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Malyna Kettavong
The Influence of
Interracial/Interethnic Relationships
with Black, Latino, and Native
American Men on Race/Ethnic
Identity of a Group of Asian
American Women

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to explore the research question of “How do interracial/interethnic relationships with Black, Latino, and Native American men influence the race/ethnic identity of Asian American women?” Although there is a plethora of research on Asian and White interracial relationships, there are no studies that look at interracial relationships between Asian women and Black, Hispanic and Native American men. Also, only a couple of the current studies have examined how interracial relationships influence the perception by Asian women of their racial/ethnic identity.

Nine Asian American women residing in various parts of the United States participated in this research study. They responded to a semi-structured interview that included questions about their own race/ethnic identity, their partner’s race/ethnic identity, and their perception of their interracial relationship. The current study found that being in interracial relationships with Black or Latino men enabled Asian American women to be more accepting of their own racial/ethnic identity. Asian American women also experienced an increased understanding of both their own racial/ethnic group, as well as gaining more understanding and acceptance of other minority racial/ethnic groups. This study may be helpful in increasing cultural competency for clinicians who are working with Asian American women who are in interracial relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American men in the context of individual or couple’s therapy.

**THE INFLUENCE OF INTERRACIAL/INTERETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH
BLACK, LATINO, AND NATIVE AMERICAN MEN ON RACE/ETHNIC IDENTITY
OF A GROUP OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN**

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have been accomplished without the assistance of many people whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged. First and foremost, I am most thankful to my thesis advisor, Victoria R. Winbush, PhD, who provided me with infinite guidance, insight, wisdom, and reassurance.

Thank you to all the wonderful women who kindly volunteered to contribute to this research study. I am deeply honored to have been able to document and share your profound experiences with the world. It was truly a privilege.

I would also like to thank my loving family, friends, and loved ones for their endless support and encouragement. Without you all, I would be not able to reach my dreams. I would like to give special thanks to my partner Christopher Batten, who was by my side, cheering me on, during every step of this process.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

As the rate of growth in the overall Asian population in the United States has continued to increase, so too has the number of Asians who are involved in interracial relationships. For example, the estimated number of United States residents of Asian descent, according to the 2010 Census, is 17.3 million or 5.6% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This is a population increase by 43 percent from 2000, when there were 10.2 million U.S. residents of Asian descent. This drastic increase means that the Asian population grew faster than any other major race group in the United States between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Similarly, rates of new marriages between two people of different races or ethnicities, or intermarriages, among Asian women increased from 37.4% in 1980 to 39.5% in 2008, (Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). Among all newlyweds in 2008, 9% of Whites, 16% of Blacks, 26% of Latinos and 31% of Asians married a partner whose race or ethnicity was different from their own. The intent of this study is to explore how the involvement of Asian American women in an interracial relationship with men who are Black, Latino, or Native American influences how these women perceive their own racial identity.

According to a recent report published by the Pew Center, a record 15.1% of all new marriages in the United States in 2010 were between spouses of a different race or ethnicity from one another (Wang, 2012). This is over double the rate of 6.7% of intermarriages from 1980 (Wang, 2012). Among all the newlyweds in 2010, 9.4% of Whites, 17.1% of Blacks, 25.7% of

Hispanics and 27.7% of Asians married interracially (Wang, 2012), indicating Asians marry interracially most frequently among all racial groups. The intermarriage rate of newlyweds in 2008 for Asian men was 19.5%, while the rate for Asian women was 39.5% (Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). Out of the Asian women who newly married a person of another racial group in 2008, 76.8% of them married a White partner, 7.2% married a Black partner, 9.5% married a Latino partner, and 6.6% married a partner who is of another racial category (Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010).

One possible explanation for the dramatic difference in rates of interracial marriages with various racial groups is the status-caste exchange theory. This theory postulates “members of a lower-status group are more likely to marry members of a higher-status group if they can offer higher socioeconomic status to compensate for their lower racial status” (as cited in Wang & Kao, p. 147). The status-caste theory may explain interracial relationships by suggesting there is a hierarchy of racial groups, with Whites having the highest status. (Yancey, 2002; Fu, 2001). Therefore, Asian American women may marry White partners at a more frequent rate than all racial groups in order to achieve upward social mobility.

Interracial dating and marriage patterns are one indication of quality of interaction between racial groups. Social distance is one marker of the quality of such interactions. Social distance, a measure of people’s willingness to participate in social interactions of varying degrees of closeness with members of different social groups, is a concept that has been studied extensively since the 1920s (Bogardus, 1925). It has been supported through research that race is the most important factor determining social distance, or people’s willingness to interact with others of different races (Triandis & Triandis, 1960). While the increase in the number of interracial marriages may indicate a decrease of social distance between racial groups, it does not

capture how individuals in these interracial relationships perceive their own racial identity.

Some quantitative research studies have indicated that dating or marrying outside of one's own racial group is linked to individuals perhaps having a low ethnic identity (Chow, 2000; Mok, 1999; Yancey, 2002), that is people may have low ethnic pride, an insecure sense of self as a member of an ethnic group, little social contact with members from their own ethnic group, and/or infrequent participation of cultural traditions. Low ethnic identity is indicated by having a low score on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, also known as the MEIM (Phinney, 1992). The MEIM is a multidimensional measure of ethnic identity that includes the subscales of "Affirmation and Belonging," "Ethnic Identity Achievement," and "Ethnic Behaviors."

However, more recent qualitative have suggested that being involved in interracial relationships do indeed have an influence on one's racial identity (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Hill & Thomas, 2000). AhnAllen and Suyemoto defined racial identity as being concerned with negotiating racial discrimination and values, affiliation, and feelings about being a racialized minority (2011). The results of their study showed that female participants described an increase in self-confidence and pride of being Asian American as a result of being in an interracial relationship with White European American males.

Hill and Thomas defined race identity as a person's identifying or not identifying with the racial group of his or her racial categorization and the quality of their identification (2000). The results of the study were that participants were able to change their narratives of previously disempowering racial identity into more positive, empowering narratives of racial identity.

Because there are conflicting data about whether or not interracial dating or marriage is connected with weaker (Chow, 2000; Mok, 1999; Yancey, 2002), or stronger ethnic and/or racial

identity (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Hill & Thomas, 2000), studying the phenomenon of the impact of interracial relationships on racial identity may be of interest and value to further understand this dynamic.

Because the number of Asians in the United States is rapidly increasing, it is highly likely that the number of Asians who participate interracial relationships will also increase. The study may be helpful in developing a further understanding of racial identity in the context of interracial/interethnic relationships and more specifically, Asian American women's race/ethnic identity in the context of interracial/interethnic relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American men. This research may also prove to be useful to clinicians to improve their understanding of the experiences with Asian American women, who are in interracial relationships with Black, Latino, and/or Native American men, and participating in either individual or couples' therapy. Furthermore, there have been numerous studies focused on White-Black and White-Asian relationship dyads. Since this study focuses on Asian-Black, Asian-Latino, and Asian-Native American relationships, another purpose of the study is to begin to fill this knowledge gap. This would be of particular value to clinical social work practice because it is consistent with the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics states that one of social workers' ethical responsibilities to clients is cultural competence and social diversity. In section 1.05 of the Code of Ethics, the organization states:

Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and culture groups (2008).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This literature review will discuss previous research that looked at the experiences of Asian Americans in interracial dating or marital relationships. Much of the research on interracial relationships has been limited to examining White-Black and White-Asian dating and marriage dyads. Even then, the research has been mainly focused on demographics and factors such as such as propinquity, or the state of being physically close, attractiveness, and acculturation. These are all factors that people consider when dating outside of their own racial group.

This chapter will first examine interracial relationship patterns among Asian Americans. These patterns will provide a basic frame of reference in understanding Asian American women in interracial relationships. Various racial identity development models, which look at how individuals define the self in the context of race, will also be discussed. These models may aid in the comprehension of how Asian American women in this study may perceive their own racial identity. Next, an interracial identity development model will then be introduced. This model explains the stages an interracial couple moves through as the relationship progresses. The interracial identity development model will be used as a reference as study participants talk about their own relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American men. Lastly, previous research studies that have already looked at how interracial relationships impact race identity will be summarized. Similar research studies will be used as a reference point against which the results

of this research study can be compared. These four topics will provide the framework for this author's exploration of how being in an interracial relationship may influence Asian American women's perception of their own racial identity.

Patterns in Interracial Relationships Among Asian Americans

The demographic characteristics of Asians who engage in interracial relationships, the percentage of the Asian population who participate in interracial relationships, and the factors that influence partner selection, all contribute to the description of interracial relationship patterns among Asian Americans. Demographic information of Asian Americans who are in interracial relationships includes religion, socioeconomic status, and education background. Rates of interracial relationships distinguish between rates of interracial dating versus interracial marriage. Factors that influence the selection of an interracial partner include propinquity (i.e. the physical state of being close to someone), physical attractiveness, and acculturation (i.e. assimilation to the dominant culture).

Asian Americans, regardless of gender, who are not Catholic, are not conservative Protestants, have higher incomes and have attended integrated schools are more likely to have dated someone outside of their own race (Yancey, 2002). Having attended integrated schools is a marker for propinquity, or close proximity. Other studies have also supported propinquity as a strong predictor of interracial dating. In one study, Asian American men and Asian American women dating Whites were more likely to have a higher proportion of Whites in their high school and hometown communities (Fujino, 1997). In another study, Asian American women dating African American or Latino American men had the highest proportion of African Americans or Latino Americans in their hometown or high school communities (Fujino, 2000).

In addition to propinquity, physical attractiveness is a significant predictor of interracial

dating (Fujino, 1997; Mok, 1999). The less Asian American women viewed Asian American men as physically attractive, the more likely they were to date White men (Fujino, 2000).

Another predictor proved to be important is acculturation (Fujino 1997). In Chow's study, what most differentiated the group of participants that preferred to date Whites and the group of participants who preferred to date Asians was the degree of identification with European Americans and European American culture (2000). One possible explanation for these research results is that Asian American people who identify with European Americans and European American culture may also endorse the standards of beauty and the stereotypes of attractiveness shaped by the dominant group via dominant group cultural norms and messages from the media.

Asian Americans prefer to date all other groups at a higher rate than they prefer to marry them, and Asian American men were just as likely to date someone outside of their race as their female counterparts (Fujino, 1997). Asian American women tend to date or marry White European American men at a higher rate than Asian American men date or marry White European American women (Chow, 2000; Mok, 1999).

In addition, Asian American and White interracial relationships occur at a more frequent rate than interracial relationships between other racial minorities and Whites or between Asian Americans and other racial minorities (Mok, 1999; Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). When Asian Americans marry or date outside of their own ethnic group, their preference for a White partner is stronger than that for a partner from another Asian ethnic group (Mok, 1999).

One major critique of these studies that examine patterns in interracial relationships among Asian Americans is that many of the studies recruit from the college population (Fujino, 1997; Fujino, 2000; Mok, 1999). This affects the generalizability of the results to the larger population. In the United States, 50% of the Asian Americans hold a bachelor's degree or higher

level of education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). If the study population primarily includes educated people with middle to high socioeconomic status, then it does not reflect the general population of Asian Americans in the United States. On the other hand, a college sample may be beneficial in a study about interracial relationships—if propinquity is significant in developing interracial relationships, then a college campus could be a good place for interactions between various racial groups.

Another critique of the literature is that the participants in the studies are comprised of mostly Japanese and Chinese Americans (Chow, 2000; Fujino 1997; Fujino 2000). “Asian American” is a broad racial category that is comprised of many ethnic groups. The U.S. Census defines “Asian” as referring to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including but not limited to Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, an estimated 17.3 million U.S. residents are of Asian descent. In 2010, there were 3.8 million people of Chinese descent in the United States, 3.4 million who were Filipino, 3.2 who were Asian Indians, 1.7 million who were Vietnamese, 1.7 million who were Korean, and 1.3 million who were Japanese (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Only including Japanese and Chinese Americans in research studies excludes the experiences of other Asian Americans in the results of the study. This exclusion is potentially significant as it affects the generalizability of the study to other Asian ethnic groups.

Racial Identity Development Theories

Racial identity theories are important to understand, in the context of this research study, as these theories assist in the explanation of the psychological aspects of racial-group membership. Various racial identity theories detail one’s concept of the self, as it relates to one’s

own racial group, as well as describes how one may feel or think towards one's own racial group or other racial groups. There are several theories that may be helpful in providing a basis of understanding of racial identity and would be important information to refer to as data from this study is being analyzed.

One of the first identity development theories created for minority racial groups is the People of Color Racial Identity Model. It was originally proposed as a framework for improving psychotherapy relationships by increasing understanding the experiences of patients of color, but it has now expanded to be used with other forms of interpersonal relationships (such as teacher-student relationships) For this study, we will use this model to better understand the racialized interactions of Asian female-Black male, Asian female-Latino male, and Asian female-Native American male couples who are in dating and marital relationships.

The People of Color Racial Identity Model considers ego status and information processing strategies. The term ego status refers to the "interactive dynamic process by which a person's behavior could be explained" (Helms, 1995, p. 183). Helms uses the term "status" as another word for stage. The term "information process strategies" refer to people's reactions to interpersonal interactions as well as to external events. This model consists of six "statuses" or stages: conformity, dissonance, immersion-emersion, internalization, and integrative awareness (Helms, 1995). Conformity status refers to devaluing of one's own group while simultaneously expressing allegiance to White standards. Dissonance status refers to the ambivalence and confusion surrounding the commitment to and self-definition of one's own racial group. Immersion/Emersion status refers to the idealization of one's own racial group, and the criticism of that which one perceives as White. Internalization status is the commitment to one's racial group, internally defined racial attributes, and the capacity to assess and respond objectively to

members of the dominant group. Integrative awareness status is the capacity to value one's own collective identities as well as emphasize and collaborate with members of other oppressed groups. Although the stages are described as mutually exclusive, those stages may in fact overlap or there may be movement back and forth between the stages, depending on the interpersonal interactions or external events.

The People of Color Racial Identity Model has important implications for the study. This model considers racial identity of people color (Native Americans, Blacks, Asians, and Latino/as of color) in the context of White society. In the U.S., Whites are members of the entitled, dominant, and "superior" group (Helms, 1995). Because the study population is Asian American women in the United States, it is important to consider their racial identity in such a context.

The Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model (R/CID; Sue & Sue, 2003) has similar stages as the People of Color Racial Identity Model. However, this model is more specific and emphasizes attitudes toward self, attitudes towards others of the same minority, attitudes toward others of a different minority, and attitude toward the dominant group (Sue & Sue, 2003). In the conformity stage, one has a depreciating or neutral attitude toward the self and toward others of the same minority, discriminatory or neutral attitude towards others of a different minority, and a group-appreciating attitude toward the dominant group. In the dissonance and appreciating stage, there is conflict between the depreciation of the self and the appreciation of the group, conflict between group-depreciating views of minority hierarchy and feelings of a shared experience, conflict between dominant-held and depreciating others of a different minority, and conflict between dominant group appreciation. In the resistance and immersion stage, there is appreciation for the self and for others of the same minority, conflict between feelings of empathy for other minorities, and a depreciating attitude toward the dominant group. The fourth

stage, introspection, there is a concern with the basis of self-appreciation, concern with appreciation of those of the same minority group, concern with the ethnocentric basis for judging others who are of a different minority group, and the concern with the basis of group-depreciation of the dominant group. Lastly, the integrative awareness stage involves the appreciation of one's own race, appreciation of others of the same minority and of a different minority, and selective appreciation towards the dominant group. In the Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model, people's reactions to interpersonal interactions as well as to external events are described in the context of self, others of the same minority, of a different minority, and others in the dominant group.

The Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model is significant to the study because it further explains people's reactions to racialized interactions. Unlike, the People of Color Identity Model that considers only interactions between Whites and people of color, R/CID includes reactions to interactions between people of color from two different racial groups. Because this study looks at interracial relationships between Asian American woman and African American, Latino, or Native American men, it is important to consider the dynamics of interactions between two people who belong to different minority racial groups.

While the People of Color Racial Identity Model and the Racial/Cultural Identity Model both include stages or phases that describe the degree to which one identifies with a common racial heritage with a particular racial group, both models operate on the assumption that these stages encapsulate the experiences of all people of color, even though there may be qualitative differences in identification of specific states of racial identity development between Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans.

Asian American Identity Development theory or AAID (Kim, 2001) incorporates

recognition of Asian Americans' unique negotiation of racial discrimination within each identifiable stage within the theory. The five stages of AAID are: ethnic awareness, White identification, awakening to social and political consciousness, redirection to Asian American consciousness, and incorporation (Kim, 2001). The first stage ethnic awareness acknowledges that the awareness of Asian Americans' ethnicity comes from the interactions with family members and relatives at a young age; the more exposure one has to their cultural heritage, the greater the positive self-concept and the clearer the sense as a person of Asian heritage. The second stage is White identification, which includes both active and passive identification with the White race. Active White identification is when Asian Americans do not consciously acknowledge any differences between themselves and Whites and consider themselves to be similar to their White peers. They do not want to be seen as an Asian person and take action to minimize their Asian identity. In Passive White identification, Asian Americans do not consider themselves to be White and do not distance themselves from other Asians, but rather, they fantasize about being White. In both active and passive White identification, Asian Americans accept White values, beliefs, and standards. The third stage of awakening to social political consciousness entails Asian Americans gaining a positive self-concept and identification with a minority group in the United States while gaining political consciousness related to being a racial minority and gaining awareness of White racism. The fourth stage is the redirection of Asian American consciousness during which Asian Americans immerse themselves in the Asian American experience, identify as Asian American, and become angry against Whites about treatment of Asian Americans. The last stage entitled incorporation is where Asian Americans are clear and have positive feelings towards their Asian American identity, while being able to blend their Asian American identity the rest of their identities (e.g. gender, class, etc.). Similar to

the previously mentioned models of People of Color Identity Model and Racial/Cultural Identity Model, the Asian American Identity Development model begins with an individual having low racial identity and perhaps identifying with White standards, and ends with having a strengthened racial identity.

The Asian American Identity Development has similar components as the People of Color Racial Identity Model and the Racial/Cultural Identity Model. However, the AAID model is a particular model that is explicitly for Asian Americans, making it more specific than the People of Color Racial Identity Model and the Racial/Culture Identity Development Model. One possible limitation is that the AAID was developed based on interviews with persons of Chinese and Japanese descent only and therefore may not fully represent the experiences of the full range of groups of Asian descent (i.e. Korean, Thai, Filipino, Indian, etc.)

The People of Color Racial Identity Model describes racial identity in the context of White society. Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model elaborates on the People of Color Racial Identity Model by not only including attitudes toward the dominant culture, but also includes attitudes towards one own's group and other minority groups. Asian American Identity Development specifically speaks to the experience of Asian Americans. All three of these models may have relevance when attempt in to create a context for describing the racial identity of Asian American women in this study.

Interracial Relationship Development

Interracial relationship development is a process that describes the stages through which interracial couples pass through as they move toward a long-term dating or marital commitment to one another. Interracial relationship development pays particular attention to the negotiation of race issues within the couple relationship, as opposed to how racial identity theory focused on

the individual. Examining the stages of interracial relationship development is relevant the context of the study because interactions and events in which race may be involved may affect the couple as a whole, and not just the individual.

In Foeman and Nance's conceptual article (1999), the authors outlined the stages of interracial relationship development. Foeman and Nance propose the four stages of interracial relationship development are racial awareness, coping with social definitions of race, identity emergence, and maintenance. In the first stage of racial awareness, couples develop an awareness of their own perspective, their partner's perspective, their collective racial group's perspective, and their partner's racial group's perspective on race. Interracial couples undergo the second stage of interracial relationship development, which is coping with social definitions. During this phase, couples develop proactive and reactive strategies to protect themselves from people and situations that are potentially harmful in order to ensure the survival of the relationship. One example of such a strategy is the choice to not attend a family reunion, an event where criticism or negative discussion of the interracial relationship may arise.

The third stage of interracial relationship development is identity emergence, when couples redefine and take control over images of themselves. For example, couples will begin to see the racial makeup of their family as strength, such as viewing their families as being the product of a multicultural society. The last stage in this model is maintenance, when the couple maintains their identity as an interracial couple. This may include continuing to be aware of their own and others' perspectives, continuing to use proactive and reactive coping strategies to address stressful situations, and maintaining control over their image as a couple.

Because the study addresses Black-White relationships, the stages of interracial relationship development may or may not pertain to other interracial couples (Foeman & Nance,

1999). However, it would seem that all couples, regardless of race, must negotiate through phases in order to have a successful relationship. The interracial relationship development model suggests the unique stages which couples whose members are of different races must negotiate, as it relates to race issues, in order to have a healthy relationship.

Influence of Interracial Relationships on Racial Identity

There have been two studies identified which investigate how interracial relationships impact race identity (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Hill & Thomas, 2000). These studies combine individual racial identity development with interracial relationship development. This is particularly significant because racial identity development theories look at how individuals respond to racialized interpersonal interactions.

A recent qualitative study that addressed the influence of interracial relationships with White European American (WEA) males on the racial identity of Asian American women. AhnAllen and Suyemoto (2011) explored how interracial dating relationships influence the ways nine Asian American women and their WEA male partners understood or perceived their own racial and/or ethnic identities. Both members of the couple were interviewed individually, instead of as a couple. The results of the study were that men acknowledged their White privilege and became White allies who challenge racial ignorance of other White people through education (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011)

Other results of the study were that the women focused on their internal sense of self and attitude towards others. For example, the female participants described an increase in self-confidence and pride of being Asian American, and reported positive shifts in attitudes toward White European Americans, such as being more open to other perspectives.

In terms of the development of the interracial relationship itself, the participants in the

research study briefly mentioned their perception of an emerging interracial couple identity, which is most likened to an “us against the world” attitude (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011). This may fit into Foeman and Nance’s interracial relationship development stage of coping with social definitions, where couples are forced to deal with society’s rejection of the relationship (1999).

A possible bias that lies within this research was the possible influence of the perspectives of the researchers—AhnAllen and Suyemoto are both Asian American women in a relationship with WEA men. The study noted that potential bias in this regard was managed through peer debriefing (seeking the opinions of other researchers to validate interpretations), inquiry, auditing, and member checking. Because it was a qualitative study, the inherent limitation was the inability to generalize to a greater population.

Hill and Thomas’s (2000) exploratory qualitative study examined how four White women and three Black women in Black-White interracial relationships described their racial identity development over the course of the relationships. The results of the study did not focus on the interracial relationship itself, but rather how participants strengthened how they spoke about their racial identities in the context of interracial relationships. Participants transformed their narratives of previously disempowering racial identities to more positive, empowering racial identities in using three types of strategies: blocking strategies, transforming strategies, and generating strategies.

Blocking strategies included defending against constraining identities. Examples of blocking strategies was directly confronting public staring, discrediting constraining narratives (i.e. saying “They’re ignorant”), or screening people to avoid interactions with racist people. Transforming strategies entailed converting a constraining narrative into an empowering

narrative. For example, one participant said that instead of avoiding going out or doing things, she and her husband make efforts to be visible in their community and go out of their way to be outstanding citizens. Generating strategies was the independent construction of empowering strategies, without direct reactions or responses to specific constraining narratives. Generating strategies included cultivating close friend and family relationships with people who weren't racist and cultivating relationships with other interracial families.

Once again, because this was a qualitative study, the results described only a phenomenon that may not be generalizable to a larger population. On the other hand, this type of study allowed deeper perspective of this phenomenon of how interracial relationships influence race identity. Most of the participants lived in White communities so a question would be how their narratives might have changed if they lived in Black communities. In addition, the dynamics of White women in relationships with Black men may or may not be different than Black women involved with White men, and this difference was not explored in the study. Hill and Thomas (2000) outlined how White-Black relationships influenced study participants' narratives of their racial identity, similar themes may become apparent when analyzing the results of this study and its examination of the impact of Asian-Black, Asian-Latino, and Asian-Native American relationships on Asian American women's racial identity.

Summary

The review of studies included in this literature review provide background information to help contextualize the phenomenon of Asian American women's interracial relationships with men of color. The review of the various racial identity development models provides a way of considering how the Asian American women in this study may perceive their own racial identity development. The interracial relationships development model presents the possible stages of

development that interracial couples may experience as the relationship progresses and may be useful in understanding the experiences of Asian American women who are in interracial relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American men.

Currently, a strength of existing literature on cross-racial relationships is that there is a wealth of research literature looking at Black-White partner relationships; however, a weakness of the current literature is that there are fewer studies examining Asian-White dyads, despite Asians having the highest frequency of marrying out among all racial groups (Mok, 1999; Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). A search of the literature has not yet shown that there are studies that specifically focused on Asian-Black, Asian-Latino, or Asian-Native American dating or marriage relationships. The implication of the lack of literature on these types of interracial relationships is that this is an area in which a great deal of further research can be conducted in order to gain knowledge determining how this phenomenon is similar to and different from previously studied relationships. A hope for this study is that it can begin to fill this knowledge

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of interracial/interethnic relationships with Black, Latino, and/or Native American men on the racial/ethnic identity of Asian American women. The specific research question being posed is, “How do interracial/interethnic relationships with Black, Latino, and/or Native American men influence the perceived racial/ethnic identity of Asian American women?”

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative method. The rationale for the selection of qualitative methods for this study is that it would allow for a refined understanding of the topic of racial identity and the subjective experiences of the study population of Asian American women in the specific social context of interracial relationships. Approval for this research study was obtained from the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix A).

The terms race, ethnicity, race identity, and ethnic identity were operationally defined to increase construct reliability and consistent understanding among participants. The term race was defined as a social construct that categorizes individuals or groups based on physical characteristics, such as skin color (Helms, 1990). Ethnicity was defined as a “group of classification of individuals who share a unique and cultural heritage (customs, language, religions, and so on) passed on from generation to generation” (Casas, 1984). The term racial

identity was defined here to mean the “sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common or racial heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1990). Ethnic identity referred to a “commitment to a cultural group and engagement in its cultural practices (e.g., culture, religion)” (Helms, 2007).

Interracial relationships were defined as relationships where each partner is of a different race category, and interethnic relationships is defined as the relationships where each partner is of a different ethnic group. For the purposes of the study, relationships are operationally defined as a monogamous dating or marital relationship between two people that has lasted at least six months.

Sample

The study population was Asian American women in interracial heterosexual relationships with Black, Latino, and/or Native American men residing in the United States. In order to be eligible for the study, participants needed to be Asian American women, ages 18 to 50 who are currently in a monogamous dating or marital interracial relationship with Black, Latino, and/or Native American men that has lasted at least six months or more. Exclusion criteria were Asian women who were not U.S. citizens, were under the age of 18 or over the age of 50, were not currently in an interracial relationship with a man of color lasting at least six months, and those who were not conversant in English (the language used in the interviews).

The group of study participants consisted of nine participants, ages 27 through 38. These participants came from various ethnic backgrounds such as Japanese, Bengali, Laotian, Hmong, Taiwanese, Cambodian, Chinese, and Korean. Four participants were U.S. born, five were born outside of the U.S., and all were U.S. citizens. Three women are in interracial relationships with Latino men, four women are in interracial relationships with Black men, and two women are in

an interracial relationship with man who identify as mixed race. Six participants were single, never married, and three were married, and the length of relationships range from ten months to nine years. All participants have an education level of some college or higher. The annual income of two participants is less than \$25,000, three participants have an annual income of \$25,000 to \$35,000, two participants have an annual income of \$35,000 to \$50,000, and two participants have an annual income of \$50,000 to \$70,000. (See Table 1 for specific demographic information of the study participants).

Data Collection Methods

Participants were recruited through nonprobability sampling. The study sample was recruited from fliers posted in public spaces (i.e. coffee shops, libraries, grocery stores, etc.), Asian social and professional organizations, churches, museums, and through internet web sites such as Craigslist, Facebook, and LinkedIn, through convenience sampling. Participants obtained the study phone number or study e-mail to contact the researcher from these advertisement and fliers, and initiated the phone call or e-mail to be screened for eligibility over the phone or e-mail. Once eligibility was determined, an appointment was made for the interview to be conducted over the phone or in-person. Participants signed an informed consent form before their interview began.

One ethical dilemma in this research study was the potential risk of emotional distress. Participants might be triggered when reflecting on their racial/ethnic identity and/or their experiences of interracial/interethnic dating. Participants might experience discomfort expressing their thoughts about and experience with this topic to someone they are not familiar with. In order to address the personal risk of psychological or emotional negative effects of the research study, I distributed a list of counseling referral sources to all participants (Appendix E).

Table 1

Demographic Data of Participants

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Country of Origin	Years in U.S.	Marital Status	Education	Annual Income	Months in Relationship	Partner's Race	Partner's Ethnicity
1	27	Japanese	U.S.	N/A	Single	Bachelor's	< \$25k	47 months	White, Hispanic	Cuban
2	27	Bengali	U.S.	N/A	Single	Bachelor's	\$25k to \$35k	24 months	Black	African American
3	38	Laotian	Laos	32	Married	Bachelor's	\$50k to \$75k	144 months	White, Hispanic	Puerto Rican
4	30	Hmong	Laos	26	Single	Master's	\$35k to \$50k	48 months	Mixed	Puerto Rican, Irish, German
5	30	Laotian	U.S.	N/A	Single	Bachelor's	\$25k to \$35k	96 months	Black	African American
6	29	Taiwanese	Taiwan	27	Single	Some college	\$35k to \$50k	10 months	White, Hispanic	Mexican
7	35	Cambodian	Cambodia	31	Single	Some college	\$25k to \$35k	108 months	Black	African American
8	28	Chinese	China	20	Married	Bachelor's	\$50k to \$75k	96 months	Black	Haitian
9	36	Korean	U.S.	N/A	Married	Master's	< \$25k	60 months	Mixed	Jamaican, African American, Jewish

Recruitment through convenience sampling did not garner enough number of participants for the research study so snowballing techniques were used. I asked study participants and people I knew to refer potential study participants to me. Because the study did not recruit from vulnerable populations, the study did not require special permission to work with these populations (i.e. children under 18, the elderly, etc.).

Participants were recruited through nonprobability sampling methods with convenience snowballing techniques. Once potential participants have been screened to determine eligibility, the informed consent form was reviewed. The informed consent form explains the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of participation, and the right to refuse to answer any questions, or to withdraw from the study at any time (Appendix B). After the subject agreed to participation and signed the informed consent form, demographic data, such as ethnicity, age, marital status, country of origin, income (socioeconomic status), education level, time spent in current relationship, and race and ethnicity of partner, was collected at the beginning of each interview (Appendix C).

All qualitative data was collected through a standardized open-ended interview via phone or in-person, which lasted approximately 20 minutes to 45 minutes. Semi-structured interviews (Appendix D) were used for this qualitative study because they allowed the participant to describe the phenomenon in-depth and to include the nuances of their experiences, which is consistent with the study methods and study purpose. After the interview was completed, study participants received a \$10 grocery gift card as compensation for their time and effort.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded via an Olympus VN-6000 digital voice recorder, and I transcribed the full interview verbatim. Demographic data was analyzed for descriptive statistics to gain information about the study population. Interview transcriptions were closely reviewed.

The first step to analyzing qualitative data involved coding (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Codes were created via open coding—meaning code categories were developed through close examination of the qualitative data. This process included breaking down the data into discrete parts, making an assessment of these parts, and making data comparisons to look for similarities and difference (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Codes were given a label, definition, description of characteristics, description of qualifications or exclusions, and examples were identified.

Once codes from the qualitative data had been established, grounded theory method was utilized to identify themes. (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Glaser and Strauss described the four stages of grounded theory method are “comparing incidents applicable to each category,” “integrating categories and their properties,” “delimiting the theory,” and “writing theory” (1967). Once the qualitative data was coded, patterns of similar codes were discovered. Then, relationships between the concepts, or codes, were noted. Next, irrelevant concepts were ignored. Last, the findings are discussed in this thesis.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to “the amount of random error in a measurement and measurement consistency” (Rubin & Babbie, 2007, p. 82). A couple of strategies were utilized to improve reliability in this research study. First, during the interview with the study participants, I asked participants to confirm the accuracy of my interpretations by asking them if my interpretations of their responses were correct (e.g. “Do you mean...?”). I also utilized negative case analysis, when

I examined the data to see if there was disconfirming evidence to my hypotheses.

Validity refers to “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration” (Rubin & Babbie, 2007, p. 83) My thesis advisor, a licensed social worker who has over twenty years experiences as a diversity consultant, reviewed the interview guide and provided feedback on the clarity and relevance of the questions. This was aimed to increase the validity of the research.

Limitations and Bias

The primary limitation in this exploratory study is researcher bias. My research question was “How do interracial/interethnic relationships with Black, Latino, and/or Native American men influence the perceived the racial/ethnic identities of Asian American women?” This question operates under the assumption that these types of relationships do have an impact on a person’s racial/ethnic identity. Secondly, I myself am an Asian American woman who has previously been in interracial relationships with Black and Latino men. One concern of the research would be how my previous experiences in these relationships would affect how I interpreted and analyzed the data. I increased trustworthiness of the study by keeping notes on my countertransference during the interviews. I also debriefed some aspects of the research, keeping in mind confidentiality of the study participants, with both my peers and my thesis advisor

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The purpose of this exploratory research study was to answer the question, “How do interracial relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American men influence the race identity of Asian American women?” This chapter summarizes the findings from data collected from interviews with nine Asian American women who were in committed relationships with men who were Black, Latino, or Native American. A review of the identified themes which emerged from each question as well as from the data overall will be presented.

Question: What does being Asian American and/or [ethnicity] mean to you?

When study participants were asked to define what being Asian American and/or their ethnicity meant to them, many of the women associated their racial and/or ethnic identity with their family values, family history, and cultural traditions. Some women also responded that their racial and/or ethnic identity was unique. At the same time, being Asian American was associated with negative experiences with racism and accommodation to dominant White society.

Many women made references to their family when they were asked what their race or ethnicity meant to them. Participant Two discussed the value of family. She said, “What I love about being Bengali is that they value family. We strongly value family and friendships, and it’s a culture that’s interrelated. They depend on each other, instead of being so independent.” Another context of family that women referred to is the integral role family played in the

transmission of culture from one generation to the next. Participant Four described how she learned the importance of marriage from her parents. She stated:

My parents believe what many Hmong hold [as beliefs], where my parents came from... they brought with them, and they've instilled in me that marriage is a once in a lifetime event, no matter what happens. There's nothing greater than saving that marriage, so that's a worldview that I have.

Participant Nine described the struggle of being raised in both Korean and American cultures, but explained, "My dad kept reminding us we were Korean."

In addition to family being an important part of their racial and/or ethnic identity, several women mentioned either personal or their ancestral immigration history when asked to define what their race and/or ethnicity meant to them. Participant Nine reported, "I have always been aware that being Korean American in some way or form, I am a daughter of immigrants. My parents came over in the 70s."

Participant One stated:

Well I definitely have a connection with my Japanese part of my heritage... I'm fourth generation... Being Japanese means a lot to me. I definitely feel like I have a connection with the history of Japanese people in this country. So, my grandparents were all in the internment camps in World War II, and I know a lot about what they went through, partly hearing from them what their experiences were, but also studying and research I've done on my own. I have a connection with that—the historical piece.

When responding to this question, most women referred to the cultural aspects related to their ethnic group, which included language, religion, ethnic foods, and customs. The New Year seemed to be a particularly important holiday that is celebrated among Asian Americans.

Participant Four discussed in depth how it is celebrated and how it is connected to practiced rituals. She said:

So customs... when I say that, I'm really talking about traditional rituals. Every New Year's, my parents have a feast. What they'll do is they'll set up the dinner table in a very grand matter, but no one will sit at the table. It'll be set for ten to 15 people, and my dad will sit at the end of the table, and he will call the ancestors to the feast. Calling the ancestors to come and share the food with him so when they leave, they take away bad omens or bad luck with them. That actually signals the end of the old year and the coming of the New Year.

Several women described being Asian American and/or being of an Asian ethnic group was *unique*. Participant One stated, I guess in some ways it [being Japanese] feels really special. I feel like I have something not everyone has – a connection with a different country.”

Participant Two shared a similar sentiment about being Bengali. “I just think it's a unique culture in general. I think in a world that has been so dominated by Caucasians and Whites, it's nice being something different.”

Although many of the responses to this question referred to ethnic heritage, the most common response that addressed the “meaning” of being Asian American was related to racist experiences women have undergone. Participant One stated being Asian American “definitely means having to deal with racism on a daily basis, but that may be different than other racial groups.” She went on to say:

I feel like the racism I experience, as an Asian person is really subtle. There are a lot of microaggressions that happen, and it kind of means always being on the look out for things. I feel like there's a lot of questioning that goes on, like wondering if something is

racist or it wasn't. The other thing I think about being Asian is no matter where I go you're always the foreigner. No matter where I go, people always assume I'm not from here or this country.

Participant Three also described having experiences when others make assumptions about her identity. She stated, "When people see us, they automatically categorize us being Asian... They don't really know where we're exactly from until they interact with us or ask us where we're from. They'll just assume." Participant Eight experienced overt racism in the form of bullying. She recounted, "I've been bullied and teased growing up. Because when I first came, I was in third grade. I didn't speak a single word of English. They would bully me, and they would realize I couldn't say anything back."

For those women who spoke about their racist experiences, some also discussed previous accommodations they have made to dominant White culture. Participant Nine explained, "We think about race as how we're seen. It didn't matter how much I curled my hair. It didn't matter what kind of clothes I wore. Ultimately at some point in time I am reminded that I am Asian."

It appears as though when study participants were asked to define what Asian American and/or their ethnicity meant to them, positive responses were tied to their family values, family history, culture, and pride. Negative responses were tied to racism and accommodation to White culture. Study participants did not define their racial and/or ethnic identity in the context of their interracial relationships, but rather discussed it as a separate entity.

Question: How would you describe your current connection to your identified racial/ethnic group?

All study participants were able to describe their current connection to their racial/ethnic group on a continuum of having a nearly absent connection to their identified racial/ethnic group to having a strong connection to their identified racial/ethnic group.

Some participants described their connection to their identified racial and/or ethnic group as decreased, detached, or weak. For these women, they discussed their connection in conjunction with few personal connections to people of their race and/or ethnic group. For example, Participant Five said:

After high school, which was 14 years ago, I think, I kind of lost touch with everybody... I went to Saturday school where they teach you Lao and how to read and write... After I graduated, I went to college my first two years with my best friends—they're both Lao. After that, I transferred over to a different campus and I started commuting, and I didn't talk to them as much.

Participant Seven also described knowing few people from her identified racial and/or ethnic group. She reported, "I'm a little detached from the current Cambodian community here. I don't have family here, meaning siblings or parents that are around. Those friends that are Cambodian are basically a handful that I can tell you." Participant Eight reported:

I don't think my own connectivity to being who I am is very strong. I'm just incorporated into American culture at this point. I'm an only child so I don't have much connection to my family, my cousins, and even to my parents because they're mostly in China.

On the other hand, some women described their connection to their racial or identity as having increased from previous years. For example, Participant One shared, "I definitely like I'm

more connected now than I was in the past,” and Participant Two shared, “My current connection... I would say that I'm still working on it. I have a stronger connection than I had when I was a teenager, but I'm still working on it.”

For the group of women who described an increase in their connection to their identified racial and/or ethnic group, all were also able to identify when they felt their connection to their racial or ethnic heritage had increased. Typically their connection began to strengthen around late adolescence and young adulthood. Furthermore, most of these women had incorporated their race and/or ethnic heritage into their professional career.

Participant Four talked about how she connects to issues of race and ethnicity into her work:

There's a very strong Hmong American community here in [city, state]. I have a background in politics and policy and I've spent my time working with other Hmong Americans to talk about policies and their impact on Southeast Asians, which include the Hmong American community. I also participate in local and national conferences on the state of Asian America.

Participant Nine also discussed how she could use her perspective as an Asian American in her work in the field of education:

I think it [Asian American race] has been the lens through which I see everything. It's been a piece of my identity that I think I've been trying to make more sense of, particularly since I'm in education. I think the conversation often tends to be Black and White. That's not to say those aren't important groups to focus on. I just think often times I feel like people I could represent are not part of that conversation.

For the women who did not describe their racial or ethnic connection as having decreased or increased, they simply described the ways they currently connect to their identified race or ethnicity, which were mainly through language, religion, food, and cultural traditions.

Regardless of reporting a decreased or increased connection to their identified racial and/or ethnic group, some women reported feeling left out from their identified group.

Participant One recounted:

There was a point where I remember feeling like there were the Asian kids, then there were White kids, and then there was me. Because you would walk by these big groups of Asian kids where they all spoke their language or had some cultural characteristic in common, whatever it was. I never felt like I could be part of a group like that being so Americanized, I guess.

Participant Five also shared a sentiment of feeling left out from her Asian and/or Lao community. She said:

Sometimes I do feel like the outsider because I don't get invited to everything all the time, because I don't hang out with all Asian people. The only time I do go to a family function is if my parents tell or if my cousin calls me or if my best friend calls me that someone is having a baby shower and I was invited. Other than that, I don't really know anything.

When study participants spoke about their current connection to their racial and/or ethnic identity, they reported varying levels of how connected they are to their racial and/or ethnic. Most participants described the connection in terms of having an increased or decreased connection from previous years. Additionally, participants did not attribute their level of connection to their racial and/or ethnic identity to their interracial relationships with Black,

Latino, or Native American men, but rather attributed their connection level to educational and professional experiences, and also whether or not they had relationships with people of their own identified racial and/or ethnic group.

Question: Has being in an interracial/interethnic relationship with a [Black or Latino or Native American] man affected what it means for you to be an Asian American and/or [ethnicity]? If so, how?

In general, participants responded that being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, or Native American man has resulted in a cultural exchange and allowed them to better comprehend the experiences of people in other minority groups. It also allowed them to gain self-acceptance.

One-third of the participants directly said that their interracial/interethnic relationship did not affect what it means for them to be an Asian American and/or a person from their specific ethnic group. Although they responded “no” to the question, all of these women continued the discussion of this question by describing the ways they share their culture with their partners and their partners’ family. Participant Five said, “Oh no, not at all, because my in-laws and my boyfriend are so welcoming. They want to learn. Because they know my culture is different and unique... they’re still trying to learn little things here and there.” Participant Seven talked about how her relationship has not affected her racial and/or ethnic identity and she shares her culture, such as holiday customs and language, with the men she dates. She said, “Being with an African American... no, it has not affected me. I think I’ve always been this way. I influence him being African American because he doesn’t speak the language... It’s more of a transfer from me to them.”

It is also important to note that all of the study participants who responded to this question by saying their relationship did not affect what it means for them to be Asian American and/or a person of their ethnic group were women who have a Black male partner and who reported a decreased connection or weak connection to their identified racial and/or ethnic group.

For the study participants who did endorse their relationship affecting their racial and/or ethnic identity in some way, the most common pattern that emerged was that the relationship allowed for understanding similarities between the two racial and/or ethnic groups. Participant One shared how her experiences of being a member of an oppressed minority group may be similar to the experience of her partner's family:

I guess I kind of feel like there's more space of understanding about not being of dominant culture. In his family, there have been challenges about not wanting to seem foreign or wanting to fit in the White community. In some ways I feel like there are some similarities there in that there's more likelihood he would be empathetic to what I'm feeling in terms of how Asians often feel like they could blend into White communities or that it's easier in some way. I kind of feel the same sort of sentiment in his family, being White Hispanic, that there is a way for them to blend in that's easier than other groups.

Participant Three discussed how her relationship with her husband allowed her to see the similarities between Asians and Latinos, and how that in turn has influenced her acceptance of other minority groups:

My views of people now, especially with the Spanish community, are that they're not different from us. There are some cuisines or foods that are similar to us. We can say that we can relate to almost, like coming from each side of the world, but we're from the

tropics... the way it had influenced me is that I become more accepting of others, like in the Spanish community or the Blacks. It just broadened my perspective of people. It just opened up my mind up even more, saying they're not that different from us. We don't have to be confined to our own beliefs... I'm not afraid anymore.

Some participants discussed how they felt as though they did not fit racial and/or ethnic norms, and subsequently, they had a negative view of themselves, or perhaps even feel rejected by their racial and/or ethnic group. Participant Seven shared, "The stereotype would be I'm very small, I would have very long hair, and I'm not any of those things. I don't date Cambodian or Asian men because I don't feel like they're attracted to me, physically, nor mentally." Some participants said that their relationships led to increased self-acceptance. Participant Three talked about how her marriage facilitated increased self-esteem around her body image. Participant Three stated:

For me, I've always had a negative perspective of myself, physically, emotionally, well, physically mostly... in the physical aspect that me being a little heavier than a normal Asian person. He's willing to overlook that. Being of Latino descent, they kind of like voluptuous women. He makes me feel happy to be who I am or be proud of who I am.

In general, participants responded that being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, or Native American man has allowed them to share cultural aspects of their own race and/or ethnicity with their partner (i.e. language, food, traditions, etc.). Being in these types of relationships also increased their acceptance and understanding between themselves and other minority groups by recognizing shared oppressive experiences and the similarities of culture. Lastly, for women who believed they did not fit the norms of their identified racial and/or ethnic

group, being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, or Native American man increased self-acceptance.

Question: What does your partner's race or ethnicity mean to you?

When respondents were asked to define what their partner's race and/or ethnicity meant to them, it is clear that the study participants thought about their partner's race or ethnicity in a similar manner of how they thought about their own race or ethnicity. That is, study participants' responses included connecting their partner's race and/or ethnicity to larger histories and how they are able to relate to their partner based on shared racist experiences. Women also shared that their partner's race or ethnicity meant thinking about how it will play a role in the future when they have children.

When asked what their partners' race and/or ethnicity meant to them, a couple of women connected race and/or ethnicity to a larger history. Participant Nine connected her partner's race and/or ethnicity to her partner's family roots. She describes the experience of her partner cooking fried chicken for her one day, which took her by surprise. She recounted:

Even though his grandparents are in New York, his dad grew up in the South... It was one of those moments where I connect with southern food a lot as far as I think about regional cultures, and it just blew my mind. It was a moment where I don't think I understood his connection to the family members and that part of his culture.

Participant Seven connected her partner's race and/or ethnicity to the history of African Americans rooted in slavery. She shared:

I think I can sum it up—power... Power meaning liberation. Not power meaning control. That's what that means because of what they've been through. And how they've survived

it, and lived it, and have grown from it. I'm talking about the years of slavery, the years of social justice. They're striving.

As previously noted when study participants were asked to define what their own race and/or ethnicity meant to them, several participants discussed their racist experiences. When asked to define the meaning of their partner's race and/or ethnicity, racist experiences were discussed once again. Participant One described how she believes her partner's family is also of an oppressed minority group. She stated, "I see him as a White person, but I don't necessarily see his family as a whole as White people because they're from Cuba. In some ways I feel like it's an opportunity to be a different oppressed group." Participant Two discussed how she believes she can relate to her partner because they have been both been discriminated against based on physical features. She shared:

Also, what he's experienced—like discrimination, his parent's being discriminated—I've experienced... my parent's look very Bengali. So growing up they used to get teased. I used to get teased for it by my friends. "Oh, your parents are..." Because he's really dark, he used to get teased. I think we could relate on that level.

The responses of this question demonstrated that being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, and or Native American man may have an impact on the racial and/or ethnic identity of an Asian American woman by once again, increasing their understanding of other minority groups, forcing them to think about the transmission of their own race and/or ethnic identity on to their children or posterity, and also relating to other minority groups on shared oppressed experiences.

Several study participants could not discuss what their partner's race and/or ethnicity meant to them without also discussing what it would mean for their posterity. Participant One wondered:

I sometimes think about us having kids together, and it definitely has an impact on how I think about our future kids being Japanese and Cuban... Which culture would have more influence? They're going to look Asian—well, that's my assumption is that they'll look more Asian than Cuban so that they'll identify more with Asian. I think about that too.

Like Participant One, Participant Eight also thought about which cultural traditions would be passed along to her children. She said:

I think our kids will benefit from learning two languages, because he speaks French Creole and I speak Chinese. The kids will have different palettes for different types of food we can both offer. The kids will probably look at it and learn from it.

The responses of this question demonstrated that being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, and or Native American man may have an impact on the racial and/or ethnic identity of an Asian American woman by once again, increasing an understanding of other minority groups and relating to other minority groups on shared oppressed experiences. Lastly, their partner's race/ethnicity forced study participants to think about the transmission of their own race and/or ethnic identity to their children or posterity.

Question: What does your partner's race/ethnicity mean to your relationship?

Study participants' partners' race/ethnicity meant that the relationship would require negotiation around racism both within the dyad and the external world and it would also require negotiation of ethnic practices. This resulted in having discussions about race, in addition to an exchange of culture.

Some participants discussed how their partner's and/or ethnicity meant that the relationship would include discussions about race. Participant One shared her frustration with her partner's lack of understanding of racial experiences. She stated:

There are times in which we are a [Latino] White guy and an Asian girl and all of the stereotypical problems that come with that. There will always be a difference between us in things I experience that he doesn't because he can blend in. He experiences the world as a White man... he knows what it's like to have an Asian partner, but I don't think he'll ever know what it's like to be an Asian person. Partly because like I was saying before the racism we experience is so subtle.

On the other hand, one participant talked about how she tries to better understand her partner's racial identity. She shared:

As far as to what it [partner's race and/or ethnicity] means to our relationship—it's been an interesting process. It's definitely made me question how I understand who I am, but it's an ongoing conversation of how he understands. So when you asked me what your partner's race was, I made it a point to ask him because I wasn't convinced whatever response I was going to give was how he wanted to be represented. So when I asked him, I actually had to push him on that. For me, how I understand it is I'm always fully aware of being the daughter of immigrant parents, I'm second generation... As for him, pushing him to have a label of some sort is pushing him to identify him one way or another in which I don't think he's ever comfortable. I'm very sensitive that what I assume is okay, what I assume is appropriate is not always the case. I don't know if that helps.

Participants reported that having a relationship with a Black, Latino, or Native American man also meant an exchange in culture. In response to the question, Participant Five said, "It

doesn't have a huge impact. It's just that it's another culture that he's bringing into the relationship," while Participant Eight said, "Instead of one culture, we can talk about his culture and I can talk about my culture. Relationship-wise there's more to learn about each other and that makes it interesting. Participant Three went further into the discussion by explaining how she's adopted some of his cultural norms:

We come from two different cultures, two different societies. It's like a yin and a yang. He allows me to be liberal. He allows me to think the way I think, speak or act, or let me do anything I want. When I grew up in a Laotian family, it was so suffocating in a way... He's helped me grow as an individual thinker. I don't have to do everything on behalf of the family anymore.

Study participants described how being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, or Native American man has caused there to be open discussions about race and racial identity. In addition, there is an exchange in culture in which both partners learn and carry out ethnic traditions, values, customs, etc.

Question: Has the fact that you and your partner are of different races or ethnic groups and had an impact on your relationship? If so, how?

Participants reported that the differences in race and/or ethnic groups between themselves and their partners meant having to cope with negative experiences, including cultural misunderstandings, familial disapproval of the relationship, and shared racist experiences.

Several women reported that the difference of their partners from minority races or ethnic groups lead to cultural misunderstandings. In many instances, many of the women resolved that there are some things about their culture that their partner cannot understand. For example, Participant One said, " Sometimes we argue or have discussion about how I experience things in

ways he doesn't... he just doesn't really understand." Participant Four shared she and her partner also have arguments related to culture, "I behave the way I do because of my upbringing of being a Hmong daughter in American. I don't do probably about 75% of the things he expects a woman in American should do. In our relationship, there are a lot of cultural clashes." Though several women shared this sentiment, not all of the participants did. Participant Seven compared her experience dating a Black and Latino man to her previous experience dating a White male. In response to the question, she stated:

No, not with this one. The previous one—yeah. Being with a White man, he just didn't understand. I couldn't tell my family about him. My White boyfriend didn't understand that. He thought I was ashamed of him, even though I've dated other races before. Funny as this may seem... every time I dated a Latino or African American man, they never questioned me or thought I was shaming them or was ashamed of them... So, the cultural thing—they're more understandable.

Two participants shared that dating an African American male led to familial disapproval of their relationship. Participant Two said, "Well, his family not being open to the fact that I'm not Black, and my family is not accepting him. He hasn't even met my family... So being able to have a healthy, stable relationship, it makes it more difficult." Participant Five also shared that her family did not approve of her relationship with her African American partner, however, her family's disapproval changed over time. She recounted:

Initially, he wasn't welcomed because he was so big and very dark, so they were a little intimidated. Once they warmed up to him, it was okay. So now my parents will make sure there's always something for him to eat. He gets invited all the time. As for his side, his family is very welcoming as well.

Participants also reported that communication increased after having shared experiences in which race was at the forefront. Participant Eight remembered that people stare at her and her partner in public places, such as restaurants. She stated, “I think it also affects our relationship when other people look at us. I think we definitely try to communicate... it is better to deal with it together than alone.” Participant Nine discussed her and her partner’s experiences living in Boston, the landlord committed discriminatory acts against the couple based on their race. She stated:

It’s made me more sensitive but it’s also created a place where he and I could really talk about things. He and I speak fairly openly about race and we ask each other questions I don’t think he would necessarily ask other people. In a lot of ways, I think it’s put a strain on our relationship, and the other light, it’s allowed us to have awkward conversations, and I think that has been particularly helpful, at least for me.

The responses of study participants exhibited that being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, or Native American man demonstrated that it has an impact on the actual relationship, which include the presence of cultural misunderstandings between the couple, disapproval of the relationship from the family, but also having increased communication because of racial experiences they had shared together.

Question: Is there a specific situation that has occurred during the time you have been with your current partner in which race/ethnicity was relevant, or you became more aware of your race/ethnicity?

Study participants reported that being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, or Native American man resulted in negative racist experiences with their family members. Participants cited a plethora of examples of situations in which issues of race and/or ethnicity

was salient in the situation, more specifically when family members or friends made racial comments to the study participants. Participant One described how she received a Japanese cherry blossom fragrance from her partner's best friend's family and was offended by it.

I remember opening it and thinking, "Oh, that's a really nice gift." And I wouldn't have thought anything other than that except his friend said "Oh yeah, well, we didn't know what to get you, but we knew this store had an Asian scent so we thought you might like it." And I remember thinking, "Oh my god." So pretty much what he's saying is that all he knows about me is that I'm Asian. Nothing else about me stands out to him. All the years that we've known each other, he doesn't know anything else about me.

Participant Two talked about how her mother made a racial comment about the physical features of her possible future children with her current partner, and how much it hurt her. She said:

Once my mom made this comment that really got to me. She said something like, 'If you marry him, and have kids with him, your child is going to have a big nose.' All I could think is that is so stereotypical. That's the meanest thing you could have said. Then my mom said something like, 'How am I going to even look at the kid?' And it broke my heart. I couldn't believe she said that.

Participant Three cited an example of how her grandmother made a racial comment after the participant revealed to her that she was going to introduce a Latino man she had been dating to the family. She said:

When he first met my family, I was like sweating and nervous because I didn't know how accepting they would be of him, because he's the only Puerto Rican in the family. I think the family's view of him is very cautious because I told them he was Puerto Rican. I

remember grandma saying, “Is he in a gang?” That was the first thought that came into her mind, until I told her he was an engineer. At first I didn’t know how to react to that because I found it kind of insulting...

When citing situations in which race and/or ethnicity was a salient theme, participants talked about situations in which they had racist experiences, both personally and as a couple. Through these experiences, participants were forced to think about their own ethnic and/or racial identity, in addition to identifying with partner when they are the targets of racism.

Summary

The overarching research question was “How do interracial relationships with Black, Latino, and/or Native American men influence the race and/or ethnic identity of Asian American woman?” Racial and/or ethnic identity had been defined as the sense of group identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial and/or ethnic heritage with a particular racial and/or ethnic group.

Attitude and beliefs towards others of a different race and/or ethnic group is one component of racial and/or ethnic identity. As a result of their interracial relationship, Asian American women reported gaining a better understanding of both their partner’s racial and/or ethnic group, and other minority groups as a whole. They also discussed adopting cultural practices of other racial/and or ethnic groups as a result of being in an interracial relationship. Additionally, there was an attitude or belief that there was a shared experience of victimization or being targeted as a result of race and/or ethnicity.

Asian American female study participants discussed their racial and/or ethnic identity both separate from and in connection to their interracial relationships with Black, Latino, and/or Native American men. For the study participants, without the influence of their partners, they

had connected their racial and/or ethnic identity through their family, cultural customs and norms, racist experiences, having a connection (or lack of connection) to people in their identified racial and/or ethnic group, through their educational experiences, and their professional development. As a result of being in an interracial relationship with a Black, Latino, or Native American man, Asian American women thought about what it would mean to pass along aspects of their identified race and/or ethnic group identity and culture along to children or future children.

Study participants also reported that being in this particular type of relationship allowed them to have more acceptance of themselves as being part of their race and/or ethnic group, in addition to acceptance of the self as whole. For example, some participants believed that being part of their identified racial and/or ethnic group was unique. Additionally, for those women who felt they did not fit into the norms of their identified racial and/or ethnic group, their partners helped them gain self-acceptance.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This chapter examines the findings of this exploratory study in a fuller context. The focus of the study was to begin to answer the question of how being in a committed relationship with either a Black, Latino, or Native American man influence the racial/ethnic identity of Asian American women. The key finding from this study was that overall, being in these types of interracial relationships enabled Asian American women to be more accepting of their own racial/ethnic identity. This resulted in their having an increased understanding of both their own racial/ethnic group, as well as gaining more understanding and acceptance of other minority racial/ethnic groups who experience oppression.

For the purpose of this discussion the specific racial identity theories of Helms' People of Color Racial Identity Model (1995), Sue & Sue's Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model (2003), and Kim's Asian American Development Model (2001) are utilized as the framework for understanding the ways in which interracial relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American have an impact on the race and/or ethnic identity of Asian American women.

In the People of Color Racial Identity Model (Helms, 1995), the internalization stage is described as having the "positive commitment to one's own socioracial group, internally defined racial attributes..." (p. 186). In the current study, one of the themes that emerged was how the participants were proud of their racial/ethnic culture. The participants' positive commitment to their identified racial and/or ethnic group was demonstrated through increased contact with those

of their identified racial and/or ethnic groups, speaking their ethnic language, consuming ethnic foods, and carrying out cultural customs and traditions. According to the People of Color Racial Identity Model (Helms, 1995), the stage of integrative awareness is the “capacity to value one’s own collected identities as well as empathize and collaborate with members of other oppressed groups” (p. 186). Several women in the study described exchanging aspects of their culture with their partner, in addition to sharing the experience of racism as a common factor between themselves and their partner. Participants also reported having an increased acceptance and understanding of their partner’s racial and/or ethnic group, in addition to other minority groups.

Some of the study results may be explained by stage four, introspection, and stage five, integrative awareness of the Racial/Cultural Identity Development in People of Color Model (Sue & Sue, 2003). In the stage of introspection, a person deals with the balance between responsibility to one own’s minority group versus responsibility to their personal independence. In addition, he or she attempts to reach out to other groups in finding what types of oppression they experience. Research participants who have reported struggling with parts of their identity they connected with that were Asian with the parts of their identity they connected that were American may be found in this stage. In the stage of integrative awareness of the R/CID model, a person develops positive sense of self and a sense of pride in the group, without having to accept all of identified group values. In addition, they actively reach out to different minority groups in order to understand their cultural values. This stage would best describe the participants who have said they believe that their identity is unique and special, and for those who have said they have made attempts to learn about their partner’s race and/or ethnicity or even adopt their partner’s cultural practices.

Participant responses may also be explained by the model, Asian American Identity Development (Kim, 2001). Study participants provided responses that would be locate them in stage four, named redirection to an Asian American consciousness, or stage five entitled incorporation. In stage four, individuals are involved in the Asian American community and are involved in the Asian American experience. They have a positive self-concept and identify as Asian American, even expressing pride to be an Asian American, which was expressed by several of the study participants. Their primary reference group is other Asian Americans.

In the stage five, individuals are found in the general community, have a clear and firm Asian American identity, and have a positive self-concept as an individual person. They think of themselves as a whole person with race as only a part of their identity. This stage would best describe those participants who reported that being in an interracial relationship helped them gain self-acceptance. Though participants reported varying degrees of identification with their racial/and or ethnic group, it is clear that their responses would locate themselves in one of these last two stages of the AAID model.

Study participants appeared to be located within advanced stages of all three models—the People of Color Racial Identity Model (Helms, 1995), Racial/Cultural Identity Development in People of Color Model (Sue & Sue, 2003), and Asian American Identity Development (Kim, 2001). This is demonstrated by respondents generally having reported they were able to accept and appreciate their own culture, as well as relate to racial/ethnic groups their partners identified with. Several studies have previously suggested that interracial dating or interracial marriage is linked to low ethnic identity (Chow, 2000; Mok, 1999; Yancey, 2002), The findings of this study indicate that interracial dating or interracial marriage may not be linked to low ethnic identity, but rather high racial and/or ethnic identity.

While some of the findings from this research study may be explained by various individual racial development models, some findings may also be explained by interracial relationship development model. Most of the study participants appeared to be located within the stage four, or the maintenance stage, of Foeman and Nance's model of interracial relationship development (1999). It is clear that the study participants had already a high level of awareness of their own racial identity development that they were able to discuss positive and negative aspects of their identity with an intimate partner. Many of the women also gave examples of how they coped with social definitions of race in the past. For example, some of the women said they use the phrase "They're ignorant," in response to racist comments about their interracial relationships. Additionally, the maintenance stage includes the couple feeling "energized to share their views" (Foeman & Nance, 1999, p. 552). The current research study provided participants the opportunity to talk about their views and these issues.

The results of this study are similar to the results of prior research also looking at how interracial dating affects racial and/or ethnic identities of women. Ahnallen & Suyemoto (2011) conducted a study that looked at how interracial dating relationships influenced the racial and/or ethnic identities of both Asian American women and White European men. The study found that for Asian American women, interracial dating relationships increased exploration and appreciation of Asian American heritage, enabled them to be more open to other perspectives and connections, and increased comfort in speaking out. Participants in this current study also reported having an appreciation of Asian American heritage. They also endorsed being more open to and accepting of other racial and ethnic groups. Though most participants did not report an increased comfort in speaking out, two participants (Participant Three and Participant Eight) did describe how their partners were able to help them more easily voice their opinions.

Strengths and Limitations

The conducted research has some strengths and limitations. One of the greatest strengths of the study is the ethnic diversity of the research participants. Prior studies that examined interracial relationships primarily consisted of Chinese and Japanese participants. The current study had participants whose ethnicities originated from East Asia (China, Japan, and Taiwan), Southeast Asia (Laos and Cambodia), and South Asia (Bangladesh). However, the diversity of the study population presents a limitation as well. Because one or two participants were recruited from each ethnic group, it is difficult to discern findings that were due to ethnic differences.

Another limitation of the study is some aspects of the recruitment process. Although the participants in the study were ethnically diverse, they were not diverse in age, education level, or socioeconomic background. The two participants who reported their income was less than \$25,000 are currently graduate students. Some participants described a shift in racial identity in conjunction with education or career development. Recruiting participants in different age brackets or education level may yield different study results. Participants were primarily recruited from snowballing techniques and advertisements posted on the internet, which may have accounted for the homogeneity in age and education of the participants.

Reliability, or the replicability of the research study, may have been compromised. Some of the interviews were conducted over the phone, and some of the interviews were conducted in public places, such as coffee shops, where confidentiality may be compromised. The difference in interview settings may or may not have had an impact on participant responses.

Lastly, this research study sought to recruit 12 to 15 women to participate in the study. Ultimately, nine participants were recruited, which may impact the identification of disconfirming responses. The study also sought to recruit Asian American women who were in

interracial relationships with Native American men. None were recruited, which is not necessarily surprising as research in general related to Native Americans is scarce.

Clinical Implications

The current findings reinforce the significance of clinicians' consideration of the client's context when providing therapeutic services. It is important to acknowledge and recognize how much and in which ways an individual is connected to their racial and/or ethnic identity, which may be impacted by whether or not they are in an interracial relationship. Making such cultural considerations meets the National Association of Social Workers' commitment to cultural competence and social diversity.

The results of the study also have implications specifically for couple's therapy. Participants mentioned multiple stressors from being in an interracial relationship with a Black or Latino man. Some of the concerns raised included difficulty communicating, experiencing negative family reactions, negotiating cultural differences, confronting racism, and issues specifically related to raising mixed race children. All of these issues may put a significant strain on relationships, and relationships may benefit addressing these issues with couple's counseling or therapy.

The results of this study point to the importance of couple's therapists taking into consideration racial identity development in the context of interracial relationships to help better understand their clients. It is important to note that couples' therapists should also be aware of their own racial/ethnic identity, their attitudes about people belonging to a racial group different than their own, and their attitudes about interracial relationships. This would aid in preventing bias, which would lead to interference of therapy. It would also be important for couples'

therapists to prevent overemphasizing and denying race as an issue in order best serve their clients.

Future Research Directions

The results of this research study suggest the significance in considering the influences of relationships when thinking about racial/ethnic identity development. It would be interesting to further investigate race/ethnic identity while taking into account the intersectionality of other sociocultural factors, such as gender or sexual orientation. Future studies may want to examine the influence of interracial relationships with women of color on Asian American men or the influence of interracial relationships with women of color on Asian American women. Lastly, the findings of the current study and previous studies (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Hill & Thomas, 2000) examined the ways in which interracial relationships influence race and/or ethnic identity.

Conclusion

This current research study sought to answer the question of how interracial relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American men influence the race and/or ethnic identity of Asian American women. Generally, study participants reported experiencing positive impacts from being in an interracial relationship with Black or Latino men. First, Asian American women were more accepting of their own racial/ethnic identity. Second, Asian American women experienced an increased understanding in their identified racial/ethnic group. Third, Asian American women also gained greater understanding and acceptance of members of other minority racial/ethnic groups as a result of their relationships. These findings suggest that Asian American women who are in interracial relationships with Black or Latino men are located within the latter stages of racial identity development models, indicating high racial/ethnic identity.

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Appendix A

HSR Approval Letter



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

March 14, 2012

Malyna Kettavong

Dear Malyna,

Very nice job and I thank you for making the requested changes. Your project is now officially approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Best of luck with your project!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David L. Burton'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

David L. Burton, M.S.W., Ph.D.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Victoria Winbush, Research Advisor

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Dear Study Participant,

My name is Malyna Kettavong. I am a master's student at Smith College School for Social Work and I am conducting a research study in which the purpose is to explore the connection between race and/or ethnic identity and Asian American women who are currently in interracial relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American men. The lack of literature on cross-racial relationships between groups of color suggests a gap in knowledge of this topic. The data from this study will be used for the MSW thesis, and later for possible professional publication, and presentation.

A clearer understanding of this topic may offer assistance in the development of social work practice with Asian American women. Knowledge gained from this research may be used to provide insight of the experiences Asian American women, who are in interracial/interethnic relationships. In addition, data from the study may be used to help further deepen the understanding of racial identity for Asian American women, in the context of this specific social situation.

I am inviting you to share your experience and knowledge about Asian American women's racial and/or ethnic identity as it relates to the experience of engaging in interracial/interethnic relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American men. Individuals who are citizens of the United States, of Asian descent, female, between the ages of 18 and 50, and are currently in an interracial relationship with a man the potential participant has identified as being Black, Latino, or Native American for at least six months have been invited to participate. Individuals with no experience or knowledge about this topic were not invited to participate in nonrandom sample. The ability to be conversant in English (the language used in the interviews) is also a criterion of participation. The research study will consist of 12-15 participants.

You will first be asked some personal data, such as ethnicity, age, marital status, education, socioeconomic status, how long you have been in your current interracial relationship, and the race and ethnicity of your partner. This data will be collected at the beginning of the interview.

During the interview, you will identify ways being in an interracial/interethnic relationship with a Black, Latino, and/or Native American man has influenced how you think of yourself as an Asian American woman (i.e. in which ways they connect with their racial or ethnic identity). You will also identify how the race or ethnicity of your partner has had an impact on your relationship. You will be asked to cite specific situations occurring while you have been with your current partner in which race and/or ethnicity was a salient issue.

Participation in the study will take approximately thirty minutes to one hour. Interviews will take place over the telephone or in public places, with the location chosen by you. All interviews will be audio recorded, and I, if necessary, will take notes, during the interview process. These notes will also become part of the data collected and analyzed. I will transcribe and analyze the collected data.

Minimal risk from participation is anticipated. You may experience distress when reflecting on your racial and/or ethnic identity and/or your experiences with interracial/interethnic dating. You may be uncomfortable expressing your thoughts about this topic to someone you are not familiar with. I will

give you a list of referrals. All identifying information will be held in confidence; however, this may be compromised if in-person interviews are being held in public places.

By participating, you may gain new insight into your identity and your relationships. The information gained from study participation will help me and perhaps others understand Asian American racial and ethnic identity in the context of cross-racial relationships with Black, Latino, or Native American care.

You will be compensated with a \$10 grocery gift card for your study participation. You will be receive the gift card even if you withdraw or fail to complete the participation of the study.

These interviews will be audio recorded. Confidentiality may be limited if interviews are taken in public locations. Research advisors will have access to the data after identifying information has been removed. Audio recordings will be reviewed only by me, and I will be the sole transcriber of the interviews. Information from the interviews used in professional publications or presentations will be presented in the aggregate without reference to identifying information, and your identifying information will be disguised if illustrative vignettes and quotes are used.

Audio recordings and transcriptions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, and signed informed consent forms will be stored in a separate locked location from the data. Audio recordings, transcriptions, and consent forms will be kept secure for a period of three years as stipulated by federal guideline after which time they can be destroyed or continued to be maintained securely.

Voluntary Nature of Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any question. You may also withdraw from the study up to two weeks after this consent form has been signed, should you wish to do so, by informing me in writing or verbally. Should you withdraw, I will immediately destroy all materials related to the withdrawing participant. Should you have any concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the study, please call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Signature of Participant _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Contact:
Malyna Kettavong

Appendix C

Demographic Survey

1. How old are you?
2. What is your ethnicity? _____
3. What is your country of origin?
4. [If not born in the U.S.] How long have you lived in the United States?
5. What is your current marital status?
 - a. Single, never married
 - b. Married
 - c. Separated
 - d. Divorced
 - e. Widowed
6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - a. Less than high school
 - b. High School/GED
 - c. Some college
 - d. 2-year degree (i.e. Associates)
 - e. 4-year degree (BA, BS)
 - f. Master's
 - g. Doctoral
 - h. Professional Degree (MD, JD)
7. What is your annual income?
 - a. Less Than \$25,000
 - b. \$25,001 to \$35,000
 - c. \$35,001 to \$50,000
 - d. \$50,001 to \$75,000
 - e. \$75,001 to \$100,000
 - f. \$100,001 to \$150,000
 - g. \$150,001+

8. How long have you been with your partner? _____

9. What is your partner's race?

- a. Asian or Pacific Islander
- b. Black
- c. Native American
- d. White, Hispanic
- e. White, non-Hispanic

10. What is your partner's ethnicity? _____

Appendix D

Interview Guide

I will be asking you various questions about your race and/or ethnicity, your partner's race and/or ethnicity, and how race/ethnicity has an impact on your relationship. Race is a term that categorizes individuals or groups based on physical characteristics, such as skin color. Ethnicity is a term that categorizes individuals or groups based on cultural heritage such as customs, language, religions, and so on.

1. What does being Asian American and/or [ethnicity listed on the demographic survey] mean to you?
2. How would you describe your current connection to your identified racial/ethnic group?
3. Has being in an interracial/interethnic relationship with a [Black or Latino or Native American] man affected what it means to you to be an Asian American and/or [ethnicity]? If so, how?
4. What does your partner's race or ethnicity mean to you?
5. What does your partner's race/ethnicity mean to your relationship?
6. Has the fact that you and your partner are of different races or ethnic groups had an impact on your relationship? If so, how?
7. Is there a specific situation that has occurred during the time you have been with your current partner in which race/ethnicity was relevant, or you became more aware of your own race/ethnicity?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share with me, as it relates how you perceive yourself as an Asian American person, [ethnicity] person, your relationship, or your partner's race and/or ethnicity?

Appendix E

List of Referral Sources

Should you need to speak to a therapist or counselor after participating in this study, please contact:

New Haven, CT

Connecticut Children and Family Center
230 Ashmun Street Box 4
New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 772-4228

Connecticut Mental Health Center
34 Park Street
New Haven, CT 06519
(203) 974-7300

The Connecticut
205-209 Orange Street
New Haven, CT 06510
(203) 787-2111

Cornell Scott Hill Health Center
State Street Counseling Services
913 State Street
New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 503-3660

Dixwell Newhallville Community Mental Health
Services
660 Winchester Avenue
New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 776-8390

Jewish Family Service of New Haven
1440 Whalley Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515
(203) 389-5599

Outside New Haven, CT

Contact the organization 2-1-1. It is a nationwide service, spearheaded by the United Way, that connects people to community resources in their local area. Dial the numbers 2-1-1 or go to <http://www.211.org> to find general counseling services closest to you.