- According to Brummett & Afifi (2019), **support** is defined as “a communicative process between IRPs (who intentionally seek support for an experienced romantic relationship stressor) and their family members (who are perceived as probable support providers)
- Skin color variations among romantic partners are typically the source of resistance toward interracial romantic relationships (IRRs). IRPs are subject to disapproval, conflict, alienation, and prejudice from others (Miller, Olson, & Fazio, 2004) and frequently cope with lower reported and perceived levels of social network support compared to those involved in same-race relationships (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006).
- Negative individual and relational consequences typically ensue when the support that individuals obtain from others does not match their support preferences (High & Steuber, 2014; Lawrence et al., 2008; Matsunaga, 2011)
 - **An important note about support:** Support is enacted across space and time and can change its trajectory; support seekers might desire and anticipate various kinds of support from a confidant over time depending on the situation or the dyad's relational history (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - Additionally, support providers and receivers do not always agree on the type, degree, or effectiveness of support provision, and people's experiences with support interactions and their reports of these communicative phenomena are likely to differ significantly (Brock & Lawrence, 2009; Priem, Solomon, & Steuber, 2009).
 - Just because people desire support does not mean they believe they will receive it, but their expectations guide their understanding of how a support process might unfold (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - More support does not necessarily equal better support (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - Support seekers can receive a variety of communicative support responses, including matched support (when expectations are met), as well as positive and negative expectation violations (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - A **support path** - references a particular journey of receiving familial support, recognizing that the ultimate outcome of the journey is unknown
 - 3 types of support paths - meeting expectations, superseding expectations(positive), failing to meet expectations (negative)
 - 1. Family members met IRPs' and parents' expectations for support (i.e., support expectations matched received support).
 - This support path resulted in support and strain depending on the directionality of original expectations.
 - 2. **Expectation violations** are enacted behaviors that are contrary to previous assumptions or predictions (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - Interracial romantic patterns could experience **positive expectation violations** (receive more acceptance/support than originally expected) **and/or** **negative expectation violations** (receive less support/ a worse reaction than

- expected) (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000; Nicholls & Rice, 2017).
 - Positive violations might result in more support-seeking behaviors, whereas support events that negatively deviate from expectations could stifle future support attempts altogether (these events represent discrepancies between expected and received support that can result in unfortunate individual and relational consequences) (see Burgoon, 1993; Burgoon & Walther, 1990 for review).
- Parents of IRPs might experience their own set of expectations regarding 1) their child's involvement in an IRR and 2) support for their child's IRR from other family members.
 - Both sets of expectations are likely to impact parents' own support provision to their children. Support can become an especially challenging undertaking when a parent accepts a child's IRR but other immediate family members in the network (e.g., spouse, grandparents) do not, thus positioning the parent as caught between familial parties (Weaver & Coleman, 2010).
- Buffering models of support (Cohen & Wills, 1985), people with supportive networks are less likely to experience stress compared to those whose networks are mostly unsupportive
 - IRPs who have supportive families are less likely to view their romantic relationships as stressful and are less at risk for experiencing hardships if or when stress occurs (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
- Social networks greatly influence IRPs' relationship behaviors (Clark-Ibáñez & Felmlee, 2004), such that network diversity and racial attitudes impact the likelihood of engaging in and sustaining IRRs.
 - Network members can serve as a source of social support for IRPs by helping to relieve relational uncertainty and validate their relational choices amidst societal norms that oppose partner racial dissimilarity (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - Receiving approval from network members, including family, is believed to reinforce relational commitment (Brooks & Ogolsky, 2017) and increase skills for effectively handling and surviving relational threats (Felmlee & Sprecher, 2000).
 - The likelihood of relationship dissolution also decreases with the presence of network social support (Felmlee, 2001).
- There is also the opportunity for social network members to contribute to individual and relational strain
 - The absence of support from network members coincides with decreased relational commitment and satisfaction among IRPs (Gaines & Agnew, 2003).
 - Strain could result from received support that matches original expectations of negative support or in instances where individuals receive a worse reaction than expected (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
- Family members, and parents more specifically, often serve as the biggest hindrance for those who want to pursue an IRR (Childs, 2005; Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Qian & Lichter, 2007). IRPs might feel especially compelled to turn to their parents when seeking support for their romantic relationships but simultaneously experience trepidation in doing so due to low support expectations (Brummett & Afifi, 2019).

- ***Huge implication for social support:** Once participants have experienced support and/or strain from family members, they alter their support seeking behaviors with particular support providers during future support interactions (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - Participants' experiences with social strain and/or support as well as their continued identity work have some bearing on the overall relational quality and resilience of IRPs and their romantic and familial relationships (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - Prior or current experiences with racial diversity **among an IRP's family unit**, then, makes crossing racial boundaries seem less problematic and more likely to elicit positive responses from others (Brummett & Afifi, 2019).
- **While this study was done within the context of black/white interracial romantic relationships, it is important to acknowledge how some of these themes may or may not apply in other interracial romantic relationship contexts**
 - 3 categories that influenced expectations for an interracial romantic partner's involvement in an interracial romantic relationship and support (defined as general acceptance and positive outlook for that relationship) (Brummett & Afifi, 2019):
 - (1) Family history and exposure to racial diversity
 - Participants who had interracial contact in their social communities (e.g., interracial neighborhoods), came from racially diverse families (e.g., parents are/were an interracial couple, transracial adoptions), and/or they or their family members were previously involved in IRRs had expectations for support that were typically high.
 - (2) Assessment of IRP's individual - and couple-level racial identities and (3) cultural comparisons
 - Support expectations tended to be higher when IRPs were confident in their monoracial, biracial, or multiracial heritages and felt self-assured that their involvement in an IRR would not marginalize their racial identifications.
 - Others' stereotypical assumptions about appropriate behaviors for different racial identities and peer pressure to establish group loyalty called enacted racial identities into question: Prejudicial assumptions operating on the outskirts of family networks created moments of self-evaluation for participants:
 - When IRPs were less secure in their racial identities and experienced social inquisitions about their 'authentic' racial group membership, their expectations for participating in an IRR and receiving relational support diminished.
 - Some participant's own identity appraisal affected the type and degree of relational support they expected from their family members, and they anticipated a considerable amount of opposition due to their own reservations

- At both the onset and during early relationship development stages of IRRs, interracial partners found themselves in situations that necessitated an evaluation of their racial identities. IRPs often felt they had to consider the consequences, favorable and adverse, of asserting an interracial partner identity (relational) and personal racial identity (individual) simultaneously.
 - *The more IRPs struggled with navigating their multifaceted identity constructions, the less relational support they typically expected from others
 - Findings overall: The likelihood of pursuing an IRR and obtaining support for one is enhanced when an IRP has more exposure to racial diversity (history/exposure), feels compelled to put forth minimal effort to perform socially preferred racial identifications (identity assessments), and is recognizably culturally similar to a romantic partner (cultural comparisons)
 - Desires for more or less race talk were sometimes not shared by both IRPs in a relationship, which also contributed to social strain.
 - However, when IRPs were able to resolve their conflicting desires and understand their partners' perspectives, they began to view their partners as sources of support (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - When individuals transitioned to increased acceptance of IRRs (usually constituting positive expectation violations) and were satisfied with the frequency and quality of race talk in their or their child's romantic relationships, positive support experiences ensued. Negative support experiences occurred when racist or oppositional attitudes among family members persisted and when faced with communicative challenges stemming from insufficient or stress-inducing race talk among IRPs
 - Expectations of support and strain and violations of those expectations impacted participants' relationships with their families.
 - High expectations of support that were met and the occurrence of positive expectation violations contributed to strengthened relationships between IRPs and their parents as well as extended family members.
 - Support from family members contributed to a sense of relief that opposition was not present
 - Low expectations of family member's support as well as negative expectation violations created many relational hardships for IRPs and parents, including strained communication, less frequent interactions, mistrust, and familial estrangement.
 - Showing opposition towards IRRs is likely to result in friction between a family member and IRP, which could threaten that familial bond
- Payne (1998) found that alienation from friends and family is a frequent feature of interracial couples' social networks

Social Support & Disclosure/Privacy Management

- Features of how IRP disclose to their parents about the romantic relationship can contribute to social support/strain.
 - People often balance their desires for seeking support against desires for privacy management (Petronio, 2002). Protecting one's privacy (and not being open) is a way to safeguard a relational identity. Individuals make disclosures to elicit support (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - This process is complicated, however, when there are risks associated with revealing private information.
 - Felt marginalization could result in preferences for concealment due to motivations for self, relationship, and network protection (Brummett & Steuber, 2015; Caughlin, 2009).
 - IRPs might be selective in the content and timing of disclosures to parents in order to reduce the propensity for relational strain (Parks, 2011). But disclosures might be preferred in order to attain desired social support (George & Yancey, 2004).
 - The relationship between expectations, disclosure, and support is cyclical in nature:
 - Support-seeking and disclosure in the grounded theory model are not distinct phenomena but rather work together to collectively influence IRPs' communicative interactions with family members. The results also point to the resilience of IRRs, offering insight into the function of familial support in IRP relationship maintenance.
 - Support-seeking disclosures, regardless of their more open or closed nature due to support expectations, thus appeared to contribute to the kinds of support experiences IRPs encountered with their family members:
 - High expectations for positive support tended to beget open, immediate conversations (direct support seeking disclosures) following the onset of an IRR or a relational stressor for which support was desired and typically brought about positive responses (Brummett & Afifi, 2019).
 - When expectations for support were low (strain was expected), IRPs engaged in tactical disclosure strategies to minimize opportunities for social strain (indirect support-seeking disclosures).
 - They utilized concealment, third-party disclosure confidants (namely parents who they perceived as trusted support providers), and disclosures synchronized with IRR turning points marked by increased relationship commitment.
 - These latter strategies enabled IRPs to safeguard themselves and their romantic partners from bigotry and outright opposition toward their IRRs, but sometimes

created even more situational strain for parent support providers who were not always in favor of more private means of information revelation (Brummett & Afifi, 2019).

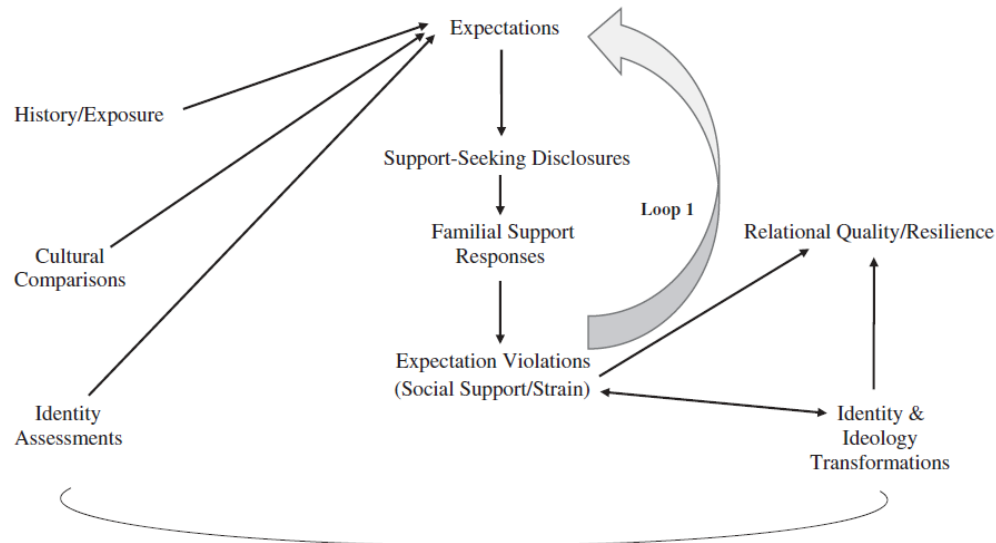


Figure 1. Grounded Theory of Expectations for Support and Strain (TESS).

Model from (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)

>Culture and Communication

- Racial and cultural identities influence the communicative process (Orbe, 1995, 1996, 1998)
 - **Co-cultural theory:**
 - Six factors that influence co-cultural communication, or communication between marginalized groups and dominant society members.
 - 1. Preferred outcome for the relationship, or (un)conscious thought about the effects communication behaviors have on relationships with dominant group members
 - 2. Field of experience, which is the lived experiences of co-cultural group members
 - 3. Abilities, which refer to a person's skill at using different communication practices
 - 4. Situational context, which involves the influence of the setting (i.e., work, home, school, social places) on the interaction
 - 5. Perceived costs and rewards of co-cultural communication
 - 6. Communication approach, wherein a person chooses the appropriate communication strategy for that co-cultural interaction

(i.e., nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive)

- *Depending on the communicator, her or his characteristics, and the situational and relational factors present in the communication context, communication strategies utilized within each intercultural interaction will vary (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000).
- Both communicators enter this interpersonal interaction with anxieties and expectations based on their fields of experience, and the cultural identities of the communicators greatly affect their interpersonal interactions and the communicative process (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000).

>Relationship Maintenance Strategies

- **Relational maintenance** has generally been defined as partners keeping a relationship in existence, maintaining the relationship's current state or condition, keeping the relationship in a satisfactory condition, and/or keeping a relationship in repair (Dindia & Emmers-Sommer, 2006).
 - Relational maintenance has been conceptualized to include both strategic and routine maintenance (Stafford, 2003):
 - Strategic maintenance is enacted by individuals "with the conscious intent of preserving or improving the relationship" (Stafford et al., 2000, p. 307).
 - Routine maintenance is enacted more casually, with less conscious awareness,
- Culture contributes to variance in self and partner perceived maintenance strategies and relationship quality altogether (Stafford & Canary, 1991)
- **Relational Maintenance Model (*infographic or chart?)**
 - **Relational maintenance behaviours** refer to strategies practiced by romantic partners to build and sustain their ongoing relationship at a satisfying level (Stafford & Canary, 1991).
 - **Original 5 Strategies:**
 - Maintenance behaviors hypothesized to be central to the maintenance of a relationship: Stafford and Canary's (1991) 5 strategies of positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and sharing tasks (Stafford & Canary, 1991).
 - **Positivity** - involves attempting to keep interactions between partners cheerful, positive and affectionate. Positivity also includes interacting in "an optimistic, cheerful, and uncritical manner with a partner" (Toale & McCroskey, 2001, p. 73).
 - **Assurances**- involve expressing support and comfort towards one another and within the relationship, as well as talking about the future of the couple
 - **Openness** - involves the partners feeling honest with one another, expressing their feelings openly and talking about the relationship honestly. Openness also involves self disclosure of the individuals towards one another and the use of relationship talk, with the direct discussion of the nature of the relationship

- **Social Networking** - involves relying on and involving friends and family in relational activities and support. It also involves spending time together with mutual friends, family, and others
 - **Task Sharing** - involves couples that divide routines and responsibilities fairly among one another. This also involves the willingness to help one another
- Their relational maintenance model was later extended to include the two additional behaviors of advice and conflict management (Stafford et al., 2000), and more recently extended to include a total of 20 maintenance behaviors (Stafford, 2003).
- Relational maintenance behaviours are important for sustaining romantic relationships, regardless if individuals are involved in interracial or intraracial relationships (Punyanunt-Carter & Rodriguez, 2020).
- Relationship maintenance behaviours can vary across culture and relational contexts (Dainton & Myers, 2019).
- The use of such behaviours is because “people exert conscious efforts to continue ongoing relationships; however, the amount and type of efforts have been suggested to vary due to personality traits and cultural influences” (Yum & Li, 2007, p. 71).
- Culture was the main predictor of relational maintenance behaviours and quality in their study (Yum and Li, 2007) -- contradicted previous research suggesting that it was individual’s attachment style
- Example of relational maintenance strategy differences across culture:
 - Koreans care about saving face, a collectivist view, and normally will not introduce their partner to the family until they are in a serious committed relationship. On the other hand, in the U.S., where most Koreans have independent views, couples do not mind introducing their casual dating partners. This demonstrates a difference in strategy that could affect the relationship between a Korean partner and an American partner in a relationship (Gao & Gudykunst, 1995).
- Other researchers have suggested that in addition to engagement in communication, avoidance of communication is also a maintenance strategy used by couples (Baxter & Dindia, 1990; Kaplan, 1976). In fact, Ayres (1983) found that partners maintain relationships through avoidance, not directness.
 - Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune (2004) found that avoidance of communication about sensitive topics was associated with the fear that such communication would negatively impact both one’s self-image and the well-being of the relationship.
 - Dailey and Palomares (2004) found that topic avoidance in relationships was negatively related to relational satisfaction, suggesting the importance of open communication.

Open communication and partner support in intercultural and interfaith romantic relationships:

A relational maintenance approach (Article)

- Higher levels of open communication about culture, as well as higher levels of cultural support were associated with lower levels of relationship distress.
 - Longitudinally (followed up one year later), open communication about culture was positively associated with satisfaction (as couples engaged in more open communication about culture, feelings of satisfaction increased)
 - Late adolescents/young adults who communicate more freely about culturally-related relationship issues have less relationship distress.
- Higher levels of open communication about religion were associated with lower levels of relationship distress (Reiter & Gee, 2008)
- $\frac{2}{3}$ of Intercultural couples had broken up just a year later at the follow-up period, which reflects the national divorce rate (66% interethnic compared to 50% of entire U.S. population)
- Intercultural individuals are more likely than their counterparts (intracultural individuals) to indicate that discussion of cultural differences helps their relationship grow
 - The maintenance behavior of open communication about culture is important for both immediate and later relational satisfaction in young adult intercultural unions.

Theory Application

- **Privacy Management Processes among Interracial Romantic Partners (Communication Privacy Management Theory) - (Brummett & Steuber, 2015)**
 - Quick Summary of Findings
 - Although interracial partners perceive societal opposition and recognize disclosure risks, many choose to disclose relational information to selected social network members when considering positive implications of doing so.
 - Participants experience power struggles with co-owners in managing their private, relational information, and their disclosures often follow sequences that align with relational turning points.
 - Findings suggest that mixed-race couples frequently partake in both an interracial and intercultural identity, which carries with it additional opportunities for disclosure negotiations.
 - Participants choose to reveal or conceal relational information based on societal expectations and norms regarding IRRs in their respective ethnic groups and cultural affiliations, which can vary for men and women
 - Race in this study does not offer any variation to the specific kinds of privacy rules that individuals develop to protect their relational information;
 - However, race plays a role in regards to the degree of marginalization participants experience in their social networks.
 - Heightened marginalization results in more reflection of contextual, cultural, and risk–benefit factors when making disclosure decisions.
 - Background/Context
 - Romantic relationships do not exist in isolation; they are influenced by the people and societal norms around them. Accordingly, individuals must balance their desire to share details of their relationship as a way to gain approval or support (Felmlee, 2001; George & Yancey, 2004; Sprecher, 2011; Sprecher, Felmlee, Orbuch, & Willetts, 2002)
 - When individuals are in relationships that can be perceived as socially deviant, they often face increased stressors both within and external to the partnership. These couples cope with decreased relationship commitment and investment and the increased potential for relationship dissolution (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006, 2007).
 - Research identifies mixed-race relationships as “marginalized” (Gaines & Leaver, 2002; Gallup & Newport, 1991; Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Rosenblatt, Karis, & Powell, 1995) because they are often “targets of disapproval by their social networks and/or society at large” (Lehmiller, 2012, p. 451)
 - Decisions to reveal or conceal private, relational information are challenging in any relationship, but they are increasingly risky and necessary for couples in this context (Brummett & Steuber, 2015).
 - Interracial couples are likely to make disclosures in hopes of garnering more social support or conceal relationship information in light of previous situations in which support was lacking (Brummett & Steuber, 2015)
 - **Communication Privacy Management & Interracial Romantic Relationships**

- Experiences with, and expectations of, relational marginalization are likely to influence IRPs' communication about relationship information.
- Conversations about individuals' romantic partnerships are frequent occurrences (Baxter, Dun, & Sahlstein, 2001) and are an expected behavior among family and friends (Altman & Taylor, 1973). But the tendency to reveal information about romantic relationships can be offset by a fear of negative responses from others (Johnson & Milardo, 1984), especially if people perceive that their disclosures are stigmatizing or risky (Greene, 2009).
- Individuals might choose to keep aspects of their relationships hidden in order to avoid social sanctions and maintain existing network connections (Caughlin, 2009; Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, & Miller, 2005).
 - Marginalized romantic partners are perhaps more inclined to be strategic in managing communication about their relationships than those involved in nonmarginalized partnerships.
- CPM takes into account individuals' motivations for constructing metaphorical boundaries around their private information, including cultural criteria and disclosure risks (CPM; Petronio, 2002).
 - Both of these are relevant to the context of IRRs due to the intercultural relational identities that interracial partners assume and the increased risks associated with disclosure for marginalized couples
- CPM also addresses the notion that individuals are not detached from the social contexts in which they live. People engage in information co-ownership with their disclosure confidants
- *Privacy Rule Criteria*
 - A leading proposition of CPM theory is that individuals perceive ownership over their private information and believe they have the right to control its dissemination (Petronio, 2013).
 - The theory further posits that individuals adhere to privacy rules that derive from **five criteria** which influence decisions about the *amount* and *content* of information that is revealed to others (Durham, 2008; Petronio, 2002) :
 - 1. **Cultural** - each culture has privacy values that are the basis for judging levels of disclosure or privacy
 - 2. **Gendered** - gender differences may contribute to alternative rule structures that regulate boundaries for men and women
 - 3. **Motivational** - when a person has needs, they may depend on rules that allow for gathering and disseminating private information to satisfy these needs
 - 4. **Contextual** - context often sets the stage for developing new rules that address the situational needs of the privacy regulation
 - 5. **Risk–benefit ratio** - individuals or co-owners calculate the risks and benefits of disclosing or remaining private' there is **always** some measure of risk and benefit

- Individuals can acquire privacy rules through processes of socialization of previously established rules or by negotiating new ones with disclosure confidants. These rules also can take on different properties that determine their stability over time (Petronio, 2002).
 - Perceived marginalization could have a direct impact on an IRP's decision to reveal or conceal relational information when utilizing these rule criteria.
 - For example, an IRP who experiences high perceived marginalization is arguably more vulnerable than a same-race romantic partner in developing privacy rules.
 - Potential increased risks, such as social disapproval, might be associated with revealing relational information to others outside the romantic dyad (risk–benefit criterion), which could decrease one's desire to disclose (motivation criterion). Concealment might be especially likely if an individual's social network members and larger social environment show opposition or disapproval toward IRRs (contextual/cultural criteria).
- *Privacy Control*
 - According to CPM, original information owners can choose to share their private disclosures with others, making them co-owners and granting them informational responsibility.
 - Co-owners must negotiate the linkages or alliances they want to form with third parties and work together to determine the permeability of their boundaries, including access rules.
 - Such rules establish “who, outside the boundary, can know the information, the amount of information they can know, when it is appropriate for them to know, and how they should be told” (Petronio, 2002, p. 100).
 - The negotiation of privacy ownership and control also takes place regarding the ways in which co-owners plan to “protect their information by keeping it within the collective boundary” and their decisions for whom within that boundary has control over the information (p. 102).
 - CPM asserts that original information owners claim primary control throughout these processes.
 - Negotiation practices, however, can become complicated when several co-owners jointly participate in structuring collective privacy boundaries that determine to whom and how much information co-owners can disclose to others and the rights to ownership associated with those decisions.
- Findings (Brummett & Steuber, 2015)
 - Individuals who self-identified as currently participating in a heterosexual, interracial romantic relationships were found to utilize all five of the criteria for privacy rule development as outlined in the CPM theoretical framework, thereby suggesting that similar rule criteria do apply to the interracial romantic relationship context.
 - Cultural Criteria
 - Many participants identify as both interracial and interethnic and have close, familial ties to individuals living

outside the US, which elicits cultural differences in attitudes toward relationship behaviors. Participants discuss variations among themselves and their parents regarding what it means to date and the relational functioning that accompanies that romantic relationship status. Having parents who are unable to relate to normative, relational scripts for dating in the US is associated with *avoiding* conversations about romantic relationships.

- *Variations in cultural scripts between participants and their family members greatly affect IRPs' disclosure decisions, most often leading to concealment or increased risk
- Interracial partners similarly discuss network members' concerns about their involvement in dually marginalized relationships that are both interracial and intercultural (i.e., not involving a white member) and how it might impact their cultural community, which contributed to their privacy management decision assessment before revealing relational information to others
- Gendered Criteria (only emerged among female Indian Americans in the sample)
 - Female Indian American participants described an awareness of the social climate toward interracial relationships within Asian countries, such that people regard them as more acceptable for men in their cultures than they do for women.
 - Thus, participants perceive Indian American men as more willing than their female counterparts to disclose the nature of their relationships to family members due to less social stigma associated with their relational choices.
- Motivational Criteria
 - Almost every participant was motivated to talk about their romantic relationship in order to satisfy personal needs.
 - For some, revealing relational information occurred due to the desire to share with others the joy that being involved in a healthy, successful partnership brings them. Motivations to tell family and friends about romantic partners also arise in order to increase closeness and intimacy with social network members.
 - In order to avoid negative affect associated with hiding a relationship, some partners choose to be forthcoming with relational information and present a confident, public relationship image. Disclosure decisions also get tied to a sense of responsibility, suggesting that revelation is the "correct" or "noble" choice to make
 - Another common motivation for disclosure is to enlighten or educate people on racial stereotypes in an effort to help others become more socially progressive
- Contextual Criteria

- Decisions to conceal derive from expectations of receiving social disapproval, sanctions, or a lack of understanding from close others. Participants make note of certain types of IRRs that they believe are more or less accepted by society, which contributes to their decisions to discuss past and current romantic relationships
- Perceptions of marginalization vary in that some participants expect to receive less support than others
- The communities and networks in which participants grow up and develop a sense of identity thus play a significant part in their decisions to openly discuss their IRRs.
- Risk-Benefit Criteria
 - Hesitancy among interracial partners to share information results primarily from fears of relationship risks (e.g., dissolution), socially sanctioned stigmas, and negative confidant reactions, especially due to cultural differences surrounding the notion of dating
 - Others feel comfortable revealing information about their relationship to others regardless of the context or social group setting
 - Some participants have low expectations of risk as a result of the lack of visual distinction between themselves and their romantic partners, especially among those partners who can “pass as white and decrease their vulnerability to public scrutiny”
 - Additionally, in seeking to legitimate their relationships some interracial partners decide to discuss their romantic relationship choices with others (strangers included) in order to seek personal benefits, such as soliciting approval and assurance that their relationship is “normative.”
- Power dynamics among disclosure confidants, as well as disclosure timing sequences greatly impact participants’ decisions to reveal and conceal private, relational information:
 - Interracial partners participate in *two distinct co-ownership relationships* with their respective social network members. Each of these relationships varies in terms of who has primary control over romantic relationship information once it is revealed to disclosure confidants:
 - *Interracial Partner Control*
 - The first involves control and co-ownership negotiations through which interracial partners take primary responsibility over their information and dictate who gets to know about their romantic relationships and the process by which dissemination occurs
 - *Disclosure Confidant Control*
 - A second kind of co-ownership relationship is marked by power struggles and involves the development of privacy rules which are determined by disclosure confidants (e.g., parents, close family members), not the participants themselves and

- surrounded topics such as informing extended family members
 - Some IRPs suggest that they feel a sense of relief in having confidants assume responsibility over their information. The pressure of dealing with confidant reactions and engaging in detailed explanations for their choice of a romantic partner is removed when their parents act as disclosure buffers
 - Disclosure timing sequences
 - Interracial partners decide to disclose information about their relationships according to a specific timeline, namely when the relationship progresses to a more serious or committed stage
 - The idea of waiting until romantic partners become more committed to one another or experience a turning point in their relationship (e.g., engagement, marriage) is prominent regardless of particular racial pairings or cultural identifications.
 - Making the relationship permanent through public ritual somehow decreases individuals' perceptions of disapproval from network members.
 - Participants specifically state that timing disclosures according to stages of relational investment and commitment allow them to avoid potential conflicts with peers and family members during a time of relational uncertainty.
 - Experiencing network "drama" is easier to handle when romantic relationship security is intact
 - *The decision to prolong revelation is almost always associated specifically with extended family members rather than immediate family (e.g., parents, siblings) or close friends.
 - Partner Disclosure Disagreements
 - Power struggles in controlling relational information occur at the romantic relationship level as well.
 - Some participants express having explicitly different preferences than their romantic partners when discussing relational information with others.
 - Partners disagree on the timing of disclosures, choosing disclosure targets, and the degree of content that should be disclosed.
 - Often these preferential differences derive from dialectical tensions of openness versus closedness within relational dyads
 - Other disagreements are rooted in variations in perceived marginalization from social network members
 - Concealment Strategies

- Grounds for concealment include: expectations of marginalization, lack of network support, fear of risk to one's self, romantic partnership, and/or social network relationships, and fear of social stigma.
 - Concealment also takes place due to perceptions of racial stereotypes regarding specific interracial pairings, especially those involving Blacks
- Decisions to conceal are also related to gender stereotypes linked to social acceptability of being involved in an interracial relationship, waiting for a romantic relationship to progress to a more serious or committed stage, and general orientations toward privacy.
- The permeability of boundaries surrounding relational information varies across participants, thus a multitude of concealment strategies emerge in participants' talk about how they protect that information
 - **Complete permeability** - a select few interracial partners assert their lack of hesitancy to share any and all information about their relationships and romantic partners to others.
 - **Topic Avoidance and Taboo Topics**
 - Some participants tell others about their involvement in a romantic relationship but do not initially tell anyone about their partner's racial identity
 - Some are motivated to do this in order to prevent family members from developing preconceived judgments
 - Topic avoidance is a common concealment strategy that participants employ when their desire is to completely refrain (either in the past or present) from discussing their relationships with others and present the facade that they are romantically unattached.
 - Avoiding particular relationship statuses (such as religious affiliation) and neglecting to post pictures of one's romantic partner on social media sites or abstaining from conversation with others about "finding" a romantic partner are typical strategies participants use.
 - **Labeling**
 - In addition to concealing relational information from others through topic avoidance, some IRPs make strategic choices about how to label their IRRs when interacting with social network members.
 - For example, several individuals use the tactic of calling their romantic partner a "friend" as opposed to using other labels (e.g., boyfriend, girlfriend, significant other)

in conversations with family members and peer groups.

- Others strategically modify their partners' names, which could potentially expose their racial group membership (e.g., not saying partner's last names), or alter their own names in order to deter others from drawing conclusions about the interracial nature of their relationships (e.g., not taking their partner's last name or struggling to decide the surname of biological children).
 - Participants' awareness of racial markers through the process of naming strongly influences their identity formation as both individual romantic partners and family units and thus serves as another strategy for concealing relational information.

Other Related Theories

- **Interdependence theory** suggests that partners “depend” on each other for certain needs (Rusbult et al., 1994)
 - dependence is determined as the reliance on a relationship for specific needs that cannot be sought from other relationships
 - Interdependence theory is the central theoretical perspective of relational maintenance (Toale & McCroskey, 2001).
 - The theory deals with costs and rewards, but rather than comparing one’s own to their partner’s costs and rewards, an individual looks at these two concepts in comparison to their expectations for them (Stafford & Canary, 2006). Individuals consider their past relationships to establish their expectations and form their comparison level (CL) for future relationships (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Kelley and Thibaut (1978), note that “The CL is the standard against which the participant evaluated the ‘attractiveness’ of the relationship or how satisfactory it is”
 - The theory focuses on an “individual remaining in a relationship as long as rewards exceed the possible rewards of an alternative relationship” (Toale & McCroskey, 2001, p. 72).
 - When outcomes meet or exceed the expectations, then partners are satisfied; however, the couple is dissatisfied when the outcomes are below the expectations.
 - Partners in a relationship have the ability to influence one another’s rewards (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993), thus resulting in the interdependence of partners.
- **Equity theory** states individuals make, “assessments of equity within their relationships; Individuals compare their own ratio of outcomes and inputs to their assessments of their partners’ outcomes and inputs” (Stafford & Canary, 2006, p. 229).
 - When the perceived ratio of rewards to costs is equal for both partners, then the relationship is considered to be equitable. The theory further notes that if one partner’s ratio of costs is higher than rewards, then the individual is underbenefited in the relationship, which causes distress. Alternatively, when one’s ratio of rewards is higher than the costs, then that partner is overbenefited. Further, the research found that equitable relationships are more emotionally rewarding for both partners, rather than couples being overbenefited or underbenefited (Sprecher, 1986).
 - Underbenefitedness was a negative predictor of the following relational features: trust, control mutuality, and liking (Canary & Stafford 1993; Dainton, 2019)
 - Equity is influential in the use of **maintenance behaviours** for relational satisfaction, considering individuals should be motivated to maintain a relationship if they perceive it to be equitable (Punyanunt-Carter & Rodriguez, 2020).
- **Cultural Contracts Theory** (Hecht, Jackson, & Pitts, 2005; Jackson, 2002) posits that

individuals negotiate identity through cultural contracts with others. Individuals have their own values and priorities that influence how they interact with others. These interactions in turn help reshape their identities, which are then brought back into their relationships.

- Cultural Contracts Theory extends Ting-Toomey's (2005) concept of identity negotiation, which partly talks about how individuals choose which of their multiple identities they will bring to the forefront in each specific communication situation. Identity negotiation is a “conscious and mindful process
- Jackson (2002) states that individuals first have to negotiate their identities on a personal level. Then they take these intrapersonal identities and use them in their relationships with others. Successful relationships are products of dynamic and ongoing negotiation of individual-level values with others.
- We draw on different elements of our identities depending on the specific person we are dealing with, context, or issue (Lawton & Foeman, 2012)
- Cultural Contracts Theory identifies three types of relational contracts that could result from identity negotiation:
 - First, **ready-to-sign cultural contracts** are usually held by dominant groups in society, whose goal is to impose their worldview on others. They are not interested in learning about other cultures or adjusting their beliefs and behaviors.
 - **Quasi-completed cultural contracts** are mostly used by non-dominant groups. These groups want to keep their worldview, but are open to adjusting them temporarily
 - **Co-created cultural contracts** are engaged in by those who are open to fully negotiating cultural differences with others.
 - Drummond and Orbe (2010) state that these contracts are among people who are open to validating cultural differences, and are often found in committed long-term relationships.
 - Jackson (1999, 2002a) explains that marginalized groups are under more pressure to negotiate quasi-completed and co-created cultural contracts because they have little choice if they want their voices to be heard but that they need to be open to adaptation in dealing with dominant cultures
 - *Contracts are multidimensional and fluid, much like relationships

Discussion Questions/Forum

- **Hatfield et al.'s (1979) Global Measure of Equity**
 - First Item on the scale
 - “Consider what you put into your relationship with your partner, compared to what you get out of it . . . and what your partner puts in compared to what he/she gets out of it. How does your relationship stack up?”
 - The response options to this item ranged from 1 deal than my partner) (My partner is getting a much better deal) to 7
 - Second Item on the scale
 - Sometimes things get out of balance in the relationship and one partner

contributes more to the relationship than the other. Consider all the times when the exchange in your relationship with your partner has become unbalanced and you or your partner contributed more than the other for a time. When your relationship with your partner becomes unbalanced, which of you is more likely to contribute more?

- (My partner is more likely to contribute more) Responses to this item range from 1 (I am much more likely to be the one to contribute more). to 7
- Equity was computed by adding the two items together.
- The scores ranged from 2 to 14.
 - Equity relationships are the ones that have a combined score ranging from 7 to 9.
 - Overbenefited relationships have combined scores ranging from 2 to 6.
 - Underbenefited relationships have combined scores ranging from 10 - 14.
- Docan, 2003
 - “How can I begin, sustain, and positively interact with people from other cultures?”
 - How can I help others interact in constructive ways?”

Advice for Interracial Couples

- Facilitate social support, both within the romantic relationship and from close others (*see social support section for importance)
 - **Support (from the context of within the relationship)**- involves giving advice, offering comfort, and being reassuring (Messman, Canary,& Hause, 2000)
 - *overlap with Stafford & Canary’s maintenance behaviors of assurances and advice
 - Advice about support for those in social network: “Should parents and other family members want to preserve their relational ties, they were encouraged by participants to accept an IRP’s romantic relationship choices and offer support to the best of their ability when it was requested” (Brummett & Afifi, 2019)
 - “Relationship-specific support” which is the perception of available support from another in a significant relationship (Sarason & Sarason, 2001; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1994).
- Trawalter, Richeson, and Shelton (2008) discussed stress and coping mechanisms for promoting positive interracial contact. They focused on the value of engagement, instead of antagonizing, avoidance, or freezing behaviors
- Engage in open communication about culture and religion (*see relationship management strategies subtab)
 - Conceptualizes “**open communication**” - to be a maintenance behavior which includes a lack of topic avoidance, such that individuals who engage in higher levels of open communication tend not to avoid topics, which allows for the inclusion of self-disclosure (Reiter & Gee, 2008).
 - Similarly, do not avoid racial issues because it can be beneficial for gaining insight into the relationship

- With regard to avoidance as a communication style in interracial unions, Leslie and Letiecq (2004) explained that while avoidance of racial issues in the couple might serve as a coping mechanism, this behavior can limit a couple's ability to gain insight into their relationship.
- Work to gain a “balanced and flexible” view of differences and similarities.
 - If partners are able to understand, appreciate, and integrate each other's similarities and differences, they would be able to use these differences in an enriching manner (Falicov, 1995).
- Seek to develop cultural awareness - assuming you are similar in all domains of a relationship can lead to later conflict
 - “Partners need to have a conscious awareness of the role that culture plays in their unions, which is only possible when there is effective communication between partners” (Jones and Chao, 1997)
 - Partners must learn to communicate about one another's similarities and differences, and support each other's personal or cultural beliefs and practices, especially when it comes to things like celebrating holidays or parenting practices.
- Consider levels of communication about, and partner support for, one another's culture, in an effort to increase these relational maintenance behaviors, and as a means of increasing relationship satisfaction and promoting relationship longevity (Reiter & Gee, 2008)
- Discuss preferences for disclosing relational information with others.
 - Partners may disagree on the timing of disclosures, choosing disclosure targets, and the degree of content that should be disclose; having honest conversations about this, while recognizing that individuals may have different preferences for openness/closedness within a relationship, can be beneficial in preventing future misunderstandings (*see privacy management/theory application section)

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