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Asian Americans and Latino Americans: Interracial Couple Functioning in a National Sample

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Abstract

Interracial relationships are increasing rapidly in the U.S., yet the divorce rate for these couples are substantially higher than that of intraracial couples. With populations of Asian Americans and Latinos increasing faster than any other racial group, factors affecting these groups in particular need to be examined in order to provide tailored services and support. This study uses the National Latino and Asian American Survey (NLAAS) to examine potential differences between interracial couples and intraracial couples on relationship satisfaction, relationship adjustment (i.e., partner support and strain), and intimate partner violence (IPV), as these factors may be contributing to a greater instability among interracial couples compared to intraracial couples. Results did not support the hypotheses that compared to intraracial couples, interracial couples would report lower marital satisfaction, fewer positive partner interactions (i.e., less partner support), more frequent negative partner interactions (i.e., greater partner strain), and greater levels of IPV. People who were in an interracial relationship reported greater partner support than people who were in an intraracial relationship; there was no association between interracial relationship status and the other measures of relationship functioning. Race moderated the association between interracial relationships and minor perpetration of violence such that Latinos in interracial relationships were less likely to be the perpetrators of minor forms of IPV than Latinos in intraracial relationships; there were no differences between interracial and intraracial relationships on perpetration of minor IPV for Asians.

Asian Americans and Latino Americans: Interracial Couple Functioning in a National Sample

One of the most sought after goals in life is a satisfying romantic relationship, and it is no wonder why with all the benefits involved. Couples with a satisfying romantic relationship have consistently reported greater happiness and life satisfaction than individuals who remain single or those in unsatisfying relationships (Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003). Indeed, relationship quality is one of the best predictors of life satisfaction (Randall & Bodenman, 2009; Whisman, 2006). These benefits even extend to protection against physical ailments, morbidity, and mortality (Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003).

Increasingly found among the ranks of relationships are interracial couples. In 1970, only 321,000 intermarriages were reported in the United States Census. In 2000, this increased to 1,047,000, about 7% of all marriages, which has increased to 10% as reported by the 2010 United States Census, all of which would be much higher if cohabitation rates were also considered (Bratter & Eschbach, 2006; United States Census Bureau, 2012). But unfortunately with the increase in marriage has come an increase in divorce. With a national average dissolution rate of 50% for first marriages for all couples, a 66% dissolution rate for interracial couples seems astounding (Gaines & Brennan, 2001, p. 242). Interracial couples have a 40% higher dissolution rate than intraracial couples that cannot be explained (Krieder, 2000, p. 30). It is clear something different is happening in interracial relationships compared to intraracial relationships, yet relatively little is known about how these groups differ that could account for this difference in dissolution rate.

A large number of interracial relationships are comprised of relationships where one person is Asian or Latino. The populations of both racial groups have increased approximately 43% between 2000 and 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Latino populations increased

from 12.5% of the population in 2000 to 16.3% in 2010, standing at more than 50 million people as of 2010; the Asian population increased from 3.6% in 2000 to 4.8% in 2010, standing at more than 14 million people as of 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2012). With this huge increase in populations of Asians and Latinos, more than any other racial group, intermarriages with these groups are also increasing (Fu & Wolfinger, 2011). Not only that, but Fu and Wolfinger (2011) and Qian and Lichter (2007) both found that Latinos are the most likely to intermarry with whites than any other minority racial group; Asians are not far behind Latinos (Qian & Lichter, 2007). Much of the research on interracial relationships has focused on black-white relationships because of the historical color line in our nation's history, but this changing relationship demographic must draw our attention now to understand the growing number of interracial relationships of Latinos and Asians.

Terminology

Before discussing interracial relationships, it is important to define the terminology used in studying interracial couples. The definition of race is one that “involves the assumption that individuals can be divided into groups based on phenotype or genotype and that those groups have meaningful differences” (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010, p. 440). Ethnicity, on the other hand, “refers to a subset of people whose members share common national, ancestral, cultural, immigration, or religious characteristics that distinguish them from other groups” (Burton, et al., 2010, p. 440).

Interracial relationships then can simply be defined as an intimate relationship between two people that self-identify as different races. The main racial groups most dominant in the U.S. are white, black, Asian, and Latinos. In definitions used by the United States Census Bureau, Hispanic or Latinos are technically used to classify people based on their ethnicity rather than as

a racial category beginning in 2000, but because common perceptions and consequently much of the research prior to 2000 place it into a race category, that is how it will generally be referred to in this study as well. Asian is considered a race as well, whereas categories like Korean or Chinese-American are considered ethnicities under the umbrella of Asian. Interracial can also include multiracial individuals. Basically, if two individuals self-identify as different races in any of the categories used to define race, they qualify as different races.

A History of Race and Interracial Relationships in the U.S.

A history of interracial relationships is necessary to understand how these couples may still be viewed today. Interracial relationships could be seen throughout history among whites and Native Americans, Latinos, Black, and Asians. All of these minority racial groups were harshly stigmatized for the color of their skin. They were believed to be unintelligent beasts, due to eugenics. Also due to eugenics, it was thought that “racial hybridity would lead to degeneration” (Telles & Sue, 2009, p.137). Nevertheless, sexual relationships did emerge, often not by choice, and, when they were by choice, they were not tolerated by most people. The offspring of these relationships were enslaved or simply outcast from both racial groups (Telles & Sue, 2009).

After the abolition movement, severe racism still existed, as evidenced by the Jim Crow Laws, for all people of color. One demonstration of this discrimination was anti-miscegenation laws. These laws were designed to prevent legal intermarriage and the children that would come from those relationships, both considered an abomination by many people. Challenging this civil right exclusion did not happen until well into the Civil Rights Movement. Finally, the anti-miscegenation laws were repealed in 1967 in the case of *Loving v. Virginia* (Telles & Sue,

2009). This historically recent date of repeal means that legal interracial unions are still relatively new.

Though interracial marriage was legal after the repeal in 1967, it was not always welcomed. Relationships that cross the racial boundary are still “stigmatized as...inherently dysfunctional relationship[s], motivated by racial stereotypes of sexual virility or even psychological pathology” (Bratter & King, 2008, p. 161). Bratter and Eschbach (2006) echo this sentiment and argue that interracial relationships may have felt, and may still feel, more disapproval and social pressure than intraracial relationships. They go on to say that “some interracial couples continue to experience disapproving reactions from family, friends, and acquaintances” (Bratter & Eschbach, 2006, p. 1028). Yet there are thoughts that this social stigma may be decreasing in recent years as evidenced by the continual increase in intermarriage (Qian & Lichter, 2007). But with the dissolution rate still as high as it is, it is clear something is happening for interracial couples that needs to be understood and addressed. Prior research is often sparse and contradictory in this regard, which is why interracial relationships need to be explored.

Prior Research and Important Constructs

Perhaps one of the most important and widely studied aspects of relationship research is relationship quality. With respect to relationship quality, there are two major approaches to studying quality (Fincham & Rogge, 2010). One approach focuses on subjective evaluation of the relationship and can be conceptualized as measuring *relationship satisfaction*, whereas the other approach examines patterns of interaction (such as communication) and can be conceptualized as measuring *relationship adjustment*. Most of the research on interracial couples

has focused on relationship satisfaction and the results from these studies have been contradictory and inconsistent.

There are studies that suggest differences between inter- and intraracial couples, finding that intraracial couples are higher in satisfaction overall (Bratter & Eschbach, 2008; Fu, X., 2008; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Jeong & Schumm, 1990). Latino interracial couples were found to have the same satisfaction as white intraracial couples, while intraracial Latino couples had lower satisfaction (Negy & Snyder, 2000). On the other hand, interracial Asian and white couples were found to have less marital happiness and satisfaction than intraracial couples (Fu, Tora, & Kendall, 2001; Jeong & Schumm, 1990). Other studies find that interracial couples have more satisfaction than their intraracial counterparts (Troy, Lewis-Smith, & Laurenceau, 2006). With the conflicting results of satisfaction of interracial couples relative to intraracial couples, especially for Latino and Asian interracial couples, additional research using representative samples is needed to evaluate if and to what degree interracial couples differ from intraracial couples with respect to relationship satisfaction.

Although researchers have evaluated potential differences in relationship satisfaction between interracial versus intraracial couples, there has been little research examining potential differences in relationship adjustment, the other aspect of relationship quality. For example, it would be informative to know whether interracial couples differ from same race couples in terms of their positive and negative communication. Positive partner interactions are supportive behaviors that allow for trust and communication and the perception of care and understanding from a partner (Walen & Lachman, 2000). These behaviors, in the advent of something negative in either of the individual's lives, could serve as a protective factor (Walen & Lachman, 2000). Negative partner interactions are stressful behaviors that lower trust, block communication, and

create hostility and irritation (Walen & Lachman, 2000). These act as a strain on the relationship from the inside out. A positive relationship, then, can come from the presence of support (i.e., positive interactions) or the absence of strain (i.e., negative interactions), whereas a negative relationship can come from the absence of support or the presence of strain.

To date, there is no known research that has evaluated differences between interracial and intraracial couples with respect to partner support or partner strain. Kiecolt, Hughes, and Keith (2008) did examine support and strain among different racial groups. No differences were found between any racial group, including Asian and Latinos, which indicates that the different racial groups experience and perceive partner support and strain similarly. However, the possibility that there may be differences between Latino and Asian American interracial versus intraracial couples has yet to be examined.

In addition to studying relationship quality, relationship researchers often examine rates of violence or aggression that occurs in intimate relationships. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is “physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse” (Centers for Disease Control, 2012). IPV may sound like a problem from within the relationship, but it is commonly conceived of as a reaction to social stressors, such as low social support, discrimination, social isolation, or the perceptions thereof, or gender and race power imbalance (Fusco, 2010; Lipsky, Cristofalo, Reed, Caetano, & Roy-Byrne, 2012). With more than a million cases of IPV reported annually, examining how race and interracial relationships might be associated with IPV are important for prevention and awareness (Lipsky, et al., 2012). Social support is a major beneficial factor for happy marriages, so if a couple loses that support or does not have that support, it can lead to greater strains in the relationship if there is no other outside support for the individual, especially if violence erupts (Fusco, 2010). Additionally,

discrimination is thought to be a major factor of stress, especially when couples experience hostility from their own race (Fusco, 2010; Killian, 2001). Another source of stress has been found to be a greater likelihood to engage in casual sex among interracial couples while the commitment remains low; this combination has been associated with depressive symptoms (D'Souza, 2010). This added stress and mood factor may influence rates of IPV.

In general, interracial couples were found to be involved in cases of IPV more often than same race couples (Fusco, 2010). Latino interracial couples are more likely to show higher rates of victim injury and prior abuse compared to intraracial Latino or intraracial white couples, which is typically indicative of more severe forms of violence (Fusco, 2010). Also, interracial couples match intraracial minority couples in showing a lower tendency for drug and alcohol use prior to violence than do white intraracial couples (Fusco, 2010). Very little is known about Asians in interracial relationships when it comes to IPV as it has not been isolated in a study previously. There are, of course, racial disparities that affect the way IPV may show in interracial relationships. Latinos are more likely to be perpetrators of IPV than are whites and more likely to commit severe aggression; specifically, Latino males are more likely than white males to commit severe physical aggression but less likely than white males to commit sexual aggression (Cho & Kim, 2012; Lipsky, et al., 2012). It is believed that Asians in same race relationships typically experience less IPV than do same race couples of other racial groups (Cho & Kim, 2012).

Summary and Current Study

Interracial relationships are far more likely to end than intraracial relationships, yet little is known about why this is, especially when it comes to Asians and Latinos involved with partners of a different race. A long history of racialized interactions in the U.S. have shaped the

way race and relationships are viewed, and these interactions are ones that may factor in to the functioning of the relationship.

The current study was conducted to examine whether Asians and Latinos in interracial relationships differed from Asians and Latinos in intraracial relationships with respect to relationship quality (i.e., relationship satisfaction and relationship adjustment) and IPV. Based on prior research, I hypothesized that compared to intraracial couples, interracial couples would report lower relationship satisfaction, less partner support, more partner strain, and a greater likelihood of IPV.

Methods

Participants

This study used data from the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS), whose aim was to study mental illness and access to mental health services in nationally representative Asian American and Latino populations (National Latino and Asian American Survey, 2013). The NLAAS is part of the Collaborative Psychiatric Epidemiology Surveys (CPES), which is sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) (Center for Multicultural Mental Health Research, 2013). In-person interviews were conducted between 2002 and 2003 by trained and, where necessary, bilingual interviewers (Porche, Fortuna, Lin, & Alegria, 2011). The study consisted of 4,649 Asians and Latinos, 3,069 of whom were married at the time of the survey. Of the 3,069 married respondents, 854 (27.8%) were Asians and 2215 (72.2%) were Latinos. Of the married respondents, 88.3% of Latinos were in interracial relationships, and 17% of Asians were in interracial relationships. Overall, 60.9% of respondents were in interracial relationships. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 92 years with a mean age of 40.4 years. Fifty-three percent of the respondents were male.

Measures

Relationship Satisfaction. Global relationship satisfaction was measured by a single-item, in which participants were asked to “rate your current marriage/relationship” on an 11-point rating scale, in which “0” was anchored with the description *the worst possible marriage/relationship* and 10 was anchored with the description *the best*. Single-item measures of dyadic satisfaction are commonly used in epidemiologic survey research (e.g., Glenn & Weaver, 1981) and correlate highly with longer measures of dyadic adjustment (e.g., Eddy, Heyman, & Weiss, 1991).

Relationship Adjustment. Positive and negative exchanges with partner were assessed via an 8-item inventory that is often used in large epidemiological studies (Walen & Lachman, 2000). Positive partner exchange (i.e., partner support) was measured with four items (“How much does your spouse/partner really care about you?”), whereas negative partner exchange (i.e., partner strain) was measured by four items (“How often does your spouse/partner criticize you?”). Items were scored on a 4-point scale and partner support and partner strain scales were constructed by calculating the mean of the items, with higher scores reflecting higher standing on each scale. The resulting scales had acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$ for partner support and $\alpha = .74$ for partner strain). Because the item content of these scales is similar to that found in commonly used measures of marital adjustment, the partner support and strain scales were conceptualized as measuring relationship adjustment.

Intimate Partner Violence. IPV was assessed with a modified form of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), which is “the most widely used instrument for identifying domestic violence” (Straus, 2007, p. 190). The CTS makes a distinction between more minor forms of abuse and severe abuse because of the “perceived greater harm resulting from acts in the severe

subscale”, though any form of violence is troubling in a relationship (Straus, 2007, p. 191). The distinction between the two also aligns legally with the definitions of simple assault and aggravated assault (Straus, 2007). Respondents were presented with two lists representing minor violence (*pushed, grabbed or shoved; threw something, slapped or hit*) or severe violence (*kicked, bit or hit with a fist; beat up; choked; burned or scalded; threatened with a knife or gun*). Participants rated how often they and their partners engaged in any of these behaviors, using a 4-point rating scale (*often, sometimes, rarely, never*). Because the *often* and *sometimes* responses were endorsed infrequently, responses were recoded as present (*often, sometimes, rarely*) or absent (*never*) to create dichotomous measures of minor and severe violence.

Results

Descriptive data for each of the study measures are presented in Table 1. To evaluate the association between interracial relationship status and relationship outcomes, each of the measures of relationship functioning were regressed on interracial relationship status (0 = intraracial, 1 = interracial), controlling for race, age, and gender. Linear regressions were conducted for continuous relationship outcomes (i.e., marital satisfaction, partner support, partner strain) and logistic regression analyses were conducted for dichotomous relationship outcomes (i.e., IPV). For the logistic regression analyses, the exponential of each regression coefficient was computed and interpreted as an odds ratio (OR); the 95% confidence interval (CI) was also computed for each coefficient. Results from these analyses are presented in Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, after holding age, gender, and race constant, interracial relationship status was significantly associated only with partner support: compared to intraracial couples, interracial couples reported greater partner support. Interracial couples did not differ

from intraracial couples on marital satisfaction, partner strain, or being a perpetrator or victim of minor or severe IPV.

Evaluating whether the association between interracial relationship status and relationship outcomes was moderated by race was of interest (i.e., whether the association between interracial relationship status and relationship outcomes differ in magnitude for Latinos relative to Asians). To determine if race moderated the association between interracial relationship status and relationship outcomes, a Race \times Interracial Relationship Status multiplicative interaction term was created and entered into the linear and logistic regression analyses, controlling for the component terms (and demographic variables). The interaction term were not significant for marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.13, p = .56$), partner support ($\beta = .10, p = .11$), partner strain ($\beta = -.00, p = .96$), minor IPV victimization ($\beta = .38, p = .35$), severe IPV perpetration ($\beta = 1.41, p = .06$), or severe IPV victimization ($\beta = .52, p = .52, OR = 1.68, CI = .341 - 8.29$). In comparison, the interaction term was significantly associated with minor IPV perpetration ($\beta = 1.20, p < .001$). To probe the nature of the interaction, separate logistic regression analyses were run for Asians and Latinos. For Asians, interracial relationship status was not significantly associated with minor IPV perpetration ($\beta = .41, p = .98, OR = 1.51, CI = 0.93 - 2.47$), suggesting that Asians in interracial relationships did not differ from those in intraracial relationships in committing minor IPV perpetration. In comparison, interracial relationship status was significantly associated with minor IPV perpetration in Latinos ($\beta = -.78, p < .001, OR = .46, CI = 0.30 - 0.67$). Holding demographic variables constant, Latinos in interracial relationships were less likely than those in intraracial relationships to be the perpetrator of minor IPV.

Discussion

The present study was conducted to test the hypotheses that compared to intraracial couples, interracial couples would report lower marital satisfaction, fewer positive partner interactions (i.e., less partner support), more frequent negative partner interactions (i.e., greater partner strain), and greater levels of IPV. The hypotheses were not supported by the data. The only significant association between interracial relationship status and relationship outcomes was in the direction opposite that which was predicted: people who were in an interracial relationship reported greater partner support than people who were in an intraracial relationship; there was no association between interracial relationship status and the other measures of relationship functioning.

Being in an interracial relationship was not significantly associated with marital satisfaction; interracial and intraracial couples were equally satisfied. This finding is contrary to what has been found in the majority of other studies. Typically, relationship satisfaction is higher among same race couples than interracial couples (Bratter & Eschbach, 2008; Fu, X., 2008; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Jeong & Schumm, 1990). One study did find that interracial couples showed a higher level of satisfaction than intraracial couples, and the interracial relationships were primarily comprised of one Asian or Latino individual (Troy, et al., 2006). This suggests that something different is happening in interracial relationships involving individuals who are Asian or Latino compared to interracial relationships that include members of other racial groups, primarily Black. So perhaps differences are not evident in Asian and Latino interracial relationships, only interracial relationships with other racial groups. One other possible explanation is found with Gaines and Brennan (2001), who posit that satisfaction is improved in interracial relationships because they are able to appreciate their partner's unique characteristics and differences more thoroughly; it is possible that for this reason interracial

couples involving Asian and Latino individuals show no differences in satisfaction compared to intraracial couples who do not have to deal with as many differences. In examining possible interactions between race and interracial relationships, it was found that the association between interracial relationship status and marital satisfaction was not moderated by race. This suggests that the degree of association between interrelationship status and marital satisfaction did not differ for Asians and Latinos. This finding demonstrates that differences in satisfaction between interracial and intraracial Latino couples and interracial and intraracial Asian couples are similar. Sampling might be one explanation for this similarity as the prior research was conducted using small, convenience samples (Fu, et al., 2001; Jeong & Schumm, 1990; Negy & Snyder, 2000). Another explanation stems from the literature. Another possibility is that interracial relationships are becoming more normative and accepted among these groups so no differences between races or interrelationship status is evident.

The hypothesized association between interracial relationship status and marital adjustment (i.e., partner support or strain) also was not supported. Partner support actually showed that interracial couples perceived more support from their partners than did intraracial couples; there were no differences between the groups on partner strain. Overall, interracial couples, regardless of whether the relationship involved an Asian or a Latino, were likely to experience more support and the same amount of strain as intraracial Asian couples and intraracial Latino couples. There has been no prior research on partner support and partner strain in interracial couples, but these data seem to partially reflect the finding that there were no racial differences among intraracial couples for support or strain (Kiecolt, et al., 2008). That intraracial couples reported higher levels of support than intraracial couples may indicate that to compensate for outside stressors, like discrimination, couples have had to adapt a means of

coping. This additional support likely benefits the relationship. Another possible explanation is that individuals involved in interracial relationships differ in some ways than individuals who choose not to enter interracial relationships, leading to a greater tendency for eliciting partner support. Other researchers have posited that individuals in interracial relationships create a relationship culture in which they are able to work together and understand each other better (Gaines & Brennan, 2001). This may explain the increase in support; couples may have created an “us” against “them” mentality that allows for more support despite any obstacles. That strain did not differ for interracial couples compared to intraracial couples suggests that there may be a greater acceptance of intermarriages. Race may not have played a factor for this variable in interracial relationships specifically, but Asians more generally were found to experience greater levels of strain than Latinos, regardless of the race of the partner, which is contradictory of past research indicating there were no differences between races (Kiecolt, et al., 2008). This may be indicative of a cultural difference for Asians Americans not captured in the previous study.

The hypothesis that interracial couples would show a greater frequency of IPV than intraracial couples was not supported by the data. Interracial couples showed equal rates of minor perpetration and victimization of violence as intraracial couples; the same is true for severe perpetration and victimization of violence. This contradicts prior research that indicates IPV, injury, and a prior history of abuse are more likely in interracial relationships than intraracial relationships (Fusco, 2010; Lipsky, et al., 2012). This may indicate a greater acceptance of interracial relationships involving Asian or Latino partners as IPV is thought to stem from a lack of social support, discrimination, and stress, among other social factors. Another possible explanation is the sampling of the studies. Both Fusco (2010) and Lipsky et al. (2012) used city police reports. Cases that are not detected by the police are not included, which

may mean only severe cases of violence were included in the other studies. Also, reporting of IPV differs between racial groups; Asian women are the least likely to seek formal help, such as police intervention, whereas Latino women are more likely to seek formal help than other racial groups, such as white or black women (Cho & Kim, 2012). This may mean that interracial couples may be counted more often in studies that are based on police reports by virtue of the reporting tendencies related to the race of the female partner. In comparison, the current study relies on self-report of IPV, so reporting minor and severe IPV may be more balanced. There were also racial differences in the prevalence of IPV, with Asians experiencing less severe violence than Latinos. This is consistent with prior research. Latinos typically are the aggressors and victims of more severe violence, regardless of partner race, and Asians typically experience less severe forms of IPV than other racial groups (Cho & Kim, 2012). This may be a cultural difference between the two racial groups in reactions to social stressors or differences in reporting of IPV between racial groups.

In the analyses involving the interaction between race and interracial relationship status, however, there were interesting results. Race moderated the association between interracial relationships and minor perpetration of violence such that Latinos in interracial relationships were less likely to be the perpetrators of minor forms of violence than Latinos in intraracial relationships; there were no differences between interracial and intraracial Asian couples. Prior research indicates that typically Latinos are among the most severe aggressors of IPV, and this finding only seems to hold for Latinos involved intraracial relationships (Cho & Kim, 2012; Lipsky, et al., 2012). Additionally, Latinos in interracial relationships were previously reported to be more likely to show more severe forms of violence than Latinos in intraracial relationships (Fusco, 2010). One explanation for these contradictory findings is that Latinos involved in

interracial relationships are more assimilated to the U.S. culture and therefore experience less acculturation and perceive less discrimination, lowering the stress thought to lead to IPV and the severity of the IPV that does occur (Fusco, 2010). Another possibility is that Latinos involved in interracial relationships differ in some way from Latinos that choose same race relationships. Differences in sample composition is another possibility given that prior studies used convenience samples whereas this study utilizes a representative sample. These results were not significant for Asians; Asians in interracial relationships were just as likely to be the perpetrators of minor forms of violence as Asians in intraracial relationships. Research indicates that Asians in intraracial relationships show a lower prevalence of IPV and lower severity than other minority intraracial couples, such as Latinos, and this seems to extend to interracial relationships as well. Asian women typically have lower reporting rates for IPV, possibly because cultural differences normalize more minor forms of aggression. The same may be true of reporting perpetration of violence, lowering the level of detected IPV among Asian interracial and same race couples. The other possibility is that Asians, regardless of partner race, experience less social stressors, such as from discrimination and lack of social support, meaning that IPV would be lower for Asians in general. Assuming IPV is a good measure for social support, discrimination and stress, then it appears that interracial Asian and Latino couples experience higher levels of social support and less stress, Asians somewhat more than Latinos (D'Souza, 2010; Fusco, 2010; Killian, 2001; Lipsky, et al., 2012).

Overall, interracial relationships involving Asians and Latinos showed no differences in satisfaction compared to intraracial couples, reported greater levels of partner support than intraracial couples, reported no differences in partner strain compared to intraracial couples, and showed no differences in the prevalence of IPV than intraracial couples, which may suggest

several different things. One, that differences in stability between interracial and intraracial couples are greatly affected by the inclusion of other racial groups, particularly blacks, such that it may be skewing the results for all interracial couples. Something may be different for interrelationships including black individuals because of the historical divide and continued discrimination. Another reason may be that acceptance has improved for all racial groups generally, or just specifically for interrelationships involving Asians and Latinos, such that no differences are evident in this study because none exist, indicating that the instability of these relationships may be changing as well. Finally, instability may be affected by other unmeasured variables, though this is unlikely because the research suggests relationship quality may be related to stability. Other variables would need to be included with these variables to survey across all racial groups involved in interracial and intraracial relationships.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study was not without limitations. The first limitation has to do with the external validity of the results. Although the sample is nationally representative, it can only be generalized to interracial couples that include an individual who is Asian or Latino. Because they are such understudied groups, however, the results are still quite valuable in helping tease out the relationship factors that may affect relationship stability. Another limitation is that the survey was based on self-report. Although the majority of prior studies are also based on self-report, and although all the measures used in the study had high reliability, there is still a chance that responses were subject to response bias or social desirability bias. Another limitation is the small number of variables measured. Measuring satisfaction, support and strain, and IPV may not be enough to fully assess potential differences in the interracial relationships of Asians and Latinos because of the wide range of possible factors associated with relationship stability, such as

discrimination, socioeconomic status, and commitment. Finally, by virtue of the populations targeted, Asians and Latinos, comparisons cannot be made of whites in intraracial relationships. Though it is ethnocentric, white intraracial couples are often used in the literature as the standard comparison or reference group, meaning that this study cannot be fully compared to prior research. Even so, this study still makes important contributions in terms of understanding the relationship outcomes of Asian and Latinos in interracial relationships compared to Asians and Latinos in intraracial relationships, an often overlooked population in relationship research.

Although there were few associations between interracial relationship status and relationship outcomes measured in this study, research has shown that satisfaction, support and strain, and IPV play important factors in determining the success of a relationship (Fusco, 2010; Lipsky, et al., 2012; Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003; Walen & Lachman, 2000). Future research needs to address other factors that can affect relationship stability, such as factors affecting commitment, finances, communication, assimilation, and discrimination. This research is especially important within Asian and Latino groups because of the huge increase in population and intermarriage. Continuing research with national samples would be ideal so subculture and racial group distribution won't be a factor and all races can be accounted for. Indeed, all racial groups need to be surveyed as it is possible that Asians and Latinos may show differences in terms of satisfaction, and possibly other variables, than Black and whites, such as with IPV. Ideally, a national sample could be conducted to assess interracial couples from the major racial and ethnic categories across a battery of tests, including these important variables, which have been implicated in relationship stability. Although expensive and challenging, this may assess whether interracial couples of a particular pairing may experience more problems or fewer problems than other pairings.

Conclusions

Although few differences emerged between interracial and intraracial couples in the current study, the results are important for several reasons. First, understanding what is happening in interracial relationships for Latinos and Asians can help to further the research on interracial relationships and create a better understanding of these relationships, what needs to be studied, and what these couples may need to be able to thrive. Second, Latinos and Asians are the fastest growing minority groups in the U.S., and intermarriage with these populations are increasing at staggering rates. Finally, with all the potential benefits that come with a satisfied relationship, understanding why, despite increases in marriage, there is an increase in separation becomes important in helping millions of people access better services for their lives, such as marital counseling and services for intimate partner violence. The first step in that is teasing out the differences.

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Table 1
Descriptive Information on Relationship Outcomes

Variable	Mean	<i>SD</i>	%
Marital Satisfaction	8.65	1.69	-
Partner Support	3.71	.50	-
Partner Strain	2.07	.69	-
Minor Aggression – Perpetrator	-	-	17.5
Minor Aggression – Victim	-	-	11.7
Severe Aggression – Perpetrator	-	-	2.4
Severe Aggression – Victim	-	-	3.6

Table 2

Analyses Predicting Relationship Outcomes from Interracial Relationship Status

Dependent Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	OR	95% CI
Marital Satisfaction	.01	.12	.00	-	-
Partner Support	.11**	.03	.11	-	-
Partner Strain	-.07	.05	-.05	-	-
Minor Aggression – Perpetrator	-.28	.18	-	.75	.53 – 1.07
Minor Aggression – Victim	.01	.22	-	1.01	.66 – 1.54
Severe Aggression – Perpetrator	-.18	.42	-	.84	.36 – 1.92
Severe Aggression – Victim	-.11	.39	-	.89	.42 – 1.90

Note. Analyses control for age, gender, and race/ethnicity. OR = odds ratio. 95% CI = 95% confidence interval.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.