Gendered Black Exclusion: The Persistence of Racial Stereotypes Among Daters

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Abstract Employing questionnaires of 381 college students, this study examines the reasons why Latinos, Asians, and whites choose to include or exclude blacks as potential dates. First, we find that past structural explanations for low rates of interracial intimacy explain current disparities less among young people today. Only 10 % of respondents cited a structural explanation, lack of familiarity, or contact, as the reason they excluded blacks as possible dates. Second, the reasons for black exclusion vary across racial–ethnic–gender groups. Among non-blacks, whites were the most open to dating blacks, followed by Latinos and Asians. Asians and Latinos were more likely to exclude blacks because of social disapproval, and whites were more likely to exclude blacks because of physical attraction. Black women were more highly excluded than black men and more excluded because of their perceived aggressive personalities or behavior and physical attraction. Black men were more excluded because of social disapproval. Thus, persistent racial ideology continues to drive the social distance between blacks and non-blacks, particularly toward black females.

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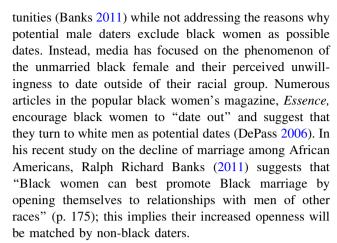Plaza B, Irvine, CA 92697-5100, USA

Introduction

Racial/ethnic attitudes regarding intimate relationships have long been the most restrictive, and thus, scholars hold that intermarriage between whites and racial/ethnic minorities serves as an indicator of increasing integration, of the breakdown of barriers, and of lower social distance (Bogardus 1968; Gordon 1964; Park 1924; Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985). Since 1980, interracial marriages have doubled (Passel et al. 2010), an indication of the continued blurring of racial and ethnic boundaries in the USA and lessening social boundaries between groups (Foeman and Nance 1999; Gordon 1964; Yancey 2002). Along with increasing rates of intermarriage, attitudes have also shifted, with national polls revealing that young people are more willing to date outside of their race than ever (Gallagher 2002). In 2010, about 15 % of all new marriages in the USA were between spouses of a different race or ethnicity from one another, and a record 8.4 % of currently married adults in the USA had a spouse of a different race or ethnicity, as compared to just 3.2 % in 1980 (Wang 2012). Blacks' rates of intermarriage have gone up dramatically over the past several decades, more than tripling since 1980 from 2.6 to 8.9 %. While these findings indicate a lessening of social distance, blacks remain significantly less likely than Asians or Latinos to enter into unions outside of their race (Qian and Lichter 2007). Qian and Lichter (2007) conclude that the boundary between whites and African Americans remains stronger than between whites and other nonwhite groups. They concur with Bonilla-Silva's (2004) conceptualization of the emergence of

a tripartite system in which nonwhite non-black groups enjoy an intermediary position (see Yancey 2003). Yet, they neither analyze the reasons behind differential marriage patterns nor gendered patterns of intermarriage and cohabitation. Recent research on interracial dating also confirms that blacks are among the least desired romantic partners among Internet daters (Feliciano et al. 2009; Yancey 2009),[1] indicating that as compared to Latinos and Asians, blacks remain at the greatest social distance from whites, but also from other racial/ethnic groups (Robnett and Feliciano 2011).

Further, racial differences in attitudes toward interracial partnerships and rates of interracial marriage are highly gendered. Among blacks, men are more likely to be in interracial marriages than are women (Batson et al. 2006; Rosenfeld 2008; Zebroski 1999). In 2010, 17 % of black newlyweds married someone who is not black, but the share of out-marriage among black men was more than twice that of black women, 24 and 9 %, respectively (Wang 2012). Not only have blacks become the most unmarried people in the nation, but black women are further disadvantaged by gender, with nearly seven out of every ten black women currently unmarried, as many as three out of ten may never marry (Banks 2011).

Recently, scholars have attempted to explain reasons why black women are least likely to intermarry and date across race, suggesting that African Americans' low trust of non-Latino whites has influenced decisions to not enter interracial relationships (Childs 2005; Spickard 1989). Both Childs and Spickard point to cultural influences including racial stereotypes that impact decisions to intermarry. However, Childs' study is limited to small samples of black female interviewees as well as participants in a focus group, and Spickard's research is now considerably dated, thus rendering it less likely to reflect the reformulations of twenty-first-century perceptions of gender–racial groups. Scholars also point to socioeconomic factors that affect black men, such as high incarceration rates, low pursuit of higher education, and limited economic oppor-

tunities (Banks 2011) while not addressing the reasons why potential male daters exclude black women as possible dates. Instead, media has focused on the phenomenon of the unmarried black female and their perceived unwillingness to date outside of their racial group. Numerous articles in the popular black women's magazine, *Essence,* encourage black women to "date out" and suggest that they turn to white men as potential dates (DePass 2006). In his recent study on the decline of marriage among African Americans, Ralph Richard Banks (2011) suggests that "Black women can best promote Black marriage by opening themselves to relationships with men of other races" (p. 175); this implies their increased openness will be matched by non-black daters.

Recent research challenges this view. Robnett and Feliciano (2011) found that, among Internet daters, blacks were the only minority group in which the women were more excluded than the men. Although black women were the least likely to be open to interracial dating, they were nonetheless *far more open* to outdating white, Latino, and Asian men than those men were to dating them. What their study does not explain is why this pattern exists. No study provides insight into why blacks remain highly excluded among daters and in the marriage market or why black women are more excluded than black men.

In addition, studies have not examined whether racial–ethnic minorities differ from whites in their explanations for the exclusion of blacks. Few studies examine racial–ethnic prejudices among minority groups (i.e., Kim 2008; Lee 2002; Smith, Bowman, and Hsu 2007; Weitzer 1997). However, studies show that Asians may be more exclusionary of (Robnett and Feliciano 2011) or prejudiced toward (Smith et al. 2007; Weitzer 1997) blacks than are whites. In contrast, Latinos include blacks more than whites do as potential dates (Robnett and Feliciano 2011) and some are shown to feel a kinship with them due to experiences of discrimination (O'Brien 2008). Thus, perceptions among groups about black men and women may vary widely.

Given the evidence that blacks, particularly females, are the most highly excluded group among daters, this study focuses on the reasons why blacks are excluded. We compare our respondents' explanations for the exclusion of black males and black females. We address why black women are more highly excluded as dates than are black men. Finally, we examine the possibility that racial–ethnic groups may vary in their reasons for excluding black men and women as dates. We address these questions through analysis of 381 white, Asian, and Latino college students' racial dating preferences and reasons given for exclusion or inclusion of blacks. These reasons may include structural factors, social factors, and/or the reliance on racial stereotypes.

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[1] There are some limitations to using data collected off of the Internet to examine racial/ethnic preferences in dating. The first concern is that the selection of people who choose to date on the Internet is not a random sample of the population. Therefore, results may not be generalizable to the population as a whole. However, Feliciano et al. (2009) find their results with respect to gendered racial exclusion among daters, to mirror the patterns of exclusion among interracial married and cohabiting couples in the USA (compared to American Community Survey (CPS) 2005 results). As Robnett and Feliciano (2011) note, although Internet users tend to be better educated than the general population, the sample selections in these studies did not appear to bias the results with respect to racial exclusion. Instead, the rates of exclusion may be underestimated because higher-educated respondents might be more open to interracial relationships.

Reasons for Exclusion/Inclusion of Blacks as Potential Dates

Structural Factors

Rates of interracial dating and marriage capture both individual preferences and sociogeographic segregation. High rates of black exclusion may be a product of structural opportunities. Evidence suggests extensive racial segregation persists in the USA today, both social and geographic (Charles 2003; Massey and Denton 1993). Theories of contact propose that the pool of potential dates is largely determined by proximity (Harris and Ono 2005). Persistent racial residential and occupational segregation, as well as same-race social networks, limits the contact young men and women have with members outside of their racial group, influencing who they consider as potential partners (Blau et al. 1984). However, recent research shows that in the absence of geographic and network constraints, white men are less likely to date blacks than are white women (Feliciano et al. 2009). This suggests that opportunities to date may not drive the exclusion of black dates.

Social Factors

Since the 1960s, society is far more inclusive of blacks, and this would suggest that fear of societal or family rejection may have subsided. Earlier studies suggest fear of upsetting parents, reactions from peers, and negative treatment from strangers have been common reasons offered for homogamy (Harris and Kalbfleisch 2000). Concerns regarding societal acceptance of mixed race children, particularly for those in black-non-black unions, may also inhibit people from entering interracial relationships (Lee and Bean 2004; Qian 2004). In their study of white college students' racial attitudes, Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) find that whites express concerns for the welfare of the offspring, upsetting their family, or receiving a negative reaction from the larger community as reasons for opposition to interracial marriage. They suggest that these indirect measures are ways that respondents discursively avoid stating opposition to interracial marriages. These perspectives do not account for reasons why dating outcomes are gendered, particularly for blacks.

Studies show that "males of all groups" are more likely to interracially date than are females (Robnett and Feliciano 2011; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1995: 351). Miller et al. (2004), in their study of white college students, find that white females report more disapproval from family and friends than do white males who date nonwhites. Nonwhite males also report more disapproval from their white female partner's family and friends than any other sex/race combination. Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995) in their study of Southern California African-American, Latino, and white dating practices find that "Males of all groups were consistently more likely to date persons outside their own "racial and ethnic group" than were females (p. 351)." This suggests that men and women may not experience similar socialpressures toward endogamy, and this may be reflected in dating preferences. Such expectations may be driven by the belief that women's sexual or dating relationships should lead to marriage, but that men are freer to explore. Buss and Schmitt (1993) show women favor long-term commitment and are choosier about several mate characteristics, even for short-term relationships (Buss 2003). We expect that respondents may exclude blacks as possible dates due to social pressures and that those explanations may vary in prevalence by gender.

Gendered Racial Stereotypes

Cultural Portrayals of African-American Females Cultural portrayals of African Americans reinforce historic stereotypes and appear to have an impact on the perceptions and attitudes held by society (Schuman et al. 1985) that likely determine who is desirable and who is not. Studies reveal that racial stereotypes constructed through the media are influential in the attitudes and the perceptions whites form toward minorities, particularly blacks (Entman and Rojecki 2000; Ford 1997). The dominant stereotypical images of black women outlined by scholars are as follows: (1) the mammy, who is obese, of dark complexion, and submissive; (2) the matriarch or "Sapphire" who is sassy, bossy, loud, and opinionated; (3) the sexual siren or jezebel, a highly sexual, often light skinned, woman prone to unfaithfulness, illegitimate children, and welfare dependency (Hooks 1992); and (4) the unmarried welfare queen living alone with her children, who has no desire to work, but is content living off the state (Collins 1990). Moreover, Western conceptions of idealized femininity are nearly exclusively white. Women who are fat and/or black, Shaw (2005) explains, cannot adhere to Eurocentric ideals of feminine beauty.

Other studies show black women's personalities are stereotyped. A study of 256 white non-Latino college undergraduates found black women stereotyped as louder, and more talkative, aggressive, and argumentative than white women (Weitz and Gordon 1993). Thus, we explore the extent to which our respondents will offer reasons based on black female stereotypes that include the perception that they (1) lack moral values, particularly in regard to their promiscuity and dependence on welfare; (2) are less physically attractive than other women; and (3) possess less "feminine" personalities than other groups of women, i.e., loud, aggressive, and talkative.

Counterimages of Black Females Arguably, there are now competing images of black femininity. It is possible that counterimages of successful black women such as Michelle Obama, Condoleezza Rice, and Oprah Winfrey are providing positive imagery and influencing cultural stereotypes and daters' choices. We might reasonably expect that black women will be *included* because they are seen as independent, intelligent, and successful.

Cultural Portrayals of African-American Males Similar to black female stereotypes, black male images emerged from slavery and to this day form two competing images, one of the Sambo and the other of the brute (Jewell 1993). Dominating today's stereotypical depictions of black masculinity are either the obedient Sambo (the nonthreatening black middle-class male) or the Cool Cats (the working class, hypersexualized black athlete, thug, pimp, or criminal) (Collins 2005). In a recent qualitative analysis of black college men, Ford (2008) finds that black masculinity is behaviorally, physically, and materially constructed from idealized images, which rely on these narrow conceptions of black men.

Common stereotypes portray black men as largely absent from their families and unemployed; however, studies show they participate in parenting through other means such as cohabitation, visitation, providing caretaking, financial, and other support (Coles and Green 2009). Thus, female respondents might exclude black men as potential dates because they are perceived as (1) dangerous, or as criminals, and (2) irresponsible and do not support their families.

Competing Images for Black Males Black male athletes are highly admired in the college setting and are the most likely to engage in interracial relationships, particularly with whites (Wilkins 2012). The black athlete, particularly the "bad boy," constructs a boundary between admiration and fear (Collins 2005) and is depicted as being both sexually virile and potentially dangerous (Ford 2008). Black men must negotiate these multiple identities as both "players" and "pimps" and as "respectable" and "decent" to form relationships (Wilkins 2012). Thus, on the negative side, black men may be excluded because of the perception that they are unfaithful or are rapists. Or, they may be included as potential dates because they are perceived as athletic and possessing sexual prowess.

With the wide visibility of black leaders such as President Obama, the image of middle-class black masculinity projects a safe, nonthreatening black identity (Collins 2005). Counterimages depicted in the media often present the middle-class black male as a leader or comedic sidekick (Means Coleman 2000). Due to competing images of middle-class black masculinity, we might expect black men to be included because they are perceived as fun or as leaders.

Much of the research on interracial romantic attraction has been limited to marriage; however, recent studies on interracial dating find that among all races, people are more willing to interracially date than marry (Herman and Campbell 2012). Given prior research which shows that interracial relationships are less likely than same-race relationships to lead to marriage (Joyner and Kao 2005), our results do not necessarily represent willingness to engage in serious interracial dating relationships or marriage. Nonetheless, intermarriage may become less significant in studying race relations as men and women are marrying later in life and increasing numbers of adults remain single (Schoen and Standish 2001) and dating is, in most cases, a necessary precondition for marriage. For these reasons, we focus on dating, which is also the precursor to marriage.

Methods

Participants

Between 2008 and 2009, we administered a questionnaire about dating preferences to white, black, Asian and Latino college students at a large California Research University. Data were collected through convenience and purposive sampling in an attempt to represent the majority of racial groups on the campus. Because Latinos and blacks comprise only 18 and 2 %, respectively, of the undergraduate student population at this University, we oversampled from these racial groups to get a sufficient sample size ($N = 381$; 172 men and 209 women) that consists of 97 white (51 men and 46 women), 96 Latino (25 men and 71 women), 98 Asian (44 men and 54 women), and 90 black (52 men and 38 women) undergraduate students. Only four respondents selected a same-sex preference for mates, and one selected both sexes. There were no differences in responses between those who selected same-sex and opposite-sex preferences. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 36 ($M = 20.34$ years, SD = 1.97 years).

Materials

Questionnaires included a total of 40 questions, 30 fixed-response and 10 open-ended questions, and consisted of three separate parts. In the first part of the questionnaire, demographic questions were asked about each respondent, including age, sex, household income, religion, and ethnicity/race, and in the second part, the same information was asked about the characteristics they seek in a date. When asked to select the racial/ethnic groups that

respondents would be willing to date, they were given the option to check one or more of 22 provided categories or could mark "any," meaning that they have no preference for partner's race/ethnicity. The 22 possible racial/ethnic groups they could choose from included African American/ African/black; Asian/Asian American, with six specific groups as well as an other category to write in a specific Asian ethnic group; Latin American/Latino/Hispanic, with seven specific groups as well as an other category to write in a specific Latino ethnic group; Caucasian/white (non-Hispanic); Middle Eastern; Native American; Pacific Islander; interracial; and other, with the option to write in another race/ethnicity. In addition, respondents were asked to respond in written form to open-ended questions about what characteristics they look for in potential partners and why those characteristics were important or not, including general attributes, religion, and political orientation. If respondents were unwilling to date outside of their racial group, they were instructed here to "explain why." They had then completed the questionnaire.

In the last part of the questionnaire, respondents who indicated a willingness to date outside of their own racial/ ethnic group were instructed to rank their chosen preferred racial/ethnic groups in order from 1, with 1 as the most preferred. If a respondent did not prefer a group at all, then they did not include it in their rankings. If multiple groups were preferred to the same extent, respondents were instructed to rank them with the same number. Respondents who had earlier in the questionnaire marked "any," indicating openness to dating someone of any race/ethnicity, also completed the rankings of which groups were most/ least preferred. Respondents were asked open-ended questions to explain why they ranked up to five racial/ethnic groups as least preferred, beginning with the group that they would not date at all or were their least preferred group. They were instructed to "explain why each lower ranked racial/ethnic group is less preferred" and to "be specific" in theirresponses. Respondents were also asked to explain why they wish to date their top two preferences and, finally, why they are willing to date outside of their racial/ethnic group. The written responses allowed us to examine reasons why individuals who exclude African Americans do so and to what extent reasons for racial preferences are gendered.

Procedure

Students were recruited on campus in popular public areas frequented by undergraduate students, such as the library and student center. They were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and no personal identifying information was collected from respondents. Thus, only pseudonyms are used throughout the paper. Same-race and same-gender research assistants administered questionnaires in an attempt to mitigate any bias. Students were given a $5.00 gift card as compensation for participation.

All questionnaires were coded for demographic information about the respondent and for information about the characteristics they seek in a date. The independent variable is the respondent's racial group; the dependent variables are stating a racial preference, whether they exclude blacks or rank them lowest, and reasons given for exclusion. The black exclusion variable includes respondents who indicated they would not date blacks at all as well as those who ranked them as least preferred.[2]

We then coded the open-ended responses to the question asking respondents to explain their reasons particular racial/ethnic groups were less preferred in their rankings. We coded reasons given for exclusion of blacks for anyone who ranked blacks lowest or did not rank them at all, indicating a lack of willingness to date them. We began by open coding and then categorized written responses as common themes emerged from the data (Lofland et al. 2005). Reasons for black exclusion fit into five categories: physical attraction, cultural differences, aggressive personality/behavior, social disapproval, and lack of familiarity. For example, a Latina female who ranked blacks lowest wrote: "Culturally very different and facial features are sometimes too big" and this response was coded as both cultural differences and physical attraction. All respondents who ranked blacks lowest or excluded them provided a written response to their rankings. If a respondent provided more than one reason, their response was coded into multiple categories.[3] A total of seven responses (6 %) did not fit into one of the codes, and these included incomplete or general statements such as "not attracted to" or "not appealing." There was no significant difference between race and gender groups among responses that did not fit into the coding scheme.

Results

Table 1 presents percentages for stating a racial preference and black exclusion for each racial group and by gender.[4] Across all racial groups, the majority of respondents (76 %) stated a racial preference for dates, although this varied by

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[2] The substantive findings do not change when we analyzed the responses of only those who excluded blacks entirely and their reasons for excluding them.

[3] 22 % of respondents provided more than one reason for excluding or ranking blacks less preferred.

[4] Simple bivariate significance tests are reported, despite technical problems with sampling and sample size, to provide a concrete perspective on size of effects and likely reproducibility and reliability of findings.

Table 1 Racial preference and black exclusion by race and gender

	All (%)	Non-black (%)	Asian (%)	Black (%)	Latino (%)	White (%)
Race						
States a racial preference	75.6*	72.2*[b]	86.7[w]	86.7[nw]	80.2[w]	49.5[abl]
Blacks excluded or ranked lowest	52.5*	65.6*[b]	79.6[blw]	10.0[alnw]	65.6[abw]	49.5[abl]
N	381	291	98	90	96	97
Men						
States a racial preference	78.5*	74.2*	95.5[lw†]	88.5[nw]	72.0[a]	56.9[ab]
Blacks excluded or ranked lowest	56.4*	75.8*[b†]	93.2[blw†]	13.5[alnw]	64.0[ab]	66.7[ab†]
N	172	120	44	52	25	51
Women						
States a racial preference	73.2*	70.8*	79.6[w†]	84.2[w]	83.1[w]	41.3[abl]
Blacks excluded or ranked lowest	48.3*	58.5*[b†]	72.2[bw†]	5.3[alnw]	66.2[bw]	30.4[abl†]
N	209	171	54	38	71	46

* $p < .001$

† Gender difference within racial group significant at $p < .05$

a Significantly different from Asians at $p < .05$

b Significantly different from blacks at $p < .05$

l Significantly different from Latinos at $p < .05$

n Significantly different from non-blacks at $p < .05$

w Significantly different from whites at $p < .05$

racial group [$x^2(3) = 49.52$, $p < .001$]. Whites were the least likely to state a racial preference for dates (49 %), appearing to be the most open to out-dating among all four racial groups in our sample (Asians = 87 %, blacks = 87 %, Latinos = 80 %). Among non-blacks, 66 % excluded blacks although there were significant differences between non-black groups [$x^2(2) = 19.44$, $p < .001$]. Asians (80 %) were the most likely to exclude blacks followed by Latinos (66 %), and whites were the least likely (49 %).

Further, results indicate gender differences within racial/ethnic groups. Asian men (96 %) were more likely to state a racial preference than Asian women (80 %) [$x^2(1) = 5.28$, $p < .05$]. Overall, non-black men (76 %) were more likely than non-black women (59 %) to exclude blacks [$x^2(1) = 9.42$, $p < .05$]. Among whites, significantly more men (67 %) excluded blacks as compared to women (30 %) [$x^2(1) = 12.70$, $p < .05$]. Asian men (93 %) and women (72 %) were similarly high in their exclusion of blacks, but still evidenced gender differences [$x^2(1) = 7.10$, $p < .05$]. Latino males and females were similar in their exclusion of blacks (64 % of males, 66 % of females) [$x^2(1) = 0.04$, $p = 0.84$]. Further, we find that black men and women were similarly low in their exclusion of blacks as dates (14 and 5 %, respectively) [$x^2(1) = 1.64$, $p = 0.20$]. To understand the reasons given for excluding blacks, we now turn to the open-ended responses to illustrate reasons for black exclusion and inclusion among non-black respondents.

Variation in Racial–Ethnic Group Explanations for Black Exclusion

First, as is apparent in Table 2, among those that exclude blacks or rank them lowest as possible dates, the racial groups differ on what is driving their racial exclusion.

Table 2 Non-blacks' reasons for exclusion of blacks by race

Reasons for exclusion	All (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	White (%)
Physical attraction	17.4*	11.4[w]	9.7[w]	30.0[al]
Cultural differences	35.7	36.4	38.7	32.5
Aggressive personality/behavior	16.5	6.8[w]	22.6	22.5[a]
Social disapproval	34.8**	54.6[w]	38.7[w]	10.0[al]
Not familiar	10.4	9.1	6.5	15.0
N	115	44	31	40

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$

a Significantly different from Asians at $p < .05$

l Significantly different from Latinos at $p < .05$

w Significantly different from whites at $p < .05$

Whites (30 %) were significantly more likely than Latinos (10 %) and Asians (11 %) to provide physical attraction as a reason for exclusion of blacks [$x^2(2) = 11.99$, $p < .01$]. Overall, non-blacks were similarly low in reporting aggressive personality/behavior as a reason for excluding blacks (17 %) [$x^2(2) = 4.87$, $p = .09$], but whites (23 %) were significantly more likely than Asians (7 %) to provide this reason [$x^2(1) = 4.21$, $p < .05$]. Among all non-blacks, 36 % cited cultural differences as a reason for the exclusion of blacks, and there were no significant differences among Asians (36 %), Latinos (39 %), and whites (33 %) that offered this explanation [$x^2(2) = 0.31$, $p = .86$].

Structural Explanations

Despite the fact that African Americans comprise only 2 % of the college campus population, few respondents (10 %)

Table 3 Non-blacks' reasons for exclusion of blacks by gender and race

Reasons for exclusion	Men				Women			
	All (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	White (%)	All (%)	Asian (%)	Latina (%)	White (%)
Physical attraction	23.7[†]	19.1	10.0	32.1	10.7[†]	4.4	9.5	25.0
Cultural differences	28.8	33.3	20.0	28.6	42.9	39.1	47.6	41.7
Aggressive personality/behavior	23.7*[†]	4.8[lw]	50.0[a†]	28.6[a]	8.9[†]	8.7	9.5[†]	8.3
Social disapproval	25.4*[†]	47.6[w]	20.0	10.7[a]	44.7*[†]	60.9[w]	47.6[w]	8.3[la]
Not familiar	11.9	9.5	20.0	10.7	8.9	8.7	0.0	25.0
N	59	21	10	28	56	23	21	12

* $p < .05$

[†] Gender difference within racial group significant at $p < .05$

[a] Significantly different from Asians at $p < .05$

[l] Significantly different from Latinos at $p < .05$

[w] Significantly different from whites at $p < .05$

cite structural reasons, a lack of familiarity or contact, as the reason they excluded blacks as possible dates, and rates did not vary across racial groups [$x^2(2) = 1.50$, $p = .47$]. One respondent, a white female, explained "I was not raised in an area with an affluent African-American community and would rather date on who I am more familiar with."

Social Explanations

While the reasons for exclusion differ by race, Table 3 further reveals the gender differences within racial groups. Similar to previous findings (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Myers 2005), social disapproval, particularly from family members, influenced the exclusion of blacks. Overall, 35 % of respondents provided this reason, and Asians (55 %) and Latinos (39 %) were significantly more likely to cite social disapproval than whites (10 %) [$x^2(2) = 18.62$ $p < .001$]. Further, women (45 %) were more likely than men (25 %) to cite social disapproval [$x^2(1) = 4.68$, $p < .05$], and responses differed by race, with Asian women (61 %) and Latinas (48 %) being more likely to cite social disapproval than were white women (8 %) [$x^2(2) = 8.93$, $p < .05$]. Among men, Asians were more likely than whites to cite social disapproval (48 and 11 %, respectively) [$x^2(1) = 8.39$, $p < .05$], but there was no significant difference between these groups and Latinos (20 %).

The nature of men's and women's comments regarding social disapproval is similar. Common responses were that parents would not approve or would oppose such a relationship, and in general, society would have a negative reaction to their relationship with a black partner. Citing family disapproval, respondents stated:

Parents have a different view of this race. There is a family issue that happened in the past that would

make them not approve of African Americans. (Tammy, Asian female)
I foresee a lot of conflict and disapproval from my family. (Brenda, Asian female)

Others claimed that general societal disapproval or the potential for discrimination is a deterrent to dating blacks:

I less preferred this group because when I see an interracial couple with this group usually I see people talking about them and I would not like that. (Lupe, Latina female)
There could be a potential for discrimination against me or her. (Adam, white male).

Vague References to Black Culture

Respondents made vague references to "African-American culture" and to unspecified cultural differences as reasons to not prefer blacks as dates. Overall, men (29 %) and women (43 %) were similar in their reporting cultural reasons for exclusion [$x^2(1) = 2.47$, $p = .12$]. White women (42 %), Latinas (48 %), and Asian women (39 %) similarly indicated that cultural differences serve as a barrier to dating blacks [$x^2(2) = 0.33$, $p = .85$]. Latinos (20 %) were the least likely of all the groups to offer this as an explanation followed by white men (29 %) and Asian men (33 %), although these racial differences were not significant [$x^2(2) = 0.59$, $p = .74$]. For each racial group there were no significant gender differences, both black men and women were excluded because of perceived "cultural differences" offered by our respondents.

Respondents gave the following cultural explanations for the exclusion of blacks:

They are very different from my ethnic group and often prioritize differently. Our parents would not be able to communicate. (Jessica, Asian female)

Dif. culture, mannerisms dif, would feel excluded from parts of their lives. (Steven, white male)

Their culture is very opposite of mine. They are more expressive of themselves as opposed to ours where we are more reserved. (Jose, Latino male)

Structural and social reasons partially explain the exclusion of black dates; however, these explanations do not account for the greater likelihood of male respondents to exclude blacks than their female counterparts. We find that respondents relied heavily on racial stereotypes when making decisions about dating preferences. The following sections illustrate the gendered differences in racial stereotypes used to explain black exclusion.
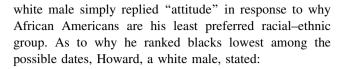
Gendered Racial Stereotypes

Many of the stereotypes surrounding black masculinity, including their perceived hypersexuality, family irresponsibility, unfaithfulness, and athleticism, were not offered as explanations for exclusion. Further, no daters excluded black women because of the perception that they lack moral values and are promiscuous, sexually available, or on welfare.[5] However, respondents referenced stereotypes that blacks have aggressive personalities and behavior and cited physical attraction as reasons to exclude blacks, and these responses differed by gender.

Aggressive Personalities

We find evidence that respondents relied on stereotypes regarding blacks' personalities and behavior, particularly that they are aggressive, as an explanation for not selecting them as potential dates. This explanation was offered by a higher percentage of men (24 %) than women (9 %) [$x^2(1) = 4.56$, $p < .05$]. Within racial groups, Latinos (50 %) were more likely than Latinas (10 %) to provide these reasons for excluding blacks [$x^2(1) = 6.35$, $p < .05$], while there were no significant gender differences among Asians and whites. Among men, Latinos (50 %) and whites (29 %) were more likely than Asians (5 %) to cite this as a reason for exclusion [$x^2(2) = 8.35$, $p < .05$].

Typical examples of men's perception that black women are aggressive included one white male's assertion that African-American women's personalities are "abrasive," while another declared, "Most Black girls' personalities just don't seem to be compatible with mine." Another

white male simply replied "attitude" in response to why African Americans are his least preferred racial–ethnic group. As to why he ranked blacks lowest among the possible dates, Howard, a white male, stated:

Many of the Blacks that I have interacted with have had large chips on their shoulder and make non-racial situations into racial ones. That really bothers me. (Howard, white male)

While the personality stereotype predominated among Latinos and white males, only one Asian male mentioned concerns about black female personalities.

Female respondents also discussed African-American men's aggression as a factor either influencing their exclusion of black men or of their parents' disapproval:

Don't like "gangster" style or personality and a lot of African Americans are like that here. (Arlene, Latina female)

Some tend to be violent and I am scared of them. (Inez, Latina female)

Thus, while some female respondents or their parents embrace the stereotype of black men as dangerous, male respondents were far more likely to reject black women because of their perception of them as aggressive.

Physical Attraction

A slightly higher but significant percentage of men (24 %) reported physical attraction as a reason to exclude blacks as potential dates as compared to women (11 %) [$x^2(1) = 4.33$, $p < .05$]. Common references to physical attraction included skin color, hair texture, and body type. Jorge, a Latino, lists, "Too dark" to explain why he selected African Americans as his least preferred racial group to date. Similarly, Brittany, a white female, stated, "Skin-tone is really dark for my taste." Hair texture was also mentioned in connection with skin color, as Sean, a white male, stated, "I am rarely physically attracted to African American women. I generally don't like curly hair or dark skin." Others made reference to general attraction, physical distinctions, or "aesthetics, I guess" as one respondent commented.

The following statements were typical of male respondents:

Because African-American women are usually bigger broader physically type people. (Larry, Asian male)

I just don't like to date anyone who has really dark skin…anyone but Black. (Doug, Asian male)

Based on these statements, phenotype, particularly skin color, played a role in exclusion of blacks as dates and to a greater extent for men than women.

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[5] This could be the result of our sample of college students who are arguably less likely to view other college students as on welfare or irresponsible toward their families.

Openness to Interracial Dating but Not to Black Women

Similar to previous research, we find an expressed openness among non-black respondents to interracial dating in general, but with the exclusion of blacks, and rates differed by race and gender. Among non-blacks who include some out-groups, 69 % of males excluded blacks as compared to 40 % of females [$x^2(1) = 15.47$, $p < .05$]. A significantly higher percentage of white males (65 %) as compared to females (11 %) who stated an openness to dating outside of their race excluded blacks [$x^2(1) = 23.03$, $p < .05$], and similar gender differences are found among Asians (86 and 53 %, respectively) [$x^2(1) = 6.32$, $p < .05$]. Among Latinos who stated a willingness to outdate, men and women were similar in their exclusion of blacks (58 and 53 %, respectively) [$x^2(1) = 0.12$, $p = .73$].

Oftentimes, males' asserted openness to interracial dating was directly contradicted by the reasons given for the exclusion of black females as potential dates. For example, Alejandro, a Latino, stated that he is open to interracial dating and explained that he grew up around mainly blacks and Latinos, having met many African-American women. However, in response to why he excludes black women as potential dates, he stated, "most that I have seen have attitude problems and I don't find them that attractive." Rather than structural constraints, personality and attractiveness influenced his preference to exclude black women. He later stated, "I am open to [any] racial group. I may be more attractive to ones more than others, but if I find a woman that I can get along with it really doesn't matter what her ethnicity is."

Brandon, a white male who ranked blacks lowest explained, "I am rarely physically attracted to African-American women. I generally don't like curly hair or dark skin." But in response to why he is willing to interracially date, he stated: "If I'm attracted to a girl and we get along, I am willing to date her regardless of race. I think it's foolish to exclude potential partners based only on race." Here, Brandon is linking stereotypical physical traits to all black women, but then explains that race does not matter when determining who he is attracted to. Again, black women are seen as the exception when discussing willingness to out-date.

Positive Viewpoints or Stereotypes

There is no supporting evidence to confirm our suggestion that the increasing visibility of successful, intelligent black females may positively influence male's inclusion of black females. Instead, men often relied on gendered and vague cultural stereotypes when determining their preference of dating partners and more often than not these stereotypes negatively enforce racial group boundaries. Males who were open to dating blacks most often expressed a general openness to dating all races. No white, Asian, or Latino males ranked black women first among their preferred dates. Only one white male, Timothy, ranked black women second among all racial–ethnic groups. He stated:

> Black girls don't like skinny white guys like me. Might be a good fuck tho. "I like big butts and I cannot lie." (Timothy, white male).

Even while ranking blacks high as a preferred group, Timothy demonstrated his stereotyping of black women's bodies and the perception that black women would not prefer to date him. Another example is in the response of Jacob, who ranked black women third, but his explanation still put distance between himself and blacks:

> I am not the kind of person who is interested in other cultural [not legible], so I don't know if we would have things in common. The fact that I am European is relevant here: I am not really used to hanging with African Americans. (Jacob, white male)

As the quote from Timothy and others above indicates, respondents' continued reliance on generalized stereotypes might continue to shadow the successes of prominent blacks. Even when stating a preference for dating blacks, males relied on gendered and vague cultural stereotypes when determining their preference of dating partners and more often than not these stereotypes negatively enforce racial group boundaries.

Our speculation that media may influence positive stereotypes of black males as leaders, given the success of President Obama and other black male leaders, was also not confirmed. No respondents offered these explanations for black inclusion.

In contrast to their male counterparts, though, a few female respondents (29 %) cited cultural similarities with blacks or that they are fun as a reason for *including* black males. The following response illustrates shared culture as a reason for inclusion of potential black dates:

> Black because I find this group most attractive and close in culture and history to us. (Judy, white female)

Among females who included blacks as preferred dates, 6 % referenced physical attributes of black males in a positive manner. Typical explanations were similar to the one provided by Beth:

> I think they are attractive (skin color and body type). They are usually fun to be around and like music and dancing like I do too, though this is not always the case. (Beth, white female)

Thus, although not a large percent, unexpectedly, women were more likely than men to cite a similarity of culture, to be physically attracted to and view blacks as fun.

Discussion

This study examined the reasons why Latinos, Asians, and whites chose to include or exclude blacks as potential dates and how their reasons differed by gender. We find that past structural explanations for low rates of interracial intimacy explain current disparities less among young people today and that persisting racial ideology is driving the social distance between blacks and non-blacks, particularly toward black females. Our study indicates the persistent racialization of gender and examines both race and gender constructs in order to identify the mechanisms at work in boundary construction between today's racial/ethnic groups (Pyke and Johnson 2003).

Although stated tolerance of racial groups in the realm of dating and marriage may be improving in society, this is not transferring to equal levels of intimacy across races. Whether or not the persistence of gendered racial exclusion among daters is an indication of persistent racism or a new form of color-blind racism that is more covert among whites and other racial–ethnic groups today (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Pyke and Johnson 2003) is still unknown. The contradictory message from non-black respondents that they are open to all interracial dating, while they simultaneously justify the exclusion of blacks, may be an indication of a new race talk (Myers 2005) that allows for the appearance of race neutrality. The justifications offered for black exclusion illustrate that negative racial stereotypes are entrenched in US culture, especially toward black females. Most importantly, our findings shed light on the reasons why black men are far more likely to out-marry than are black women. As dating is a precursor to marriage, the results highlight one significant mechanism driving black women's relatively low rates of intermarriage.

Across all racial groups, structural reasons were the least common responses given, indicating that lack of familiarity is not driving black exclusion among non-blacks. Cultural differences were most often provided as reasons for exclusion, indicating social distance between blacks and non-blacks, but the rates were similar across racial and gender groups. However, there were marked differences among the racial groups regarding what is driving their exclusion of blacks. Asians and Latinos were far more likely than whites to exclude blacks because of concerns over the perceptions of family and friends. Although most of our Asian and Latino respondents were second generation or beyond, previous research suggests that Asian immigrants bring negative stereotypes of blacks with them and that their children are more susceptible to social pressure from family and community members (Kim 2008). Whites were also far more likely than Asians and Latinos to reject blacks as possible dates because they did not view them as physically attractive.

In addition to racial differences, our data reveal that the nature of perceived social distance may vary between men and women. The negative portrayals of African-American women and the reasons for their exclusion differed in some ways from that of African-American men. In contrast to black female exclusion, black male exclusion was based far less on a perceived lack of physical attraction or on perceived negative personality characteristics. Men, more than women, relied on stereotypes of blacks as being loud, aggressive, or angry. While Latinos did not differ by gender in their levels of black exclusion, their reasons for excluding blacks were highly gendered. Latino men were much more likely to exclude blacks due to ideas about personality and behavior than were Latinas. Further, responses by men and women differed by racial group. White men and Latinos were more likely to exclude black women because of personality or behavior as compared to Asian men, while Asian men were more likely to reject blacks because of social disapproval than were white men. Similarly, white women were much less likely to reject blacks due to social disapproval than were Asian women and Latinas.

One explanation for the different reasons black men and women were excluded and for the greater exclusion of black women may rest on the nature of gendered media stereotypes. While women's femininity is heavily defined by physical attributes that adhere to ideals of white femininity (Shaw 2005; Thompson and Keith 2001), masculinity rests on other attributes as well, including the acquisition of wealth, status, and power (Kalmijn 1994; Stewart et al. 2000). Studies indicate that men emphasize physical attractiveness more than intelligence or ambition in mate selection (Fisman et al. 2006). In this regard, mate preferences based on physical attractiveness are more narrowly defined for women than for men (Collins 2005; Thompson and Keith 2001). Future studies need to investigate additional mechanisms that influence the exclusion of black women and how these relate to decisions to enter relationships and marriage across race.

Limitations

Although this is the first study to examine reasons behind patterns of racial/ethnic exclusion among daters, there are limitations that deserve attention. First, this study relies on questionnaire data, which is subject to social desirability effects as well as sampling bias. However, the questionnaires may be preferable to in-person interviews with respect to social desirability, since they were anonymous. The sample was drawn from undergraduate students; therefore, there is little variation in age and class.

Second, the sampling design and sample sizes limited statistical analysis. However, results indicate significant gender and racial/ethnic differences in racial preferences for dates and do not largely diverge from previous studies. While we acknowledge that this sample is not representative of the larger population of young adults, it is the first study to examine the reasons for stated preferences in potential dates among young singles. Studies have emphasized the importance of young adults as indicators of changing racial attitudes (Smith et al. 2007; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1995). An overwhelming majority (85 %) of millennials, youth age 18–29, are accepting of interracial marriage, regardless of race (Pew Research Center 2010). Additionally, having more education, being a racial minority, being liberal, and living in the Northeast or Western states are associated with those who think positively about intermarriage (Wang 2012). College is a unique time in a young adult's development, where students experience reduced parental control over the dating practices and mate selection of their children, contributing to higher rates of interracial dating (Rosenfeld 2007). Therefore, college campuses provide a unique context for examining the ways in which young people talk about interracial dating (Levin et al. 2007; McClintock 2010). Because college students are the most likely group to express preferences to date outside of their racial group, reasons given for exclusion or inclusion of mates can provide an indication of the future of racial attitudes. Further, we find significant differences in reasons for exclusion of blacks as dates, and given the increasing diversity of college campuses and the USA overall, these results may be an indication of broader patterns.

With these limitations in mind, future studies should examine how preferences and reasons for racial exclusion/inclusion vary within and between racial/ethnic groups among different demographics. This would require a much larger sample, one that is more representative of the general population, or if focused on youth, would include those not in college. Perhaps older cohorts, or youth not in college, would be less concerned about the disapproval of family and friends, but more likely to hold stereotypical views of specific gender–racial–ethnic groups. A larger sample should be class-stratified as well. We do not know how class status may impact one's propensity to date blacks or their reasons for not doing so. Another consideration is that the racial–ethnic composition of a university may influence the results since greater exposure to blacks may affect perceptions of cultural and other differences. Finally, other contextual characteristics such as region (Feliciano et al. 2009; Robnett and Feliciano 2011) and city size (Yancey 2009) may also influence attitudes about blacks for similar reasons.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations of this study, what is clear is that while interracial marriage is at an all-time high, even among college-aged students, blacks and especially black women continue to experience exclusion by non-blacks in the dating arena that influences marital prospects, in part because of an adherence to persistent negative stereotypes about them. Interracial marriage has long been viewed as an indicator of the final breakdown of racial boundaries and of the acceptance by whites into the mainstream. The lack of acceptance signals the imperviousness of the black/non-black racial boundary in the domain of intimacy. While a lack of resources is influencing the decline of marriage across all races, African Americans have been the most impacted (Schneider 2011). Marriage continues to provide a path toward wealth accumulation and stability that facilitates successful outcomes for children. Thus, the racial exclusion of blacks inthe dating arena further reduces their marital prospects, especially for black women.

Because individuals tend to marry persons similar to themselves in terms of characteristics such as race, education, social origins, and religion (Kalmijn 1998; Mare 1991; Sherkat 2004), it may be tempting to view our findings at face value, as a product of tendencies toward homogamy, but previous research shows an overwhelming pattern of black exclusion by non-black daters that defies this simple explanation (Feliciano et al. 2009; Robnett and Feliciano 2011). For example, Robnett and Feliciano (2011) found that Latinos' and Asians' racial preferences reflect whites' racial hierarchies: Whites are the most preferred out-date among both male and female Latinos and Asians; and among men, both groups most include Latinas and Asians over blacks. The patterns of exclusion and explanations for black exclusion, particularly of black females, strongly suggest a broader societal influence that values lighter skin tones over darker skin tones, thin body types over heavier body types, and straight hair over curly hair. As discussed at the outset, gendered racial preferences are reinforced through media.

Moreover, our findings strongly suggest that non-black men do not grasp the diversity among black women. Just as white women are represented by a variety of personality types, socioeconomic statuses, and aesthetic characteristics, so too are black women. Thus, the reliance on all-encompassing negative stereotypical attributes as the basis upon which black women and men are rejected en masse appears to reflect the broader negative societal framing of African Americans within the narrow confines of constructions that have persisted and continue to influence even university educated millennials. A furtherimplication is that acceptance of these negative stereotypes may spill

over beyond the domain of intimacy to influence decision-making and perceptions in other contexts such as whether or not a black candidate is suitable for a specific job or a promotion.

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