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AFFECTIVE RESPONSE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND
EUROPEAN AMERICAN STUDENTS TO PORTRAYALS OF
CROSS-RACIAL RELATIONSHIPS ON TELEVISION

by

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ABSTRACT

Race is a potent discourse within the world of pop culture, particularly in television where viewers are witnessing more racial diversity in scripted shows. However, show creators must maintain standards that emphasize distinct social roles among characters in order to appeal to large heterogeneous audiences. These roles tend to be characterizations of racial stereotypes that often lead to biased opinions and inaccurate perceptions of minority groups. Previous studies detail that racial biases in media adversely shape public opinions about African Americans and depress the desire for racial integration. This seems somewhat confounding since the shift in programming towards racial diversity presumes increased affirmation, importance, and validity of African Americans and other minority groups. This study investigates the affective response of Black and White college students to cross-race relationships on TV and the perceived realism of these media depictions. Since these relationship forms are now becoming part of television's pop culture, and pop culture reflects co-existing attitudes and values in society, it is important that they be examined. Additionally, examining cross-racial relationships may serve as a proxy for understanding larger race relations in the United States.

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CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Statement of Problem

Race is a potent discourse within the world of pop culture (Esposito, 2011), particularly

in television where viewers are witnessing more racial diversity among scripted shows (Mastro

& Troop, 2004). Broadcasters are seemingly making an effort to include casts of various racial

mixtures. Increased frequency of minority portrayals and cross-racial relationships (Mastro &

Troop, 2004; Weigel, Kim, & Frost, 1995) suggest that interracial relationships have become

part of television's pop culture.

However, creators of television shows must maintain standards that emphasize distinct

social roles among characters (Head, McGregor, & Span. 2001) in order to appeal to large

heterogeneous audiences (Gans, 1999). Researchers argue that these roles tend to be

characterizations of racial stereotypes, often leading to biased opinions and inaccurate

perceptions of minority groups (Punyanunt-Carter, 2008; Harwood & Anderson, 2002). Previous

studies detail that racial biases in media adversely shape public opinions about Blacks (Rada &

Wulfemeyer, 2005) and depress the desire for racial integration (Callan, 2005; Lacy, 2004;

Wright, Ellis, and Holloway, 2011; Dixon & Maddox, 2005). This seems somewhat confounding

since the shift in programming towards racial diversity presumes increased affirmation,

importance, and validity of minority groups.

This study investigates the emotional reaction of college students to interracial

relationships on TV. It examines both the student's emotional response to the relationships and

their perceived realism of the televised portrayals. Examining post-exposure affective response of African American and European American students to cross-racial relationships on TV and the perceived realism of the relationship portrayals may provide insight to the extent that these relationship forms are supported. Although previous studies have mentioned the significance of racial characterizations on contemporary television shows, scholars have paid very little detailed attention to depictions of cross-racial relationships. Even fewer have explored the subject in terms of viewer's emotional reaction to these relationship types. This study resolves the omission.

Literature Review

The term race often bears connotations of inherent group inferiority (Pettigrew, 2001) and is often a mediating factor for intergroup relationships (Killen, Stangor, Price, Horn, & Sechrist, 2004). Race has historically been the most flagrant means of dividing American society (Miller & Rotherman-Borus, 1994). As a social construct, it assumes that society imposes socially significant identifiers such as skin pigmentation and hair texture that determine racial categories (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). Categorizing individuals into racially specific groups guarantees predictable social and psychological behaviors for intergroup relations (Canino, 1995). A history of conflict between minority and majority groups (e.g., Postbellum North and South, formal and informal segregation, race riots) has resulted in some degree of prejudice in the United States (Canino, 1995).

Prejudices are attitudes towards a group of people based on factors such as race and ethnicity (Pincus & Ehrlich, 1999). They are often prejudgments made without adequate knowledge of the targeted group and can be either favorable or unfavorable (Ropers & Pence, 1995). Manifestations of prejudice include holding a set of beliefs about a target group, having an emotional reaction towards them, and behaving in certain ways towards them (Jones, 1999).

From a constructionist perspective, race has consequential effects since it shapes the way individuals see themselves and others. Yancey (2007) argues that the alienated position of African Americans in society creates a unique barrier that undermines cross-racial acceptance in the United States. A common source of alienation is informal segregation practiced and maintained by various interest groups and industries across America. For instance, surreptitious segregation remains largely supported by planners, politicians, and private developers who see value in socially homogeneous communities (Wright, Ellis, & Holloway, 2011; Rothwell & Massey, 2009); African Americans are stratified into lower-level positions despite making significant progress in the labor market (Kalev, 2009; Dickerson, 2007; Conley & Yeung, 2005; Smith & Elliot, 2002); and through media where poverty is often depicted as an urban Black condition (Entman & Rojecki, 2000).

Recent studies show that society generally opposes the exploitation of race as a decision-making factor for non-intimate affairs (Killen, Stangor, Price, Horn, & Sechrist, 2004) such as community or labor force segregation. However, race is legitimized as a decision-making factor in the realm of cross-racial romance (2004). Courtship is one of the few areas in society where race-based decisions are generally accepted. To that extent, African Americans

tend to be less easily accepted in the majority culture (Yancey, 2009) and least desired for

dating among other racial groups (2009). A notable exception exists in the realm of college life.

Whereas society in general holds negative attitudes regarding interracial romantic

relationships, Black students hold more favorable attitudes toward them than White students

(Mills, Daly, Longmore, and Kilbride, 1995).

Though the United States is collectively becoming more relaxed in accepting intimate

cross-racial relationships (Rosenfeld, 2010), research shows that a substantial number of

European Americans still reject interracial romance (Squires, 2009), particularly in the case of

Black/White pairings (Yancey, 2009). The negative attitudes are mediated, however, through

exogamous social interactions (Johnson & Jacobson, 2005), including vicarious experiences

through television media (Graves, 1999).

Researchers often explain the socializing effects of media through Cultivation Theory,

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), or as an interactional effect of both. Cultivation theory posits that

repeated exposure to restrictive images influences social judgments and attitudes (Gerbner,

1995). Theorists suggest that long-term exposure to television content has incremental, yet

measurable, effects on how heavy viewers perceive the world. Social Cognitive Theory posits

that human behavior is the result of observational learning (Bandura, 1986) often acquired

through media exposure, consequently skewing audience perception of the real world (Howard

& Renfrow, 2003).

Anderson and Meyer (1988) argue that the effects of media can profoundly influence

social change. By drawing upon Weber's theory of social action, the researchers hint at a

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probable effect of racial bias on programming content and how prejudices become embedded

in media. Very briefly, Weber (1958) sees society as a product of human activity rather than

behavior being largely influenced by society. A cursory review of Anderson and Meyer's (1988)

work shows that social action occurs from *meanings*. Meanings are constructed from activity

within the creative development process rather than being delivered in it (1988). Meanings

arise from the creator's intent, the manner in which the content is conventionalized

(audio/visual), and how the receiver interprets the content (1988). The creator's intent can be a

manifestation of implicit biases held by the creator. Kang's (2005) research indicates that

individuals have implicit biases in the form of negative stereotypes and prejudices. Implicit

biases are unintentional, negative racial/ethnic-based biases that exist on the unconscious

level. He stresses that these biases have relevant consequences in how people view African

Americans. Supporting evidence shows that racial framing can be triggered by physical

appearances that are comparable to media references (2005). Kang's (2005) findings indicate

that racial schemas developed through media influence both social and visual perceptions

(Kang 2005) from which meanings draw reference.

As previously noted, television *meanings* are the result of interactions between show

creator, content, and receiver. However, the creator is indirectly a receiver as well. And when

the producer becomes the receiver, then his art is mediated through the interactional effect. In

other words, the producer becomes an unwitting agent of television's pop culture in the sense

that he too is being shaped by *meanings*. Since pop culture reflects middle-class attitudes

(Gans, 1999), television imagery and storylines are mere abstractions of co-existing mainstream

values. Anderson and Meyer's (1988) theory suggests that if racial biases exist on television shows it is because they exist in the real world. With that in mind, examining how African Americans are portrayed through media and how they affect and/or are perceived by audience members should be explored.

Many social scientists have examined the relationship between media images and racial attitudes. Dixon's (2008) survey research examined the extent to which network and local television news exposure predict racism against African Americans. The results indicate that local news exposure was not a significant predictor of racial prejudice, stereotype endorsement, or perceptions of African American income. Dixon (2008) explains that the non-significant outcome may be the effect of local news programming that typically focuses on race and crime. Network news exposure, on the other hand, was negatively related to perceptions of African American income, positively related to African American stereotype endorsement, and positively related to modern racism (described as a general emotional hostility toward Blacks and the denial that racial discrimination still exists). Dixon (2008) argued that the results might be the effect of network news propensity to episodically frame Blacks in roles that focus on social problems. In other words, social problems are framed episodically by highlighting the personal experience and circumstance of one individual or family rather than focusing on general trends. This study cites media cultivation as a probable predictor of negative bias toward African Americans.

Punyanunt-Carter's (2008) study utilized a modified version of the Perceived Realism Scale (PRS) and found that viewers perceive the negative personality traits and occupational

roles portrayed by African Americans on TV as being true to life but the low-achieving status

and positive stereotype depictions as unrealistic. No significant difference was found between

the amount of TV watching and the perceptions of African Americans, nor between race and

gender on respondents' perceived realism. Punyanunt-Carter notes that the study's finding is

indicative of cultivation effects (2008). That is, that although heavy media exposure over time

can influence the attitudes and behaviors of viewers, the effect is mediated by variables such as

one's lifestyles or cultural norms (Gerbner, 1995).

Dixon and Maddox (2005) tested the priming effects of African American stereotypes

using video clips featuring Blacks of various skin tones. The study revealed that heavy viewers

are more likely than light viewers to experience emotional discomfort after being exposed to

dark skinned African American perpetrators on the news. Additionally, both the victim and

perpetrator were more memorable when the perpetrator was presented as a dark-skinned

Black male compared to a White male. Dixon and Maddox (2005) explain the results as a

priming effect where mental schemas (information) about Blacks (e.g., stereotypes) that are

linked in memory become activated through group-related stimuli and used for subsequent

judgments about Blacks. The effects of priming are short-term but can lead to chronic

accessibility such that the concepts/schemas become highly accessible from memory (Roskos-

Ewoldsen, D., Roskos-Ewoldsen, B, & Carpentier, 2009). The researchers note (2005) that

factors such as an individual's level of racism can, however, moderate the priming effect.

Mastro and Kopacz (2006) applied self-categorization theory to their research and found

racial identity rather than prejudiced beliefs to be the underlying factor in determining racial

bias to racial characterizations in media. In other words, as the minority portrayal become less similar to White norms, then negative stereotyping among Whites increases. Results revealed that the more culturally deviant African American portrayals in media are from White norms, the more negative evaluations Blacks in society would receive from Whites. To that extent, prototypicality is a better predictor of affective responses to stereotype portrayals in media and significantly factors into the evaluations of African Americans in the real world.

In evaluating affective reactions of African Americans to images of Blacks on TV, Richeson & Pollydore (2002) examined the extent to which stereotypical (i.e., depictions of African Americans in poor demeanor) and counter-stereotypical portrayals of African Americans on situation comedies affect the anxiety levels of African American students at a predominately White college (PWC). The results showed that African Americans felt more anxious when exposed to video clips where White characters interacted with Black characters than African Americans who were exposed to videos with all Blacks characters. Also, counter-stereotypical portrayals of Blacks interacting with Whites induced higher anxiety levels among African Americans when compared to stereotypical portrayals of Blacks interacting with Whites. The findings suggest that students in this study may prefer using impression management strategies that embrace and promote rather than suppress African American cultural norms.

Sociological research is replete with empirical studies using content analysis to examine media portrayals of African Americans. Glascock (2003) sampled one week of primetime shows on newer networks at the time of the study (WB, UPN, and Fox) and found distinctions between African American and European American character depictions. For instance, Blacks were

typically portrayed as being younger, less often as law enforcement officers, having a greater

variety of jobs, more verbally aggressive in comedies, and less verbally and physically aggressive

in dramas than Whites. Blacks and Whites were comparable in job status and employment,

dress, and body weight. One consistency with implications for social learning was the

propensity of the newer networks to segregate African Americans into all-Black comedies.

According to Glascock (2003), this signals to viewers that Blacks and Whites generally do not

interact very often.

Mastro and Greenberg (2000) conducted a similar analysis and found linkage between

social perceptions of African Americans and televised roles where Blacks were considered lazier

and less respected than other social groups. Signorielli's (2009) content analysis research

showed that African American characters in mostly White or racially diverse programs are more

likely to have prestigious jobs than African Americans in mostly Black programs. Other content

analyses (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Mastro & Stern, 2003) reported that African American

presence on television proportionately matched their population numbers in society though

European Americans were over-represented in overall programming. However, television

media misrepresents and over-represents African Americans as criminals and Whites as victims

(Howard & Smith 2007) creating a negative effect on the perception of Blacks in general

(Entman & Rojecki, 2001).

Only a handful of studies exist that have examined racial depictions from an intergroup

relationship perspective. Early work by Weigel, Loomis, and Soja (1980) measured cross-racial

relationships across three dimensions; *interdependence, individuation,* and *cross-gender*

relationships. The research revealed that Black/White relationships were more harmonious and shared more common goals but lacked intimacy, were less multifaceted, shared less decision-making, and less romantic than White/White relationships. The study was replicated 15 years later by Weigel, Kim, and Frost (1995). During this period, intimacy, multifaceted, and romantic involvement remained statistically lower for cross-racial relationships. Differences in common goals, cooperativeness, and shared decision-making, however, were no longer statistically significant. A trajectory drawn from the two studies would show race becoming a weakened factor in structuring interpersonal relations with cross-race relationships maintaining their status as narrowly defined, minimally intimate, and romantically null. Weigel et al's (1995) methodology was slightly modified in Entman and Rojecki's (2000) study of primetime cross-racial relationships, producing similar results. Their research revealed that Black/White relationships are more role-defined than White/White relationships, lacked intimacy, and are predominately found in sitcoms.

Sociological research (Perry, 2007; Doane, 2003) shows that dominant prejudicial beliefs are ingrained in American society where the White experience is considered normal and minorities including African Americans are viewed as different, threatening, or as "the others." And in an environment where prejudice is the norm will likely produce prejudiced individuals. With that in mind, the broadcast industry is both victim and purveyor of racial prejudice. Meaning that show creators are not only conditioned by existing racial ideologies but deliver them in their craft. Research shows that the messages television shows deliver are often racially biased and have real effects on how individuals understand their social world (Dixon, 2008;

Punyanunt-Carter, 2008; Mastro & Kopacz, 2006; Dixon & Maddox, 2005). Racial assumptions are typically formed, often implicitly (Kang, 2005), becoming important contributors to contemporary prejudicial beliefs.

Prejudicial beliefs exist in three forms; cognitive (what people believe to be true), affective (people's emotional reaction), and conative (how people are likely to behave) (Triandis, 1971). A relationship between education and prejudice exists where people with higher levels of education tend to view African Americans and other minority groups more favorably (Bournas, 2005; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Case, Greenley, & Fuchs, 1989). This occurs mainly because more educated individuals tend to rely on both cognitive and affective reasoning (Tan, Fujioka, & Tan, 2000). This suggests that education may mediate an individual's response to video clips of cross-racial relationships.

Researchers have investigated the significance of racial portrayals on television from different angles. Some conducted experiments to draw conclusions regarding the perception of Blacks in society while others approached this area through content analyses. Most of the studies examined racial characterizations while fewer measured individual response to these images. However, I could find no research that investigated how individuals respond to portrayals of cross-racial relationships on TV. The few studies (Entman & Rojecki's, 2000; Weigel et al., 1995; Weigel, et al., 1980) that examined these relationships looked at how they were presented on TV, but not at individual reactions to the imagery. This study resolves that gap by investigating how African Americans and European Americans respond to cross-racial relationships on TV and whether they perceive these depictions to be true-to-life examples of

real world relationships. Since this study examines affective response to cross-racial

relationships on television and their perceived realism of the relationships, findings will have

implications of how in-group members think of and relate to out-group members.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Concepts in Race Theory and the Construction of Racial Attitudes

Since this study examines in-group/out group relationships and the affective response of college students to these relationship forms, this study is guided by theories in sociology that offer explanations about the dynamics of majority-minority group relations, more specifically, explanations of how prejudicial bias and group favoritism are constructed and how they both help individuals form evaluations of members of divergent groups. It is conceivable, indeed quite likely, that prejudicial opinions help shape how we feel about cross-racial relationships.

The sociology of race and ethnicity has developed several perspectives to explain race and ethnic relations in the United States. Theoretical assumptions associated with symbolic interactionist, structural functionalist, social constructionist, conflict, and critical race theory have been used to guide research in this area. Key factors such as race, ethnicity, prejudice and discrimination are contextualized differently within each framework, each having distinct pros and cons for understanding the critical role that inequality plays in how individuals evaluate each other.

Race is the categorization of people into distinct groups based on factors such as ethnicity, culture and physical appearance (Miller & Rotherman-Borus, 1994). As a biological term it signifies genetic similarities specific to a particular group or population of people (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). The biological concept of race emerged from the late 15th and early 16th centuries when European explorers discovered populations of humans with differing

physical characteristic. Characteristics include skin color, hair texture, and stature (1998). The

Europeans concluded that the physical differences were indicators of deviant genetic

phenotype (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998).

Scientific research has since debunked race as being a biological classification applicable

to disparate groups of people (Hall, 1997). Race is now considered a social construct among

contemporary scholars (Miller et al, 1994). Race as a social construct assumes that society

imposes socially significant markers that determine racial categories (Cornell & Hartmann,

1998). This perspective defines race as a group of human beings, defined by itself or others, by

virtue of the physical characteristics of the group. Since race is historically the most blatant

means of dividing American society (Miller et al, 1994), the physical characteristics become

socially significant when society assigns them meaning. The meanings consequently mobilize

individual and collective action that in turn affects society's social structure (Hall, 1997).

Common categories of race include White, Black, and American Indian which serve as

identifiers for distinct groups. The identifiers are socially determined ascriptions imposed

onto individuals that are based on inconsequential qualifiers such as skin pigmentation and

hair texture.

The term race often bears with it connotations of inherent group inferiority (Pettigrew,

2001) and social status. These notions are often a manifestation of post-bellum friction

between Whites and Blacks (McKee, 1993) where many Whites were unwilling to embrace

racial equality (1993). Racism echoed throughout the United States history as a result of the

discord. Racism is described as intergroup conflict where the dominant group exercises power

over the subordinate group (Pincus & Ehrlich, 1999). Within the context of U.S. history, this presumes White superiority over Black Americans.

Similar in concept to race is ethnicity, both of which are categorizations of social groups. Ethnicity goes beyond physical characteristics, however, to include shared attributes such as social customs, behavioral roles, linguistics, values, shared national origins, and rules of social interaction (Canino, 1995). It can be expressed as differences in attitudinal and behavioral patterns across different cultures (1995) that exist as subpopulations within a larger society (Cornell et al., 1998). Ethnic groups claim a common history, a real or assumed common ancestry, a kinship among members, and that discernible symbols capture the group's core identity (1998). Ethnic homogeneity may vary among group members. Situational factors such as population density, ethnic balance, proximity, frequency of contact, and economic and political changes often mediate group association (Canino, 1995).

A fundamental difference between race and ethnicity lies in how the groups are determined. Whereas racial identity is involuntarily imposed onto members of divergent groups, membership into an ethnic group is usually volitional. Scholars purport that ethnicity leans toward inclusion (us) while race is a matter of exclusion (them). Regardless of how the differences are perceived, their coexistence in society and group classification status guarantees predictable social and psychological behaviors between them and the majority culture (Canino, 1995). A history of conflict between minority groups and the majority culture has resulted in prejudice and discrimination that still exists to some degree in the United States (1995).

Prejudices are attitudes towards a group of people based on factors such as race and ethnicity. They are often prejudgments made without adequate knowledge of the targeted group and can be either favorable or unfavorable (Ropers & Pence, 1995). Within the social discourse, prejudice has been contextualized as unfavorable. Discrimination is actions of unequal treatment of people of particular social categories (1995). Both concepts are similar in meaning, but different in social application. Prejudice describes what people feel and think, whereas discrimination is the punitive actions of people and institutions (Pincus et al., 1999), which are motivated by prejudicial viewpoints.

Manifestations include holding a set of beliefs about a target group, having an emotional reaction towards them, and behaving in certain ways towards them (Jones, 1999). Attitudes are based on the degree in which the beliefs, feelings, and motivations about the target group are interrelated (Jones, 1999). If all of the elements (beliefs, feelings, behavior) lean toward the same direction in terms of likes or dislikes, then the attitude is considered balanced (1999). For instance, if every belief, feeling, and motivation of an individual was negative, then the individual would be considered highly prejudiced. When the elements do not line up, then unbalanced attitudes that are less predictive of behavior occur (1999). This may cause uncomfortable encounters with members of the target group.

Racial prejudice is a learned behavior (Jones, 1999). It is one of the primary effects of early childhood socialization (Ropers et al., 1995). It is suggested that individuals develop prejudiced attitudes in childhood and carry a "*racial affect*" with them into adult life (Roth,

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1999). The racial affect can subsequently lead to discrimination against minority groups in society (1999).

Discrimination is the unequal treatment of people from divergent groups and can be acted upon both personal and institutional levels. It is considered personal when individuals use prejudiced presumptions to explain their or someone else's actions. Institutionalized discrimination is the manner in which the prejudices become embedded in society's major institutions. Legal, educational, congressional, and economic institutions are dominating purveyors of racial/ethnic discrimination. Through inclusionary/exclusionary processing, racial prejudice becomes incorporated and perpetuated within the daily operations of these institutions.

Discrimination expressed through majority-based attitudes has served as legal rationale for institutionalized inequality within the history of America. In 1898 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld segregation by ruling that Blacks could be excluded from accommodations in public institutions if separate ones were provided the so-called, "separate but equal" ruling (Ringer & Lawless, 1989). The U.S. Supreme Court overruled that decision 56 years later in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declaring that separate was inherently unequal (1989). That withstanding, informal segregation exists within educational institutions (Hall, 1997), creating a barrier for some minority students to achieve academic success (1997), and in many other social institutions as well.

Congress has also played a functional role in promoting discrimination throughout the founding of the republic. The 1790 *Naturalization Act* granted citizenship through naturalization

to Whites only (Ropers et al., 1995). Additionally, immigration laws of the late 1800s to early 1900s restricted non-White Europeans and Asians from migrating to the United States (1995). Where economic institutions are concerned, African Americans and Hispanics have consistently been more likely than European Americans to be rejected for mortgage loans regardless of income earnings (1995).

Racism has a long history in the United States and continues to be a divisive factor in American society. Major assumptions, ideas, and concepts that underlie the sociological approaches to race and ethnicity have been developed within symbolic interactionist theory, functionalist theory, conflict theory, social constructionist theory, and critical race theory. Each theoretical perspective brings unique insight in understanding how racism is embedded and maintained in the United States, arguably affecting how individuals perceive and judge out-group members.

Symbolic interactionism was borne from a group of sociologists at the University of Chicago's department of sociology. From their perspective, individuals were viewed as conscious beings that are shaped by their social and physical environment (Meltzer, 1995). Symbolic interactionists were interested in how social meanings were created in the daily interaction of divergent groups and individuals (Malešević, 2004). Pioneering theorist, Mead regarded the self as a product of social activity. Through role playing, the self can take the role of any other individual or group but most likely will gravitate toward the generalized other (Meltzer, 1995). Mead identifies the generalized other as the generalized role from which an individual views themselves and are a set of standpoints which are common to a particular

group (1995). Since ethnic identity is based on the commonness of subjective apprehension (Cashmore, 1984) it can be imagined as a construct of the generalized other.

Noted sociologist Herbert Blumer saw prejudice as a reactionary outcome of divergent ethnic/racial groups living together in a heterogeneous society while competing for status (Blumer, Lyman, Vidich, and Lyman, 2000). He surmised that racial prejudice would be most severe if the following three conditions were met: two groups living together as part of a unitary society; assignment of the subordinate group to inferior status with limited social acceptance; and fear from the dominant group that the subordinate group will revolt (2000). Blumer (2000) argued that prejudice functions as a means to preserve the hierarchal position of the dominant group by maintaining society's racial/ethnic status quo. Race prejudice is characterized as a sense of favorable group position that involves a feeling of superiority, privilege, that the subordinate race is intrinsically different and alien, and fear of conspiracy among members of the subordinate race to fight back (2000). In short, Blumer proposed that prejudice operates along the lines of one's sense of group position rather than the individual's feelings of race.

Contrary to prejudice is the concept of solidarity. Early functionalist Emile Durkheim (1984) theorized that organic solidarity emerges when society advances and the division of labor becomes more specialized creating increasing dependency among the members of that society. It is a social bond formed from the interdependence of individuals in more advanced societies. Although values and interests may differ among individuals, the functioning of society is dependent on their reliance of each other to perform specific tasks. Durkheim (1984) argued

that ethnic attachment in society would decline as industrialization increases and the division of labor becomes more complex.

More contemporary theorists (Parsons, 1982) formalized the relationship between modernization and ethnicity. Ethnic group solidarity revolves around four fundamental tenets of structural-functionalism; societies are social systems that share general value patterns; social systems avoid conflict aim towards the state of equilibrium or normality; parts of the system operate interdependently and with specific tasks that contribute to the successful functioning and reproduction of the system as a whole; and the system reorganizes when in crisis in order to maintain equilibrium (Malešević, 2004).

Parsons (1982) relates ethnicity to group solidarity, moral behavior, and the adverse effects of modernization in his system's theory. According to Parsons (Malešević, 2004), ethnicity is expressed as a form of group solidarity where voluntary adherence (loyalty) and transgenerational cultural tradition (normative expectations) serve as the foundation for the group. The ethnic group functions as a moral compass for individual and group behavior (2004). To this extent, group boundaries establish the limits for moral behavior.

Parsons viewed modernization as being deleterious to ethnic identity. He argued that ethnic identities will become absorbed into national identities as mass industrialism increases and solidarity becomes more organic (2004). Ethnic groups will experience de-socialization, meaning that ethnic identity will continue in form alone since its content will adapt to structural requirements of an industrial society (2004). Presuming that modernization is society's natural course, obfuscated group identity and increased cultural homogeneity seems a likely outcome.

This is exemplified in the process of acculturation. Acculturation is the voluntary adoption of the dominant groups ideals by the minority group (Lacy, 2004) thus marking their acceptance into the dominant group. Innate racial identity is often compromised in the process (2004). Acculturation raises arguments concerning racial tolerance and social acceptance particularly since it is considered a manifestation of internalized racialism (Cokely, 2002).

In respect to racism, conflict theory has witnessed the development of two basic Marxist interpretations. They consist of the orthodox Marxist theory and the split labor-market theory. Orthodox Marxists consider racism the result of the manipulation by the capitalist class to divide the working class along racial lines thereby reducing their capacity to fight against the system (Karenga, 2001). This involves the marginalizing of Blacks as inferior workforce members while privileging Whites with better paying jobs (2001). Racism in this sense is actualized as a class struggle rather than as a variable in itself. The struggle between the classes becomes a divisive factor, helping to form prejudicial bias against each group.

The split labor-market theory posits that racial discord occurs in the labor market split along racial lines when businesses encourage worker competition to displace higher paid labor (Malešević, 2004). This proposes that when the labor-market is split with Whites earning higher wages than Blacks, then class animosity will be transformed into race animosity with Whites fighting to neutralize or eliminate occupational competition with Blacks (2004). Although orthodox Marxists view racism as a product of capitalist practices and split labor-market theorists give onus to White workers for racial discrimination, there is a convergence of ideas among both capitalists and workers that is oppressive for Blacks and other minority races.

Social constructionists view race as a social construction rather than a genetic distinction. Human interaction rather than biological phenotype is seen as the source for racial categorization (Howard, 2010). In other words, race is a social construction because as social beings, people constantly interact around race and therefore give race substantive meaning. It is through the social interactions that attitudes, values, and beliefs that often contribute to the formation of racism.

Social constructionists propose that race has been historically used as a means for justifying unequal treatment of minority groups (Machery & Faucher, 2005). It is collectively defined by the dominant group (Pieterse, 1995) and imposed upon society as a demarcation of status. As a divider, it includes or excludes individuals from widespread social constructs (1995). Though it is not tangibly real, race still exists as part of society's collective agreement, acceptance, and impositions. From a constructionist perspective, it has consequential effects since it shapes the way individuals view themselves as well as others.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) looks at the ramifications of White supremacy and the perpetuation of minority group subordination in the United States (Wing, 2002). Theorists examine the rate at which laws to promote racial equality were changing in order to determine whether early civil rights victories were eroding. Human rights is a critical topic in CRT since minorities have historically struggled to gain traction in that area while Whites are accustomed to taking such rights for granted. Critical race theorists reject any notion that color-blindness exists in the legal world. It is the belief that racism has been a central component of the American legal since its founding, with racial progress only occurring when it favors White

elite interests (2002). The consensus among many critical race theorists is that racism

can never be truly extirpated from society and will remain a permanent condition in the

United States (2002).

The aforementioned sociologists attempted to explain race through their respective

theories. However, some discrepancies exist among the various ideas. Symbolic interactionists

rely heavily on human agency but remain negligible in addressing structural constraints in

regards to race relations. Structural functionalists view ethnic relations in terms of solidarity;

however, ethnic conflict which is an inevitable part of social discourse is left unexplained.

Conflict theorists associate racism with class conflict. Still, Black underclass is treated with less

regard than the White underclass though they are both equal in class (Wing, 2002). Social

constructionists propose that social environments explain our concepts of race but it does not

explain how some cultures have conceptualized race based on genetic composition (Machery,

et al., 2005). Lastly, critical race theorists tend to be essentialist (Wing, 2002), meaning that the

experiences of divergent racial/ethnic groups are reduced to the experience of one sub-group.

This presumes that discrimination is generalizable across all racial groups to the same level

or degree. However, different groups face unique conditions or situations where each group

can be targeted for specific acts of discrimination. For instance, the experience of African

Americans may differ from those of other minority groups and should be examined

independent of each other.

Regardless of differences that exist among the various theoretical perspectives or

limitations within each individual framework, all theories underscore the relative importance of

race in forming prejudicial ideas among individuals. To that end, an environment where prejudice ideology is part of the social discourse is likely to produce prejudiced individuals who form implicit (and explicit) biases about others based on those dominant beliefs. This can occur through social learning where agents of socialization transmit values, behavior, and messages to receptive individuals. Socializing agents include institutions, peers, parents, and media. Since broadcast media cultivates and transmit information that is often racially biased (Dixon, 2008; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008; Dixon & Maddox, 2005; Mastro & Kopacz, 2006; Glascock, 2003; Greenberg, Bradley, & Mastro, 2000), it is considered an important socializing agent and have relevant consequences in how African Americans are perceived.

The theories behind racial ideology and how it constructs prejudicial bias is important to the scope of this research. It offers explanations as to why romantic relationships involving European Americans and African Americans might be viewed as disturbing to some. For instance, symbolic interactionists believe that individuals form prejudicial beliefs from their social and physical environment rather than from their feelings regarding race. These environments include places such as colleges and Universities where institutionalized discrimination can occur. Conflict theorists would argue that institutionalized discrimination is borne from a history of class struggles between Blacks and Whites, where prejudicial bias becomes a manifestation of the conflict. As a result, prejudice beliefs become embedded into the social world. These beliefs become oppressive to Blacks, arguably, influencing general perceptions of their social position in society. This may affect how individuals view cross-racial relationships with African Americans.

Though conflict theorists might suggest that class is the root factor that undermines harmonious intergroup relationships, others believe that it is the idea of race and how people respond to that becomes a barrier to social integration. As a social construct, race involuntarily categorizes individuals into specific groups based on the physical characteristics of the individual. The categorization of individuals into racial groups is exclusionary whereby minority group members are considered to be "others" by many members of the majority group. Structural functionalists assert that society favors assimilation intimating that individuals that look and are more culturally similar to the majority group gain greater acceptance from that group. It is likely that distinct racial disparities between Blacks and Whites create a barrier for many Blacks to assimilate into White culture. As a result, varying degrees of alienation may occur between the two disparate groups. This may affect how individuals from each group emotionally respond to interracial relationships that cross those racial lines. Since this study is an investigation into the emotional response to cross-racial relationships, gaining an understanding of how racial bias becomes embedded into the society is essential for guiding this work.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation research, developed by George Gerbner in the 1960s (Morgan, Shanahan, and Signorielli, 2009), examines the mass media as a socializing agent to determine the degree to which viewing audiences conceptualize the social world based on media articulations. Theorists maintain that extensive exposure to television over time considerably affects the manner in which individuals construct worldviews (Harris, 1994) subsequently influencing their attitudes, judgments, and beliefs. The emphasis is on the cumulative effect of repeated images over time. Cultivation theory posits that heavy television viewers are more likely than lighter viewers to perceive the real world as it exists on TV (Gerbner, 1995). Harris asserts (1994) that prolonged exposure teaches viewers about their world and their role within it.

Previous research suggests that heavy television viewing cultivates and confirms stable conceptions about everyday life (Gerbner, 1995) in regards to TV's pseudo world. And in the often fictitious world of television, minority portrayals are overwhelmingly presented with inaccuracies. For instance, African Americans in media are over-represented as criminals and typically characterized as less professional than their White counterparts (Mastro, 2009). Media cultivation may also support inaccurate perceptions of cultural equivalence that defy actual facts. For example, despite widespread media depictions of African Americans in subordinated roles, primetime programming generally typify African Americans as part of America's middle-class (Mastro, 2009). The misrepresentation leads viewers into believing that African Americans and European Americans are more similar in context and that racial integration is more

prevalent than it actually exists in the real world (Harris, 1994). This perception unjustly raises

real world expectations of African American achievement without addressing systemic

inequalities which provide barriers that undermine success. As a result, African Americans who

do not attain a level of achievement that is consistent with televised portrayals may be

perceived as underachievers.

Theorists emphasize that media cultivation is more likely to operate on the secondary

rather than primary socializing processes (Chesebro & Bertelsen, 1996). Meaning, television

viewing is more likely to affect attitude rather than behavior. To this extent, media's agenda of

defining poverty as an urban Black condition (Larson, 2006) is more likely to create an

erroneous public perception of African Americans on the viewer than it is to elicit any action in

helping to resolve the matter.

Cultivation assumes that media systems function causally to cultural systems and cannot

exist independent of cultural systems (Chesebro & Bertelsen, 1996). In short, television media

cultivates attitudes and values that already exist in society. The broadcasted programs express,

define, and maintain dominant assumptions and expectations of the culture it represents

(Shanahan et al, 1999). The shows are presented, however, as a world within themselves rather

than as a reflection of the real world (Condry, 1989), though real-world values and attitudes

remain intact.

Cultivation theorists describe mainstreaming as the process in which heavy viewing

absorbs (or overrides completely) some of the differences in attitudes and behaviors that are

typically derived from mediating factors (Shanahan and Morgan, 1999) such as race,

socioeconomic status, and gender. The collective attitudes and behaviors of heavy television are considered consequences of media articulations.

The effect of mainstreaming can be conceptualized as gravitational rather than unidirectional. Shanahan and Morgan (1999) note that the angle and direction of the "pull" is dependent on where the group of viewers and their styles of life are in relation to the center of gravity – the "mainstream" world of television. An analysis of attitudes on both racial segregation and minority rights revealed more variation among light viewers than heavy viewers (Gerbner, Morgan, and Signorelli, 1982). The studies suggest that heavy television viewing, demographic factors and an interaction between them can contribute to similarities in attitudes regarding race. However, the more individuals become acculturated into television's fictive world, the less influential mediating factors become on opinions and attitudes.

Mainstreaming as a variable can profoundly influence the cultivation effect. According to researchers (Shanahan, et. al., 1999), mainstreaming is the particular interaction where cultivation is stronger for some subgroups, weaker or absent for other groups, and where heavy viewers' responses are closer than those of light viewers. Cultivation might be stronger among subgroups that would require more of it to get to the social center of issues that marginally affect them (Shanahan & Jones, 1999). To illustrate this point, racial attitudes of European Americans who marry African Americans have been found to often be adjusted based on their spouse's racial identity (Yancey, 2007). For these individuals, racism becomes personalized through first-hand experience thus reducing their acceptance of common beliefs such as individualism and colorblindness (2007). As a result, long-term exposure to television would

make little difference among this group who are already cultivated. In comparison, light-viewing European Americans who marry members of their own race would be less likely to conceptualize racism as a serious problem and would subsequently require more media cultivation to get to the "social center."

In addition to mainstreaming, a secondary process called *resonance* helps to intensify the cultivation effect. Resonance occurs when the relationship between what is viewed on television and the viewer's everyday reality (or perceived reality) is congruently matched (Condry, 1989). Together, mainstreaming and resonance creates a double dose of television messaging which significantly strengthens the cultivation effect.

The extent to which the pattern of responses between light and heavy viewers differ when controlling for other variables is referred to as the "cultivation differential" (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). It reflects the degree to which an attitude appears to be shaped by media exposure. Cultivation differential suggests that since African Americans tend to be portrayed negatively on television (Entman & Rojecki, 2001), heavy viewers, particularly those with less intimate contact with African Americans, are more likely than lighter viewers to have negative views about Blacks.

Cultivation analysts primarily focus on establishing either the generalizability of the cultivation effect and/or understanding the mediating effects of other variables. Researchers typically employs standard survey methodology techniques, using information from public opinion polls of national probability, regional, and convenience samples (Morgan, et al, 2009). Secondary analyses of large-scale national surveys such as the General Social Surveys (GSS) are

conducted when questions regarding viewing data and potential lessons that can be learned

from them are included in the survey (Morgan, et al, 2009). Answers are interpreted as

reflecting either the world of television or that of everyday life. Questions probe the amount of

time respondents view television on an average day (2009) in addition to inquiries regarding

social issues (Shanahan et al, 1999). Answers are then correlated to the amount of television

viewed, other media habits and demographic data such as education, race, sex, and age (1999).

The responses to the inquiries are compared and cultivation hypothesis expects that heavy

television viewers are more likely than light viewers to give television answers.

The tendency of heavy viewers to choose more television answers is interpreted as

evidence that a cultivation effect is present. Statistically, cultivation effect is typically small,

with strengths hovering around .09 indicated by Pearson correlation coefficient (Morgan et al,

2009). However, it is asserted (Morgan et al, 2009; Shanahan et al, 1999; Shanahan et al, 1992),

that slight but steady shifts in the cultivation of common perspectives can profoundly alter the

balance of social decision-making. Though some social scientists dispute media's ability to

influence collective attitudes and opinions, the vast preponderance of media researchers cite

cultivation as the theoretical framework to support their findings.

Cultivation theory posits that extensive exposure to television programming over time

considerably influences the beliefs and attitudes of receptive viewers. Research shows that

television media has consistently focused on negative stereotypes of Blacks that position them

less socially favorable than Whites (Dixon, 2008; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008; Dixon & Maddox,

2005; Mastro & Kopacz, 2006; Glascock, 2003; Greenberg, Bradley, & Mastro, 2000). From this

it can be inferred that heavy television viewers would have stronger reactions to clips of cross-racial relationships involving Blacks and Whites than light viewers.

Media Priming

Priming refers to the activation of certain parts of the brain (nodes) just prior to carrying out tasks or forming judgments. It occurs unconsciously and prepares us to feel and act in certain ways and notice certain things about a related subject or construct. From an operational perspective, the activation of one thought in memory triggers related thoughts, subsequently influencing how individuals evaluate other ideas and concepts. Within the context of this study, thoughts can be activated through media exposure (Berkowitz & Rogers, 1986). Researchers argue (Domke, Shah, & Wackman, 1998; Berkowitz et al, 1986) that media framing of issues can prime viewers into forming opinions concerning the matter. To this end, characterizations and depictions of race in media are often considered activation triggers (Dixon, 2006).

Priming follows a network path of memory where extracts of thoughts, feelings, and prior memories regarding a construct are stored as nodes and interconnected within an associative network in the human mind (Berkowitz et al, 1986). Nodes typically lay dormant until activated by an external stimulus. Once a node in the network becomes active, the entire network gets activated serving as an aid for forming judgments or making decisions.

Priming can operate on affective or cognitive levels. For instance, if given the following series of words, "lawn," "grass," "tree," "bush" and asked to fill in the missing letter in "yar_"

one might suggest "d" to make the word "yard." The word "yard" readily comes to mind since thoughts were primed by similarly-related words. In contrast, the following words, "crochet," "needle," "knitting," "loom" would likely influence the formation of the word "yarn" instead. The ability to add the letter that contextually matches the word is achieved through cognitive processes.

Another example of cognitive priming can be found in crime-related stories in media where stereotype network activation can occur. The activation may assist in forming opinions or ideas about the subject of the story. Studies (Abraham & Appiah, 2006; Dixon, 2006) show that crime reports on TV news involving African Americans prime racial stereotypes of Blacks consequently leading to poor evaluations of African Americans by the viewer. Figure 1 illustrates an associative network formed from what Larson (2006) identifies as system supportive messages and themes (criminal, inferior, poor, etc.) of African American males in media. Activation of the network via exposure to African American crime suspect on TV news may result in negative evaluations of African Americans.

Affective prime, in comparison to cognitive prime, is expected to elicit an emotional response. It is intended to make individuals feel a certain way about a particular subject. For example, individuals who are afraid of snakes are expected to have a high emotional response when primed by exposure to live snakes. On the other hand, individuals with no phobia of snakes would likely register little or no response under the same conditions (Lang, Miller, Kozak, 1983).

The effects of priming are short-term but can lead to chronic accessibility such that the concepts/schemas become highly accessible from memory (Roskos-Ewoldsen, D., Roskos-Ewoldsen, B, & Carpentier, 2009). The effect is dependent on the intensity/frequency and recency of information (Domke et al, 1998), both of which are positively correlated to higher memory accessibility (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2009). That is, the more prominent a concept is featured and communicated through media, the greater is it's accessibility in memory. Chronic accessibility is a relatively important factor in forming judgments and opinions since individuals generally operate along the lines of cognitive misers. Meaning, individuals typically retrieve sufficient information from memory rather than searching memory for all information as criteria for constructing judgment (Shrum, 2009). Although all information might be relevant in forming opinion, the ones that come most effortlessly to mind will be the information that will most likely be used (2009).

For the purpose of this study, priming will be used as a mechanism to incite an emotional response from the participant. The goal here is to elicit a response from exposure to two extremes of relationship dispositions as portrayed on TV. The intensity of the prime is dependent on the availability of relationship portrayals. The dispositions for this experiment range from harmonious to discordant cross-race (Black/White) and same-race (White/White) relationship types. It is expected that relationships presented in a discordant manner will trigger a higher emotional response from the participants than harmonious relationship portrayals.
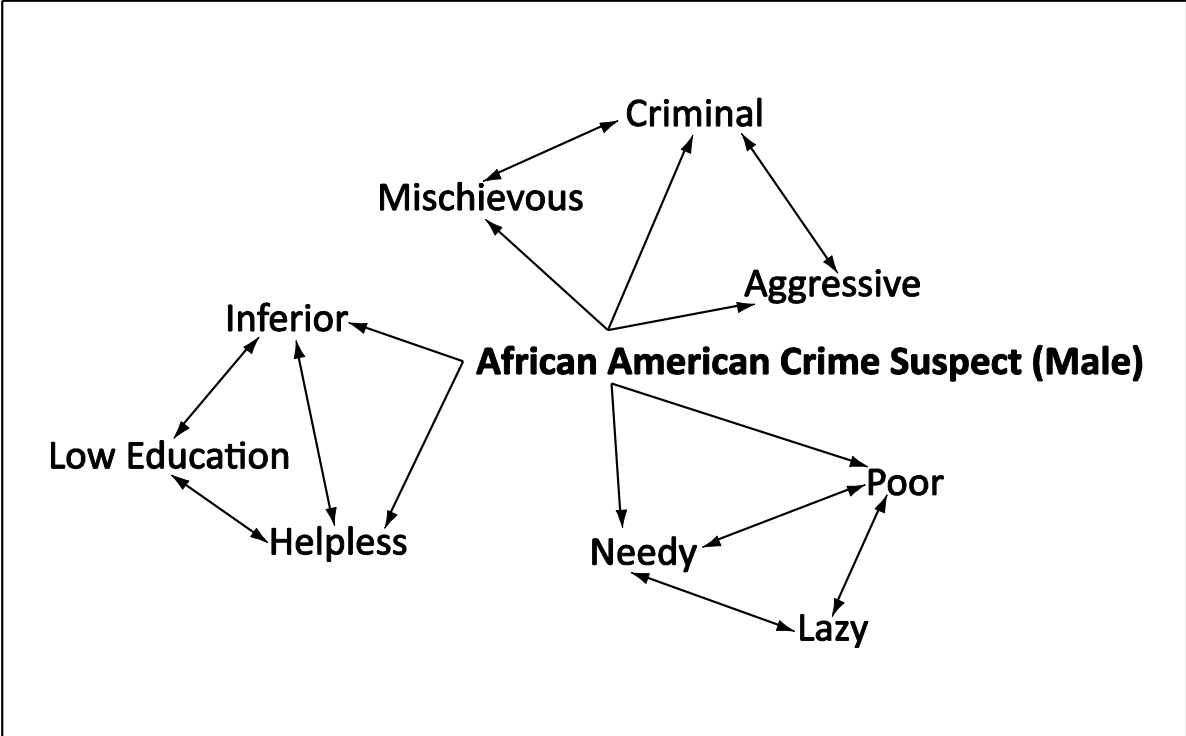
Figure 1. Associative network of mental nodes formed from system supported messages in broadcast media.

CHAPTER THREE: THE STUDY: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This research is adapted from Richeson and Pollydore's (2002) analysis of African American students' response to media images of Blacks cited earlier. In this investigation, the anxiety experience of Black and White students was examined after exposure to brief video segments of popular primetime television shows featuring either Black/White (B/W) or White/White (W/W) character interactions. A secondary analysis was conducted to examine the perceived realism of the portrayals.

The video clips portrayed four combinations of harmonious and discordant relationships between B/W and W/W characters. The following four relationships were examined for their individual effects: 1) Harmonious B/W Relationships, 2) Discordant B/W Relationships, 3) Harmonious W/W Relationships, 4) Discordant W/W Relationships.

Emphasis was placed on relationships between Blacks and Whites and not minorities in general for three specific reasons: 1) Blacks are the most commonly portrayed minority group on television with increasing frequency (Greenberg & Mastro, 2000); 2) racial disparities between Blacks and Whites are especially distinct; and 3) the effects of racism against Blacks remains persistent within the United States (Massey, 2007). Additionally, there was a lack of relationship portrayals on television involving other mixed and same race couples. Surprisingly, this included Black/Black pairings. As a result, other cross-race and same-race relationships could not be examined at this point in time.

Hypothesis

Many social theories suggest that racism continues to be a divisive factor in American society, influencing attitudes and opinions of people of differing groups. Portrayals of African Americans on television are determined by an industry adversely affected by racism. Studies show that stereotypical characterizations of Blacks that position them less favorably than Whites is a pervasive an underlying storytelling theme (Dixon, 2008; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008; Dixon & Maddox, 2005; Mastro & Kopacz, 2006; Glascock, 2003; Greenberg, Bradley, & Mastro, 2000). Other studies detail that racial biases in media adversely influence opinions about Blacks (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005) and the desire for social integration (Callan, 2005; Lacy, 2004; Wright et al., 2011; Dixon & Maddox, 2005). However, these images are becoming more pervasive (Mastro, & Troop, 2004) and may therefore have a positive socializing effect on receptive viewers (Bandura, 1986; Gerbner, 1995). Additionally, Dixon and Maddox (2005) maintain that stereotypes about African Americans are linked in memory and get activated when the perceiver is exposed to images of Blacks (i.e., the priming effect).

Research also shows that a substantial amount of European Americans still reject romantic relationships between European Americans and African Americans (Squires, 2009; Yancey, 2009). And though higher educational levels somewhat reduce prejudicial bias (Sniderman & Piazza, 1993), the effects of racism are durable. Based on these findings, it is predicted that the affective response of the study participants will be influenced by their race,

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the race of the characters involved, and the disposition of the relationship (harmonious or discordant). The following hypotheses have been formulated:

H1:   White participants are expected to experience higher levels of anxiety after exposure to stimulus clip of harmonious Black/White relationship than after exposure to discordant Black/White relationship.

H2:   Black participants are expected to experience higher levels of anxiety after exposure to stimulus clip of discordant Black/White relationship than after exposure to harmonious Black/White relationship.

H3:   White Participants are expected to have higher levels of anxiety than Black participants after exposure to clip of harmonious Black/White relationships.

In addition to testing these hypotheses, this study will also examine the perceived realism of the relationship portrayals, more specifically, how accurately the video clip matched the participant's idea of "real world" relationships. If overall anxiety levels increase after exposure to harmonious cross-race relationships, and there is a positive correlation between perceived realism and the stimulus clip, then the increased anxiety level would indicate that the participants are generally uncomfortable with real-world cross-racial relationships.

Adding this component is important to the study since it may provide insight into real world intergroup relationships. For instance, social desirability bias tends to be an issue in research when inquiring about sensitive topics such as race. This method circumvents asking specific questions about how individuals feel about interracial relationships. By measuring both

emotional response and perceived realism, this method indirectly addresses the race inquiry. With that in mind, the following research question was proposed:

RQ1: To what extent do the relationships in the video clips match viewers perception of relationships as they exist in real life?

Methodology

Participants and Design

Students from the University of Central Florida were recruited for this study. Although convenience sampling often presents a limitation in research, the use of college students provides some opportunity for the following reason. African American students hold more favorable attitudes toward interracial relationships than White students (Mills, et al., 1995). Since this current study compares the affective reaction of both African American and European American students toward mixed-race relationships, using students for this research may provide further insight into differences in how each racial group responds to them.

Announcements and sign-up sheets were used to recruit a set goal of 160 freshman to graduate students who self-identified as either White or Black and who were evenly divided between males and females. Participants from each racial group were to be randomly assigned into subgroups containing 4 sets of 40 students. Since a large effect size requires a minimum of 20 respondents per subgroup, each one was to contain 20 White students (10 males/10 females) and 20 Black students (10 males/10 females).

After the data was collected, frequency analysis reported participation of only 155 students. This shows evidence that some students either failed to respond to the race inquiry during the actual experiment or responded differently than they did on the sign-up sheet. Since the difference between the goal for the number of participants and the number of those that actually participated in the study is small, it is not expected to compromise the results of the experiment.

The subsequent combinations were as follows: 19 White and 20 Black students viewed a harmonious B/W relationship target; 18 White and 19 Black students viewed a discordant B/W relationship target; 21 White and 18 Black students viewed a harmonious W/W relationship target; and 20 White and 20 Black students viewed a discordant W/W relationship target. The total number of participating students was 155. Each member of each subgroup individually viewed the same target portraying one of 4 different relationship scenarios. The study followed a 3-Way Factorial Design (see Table 1): 2 (participant race) x 2 (relationship type: B/W relationship, W/W relationship) x 2 (relationship disposition: harmonious, discordant) factorial design.

Table 1. 3-Way Factorial Design utilizing participant's race, relationship disposition, and relationship type.

	White Participants (Factor A)	Black Participants (Factor A)
W/W Relationship (Factor B)	**N=41**	**N=38**
Harmonious Relationship (Factor C)	n=21	n=18
Discordant Relationship (Factor C)	n=20	n=20
B/W Relationship (Factor B)	**N=37**	**N=39**
Harmonious Relationship (Factor C)	n=19	n=20
Discordant Relationship (Factor C)	n=18	n=19

Stimulus Material

Video clips from popular television dramas were used to create the four scenarios of interest: 1) Harmonious B/W Relationships, 2) Discordant B/W Relationships, 3) Harmonious W/W Relationships, 4) Discordant W/W Relationships. The large majority of shows for this study aired between February 3, 2011 and March 2, 2011 during "sweeps" where network broadcasters try to go for as large an audience as possible (The Nielsen Company). The sweeps period was specifically selected with anticipation that broadcasters would televise a broader range of cross-racial relationships. Since cross-racial relationships occur infrequently on television, the purpose of using this time period was to increase the likelihood that there would be enough relationships to choose from.

The shows for this analysis were captured onto multiple digital video disks (DVD) using three DVD recorders. The machines were programmed to capture shows airing between 8 PM and 11 PM. Each of the three machines was assigned a specific network (ABC, CBS, or NBC) for program recording. Only scripted dramas were used in this study. News programs, sports and reality television shows are excluded since they are assumed to be real and unscripted depictions of actual events. Sitcoms were also excluded since sitcom relationships are often expressed as comical exaggerations of real life situations and therefore less likely to be perceived as being examples of the real world.

A primary concern was the effect that previous exposure to the target or target storyline might have on the affective response of the participant. For instance video familiarity might elicit a response that is based on an understanding of the show's underlying theme and not necessarily connected to the relationship condition. To decrease the likelihood of the occurrence, the selected clips were from television programs that typically scored low on viewer frequency for college age students. Existing data (Kinnally, 2011) that measured program viewership on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never Watch) to 7 (Watch As Often As Possible) was used in the vetting process. Shows where a minimum of 75 percent of viewers indicated "Never Watch" were mainly used in this study. Since the range of shows did not capture all of the relationship conditions, two programs that were not included in the data were also used for testing.

Only sequences depicting both B/W and W/W relationships in either a harmonious or discordant manner with indication that the characters have been, are, or intend to be

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romantically involved were used in this study. A relationship involving current harmonious

involvement was defined as a complete sequence where both characters engaged in verbal or

non-verbal interaction where there is clear evidence that the characters have an attraction

toward each other. The relationship would likely appear to be loving and cooperative. An

example would be discussing plans to marry or expressing a moment of romantic intimacy. A

discordant relationship was defined as a scene with some verbal or non-verbal hostility

between the characters, but evidence of a past or current relationship between them. This

relationship type would likely be argumentative or display verbal or passive aggression. An

example would be arguing over custody of their children or a jealous emotional reaction.

Recent studies (Squires, 2009; Yancey, 2009; Killen, Stangor, Price, Horn, & Sechrist,

2004) show that society in general is overwhelmingly more uncomfortable with Black/White

romantic relationships than with professional or casual relationships. With that understanding,

this study only examines past or current romantic relationships with the anticipation that they

will incite a stronger emotional response from the participants than professional or casual

relationship portrayals.

To increase the likelihood that an effect would occur, each video clip predominately

focused on one specific interaction, lasting the entire duration of the sequence. Narrowing the

focus on the specific interaction without extraneous audio/visual distractions increases the

intensity of the prime increasing the likelihood that an effect will occur. Priming refers to short-

term judgments or behaviors that occur immediately following exposure to media (Roskos-

Ewoldsen, D., Roskos-Ewoldsen, B, & Carpentier, 2009). Since the effect is fast-fading (2009)

and conditional based on the target's intensity (2009), it is important that the participant complete the survey immediately following exposure to the target.

Regarding media priming, though it operates on both cognitive and affective levels, this study chooses to explore affective reactions of priming for one specific reason. That is, people's reaction to interracial relationships seems to be more of an emotional than rational response. For instance, research shows that racialized attitudes towards out-group members are often made without adequate knowledge of the group itself (Ropers & Pence, 1995). This often results with in-group members having an emotional reaction toward members of the targeted group (Jones, 1999), arguably affecting how individuals respond to cross-racial relationships involving Blacks and Whites. As it stands, African Americans are least desired for dating among other racial groups (Yancey, 2009). Since this study examines emotional response of romantic relationships between Blacks and Whites, utilizing an affective rather than cognitive prime is more appropriate within the scope of this investigation.

Pre-test

A pretest was administered to determine the stimulus clips that were used in the main experiment. Properties of twelve preselected video clips were evaluated. The clips were selected intuitively to meet the necessary requirements of each of the four experimental conditions. Three clips representing each condition were examined to measure the degree to which the relationships were considered harmonious or discordant.

The pretest consisted of 14 undergraduate students recruited from the University of Central Florida using announcements and sign-up sheets. Since this study only investigates the affective response of Black and White students, only individuals who self-identified as either Black or White were selected for the pretest. Other racial groups including those who self-identify as multi-cultural were excluded. A total of 8 White and 6 Black students participated.

The pretest was administered in a group testing format where participants responded to their perceptions of the relationship example immediately following each clip. A 7- point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Harmonious) to 7 (Discordant) was used for assessment. The relationship dispositions (whether harmonious or discordant) was not specifically defined for the participants, but rather left to the individual's discretionary interpretation. More specifically, the participants were not told which of the relationships were "supposed" to be harmonious or discordant. Allowing the viewer to determine the relationship disposition reduces the likelihood for bias in the clip selection process. In other words, that they are responding intuitively to their perception of harmonious and discordant relationship types rather than responding based on an assigned relationship type. T-test was employed to determine which target had the highest harmonious and discordant ratings. For each condition, the clip with the strongest rating was used for the main experiment.

Selection of Stimulus Clips for Pretest

The recorded footage was edited to capture relationships that existed across 4 separate experimental conditions; 1) W/W harmonious, 2) B/W harmonious, 3) W/W discordant, 4) B/W discordant. A 7- point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Harmonious) to 7 (Discordant) was used for assessment. T-test analysis was performed to determine which clips were perceived by the participants as being more harmonious or discordant. For each condition, the clip with the strongest mean score was used for the main experiment. Lower scores indicated a more harmonious relationship type, higher scores indicated more discordant (see Table 2).

The choice of the four most appropriate clips was determined from the results obtained from the analysis. Table 2 shows the selected clips from the programs that showed the strongest support for each experimental condition of the main experiment. The clips that satisfied the conditions were collected exclusively from ABC's "*Private Practice*" and NBC's "*Parenthood.*" The clips were coded as follows: "Private Practice 1" for WW Harmonious Relationship; "Private Practice 2" for BW Harmonious Relationship; "Parenthood 4" for WW Discordant Relationship; and "Parenthood 6" for BW Discordant Relationship. Descriptions for each can be found in Figures 2 through 5 respectively.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics in the analysis of the four experimental conditions to determine stimulus clips for the main experiment.

Stimulus Clip (TV Show)	Experimental Condition	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Private Practice 1	**WWH**	2.07	1.21	0.32
Parenthood 1	WWH	2.34	1.74	0.46
The Good Wife	WWH	3.14	0.77	0.21
Private Practice 2	BWH	5.21	0.97	0.26
Private Practice 3	**BWH**	3.36	1.22	0.32
Parenthood 2	BWH	3.57	0.76	0.20
Private Practice 3	WWD	6.29	0.73	0.19
Private Practice 4	WWD	6.43	0.51	0.14
Parenthood 4	**WWD**	6.71	0.61	0.16
Parenthood 5	BWD	6.21	0.58	0.15
Parenthood 6	**BWD**	6.57	0.66	0.17
Parenthood 7	BWD	5.36	0.93	0.25

N=14; WWH = White/White Harmonious, BWH = Black/White Harmonious, WWD = White/White Discordant, and BWD = Black/White Discordant Relationship.

Figure 2. Private Practice 1: WW Harmonious Relationship (M = 2.07, SD = 1.21); Intimate bedroom scene with couple seemingly in their late 30s, verbally expressing affection for each other. The two characters gently embrace each other throughout the scene and the verbal expressions are soft, tender, and affectionate. Sequence duration: 1 min., 48 sec.

Figure 3. Private Practice 2: BW Harmonious Relationship (M = 3.36, SD = 1.22); BM / WF, seemingly early 30s, in an apartment setting discussing a mutual desire to move their relationship towards marriage. The suggestion to wed is initiated by the female with the male fully agreeing to the courtship; sequence duration: 2 min., 8 sec.

Figure 4. Parenthood 4: WW Discordant Relationship (M = 6.71, SD = 0.61); Separated/divorced couple, seemingly mid to late 30s, in a dimly lit room disputing over visitation rights for their children. This scene has reference to male experiencing alcohol addiction. The male wants to see his kids, but the female will not allow that to happen until he can maintain a life of sobriety. The sequence escalates from a frank discussion to a loud argument between the two with the female becoming more emotionally charged than the male; The scene ends with the man leaving the room with the door slamming followed by a close up of the female negotiating her feelings in silence. sequence duration: 1 min., 48 sec.

Figure 5. Parenthood 6: BW Discordant Relationship (M = 6.57, SD = 0.66); BM / WF, appearing to be late teens in an apartment setting. Male interrupts girlfriend in the middle of planning an afternoon together to announce the break-up of their relationship. Female is emotionally distraught over the male's decision to end the relationship but does not spend much energy trying to understand why the decision was made. They both leave the apartment together with the door slamming at the end of the sequence. Action takes place in a small apartment setting; sequence duration: 4 min., 52 sec.

Main Experiment

Each participant was brought into a screening room and told, "This research examines people's perceptions of network primetime television shows. Since the internet has created a gateway for alternative media programming, it is increasingly becoming the choice for selective viewing. Since this is the case, we would like to know what people think about some of the shows on network TV. All responses to the questionnaire will remain confidential." The participants were then told that they would view a brief clip from a popular network television show followed by a questionnaire in which they would describe how they felt about the clip. Each clip will represent one of the following four experimental conditions: BW harmonious, WW harmonious, BW discordant, and WW discordant.

Participants were then given the State Anxiety Inventory (SAI) section of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) (Spielberger, Gorusch, & Lushene, 1970) to complete immediately after viewing the clip. The SAI is an instrument that quantifies anxiety levels in adults. It is a 20 question response assessing how an individual feels at the current moment, reflecting situational factors that may influence anxiety levels. The responses are measured using 4-point Likert scales. SAI scores range from 20 to 80 with higher values indicating greater levels of anxiety. The SAI section of the STAI has a test-retest reliability of .54 (Spielberger & Luschene, 1970). Barnes, Harp, and Jung (2002) note that internal consistency reliability for SAI is relatively stable and generally satisfactory for a broad range of studies.

Perceived Realism

Immediately following the SAI, participants completed additional questions for the

perceived realism component of this study. The goal of this secondary analysis is to evaluate

whether the target matched the participant's perception of real world cross-race relationships.

To analyze this portion of the research, a modified version of the Perceived Realism Scale (PRS)

PRS was created for this study. The PRS is the most widely used instrument for evaluating

perceived realism on TV. Many studies involving cultivation theory (the expectation that

media exposure is linked to how individuals view their social world) use perceived realism

 as a variable. The instrument was slightly modified to specifically analyze the conditions

of this experiment.

PRS uses a 5-point Likert scale and five inquiries to evaluate how real television content

is perceived to be. Within the context of this study, perceived realism is suggested to be a

mediating factor for the participant's response to the main experiment. In other words, how

they affectively respond to the stimulus clip is correlated to how similar they believe the

relationship portrayal is to real-life relationships. The PRS has been used as a reliable measure

for past research studies (Punyanunt-Carter, 2008; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). The students

were debriefed following survey completion.

Main Experiment: Affective Response of Participants

The dependent variable for the main experiment is affective response. This was assessed using the State Anxiety Inventory (SAI). The SAI is a sum of 20 indicator variables, each measured on a 4-point Likert scale, and used to estimate an individual's current state of anxiety (See Appendix B). The level of anxiety is a continuous scale ranging from a value of 20 (low anxiety) to 80 (high anxiety).

The main effects consisted of dichotomous variables for participant's race, the relationship type, and the relationship disposition. The participant's race was determined by how the individual self-identified. It was coded as 1 = "White" and 2 = "Black" for the analysis. Relationship type was determined by whether the interaction was between a White couple or a Black and White pair and coded as 1 = "WW Relationship" and 2 = "BW Relationship." Relationship Disposition was coded as 1 = "Harmonious" and 2 = "Discordant."

After viewing the target, each participant completed the SAI. The responses were then averaged to evaluate each individual's level of anxiety. Higher scores on the SAI indicate higher levels of anxiety. A 3-Way Factorial ANOVA [2 (participant's race) x 2 (relationship type) x 2 (relationship disposition)] was employed to see if there were any significant differences on the means of the conditions involved.

Priming Effect

Priming research shows that affective reactions can be automatically triggered by external stimuli such as exposure to media (Harris, Bargh, & Borwnell, 2009; Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996). To address the priming effect, each of the four experimental conditions was specifically intended to elicit an affective response from the participant that is congruent with the disposition of the relationship viewed. For instance, the discordant relationships between the same race pairings are expected to produce higher levels of anxiety on the SAI than the harmonious ones. Each clip lasted the entire duration of the sequence in order to increase the likelihood that a priming effect would occur.

Secondary Analysis: Perceived Realism

The dependent variable for this portion of the study is the participant's perceived realism of the video sequence. This was assessed using an adaptation of the Perceived Realism Scale (PRS) which the students completed immediately after the SAI. This version of the PRS replaced ambiguous terms in the original survey (i.e., "things") with clearly defined words that explicitly matched the focus of this study. Reducing ambiguity is expected to yield more valid findings. The original version of the PRS can be found in Appendix C. The modified version in this study uses the following inquiries:

1. The video clip presents relationships as they really are in life.

2. The video clip lets me really see how people are attracted to each other.

3. The video clip lets me really see how people in relationships interact with each other.

4. The video clip does not show relationships as they really are.

5. The video clip lets me see what happens in relationships as if I were really there.

Each inquiry was measured using a 5-point Likert scale with the following range: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree some and disagree some, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

Since perceived realism is linked to cultivation effect, the main explanatory variable for perceived realism is TV exposure. Cultivation theory posits that over time, heavy television viewers are more likely than lighter viewers to perceive the world as it exists on television (Gerbner, 1995). This presumes that participants in this study who spend more time watching television will believe the video clip to be a truer representation of real world relationships. To measure television exposure, participants were asked to indicate by numerical value how many hours they spent watching TV during each of four time periods (6 AM to noon, noon to 6 PM, 6 PM to midnight, midnight to 6 AM) for the average weekday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Control variables consisted of sex, race, age, education, video familiarity, and affective response. Sex, race, and affective response used the same data from the interaction analysis. Education is an ordinal variable that measures the participant's educational experience. The measures are (1) Freshman, (2) Sophomore, (3) Junior, (4) Senior, and (5) Graduate. Since previous exposure to the story lines and characters may influence the participant's perception of realism, this study also controlled for familiarity with the video presentation. The measures

were (1) Not Familiar At All, (2) Not Very Familiar, (3) Somewhat Familiar, and (4) Very Familiar.

A nested linear regression was employed to determine whether the variables are related to one

another in the hypothesized fashion.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Affective Response

The first analysis tested African American and European American student's affective response after watching a stimulus clip portraying a White/White or Black/White relationship involvement. Affective response was measured from the State Anxiety Inventory (SAI) section of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory with scores ranging from 20 (low anxiety) to 80 (high anxiety). Main effects variables for this analysis are Race, Relationship Type, and Relationship Disposition. The main experiment followed a 3-Way Factorial Design – 2 (participant race) x 2 (relationship type) x 2 (relationship disposition). The analysis included additional tests for "race x relationship type" and "race x relationship disposition" interactional effects.

Descriptive statistics from Table 3 shows that the mean rating for affective response of European American students (n = 78) is 44.09, (SD = 5.21). For African American students (n = 77, M = 44.00; SD = 5.39). The mean rating for the affective response of all students (N = 155) is 44.05, (SD = 5.28). The SAI inquiry reporting the highest mean rating was "I feel secure" (M = 3.25, SD = .82). "I feel overexcited and rattled" received the lowest (M = 1.24; SD = .61).

3-Way ANOVA was then calculated with the following design: 2 (Race of Participant) x 2 (Relationship Type) x 2 (Relationship Disposition). Table 4 shows that there was no significant main effect for participant's race (F = .01; p = .92), Relationship Type (F = .34; p = .56), or Relationship Disposition (F = .04; p = .83). Additionally, there was no significant interaction effect for Race x Relationship Disposition (F = 1.07; p = .30), Relationship Type x Relationship

Disposition (F = .00; p = .97), and Race x Relationship Type x Relationship Disposition (F= .03; p = .88). In other words, there were no differences in the emotional responses of either Black or White respondents to viewing mixed race (or White/White) relationships that were either harmonious or discordant. None of the predicted effects was observed in the data.

Since Relationship Disposition proved to have no significant effect, hypothesis 1, 2, and 3 are not supported. There was, however, a marginally significant but unexpected Race x Relationship Type (F = 2.81; p = .09) interactional effect. Table 4 shows that White participants had slightly but marginally significantly higher levels of anxiety after viewing WW relationships (M = 44.54; SD = 5.39) than did participants who were African American (M = 43.00; SD=5.20). In comparison, European American participants had lower anxiety levels (M = 43.59; SD = 5.02) after viewing BW relationships than African American participants (M = 44.97; SD = 5.46). In other words, both Whites and Blacks showed higher emotional response when the relationship type (White/White or Black/White) gravitated more toward members of their own race. Since Relationship Type was found to be a marginally effective factor, the variable prompted further analytical investigation.

Reexamination of the stimulus material shows that BW Relationship Types were one-dimensional; meaning that they were presented from only a Black Male / White Female perspective without exploring the reverse (i.e., there were no White male/Black female interactions depicted anywhere in the experiment). This observation suggests that gender could be a plausible mediating factor for affective response, or in other words, that Whites may be more positive (or Blacks more negative) about Black male/White female interactions than

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about White male/Black female interactions.. To elaborate slightly on this idea, a similar 3-Way

ANOVA was estimated replacing Relationship Type with Participant's Sex. The new design

illustrated in Table 5 tested 2 (participant race) x 2 (participant's sex) x 2 (relationship type).

Descriptive statistics from Table 6 show slight shifts in mean ratings and standard deviations

from the first analysis though the mean and standard deviation totals remained consistent.

3-Way ANOVA showed a significant main effect for Participant's Sex (F = 4.44; p < .05).

In general, male participants had higher anxiety levels (M = 44.95; SD = 5.43) than did female

participants (M = 43.15; SD = 5.01). This finding suggests that although gender does not

significantly interact with other variables in producing affective responses, it is a potentially

important main effect. Regardless of the type of the relationship or the race of the people in

the relationship, men exhibited higher anxiety than women when viewing these clips. This is

not the first piece of evidence to suggest that compared to women, men are "relationship-

phobic." But it is certainly an interesting confirmation of this point.

The analysis also showed a marginally significant Race x Relationship Type

(F = 2.83; p = .09) interactional effect suggesting the same thing as the first analysis. That is,

European American participants had slightly higher levels of anxiety after viewing WW

relationships (M = 44.54; SD = 5.39) than did participants who were African American (M =

43.00; SD=5.20). In comparison, European American participants had lower anxiety levels (M =

43.59; SD = 5.02) after viewing BW relationships than African American participants (M = 44.97;

SD = 5.46). Again, both Whites and Blacks showed higher emotional response when the

relationship type (White/White or Black/White) gravitated more toward members of their own

race. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 7.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for variables used in the analysis of Affective Response (Race x Relationship Type x Relationship Disposition).

Race	Relationship Type	Relationship Disposition	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
White	WW Relationship	Harmonious	44.29	4.66	21
		Discordant	44.80	6.19	20
		Total	44.54	5.39	41
	BW Relationship	Harmonious	43.16	5.52	19
		Discordant	44.06	4.56	18
		Total	43.59	5.02	37
	Total	Harmonious	43.75	5.05	40
		Discordant	44.45	5.42	38
		Total	44.09	5.21	78
Black	WW Relationship	Harmonious	43.50	5.83	18
		Discordant	42.55	4.66	20
		Total	43.00	5.20	38
	BW Relationship	Harmonious	45.55	5.20	20
		Discordant	44.37	5.79	19
		Total	44.97	5.46	39
	Total	Harmonious	44.58	5.53	38
		Discordant	43.44	5.26	39
		Total	44.00	5.39	77
Total	WW Relationship	Harmonious	43.92	5.18	39
		Discordant	43.66	5.53	40
		Total	43.80	5.32	79
	BW Relationship	Harmonious	44.38	5.42	39
		Discordant	44.22	5.16	37
		Total	44.30	5.26	76
	Total	Harmonious	44.15	5.27	78
		Discordant	43.94	5.32	77
		Total	44.05	5.28	155

Table 4. 3-Way ANOVA for evaluation of main effects and interactions on Affective Response (Race x Relationship Type x Relationship Disposition).

Variables	Type III Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Race	.26	1	.26	.01	.92
Relationship Type	9.63	1	9.63	.34	.56
Relationship Disposition	1.25	1	1.25	.04	.83
Race * Relationship Type	79.60	1	79.60	2.81	.09
Race * Relationship Disposition	30.33	1	30.33	1.07	.30
Relationship Type * Relationship Disposition	.06	1	.06	.00	.97
Race * Relationship Type * Rel. Disposition	.91	1	.91	.03	.88
Error	4171.78	147	28.38		
Total	304993.00	155			
Corrected Total	4236.68	154			

N=155; ***p<.005; **p<.05

Table 5. 3-Way Factorial Design utilizing participant's race, sex, and relationship type.

	White Participants (Factor A)	Black Participants (Factor A)
Male (Factor B)	**N=37**	**N=40**
B/W Relationship (Factor C)	n=18	n=21
W/W Relationship (Factor C)	n=19	n=19
Female (Factor B)	**N=41**	**N=37**
B/W Relationship (Factor C)	n=19	n=18
W/W Relationship (Factor C)	n=22	n=19

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for variables used in the analysis of Affective Response (Race x Sex x Relationship Disposition).

Race	Participant's Sex	Relationship Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
White	Male	WW Interaction	45.47	6.31	19
		BW Interaction	44.94	5.15	18
		Total	45.22	5.70	37
	Female	WW Interaction	43.73	4.45	22
		BW Interaction	42.32	4.68	19
		Total	43.07	4.56	41
	Total	WW Interaction	44.54	5.39	41
		BW Interaction	43.59	5.02	37
		Total	44.09	5.21	78
Black	Male	WW Interaction	43.00	4.83	19
		BW Interaction	46.24	5.20	21
		Total	44.70	5.22	40
	Female	WW Interaction	43.00	5.68	19
		BW Interaction	43.50	5.52	18
		Total	43.24	5.53	37
	Total	WW Interaction	43.00	5.20	38
		BW Interaction	44.97	5.46	39
		Total	44.00	5.39	77
Total	Male	WW Interaction	44.24	5.68	38
		BW Interaction	45.64	5.15	39
		Total	44.95	5.43	77
	Female	WW Interaction	43.39	5.00	41
		BW Interaction	42.89	5.07	37
		Total	43.15	5.01	78
	Total	WW Interaction	43.80	5.32	79
		BW Interaction	44.30	5.26	76
		Total	44.05	5.28	155

Table 7. 3-Way ANOVA for evaluation of main effects and interactions on Affective Response (Race x Sex x Relationship Type).

Variables	Type III Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Race	1.26	1	1.26	.05	.83
Sex	122.01	1	122.01	4.44	.04**
Relationship Type	7.79	1	7.79	2.83	.60
Race * Sex	6.46	1	6.46	.24	.63
Race * Relationship Type	77.76	1	77.76	2.83	.09
Sex * Relationship Type	31.61	1	31.61	1.15	.29
Race * Sex * Relationship Type	8.31	1	8.31	.30	.58
Error	4036.46	147	27.46		
Total	304993.00	155			
Corrected Total	4296.684	154			

N=155; ***p<.005; **p<.05
Race = Black; Sex = Female

Perceived Realism

This study also sought to examine the extent that the relationships in the video matched

the participant's perception of relationships as they exist in the real world. To determine

whether the video portrayals were believed to be true to life examples of real world

relationships, an analysis using a modified version of the Perceived Realism Scale (PRS) was

utilized. PRS uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 "Strongly Agree" to 5 "Strongly Disagree"). Table 8

shows a PRS mean rating of 2.95, (SD = .54). Since past research suggests that television

exposure affects how heavy viewers perceive the world, television exposure was used as the

main explanatory variable (M = 69.70; SD = 20.12). The analysis controlled for sex, race, age, education, video familiarity, and affective response.

Table 9 outlines results from the nested linear regression analysis indicating that TV exposure has no significant effect on the perceived realism of the video clips (t = -.69; p = .49). Similarly, sex (t = 1.19; p = .24) and age (t = .31; p = .76) have no significant effect on perceived realism. However, race and affective response are significant factors for perceived realism. African Americans tend to believe less that the relationships in the video presentation are as they exist in the real world than European Americans (t=-2.98; p < .005). And participants who felt the clips were "real" exhibited more anxiety when watching them. Participants who did not feel that the clips portrayed real life adequately experienced less anxiety watching them (p < .05).

There were also marginally significant effects for education and video familiarity. Each increase in the level of education decreases the perceived realism of the relationship portrayal by 7% (t = -1.74; p = .08). At the time of this study, 12% of the students were Freshmen, 21% were Sophomores, 36% were Juniors, 25% were Seniors, and 7% were pursuing Graduate degrees. Additionally, participants that are more familiar with the shows in the clip tend to perceive them as being more true-to-life examples of real-world relationships than participants who are less familiar with the content (t = 1.813; p = .07).

Estimates from linear regression reveal that 8% of the variance in perceived realism can be predicted from a nested model of race, sex, age, and education (p < .05). Adding video familiarity does not improve the model fit (p = .08). However, when affective response is

included then 14% of the variance can be predicted with affective response, TV exposure, sex,

race, age, education, and video familiarity collectively (p < .05).

Table 8. Descriptive statistics for variables used in the analysis of Perceived Realism

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Dependent Variable			
Perceived Realism	2.95	.54	155
Explanatory Variable			
TV Exposure	69.70	20.12	155
Control Variables			
Race	1.50	.50	155
Sex	1.50	.50	155
Age	4.94	3.56	155
Education	2.92	1.10	155
Video Familiarity	1.51	.87	155
Affective Response	44.00	5.37	155

Sex = Female; Race = Black

Table 9. Coefficients from Linear Regression of Perceived Realism

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Explanatory Variable				
TV Exposure	.00	.00	.00	.00
	(-.04)	(.08)	(.06)	(.06)
Control Variables				
Race		-.27***	-.28***	-.27***
		(-.25)	(-.25)	(-.25)
Sex		.10	.07	.10
		(.09)	(.07)	(.09)
Age		.01	.01	.00
		(.08)	(.05)	(.03)
Education		-.08	-.07	-.07
		(-.15)	(-.13)	(-.15)
Video Familiarity			.09	.09
			(.14)	(.15)
Affective Response				.10**
				(.19)
Intercept	3.02***	3.13***	3.13***	2.29***
F-statistic	.21***	2.74	2.83	3.37
Degrees of Freedom	1	5	6	7
Change in F-statistic		3.37*	3.09	6.04*
R-square	.00	.08	.10	.14

N=157; ***p<.005; **p<.05
Race=Black; Sex=Female
Coefficients in parenthesis represent standardized scores.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Discussion

This study is premised on the understanding that racial inequalities existing in society reproduce and become mainstreamed through broadcast media. This then becomes a catalyst in the formation of prejudicial and implicit biases. Many of the biases adversely affect evaluations of African Americans. The goal of this investigation was to examine the extent that African American and European students are emotionally affected by viewing cross-racial relationships as they are presented on popular primetime TV shows, and whether they believe them to be true to life examples of real world relationships. While our respondents seemed to feel that the clips were "real" enough, watching them only produced middling levels of anxiety.

It was hypothesized that the collective interaction of the participant's race, the race of the characters portrayed, and the temperament of the relationship would incite a response from the participant that was primed by the relationship disposition. The effect, however, was limited since the relationship disposition proved to be an overall inconsequential factor. Also, this study examined the perceived realism of the stimulus clips. Past studies suggested a positive relationship between TV exposure and the perceived realism of the relationship portrayal based on cultivation theory. However, this analysis indicated that there was no significant effect for TV exposure though there were for race and affective response.

Though race was hypothesized to be a significant interactional factor for affective response, it turned out to be marginally significant at most. An unexpected finding, however,

was the relative significance of gender. The data analysis showed that gender was a significant predictor for affective response. Regardless of race, males reported higher levels of anxiety than did females (see Table 10). A plausible explanation for this outcome can be explained by gender differences in opposite sex relationships.

Existing relationship studies stress that women tend to be more commitment-minded than men in romantic relationships (Balswick, 1988, Pellegrini, 1978). Additionally, women are typically more likely than men to express vulnerable emotions such as love (Grossman & Wood, 1993; Sprecher & Sedikides, 1993). The "relationship-phobia" exhibited by men may influence the manner in which the male participants in this study respond to the SAI. For instance, if males are less willing to commit to romantic relationships than females, then they very well may be made more anxious by viewing clips of relationships than females would be. Also, if males are less likely to express vulnerable to express vulnerable emotions, then they may also react more uncomfortably by watching the relationship portrayals.

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics for the Participant's Race and Gender for Affective Response

Participant's Race/Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
White Male	43.22	5.70	37
Black Male	42.37	5.58	40
White Female	41.07	4.56	41
Black Female	41.42	5.58	37

N=155

Even though Gender was a significant main variable in affective response, Race should not be overlooked since it showed marginal significance as an interactional factor. As an interactional effect, Race did become marginally significant when paired with Relationship Type. Relationship Type as a variable looked at the cross-race/same race pairing of the characters involved. This suggests that the intersection of Gender and Race should be investigated in more detail.

As noted in the analysis, the stimulus material presented cross-race relationships only from a Black Male / White Female perspective. This arrangement registered marginal significance among the participants. It does not address the question, however, as to how they would respond if the relationship were reversed where Black Female / White Male was examined. Since gender proved to be a significant main effect, then a reverse race/gender order should also be examined. Future studies should test the interactional effects of White Male / Black Female relationships under the experimental conditions of this study to see the degree of emotional response they create. This would provide further insight into how cross-racial relationships are viewed.

This current study hints in the direction that gender does seem to matter when examining cross-racial relationships. Surprisingly, few studies have examined the extent to which the intersection of race and gender play a role in individual's evaluations of interracial relationships. Although many studies examine these relationships from a general viewpoint, only a few researchers approach it in terms of gender and race. One example can be found in Yancey's (2009) work where he finds that younger males are more willing to date outside of their race. However, Yancey's study and similar studies do not delve deeply into how individuals feel and respond to interracial relationships along gender/racial lines. Most studies investigate interracial relationships rather broadly in terms of in-group/out group member attitudes. The propensity of researchers to over-generalize race shows the limited ways in which gender has been seen to matter in regards to interracial relationships. Future studies that include gender as a factor may provide new insight into how individuals feel about these relationship forms.

Though college students were specifically selected for participation in this research, in retrospect, using that population may have inadvertently influenced affective response. This argument can be supported in several ways, all suggesting that conditions in higher education can conceivably give rise to indifference toward cross-racial relationships.

Research shows that affective rather than cognitive prejudice may have a stronger effect on racial attitudes (Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991). Individuals with higher levels of educational attainment tend to rely on both cognitive and affective reasoning compared to the less educated individuals who predominately use affective reasoning (Tan, Fujioka, & Tan, 2000). The combination of cognitive and affective reasoning typically found in college students

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generally reduces prejudicial bias (Stangor, Sullivan & Ford, 1991), meaning, those with higher education will tend to hold less bias against out-group members compared to other members of society. Arguably, this would affect how they view interracial relationship to the extent that they would likely be more accepting of them. This might have caused the participants to feel somewhat indifferent about the relationships in the experiment to the point where the results would be insignificant.

Additionally, the cognitive/affective effect might have had a stronger effect on racial attitudes than the effect of the prime employed to induce an affective response. In other words, the magnitude of the prime (stimulus clip) may not have been strong enough to elicit a desired response from a sample of people who may already have lower prejudicial bias. To that end, the prime might have been more effective on lesser educated individuals. With the understanding that the priming effect is dependent on the intensity of the external stimulus, future studies might include a measure for the magnitude of the prime. The measure should ensure that the effect is balanced to the extent that each experimental condition has the same degree of intensity.

Indifference among students may also affect how the priming effect is manifested. This can be linked to the school environment itself. Students spend much of their time in social settings that become conduits for intergroup interaction. The social contact of the integrated environment may dispel prejudicial beliefs by verifying to individuals that stereotypes are largely baseless. Studies show that stereotypes help to form negative judgments against African Americans (Kang, 2005; Dixon and Maddox, 2005). Rejecting them can create neutral feelings

about race that may affect the student's emotional response to the stimulus clip. If they are indifferent about the relationship conditions then effect of the prime on the individual may be weaker. This concept falls under the social cognition theoretical framework, particularly within the concept of self-reflection.

Self-reflection is suggested to be essential for assessing one's adequacy in judging a given situation (Bendura, 2009). Humans have the capability to self-reflect in order to verify their thoughts or behavioral actions. Thought verification is conceptualized as existing in the following four modes – enactive, vicarious, social, and logical verification.

Enactive verification is determined by the significance in match between an individual's thought and the action it engenders (2009). Vicarious verification is the process of forming one's own thinking based on the observation of the actions of others (2009). Social verification is the evaluation of the individual's views in comparison to the perspectives of others (2009). For logical verification, the individual uses deductive reasoning based on their knowledge of a given situation to check for inaccuracies or inconsistencies in their thinking (2009). From a theoretical perspective, self-reflection and concept of verification seems reasonably connected to the interactional experience of college life. Since the campus setting is an arena for social contact among disparate groups, it might have had a mediating effect on the student's response to the survey. Additionally, and in regards to cultivation theory, school settings provide a space for intimate intergroup contact mediating the effects of long-term television exposure.

Additionally, secondary structural assimilation which involves impersonal intergroup mingling is more likely to occur among college students (Parillo, 2008). This supports contact hypothesis theory that strongly associates out-group contact with lower inter-group prejudice (2008). Studies indicate that individuals in integrated college settings showed reductions in prejudice when compared to individuals in more segregated settings (Laar, Levin, Sinclair, and Sidanius, 2005). In addition, racially diverse school environments such as colleges and universities tend to promote interracial friendship formation (Joyner & Kao, 2001; Mouw & Entwisle, 2006). The studies show that social contact among college students fosters harmonious intergroup relationships by reducing prejudiced beliefs. This insight might offer further explanation as to why participants in this study did not respond to the stimulus material as predicted. Social contact was overlooked as a measure in this study. The research would have benefitted if we had thought to obtain measures of interracial contacts among our respondents. Future studies should control for this, perhaps by including a variable to measure how racially diverse people consider their circle of friends to be. This may prove to be a revealing factor in examining affective response.

Cultivation theory posits that heavy television viewing influences people's perception of the social world. This study reveals, however, that television exposure was not a significant factor in predicting perceived realism. This seems counter to much of the existing research in this area. However, the research also suggests that cultivation is an interactional effect and is mediated by demographic factors (Shanahan and Morgan, 1999) such as race, socioeconomic status, and gender. To that end, the linear regression revealed that interactional factors such as

race, education, video familiarity, and emotional response to the target were significant predictors to various degrees, with race being the strongest. This is consistent with previous cultivation research suggesting an interactional effect of other mediating variables. Additionally, cultivation effect is said to be typically statistically small (Shanahan, et al, 1999).

Where race is concerned, African Americans in this study were less convinced than European Americans that the relationships in the stimulus clip were true to life examples of real world relationships. It's quite possible that the participants may have felt less connected to the relationship portrayals, thus having a negative effect. Arguably, this may result from the lack of Black/Black representation in the selection of clips and how that was internalized by the sample of African American participants. For instance, within the hierarchy of racial preferences, African Americans are least desired for dating among other racial groups (Squires, 2009; Yancey, 2009). That alienated position may influence them to exert themselves into dating within their own racial group. It is also possible that African Americans are typically more enamored with members of their own race, thereby rejecting interracial romance of out-group members. Whichever situation exists, social isolation may result in failure to perceive Black/White (or White/White) relationships as portrayed on TV as being real. If Black/Black relationship portrayals were presented as an experimental condition then perhaps a point of reference could be drawn by the African American participants. That would serve as a basis for forming opinions of perceived realism.

Because affective response is positively correlated to perceived realism, and Sex as well as the interaction of Race x Relationship type also mediates affective response, the implications

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that this has on the viewer requires attention, simply because producers of television shows are also viewers and affected by the media in which they work (Gans, 1999). This opens the door for discussions concerning the relationship between show content and the creative team behind them can creative teams unwittingly raise viewers anxiety levels based on the gender composition or break-down of the team?

Past studies show that mixed-sex teams of writers are more likely than all male teams to feature male and female characters in interpersonal roles and less likely to feature male and female characters in work roles (Lauzen, Dozier, and Horan, 2008). This accounts for gender but does not control for race. The question here is how does the gender and race mix of the creative team affect storylines of cross-racial relationships? This arrangement prompts investigation since Race x Relationship Type, and Gender operate on Affective Response and Perceived Realism to different degrees. This presumes that cross-racial dynamics in the studio seemingly affects cross-racial storylines on TV. And if these media articulations affect anxiety levels then investigating how they are produced seems like an important next step. Future studies should look at how shows produced by mixed sex/race creative teams affect viewers.

Contribution and Limitations

The primary goal of this study was to examine the affective response of African American and European American students to cross-racial portrayals on television. It was expected that racial attitudes that position Blacks less favorably than Whites would affect how the students respond to the relationship depictions. These racial attitudes are manifested from inequalities that exist in society. Concepts in race theory explain how the inequalities are constructed and embedded in the United States. However, though race is an important factor in how individuals perceive out-group members, the influence of gender cannot be neglected. This study shows that gender plays and functional role in intergroup relations. And though it does, it is often omitted or marginalized in research involving interracial relationships. Instead, these relationships are often studied solely within the parameters of racial categories. The findings of this current work should open a gateway into further investigation of how the intersection of gender and race affect race relations.

Yancey (2007) asserts that examining cross-racial relationships may serve as a proxy for understanding larger race relations in America. Since these relationship forms are now becoming part of television's pop culture, and pop culture reflects co-existing attitudes in society (Gans, 1999), it is important that they be examined. However, very little research exists exploring these relationship types. I could only find three major works (Weigel, Loomis, & Soja's, 1980; Weigel, Kim, & Frost, 1995; Entman & Rojecki, 2001). The previous studies content analyzed cross-racial relationships but did not examine the viewer's response to them. This

study, however, approached that matter by examining the affective response of individuals to televised portrayals of cross-racial relationships. It also addressed whether these media depictions are believed to be accurate reflections of real-world relationships. The results of this study offer insight into how in-group members think of and relate to out-group members.

Though this study attempted to be thorough, limitations did exist. Even though there are increasing frequencies of African-American appearances on primetime network TV, only a few shows currently exist with rosters that feature Blacks as regular cast members. The majority of those shows are offered only on cable. Because of this deficiency, affective responses to Black/Black (BB) relationships could not be tested at this point. As a result, African-American in-group interactions were not used in this study. This limitation presents an additional problem when considering situational context. As a result, the analysis did not compare relationships that exist under similar situations. For instance, the WW discordant relationship differs from that of the BW discordant in that the WW presents a situation where a couple is arguing over visitation rights of their children. The BW discordant, on the other hand, features a relatively younger couple arguing over a break up. Going beyond network shows to include cable selections where BB relationships are more pervasive might be fertile direction for expanding this study.

This limitation does, however, provide some insight into race relations in the United States. For instance, while African American characters are gaining prominence in television shows, interracial relationships between Black and White characters are relatively rare in the scripted storylines. Furthermore, while reviewing the material for clip selection, it was observed

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that while same-race relationships remained intact for the most part, cross-race relationships between Blacks and Whites were less durable. For example, for all the shows under review, only two shows featured interracial couples. One such couple was featured in NBC's *Private Practice* and two were found in ABC's *Parenthood*. Though the couple in *Private Practice* remained romantically involved, both relationships in *Parenthood* ended in break-ups and were very short-lived. In comparison, same-race relationships between Whites that were romantically involved at the time of this study tended to remain intact. Since television's pop culture is said (Gans, 1999) to reflect values that exist in society, this storytelling theme may serve as a testament to previous assertions (Squires, 2009; Yancey, 2009) that romantic relationship between Blacks and Whites are generally rejected by society at large.

On a final note, since Black/White romantic relationships remain contentious for many members in society (Squires, 2009; Yancey, 2009), this study only examined those relationship forms. However, including professional and casual relationship would prove to offer more insight on inter-group relations. However, including them as variables may risk the potential of diluting the effect. Future studies in this area should consider individual examinations of relationships across those other two dimensions.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
            FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Earl S. Mowatt**

Date: **November 18, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 11/18/2011, the IRB approved the following human participant research until 11/17/2012 inclusive:

Type of Review:	UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Project Title:	Affective Response of African American and European American Students to Portrayals of Cross-racial Relationships on Television
Investigator:	Earl S Mowatt
IRB Number:	SBE-11-07989
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at https://iris.research.ucf.edu .

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 11/17/2012, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., CF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 11/18/2011 03:07:05 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

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APPENDIX B: SURVEY

qualtrics.com

Default Question Block

What is your age?

[   ]

What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

What is your race?

○ White

○ Black

What is your class standing

○ Freshman

○ Sophomore

○ Junior

○ Senior

○ Graduate

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then select the appropriate one to indicate how you feel right now, that is, at this moment. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.

	Not at all	Somewhat	Moderately So	Very Much So
1. I feel calm	○	○	○	○
2. I feel secure	○	○	○	○
3. I am tense	○	○	○	○
4. I am regretful	○	○	○	○
5. I feel at ease	○	○	○	○
6. I feel upset	○	○	○	○
7. I am presently worrying over possible misfortunes	○	○	○	○
8. I feel rested	○	○	○	○
9. I feel anxious	○	○	○	○
10. I feel comfortable	○	○	○	○
11. I feel self-confident	○	○	○	○
12. I feel nervous	○	○	○	○
13. I am jittery	○	○	○	○
14. I feel "high-strung"	○	○	○	○
15. I am relaxed	○	○	○	○

16. I feel content	○	○	○	○
17. I am worried	○	○	○	○
18. I feel overexcited and rattled	○	○	○	○
19. I feel joyful	○	○	○	○
20. I feel pleasant	○	○	○	○

Please indicate how many hours of television programming you watch on TV or another electronic device for each time period

	Number of hours watching TV During the average WEEKDAY (Monday - Friday)	Number of hours watching TV During the average SATURDAY	Number of hours watching TV During the average SUNDAY
6 a.m. - noon	0	0	0
Noon - 6 p.m.	0	0	0
6 p.m. to midnight	0	0	0
Midnight to 6 a.m.	0	0	0

Other

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree Some and Disagree Some	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The video clip presents relationships as they really are in life.	○	○	○	○	○
2. The video clip lets me really see how people are attracted to each other.	○	○	○	○	○
3. The video clip lets me really see how people in relationships interact with each other.	○	○	○	○	○
4. The video clip does not show relationships as they really are.	○	○	○	○	○
5. The video clip lets me see what happens in relationships as if I were really there.	○	○	○	○	○

Video Familiarity.

	Not Familiar At All	Not Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar
How familiar were you with the video presentation?	○	○	○	○

Block 1

Please stop at this point and ask facilitator for your survey code before entering your selection. Thank you.

○ Code 1 WW

○ Code 2 BW

Disposition

○ Code 1 Harmonious

○ Code 2 Discordant

APPENDIX C: PERCEIVED REALISM SCALE

Perceived Realism Scale

Directions: Here are some statements people may make about television. For each statement please circle the number that best expresses your own feelings. If you strongly agree with the statement, circle a 5. If you agree, then circle a 4. If you agree some and disagree some, circle 3. If you disagree, circle a 2. If you strongly disagree, circle a 1.

1. Television presents things as they really are in life.

2. If I see something on TV, I can't be sure it really is that way.

3. Television lets me really see how other people live.

4. TV does not show life as it really is.

5. Television lets me see what happens in other places as if I were really there.

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