

Love is Not Colorblind: An Investigation of the Racial Hierarchy of Mate Preferences

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Abstract

Not my type is the usual invocation when rejecting potential lovers who don't align with the racial hierarchy of mating preferences. The largely unchallenged norm of interracial intimacy aversion, particularly how the desire for some racial groups and rejection of others reinforces existing racial inequities, is inconsistent with the blanket notion of greater interracial acceptance. Our investigation assessed the openness of monoracial and multiracial individuals to form interracial romantic relationships. We partially replicated an interracial mate preference known as the *Multiracial Dividend Effect*, finding that most monoracial groups equally preferred same-race lovers and interracially dating multiracials, and they preferred interracially dating someone multiracial over any monoracial group, whereas Multiracials were more open to interracially dating any monoracial group than monoracials were to interracially date each other. In addition, Hispanic-White and East Asian-White multiracials were more open to interracially dating White individuals than their respective monoracial in-group members, and East Asian-White multiracials were more open to interracially dating all monoracial minority groups than monoracial East Asian participants. Finally, half-White multiracials are more likely to be in partial-racial couples (e.g., former President of the United States Barack Obama is Black-White multiracial and the former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, is Black) whereas interminority multiracials are more likely to be in 100% interracial/non-overlapping couples (e.g., Vice President of the United States Kamala Harris is interminority Tamil Indian and Black whereas the Second Gentleman of the United States, Doug Emhoff, is White).

Keywords: intergroup relations, mate preferences, sex and gender, multiracial, interracial

1. Love is Not Colorblind: An Investigation of the Racial Hierarchy of Mate Preferences

Interracial couples are among the greatest examples of America's racial progress and moral evolution since its original sin of slavery. The *Loving v. Virginia* achievement in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1967 finally allowed for the legal recognition of relationships between minorities (i.e., Asian Indians, Blacks, East Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, etc) and Whites.¹ Although minority groups were allowed to marry each other prior to the ruling (for examples, see Filipino-Mexican and Punjabi-Mexican couples, Esguerra, 2013; Black-Native American, Logan, 2011; Chinese-Mexican couples, Acosta, 2014), the *Loving* (1967) decision finally gave White Americans the right to marry American minorities and vice versa.

Today, about 30% of both Asian and Hispanic individuals have a spouse of a different ethnoracial background, with Hispanic-White couples accounting for about 42% of all interracial couples in the United States (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Despite gaining marriage equality, interracial couples still face a myriad of obstacles that monoracial dyads are

¹ Although the United States classifies 'Hispanic' as an ethnic category, about two thirds of Hispanic Americans consider it to be a racial category (Parker et al., 2015). Thus, we adopt an over-arching utilization of the terms multiracial and interracial as inclusive of Hispanic individuals throughout this article.

less likely to endure (Toosi et al., 2012).² Oddly enough, the social and familial hostility that interracial couples are confronted with coexists with polling data suggesting that people are more open to interracial marriage than ever before (Parker et al., 2015). We reasoned that people may provide more detailed self-reports regarding their openness to interracial dating if we specified the racial groups in question.

In the present study, we assessed individuals' preferences for dating people of the following ethn racial groups: Black, East Asian, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, multiracial, South Asian Indian, and White. Several lines of research considering the unique challenges of interracial couples, parental mate selection pressures, online dating behavior, and an interracial mating preference known as the *multiracial dividend effect* are discussed to help frame the expected patterns across the various racial groups (Curington et al., 2015, 2021; Lundquist & Lin, 2015; McGrath et al., 2016).

2. Interracial and Monoracial Couples

Race is a filter used in judgments of individuals' value in the romantic marketplace (Heino et al., 2010; Robinson, 2015). Decades of research has documented the unique challenges interracial couples face compared to monoracial couples. For instance, interracial couples face social network opposition and rejection at a far greater magnitude (Böhm & Shapley, 2013; Lehmler & Agnew, 2006; Lehmler & Konkel, 2012; Luke & Carrington, 2000; Miller et al., 2004; Root, 2001; Skinner & Rae, 2019), their families express greater fear of cultural dilution (Brooks & Ogolsky, 2017; Byrd & Garwick, 2004; Clark-Ibáñez & Felmlee, 2004; Inman et al., 2011; Lee & Bean, 2012; Moran, 2003), interracial couples experience more macrocultural hostility (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Dalmage, 2000; Henriksen & Watts, 1999; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Killian, 2001; Klocker & Tindale, 2019; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004; McNamara et al., 1999; Vaquera & Kao, 2005), and heterosexual interracial couples may be at greater risk for dissolution due to external disapproval (Bratter & King, 2008; Brown et al., 2018; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Indeed, these societal challenges may partially explain research indicating that interracial couples are more likely to live in racially diverse communities (Holloway et al., 2005), expend more executive resources when navigating sensitive conversations consequential to relationship maintenance (Gaines & Agnew, 2003), are more likely to migrate than intraracial couples (Bohm & Shapley, 2013) and may develop/sharpen resilient characteristics, such as scouting intended destinations to ensure the current patrons/inhabitants don't pose a threat (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Lehmler & Konkel, 2012).

Given the greater potential for race to influence interracial couples in comparison to monoracial couples, it is important for interracial couples to have a shared perception of reality when it comes to their narratives of the world regarding the psychological and interpersonal experience of race in their everyday lives (Kanter et al., 2017; Neville et al., 2013). In the absence of a shared perception of reality, individuals within interracial couples may feel an undue burden to verify their experiences of microaggressions and bias to their partners (Kanter et al., 2017), and may feel increasing ambivalence towards a relationship partner with a colorblind ideology (Walker, 2005). Those who have faced invalidations from their partners may be hesitant to mention future racial slights out of a concern that it would only lead to a conflict with someone who has previously failed to appreciate the gravity of such experiences. In doing so, individuals would be sacrificing their self-worth for the sake of preserving their romantic relationship.³

Conversely, research finds that interracial couples who successfully form a multicultural dyadic identity report higher relationship satisfaction and that they may benefit from the potential enrichment afforded by embracing someone different from oneself (Reiter & Gee, 2008; Sasaki & Vorauer, 2013). Moreover, interminority couples are more likely to form as a result of a panethnic dyadic identity borne out of shared experiences of marginalization than are interracial couples where at least one member has White heritage (Vasquez-Tokos, 2017).

2.1 Family (Dis) Approval

The concern and reality of disapproval from one or both parents, not to mention other close family members, often poses an additional challenge for marginalized (interracial and same-sex) couples compared to monoracial heterosexual couples (Lehmler & Agnew, 2006; Miller et al., 2004; Mills et al., 1995; Troy et al., 2006). Interracial and same-sex couples face social pressure and disapproval for different reasons. For example, individuals in an interracial relationship acquire a marginalized status because they differ in their visually salient ethn racial identities, whereas someone in a same-sex relationship faces social pressure because of his or her sexual orientation, an aspect of identity that is less

² "Mexican & Punjabi interminority marriage is especially informative because it shows us how minorities married outside the restrictive boundaries of Black-White miscegenation laws in California" (Maria Esguerra, 2013, p. 12).

³ This would be true in both minority-minority interracial couples and interracial couples in which one individual is White. For example, there is no reason to assume that a Black husband would validate the microaggressions experienced by his Asian wife just because they are both minorities, just as bisexuals report experiencing a significant amount of biphobia from gay/lesbian monosexuals even though they are both sexual minorities (Chang, 2016; Rankin et al., 2015; Roberts et al., 2015; Wu, 2017).

visually salient than ethnoracial identity (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006).⁴

The burden of marginalization due to an internal factor, such as one's sexuality, cannot be easily lifted by merely dissolving the relationship since the social pressure is aimed at an aspect of the individual (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006). On the other hand, the burden of marginalization due to an external factor, such as a difference in the race of one's partner, can be immediately remedied by ending the relationship. This means that those who face marginalization due to an external factor, such as an interracial romantic relationship, are *choosing* to endure social pressure in order to stay with their partner. This marginalization has been shown to reduce levels of investment in a marginalized relationship (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006; Troy et al., 2006).

Interestingly, research on the *Romeo and Juliet Effect*, the notion that individuals will become more committed to their romantic relationships in the face of familial disapproval, suggests that these couples are more committed to their relationships than are non-marginalized couples (Driscoll et al., 1972). Though recent research suggests the Romeo and Juliet Effect may not be as robust for heterosexual couples as previously believed (Driscoll et al., 2014; Sinclair et al., 2014), the *Juliet and Juliet* and *Romeo and Romeo* effects are quite robust and have been demonstrated in the emotional and geographic resilience lesbian/gay couples display when confronted with familial disapproval (Balsam et al., 2008; Herek, 2002; Mohr & Fassinger, 2003; Reczek, 2016). Lesbian/gay couples who face familial disapproval and rejection upon coming out and disclosing their same-sex relationships respond by privileging "*their gay or lesbian relationship over the parent-child tie, enhancing intimate relationship quality*" (Reczek, 2016), they reduce interaction with parents and relocate to create geographic distance from them, they place more resilient boundaries around their relationship (Rostosky et al., 2004), and some lesbian couples don't seem to care about their parents' disapproval at all (Green et al., 1996).⁵ This may be because most lesbian/gay individuals don't share their sexual orientation with their parents (most lesbian/gay individuals are the offspring of parents in an opposite-sex relationship), but all individuals in same-sex relationships share their non-heterosexual identity with their lover.⁶ Conversely, all monoracial individuals in interracial romances with another monoracial person share their racial compositions with their biological parents, but don't share it with their lovers.

Taken together, parents will likely have far more influence over the outcomes of an interracial relationship consisting of two monoracial lovers who share more visually salient characteristics with their parents than with their significant other, than they will over the outcomes of two lesbian/gay lovers who share more with their significant other on a core mate preference characteristic than they do with their parents.

3. Parental Sociosexual Selection Pressure

3.1 Biological Sex

A greater proportion of sexual selection pressures have been *female-dependent*, whether unfolding under the theoretical framework of female choice (e.g., males often attempt to impress and win over females more than females attempt to initiate the courtship process; Buss, 2016; Darwin, 1872; Miller, 2010), or parental pressure and in-law preferences (e.g., historically, parents have controlled their daughters' mating outcomes more than their sons'; Apostolou, 2012; Buss, 2016; Buunk, 2015; Perilloux et al., 2008; Shadle, 2003). It is evident that parental sexual selection pressures weigh heavier on daughters than they do on sons.

We contend that parental selection pressures are particularly consequential in the context of interracial couples, as a daughter's parents may dissuade the formation of an interracial relationship, question its value, or encourage its dissolution (either by suggestion, force, or coercion). Support for this notion stems from research finding that White women in interracial romances experience more familial disapproval than men (Miller et al., 2004), White straight women hold more negative attitudes towards interracial relationships than do straight men (Buunk et al., 2012; Lundquist & Lin, 2015; Mills et al., 1995), particularly towards Asian partners (Robbnett & Feliciano, 2011) and Black

⁴ It is important to note that race is considered an external factor in the sense that it refers to the difference in the outer appearances of two individuals involved in an interracial relationship and the stigma that comes with it, despite the fact that their attraction to one another may have internal influences.

⁵ Please note that the specificity with which we discuss lesbian/gay individuals here is intentional, as bisexual individuals do not have a natural preference. Thus, parents of bisexual individuals could express how much they accept their children's sexuality while simultaneously expressing their desire that they choose to marry someone of the opposite sex.

⁶ Even though research on the intergenerational transfer of sexuality indicates that the offspring of lesbians and gay men are more likely to be non-heterosexual than the offspring of heterosexuals, it is still the case that most offspring of lesbians and gay men do not share their parents' sexual orientation (Gartrell et al., 2019; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Javaid, 1993; Joos & Broad, 2007; Schumm, 2010, 2013, 2016).

partners (Qian & Lichter, 2007), straight women are far more likely than straight men to use race/ethnicity as a status cue (more for Black men than for Asian men) (Lewandowski & Jackson, 2001), White women married to Asian or Black men divorce at significantly higher rates (Bratter & King, 2008), and minority males report that they experience greater disapproval from the family members and friends of White female partners (Miller et al., 2004). In line with this is research finding that interracial interminority Asian-Hispanic and Asian-Black couples are less likely to divorce their Hispanic-White and Black-White counterparts (Brown et al., 2018).

Online dating research from OkCupid (Rudder, 2014) reveals patterns consistent with the aforementioned research. Specifically, straight women were more likely to seek monoracial relationships, though minority women indicated a desire for White men as their secondary option. Straight men indicated greater openness to interracial dating than straight women; however, they displayed the least interest in dating Black women. This is consistent with research finding that Hispanic men were nearly four times more willing to date a White woman than a Black woman (Feliciano et al., 2011). Overall, Rudder's (2014) exposition of online dating patterns found that people are indeed open to interracial dating, but that openness applies to some races more than others.

3.2 Culture

Many parents may want to keep a certain legacy or cultural foundation strong for generations to come and may fear that a multiracial grandchild may choose not to practice their religion, their language, or the culture of their respective parents (Inman et al., 2011). The fear of cultural dilution highlights the unique circumstances of relationships that are simultaneously interracial and intercultural (particularly those between two minority groups) and may be one reason as to why there is at times a lingering prejudice from parents towards interracial marriages (Gupta, 1997; Killian, 2001; Sung, 1990). Such fears may be more pronounced for inter-minority interracial couples compared to White-minority interracial couples. For example, a Hispanic household may have more concerns with their daughter marrying an Asian man with a rich Japanese heritage than with her marrying a White American.⁷ In addition, Black, Hispanic, & Asian minorities with a White romantic partner report better health than those in monoracial relationships (Lykke & Rendall, 2018). Ironically, the interracial couples that parents may express the most concern about may be the most stable, as Hispanic-White couples are about 50% more likely to divorce than Asian-Hispanic couples, and Black-White couples are about 10% more likely to divorce than Asian-Black couples (Brown et al., 2018). In short, parental sexual selection pressures may partially explain why minorities are more likely to interracially marry Whites than other minorities, even when marriages to other minorities (particularly Asians) may predict greater marital stability (Brown et al., 2018; Portes & Zhou, 1992).

4. Multiracial Dividend Effect

Familial discouragement of interracial dating may decrease when the partner is multiracial. In fact, research over the past decade has found evidence of a monoracial-multiracial dating pattern known as the *multiracial dividend effect* (MDE; Curington et al., 2015, 2020; Lundquist & Lin, 2015). The MDE is a phenomenon whereby multiracial (inclusive of multiracials and biracials in this article) partners are preferred over monoracial partners on the racial hierarchy of mate preferences. For example, heterosexual Asian women show a preference for multiracial Asian-White men over Asian men, heterosexual White men show a preference for multiracial Asian-White women over White women, heterosexual Hispanic women show a preference for multiracial Hispanic-White men over Hispanic men, heterosexual Asian men show a preference for multiracial Asian-White women over Asian women, and White women show a preference for multiracial Black-White men over any other monoracial minority group (Curington et al., 2015). Moreover, multiracial Black-Native American and Asian-Black individuals are rated the most attractive among multiracial groups (Sims, 2012). In short, the MDE illustrates the promise of multiracials to destabilize the intraracial normativity and reframe the otherwise hegemonic racial hierarchy of the sexual marketplace.

The preference for multiracial lovers on the racial mating hierarchy may arise from an implicit assumption that the multiracial person may compensate for the perceived negatives that are stereotypically applied to monoracial individuals (Curington et al., 2015). In addition, it may be assumed that entering into a romantic relationship with a multiracial person (specifically where the race of the monoracial actor matches one of the races of the multiracial partner) won't result in the same degree of familial and social network costs that are typically associated with entering an interracial romantic relationship with a monoracial person (Curington et al., 2015). Moreover, multiracial individuals are the least residentially segregated (Catney, 2015), consistent with their more favorable attitudes towards diversity, greater comfort in interracial relationships than monoracials, and being raised by parents who are more likely to encourage intercultural acceptance (Bonam & Shih, 2009; McGrath et al., 2016). The 'socially risky' interracial

⁷ This trend is also seen when individuals change religion. Individuals tend to change from an organized religion to agnostic (or spiritual), as opposed to changing from an organized religion to another organized religion (Pew, 2009).

relationship, plagued with pressures from peers, parents, and society, may not be such a risk when it is only partially interracial (Levin et al., 2003).

4.1 Overview and Hypotheses of the Current Research

In the present study, we tested differences in individuals' openness to forming relationships with White, Black, Hispanic, South Asian Indian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and multiracial individuals. We hypothesized that individuals' openness ratings would be higher for same-race individuals and multiracial individuals than for non-coethnic monoracial groups. Next, we investigated openness to dating Whites among minorities in an attempt to partially replicate Rudder's (2014) findings. Moreover, these predictions are consistent with another investigation we conducted ($N = 196$) which found that minorities were more likely to break up in response to parental pressure if they were in relationships with other minorities, but not if they were in a relationship with someone White (Willis et al., 2019).

Lastly, we hypothesized that individuals' openness to dating multiracials would be higher than openness to dating non-coethnic monoracial groups (Curington et al., 2015). We then investigated the degree to which multiracials indicated a preference for dating monoracial groups and predicted a greater openness among multiracials compared to monoracials (McGrath et al., 2016).

In summary, this research attempted to replicate and expand on research indicating a racial hierarchy in dating (Rudder, 2014) and on research indicating a preference for multiracial individuals in interracial relationships (Curington et al., 2015; McGrath, et al., 2016).

5. Methods

5.1 Participants

There were two waves of data collection for this investigation. In the first wave of data collection, participants were able to identify as White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial, and we assessed openness to dating White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Arab, and multiracial individuals. In the second wave of data collection, participants were able to identify as White, Black, Hispanic, South Asian Indian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and multiracial, and we assessed openness to dating White, Black, Hispanic, South Asian Indian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and multiracial individuals. Moreover, we asked multiracial participants to provide information about the ethnoracial identities of their parents, and for individuals dating multiracials to provide information about the ethnoracial identities of their lover's parents. This enabled us to code multiracial participants (and the lovers of participants dating multiracial individuals) as half-White, interminority, and majority minority. We ultimately collapsed interminority and majority minority multiracials into the same coding category.

Participants in the first wave of data collection were 234 undergraduate students ($M_{age} = 20.38$; range = 18-33; 179 females; 197 heterosexuals) at a university in the United States. The racial composition of the sample is as follows: 59% Asian, 16.4% White, 13.5% Hispanic, 8.6% Mixed, and 2.5% Black.

Participants in the second wave of data collection were 540 undergraduate students ($M_{age} = 20.17$; range = 18-38; 311 females; 234 bisexuals, 229 heterosexuals) at a university in the United States. The racial composition of the sample is as follows: 38.3% East Asian, 21.3% Hispanic, 18.2% White, 8% multiracial, 6.7% South Asian Indian, 4% Middle Eastern, and 1.5% Black. Among multiracial participants ($n = 44$), 69% were half-White and 31% were interminority. Among interminority multiracials, 55.6% were Hispanic-East Asian. Among half-White multiracials, 53.13% were East Asian-White and 37.5% were Hispanic-White.

Participants were recruited using the SONA system (Fidler, 1997) and were given class credit compensation for their participation in this study.

5.2 Procedure

For the first wave of data collection, we constructed an assessment survey to assess participants' attitudes towards, and preferences for, interracial romantic relationships. The survey was administered to participants in a well-illuminated, quiet room on the university campus. The duration of time spent on the survey was approximately 30 minutes. All participants completed an informed consent form before receiving and initiating the experimental packet. Participants were debriefed following the completion of the questionnaire materials.

The second wave of data collection was entirely online as participants completed the survey materials on Qualtrics. All participants provided informed consent by clicking a button indicating that they consent to participate in the study. Participants were redirected to debriefing information once they completed the survey.

Both waves of data collection were approved by the institutional review board.

5.3 Measures

To capture participants' openness to interracial dating, participants in the first wave of data collection completed a seven-point Likert-type scale for the following racial/ethnic groups: Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Arabs, and multiracials. Participants in the second wave of data collection completed a seven-point Likert-type scale for the following racial/ethnic groups: White, Black, Hispanic, South Asian Indian, Middle Eastern, East Asian, and multiracial. The measures on interracial dating attitudes were scaled from 1-to-7, with '7' indicating strong willingness and '1' indicating strong disapproval of dating the specified ethnoracial group.

Due to the asymmetry in how openness to dating someone Asian was assessed between waves of data collection, we only report the results for the second wave of data collection as it relates to openness to dating someone South Asian Indian and someone East Asian. Participants in the first wave who completed the openness to dating someone Asian may have been thinking about either group while completing the item. In addition, participants who identified as Asian in the first wave of data collection are not included in the analyses presented below as it is not possible to determine if they were South Asian Indian or East Asian.

6. Results

The present findings provide evidence supporting research that suggests the existence of a racial mating hierarchy, and research suggesting that monoracial individuals' racial mate preferences tend to be higher for multiracial individuals than for any monoracial group of non-coethnic peers (Curington et al., 2015, 2021; Lundquist & Lin, 2015; McGrath et al., 2016; Rudder, 2014). See Figure 1 for associated means of each racial group's willingness to date another racial group. No findings are reported in text for Black participants as the sample size was too small.

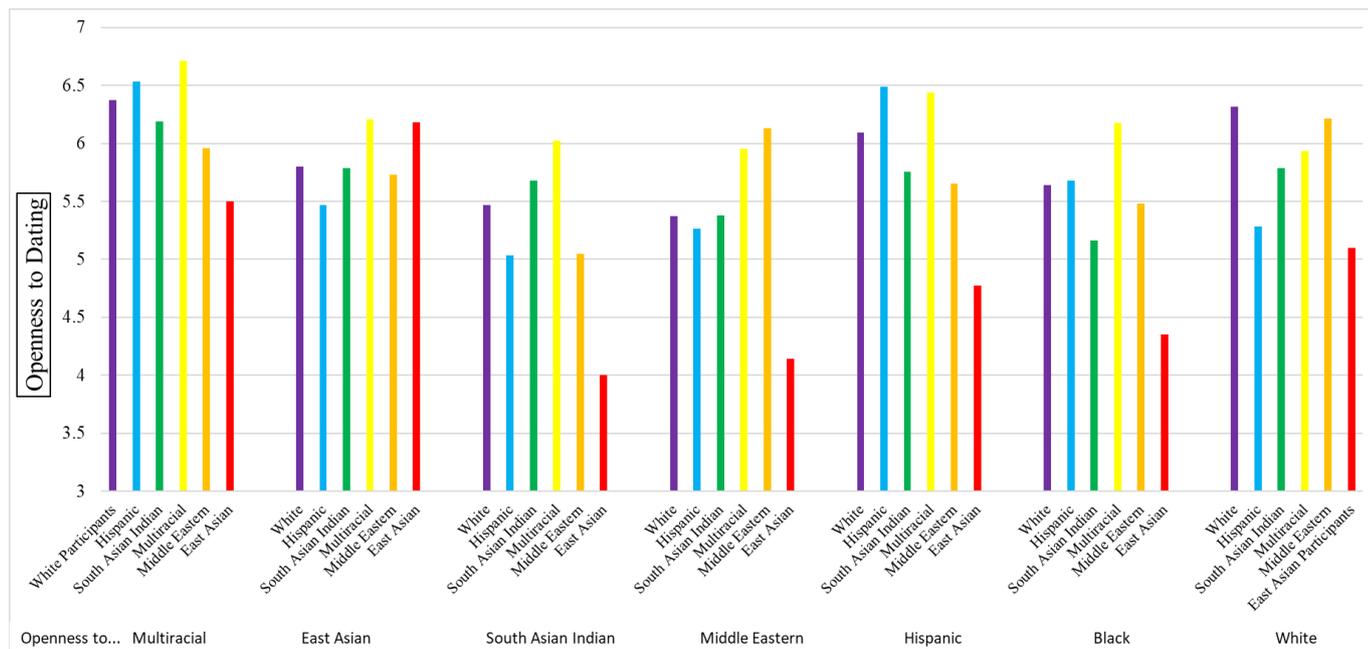


Figure 1. Openness to Dating Various Ethnoracial Groups Based on Participants' Ethnoracial Identity

6.1 Multiracial Dividend Effect

We conducted a set of six repeated measures ANOVAs with interracial openness (openness to dating someone Middle Eastern, East Asian, South Asian Indian, Multiracial, Black, Hispanic, White) as the within-subjects factor to test for our initial hypothesized patterns. Specifically, we predicted that: (1) there would be evidence of a racial mating hierarchy (Rudder, 2014), (2) a secondary monoracial preference for Whites (Rudder, 2014; Willis et al., 2019), and (3) that participants from each monoracial group would express an openness to dating multiracials that was greater than their openness to dating all non-coethnic monoracial groups (Curington et al., 2015; McGrath et al., 2016). Each analysis was conducted for participants of different racial groups separately.

A repeated measures analysis of variance found that White participants' racial mating preference differed across groups, $F(6, 564) = 12.29, p < .001, \eta^2 = 11.6\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that White participants were more open to dating multiracials ($M = 6.42, SE = .12$) than they were to dating individuals who are Black ($M = 5.87, SE = .19, p = .002$), Indian ($M = 5.48, SE = .2, p < .001$), Middle Eastern ($M = 5.67, SE = .18, p < .001$), and East Asian ($M = 5.82, SE = .18, p = .002$).

A repeated measures analysis of variance found that Hispanic participants' racial mating preference differed across groups, $F(6, 696) = 28.48, p < .001, \eta^2 = 19.7\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that Hispanic participants were more open to dating multiracials ($M = 6.58, SE = .1$) than they were to dating someone Black ($M = 5.85, SE = .14$), East Asian ($M = 5.47, SE = .16$), Middle Eastern ($M = 5.37, SE = .16$), Indian ($M = 5.03, SE = .18$), and White ($M = 5.31, SE = .19$) (all $ps < .001$).

A repeated measures analysis of variance found that Middle Eastern participants' racial mating preference differed across groups, $F(6, 126) = 4.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = 18.1\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that Middle Eastern participants were more open to dating someone Middle Eastern ($M = 6.27, SE = .23$) than they were to dating someone South Asian Indian ($M = 5.05, SE = .45, p = .042$). No other comparisons were significant.

A repeated measures analysis of variance found that South Asian Indian participants' racial mating preference differed marginally across groups, $F(6, 216) = 2.1, p = .055, \eta^2 = 5.5\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that South Asian Indian participants were more open to dating multiracials ($M = 6.19, SE = .22$) than they were to dating someone Black ($M = 5.16, SE = .31, p = .01$). No other comparisons were significant.

A repeated measures analysis of variance found that East Asian participants' racial mating preference differed across groups, $F(6, 1200) = 92.92, p < .001, \eta^2 = 31.7\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that East Asian participants were more open to dating multiracials ($M = 5.48, SE = .12$) than they were to dating someone White ($M = 5.12, SE = .12, p = .039$), Hispanic ($M = 4.77, SE = .14, p < .001$), Black ($M = 4.36, SE = .14, p < .001$), Middle Eastern ($M = 4.14, SE = .14, p < .001$), and South Asian Indian ($M = 4.02, SE = .14, p < .001$). East Asian subjects were also significantly more open to dating someone Hispanic or White over someone Black, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Indian (all $ps < .001$), and more open to dating someone White over someone Hispanic ($p = .037$). These results are consistent with research showing that East Asians are significantly more open to dating Whites and Hispanics than they are to dating Blacks (Yancey & Lewis, 2009). Interestingly, East Asian subjects were more open to dating someone of the same race ($M = 6.17, SE = .09$) than someone multiracial ($p < .001$).

Lastly, for multiracial participants, a repeated measures analysis of variance found a significant omnibus main effect, $F(6, 252) = 4.6, p < .001, \eta^2 = 9.9\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that multiracials were significantly more open to dating multiracials ($M = 6.81, SE = .08$) than someone South Asian Indian ($M = 6.02, SE = .2, p = .001$), Middle Eastern ($M = 6.21, SE = .2, p = .02$), and East Asian ($M = 6.21, SE = .18, p = .01$). Moreover, they were more open to dating someone Hispanic than someone South Asian Indian ($p = .005$) or Middle Eastern ($p = .026$).

6.2 Bi-Directional Multiracial Dividend Effect (McGrath et al., 2016)

To test the hypothesis that multiracials are more open to dating other monoracial groups than monoracials are to interracially dating each other, we conducted a set of seven univariate ANOVAs with participants' ethn racial group (multiracial, East Asian, South Asian Indian, Middle Eastern, Hispanic, White) as the between-subjects factor.

First, we assessed openness to dating someone Hispanic and found a significant main effect of race, $F(5, 609) = 28.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = 19\%$. Bonferroni Pairwise Comparisons found that openness to dating Hispanic individuals was lower for East Asian participants ($M = 4.78, SE = .1$) than it was for multiracial participants ($M = 6.44, SE = .19$), White participants ($M = 6.1, SE = .13$), Hispanic participants ($M = 6.49, SE = .12$) (all $ps < .001$), and South Asian Indian participants ($M = 5.76, SE = .25, p = .004$).

We then assessed openness to dating someone Black and found a significant main effect of race, $F(5, 610) = 17.09, p < .001, \eta^2 = 12.3\%$. Bonferroni Pairwise Comparisons found that openness to dating Black individuals was lower for East Asian participants ($M = 4.35, SE = .12$) than it was for multiracial participants ($M = 6.18, SE = .23$), White participants ($M = 5.64, SE = .15$), Hispanic participants ($M = 5.68, SE = .15$) (all $ps < .001$), and (marginally) Middle Eastern participants ($M = 5.48, SE = .37, p = .062$).

Next, we assessed openness to dating someone White and found a significant main effect of race, $F(5, 610) = 10.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = 7.8\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that openness to dating someone White was higher for multiracial participants ($M = 5.94, SE = .22$) than for East Asian participants ($M = 5.1, SE = .12, p = .013$), higher for White participants ($M = 6.32, SE = .15$) than Hispanic participants ($M = 5.28, SE = .14, p < .001$) and East Asian participants ($p < .001$), and marginally higher for Middle Eastern participants ($M = 6.22, SE = .36$) than East Asian participants ($p = .051$).

Next, we assessed openness to dating someone Middle Eastern and found a significant main effect of race, $F(5, 608) = 16.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = 11.8\%$. Bonferroni Pairwise Comparisons found that openness to dating Middle

Eastern individuals was lower for East Asian participants ($M = 4.14$, $SE = .13$) than it was for Middle Eastern participants ($M = 6.13$, $SE = .38$), multiracial participants ($M = 5.95$, $SE = .23$), White participants ($M = 5.38$, $SE = .16$), Hispanic participants ($M = 5.26$, $SE = .15$) (all $ps < .001$), and South Asian Indian participants ($M = 5.38$, $SE = .3$, $p = .003$).

Next, we assessed openness to dating someone South Asian Indian and found a significant main effect of race, $F(5, 513) = 15.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 13\%$. Bonferroni Pairwise Comparisons found that openness to dating South Asian Indian individuals was lower for East Asian participants ($M = 4$, $SE = .13$) than it was for multiracial participants ($M = 6.02$, $SE = .29$), White participants ($M = 5.47$, $SE = .19$), Hispanic participants ($M = 5.03$, $SE = .17$), and South Asian Indian participants ($M = 5.68$, $SE = .31$) (all $ps < .001$). In addition, multiracial participants were marginally more open to dating someone South Asian Indian than Hispanic participants ($p = .051$).

Next, we assessed openness to dating someone East Asian and found a significant main effect of race, $F(5, 512) = 3.82$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = 3.6\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that openness to dating East Asian individuals was higher for East Asian participants ($M = 6.18$, $SE = .11$) than it was for Hispanic participants ($M = 5.47$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$).

Lastly, we assessed openness to dating someone multiracial and found a significant main effect of race, $F(5, 610) = 15.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 11.5\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that openness to dating someone multiracial was lower for East Asian participants ($M = 5.5$, $SE = .09$) than it was for multiracial participants ($M = 6.71$, $SE = .17$), White participants ($M = 6.38$, $SE = .11$), Hispanic participants ($M = 6.53$, $SE = .11$) (all $ps < .001$), and (marginally) South Asian Indian participants ($M = 6.19$, $SE = .22$, $p = .052$).

Taken together, and consistent with McGrath et al. (2016), the results suggest that the MDE is largely (albeit not entirely) bidirectional. Specifically, monoracials are more open to dating multiracials than they are to dating any non-coethnic monoracial group, and multiracials are more open to interracially dating other monoracial groups than monoracials are to interracially dating each other.

6.3 Supplemental Findings: Multiracial Groups

In an effort to consider disaggregated multiracial data, we assessed openness to date someone White, Hispanic, and East Asian among monoracial participants, interminority multiracials ($n = 13$), East Asian-White multiracials ($n = 15$), and Hispanic-White multiracials ($n = 12$). A mixed model ANOVA found a main effect of ethnoracial identity, $F(7, 494) = 5.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 7.8\%$, as well as an interaction effect, $F(14, 988) = 15.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 18.2\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found racial hierarchy preferences for monoracials that reflect those reported earlier, though there were no significant preference differences for multiracials. Interestingly, East Asian participants were less open to dating someone Hispanic ($M = 4.75$, $SE = .11$) than Hispanic-White ($M = 6.64$, $SE = .46$, $p = .002$) AND East Asian-White participants ($M = 6.67$, $SE = .39$, $p < .001$). Finally, East Asian participants were more open to dating someone East Asian ($M = 6.27$, $SE = .11$) than Hispanic participants ($M = 5.47$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$).

A subsequent mixed model ANOVA with only Hispanic, White, and Hispanic-White participants found a main effect of openness to date various ethnoracial groups, $F(6, 1320) = 10.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 4.5\%$, as well as an interaction effect, $F(12, 1320) = 5.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 4.5\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons revealed that Hispanic participants were less open to dating someone White ($M = 5.31$, $SE = .15$) than White ($M = 6.55$, $SE = .17$, $p < .001$) AND Hispanic-White participants ($M = 6.73$, $SE = .5$, $p = .021$). Moreover, Hispanic participants were more open to dating someone Hispanic than they were to interracially dating someone from any other monoracial group, and more open to interracially dating someone multiracial than they were to interracially dating any monoracial group (all $ps < .001$).

Finally, a mixed model ANOVA with only East Asian, White, and East Asian-White participants found a main effect of openness to date various ethnoracial groups, $F(6, 1782) = 13.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 4.4\%$, a main effect of openness to date various ethnoracial identity, $F(2, 297) = 26.5$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 15.1\%$, as well as an interaction effect, $F(12, 1782) = 15.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 9.6\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons revealed that East Asian participants were less open to dating someone White ($M = 5.19$, $SE = .11$) than White ($M = 6.55$, $SE = .16$, $p < .001$) and *marginally* East Asian-White participants ($M = 6.13$, $SE = .39$, $p = .062$). Moreover, East Asian subjects were more open to dating someone East Asian than they were to interracially dating someone from any other ethnoracial group, and more open to interracially dating someone multiracial than they were to interracially dating any monoracial minority group (all $ps < .001$). East Asian-White multiracials were more open to interracially dating every monoracial minority group than monoracial East Asian participants (all $ps < .001$). Finally, there were no significant preferences among East Asian-White or Hispanic-White participants.

6.4 Supplemental Findings: Partial-Racial and 100% Interracial Couples

“Rather than considering interracial couples a homogeneous group, future studies should account for the different types of these couples as it may have implications on results” (Tarah Midy, 2018). Given that most multiracials date interracially, we explored whether multiracials tended to date someone who overlapped on one of their identities (a partial-racial couple) or tended to date someone who did not overlap on any of their ethnoracial identities (a 100% interracial couple). An example of a partial-racial couple is former President of the United States Barack Obama and former First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama, as they share a Black ethnoracial identity, but Michelle does not share Barack’s White ethnoracial identity, or his identity as multiracial. An example of a 100% interracial couple is Vice President of the United States Kamala Harris and Second Gentleman of the United States Doug Emhoff, as she is Tamil Indian, Black, and multiracial, and Doug is White.

We conducted a chi-square test of independence to assess the frequency of partial-racial couples and 100% interracial couples between half-White multiracials (President Obama) and interminority (and majority minority) multiracials (e.g., Vice President Kamala Harris is interminority; former First Daughters Sasha and Malia Obama are majority minority given that their mom is monoracial Black American and their dad is half Black and half-White). Hereafter, interminority and majority minority multiracials are referred to as interminority multiracials.

The chi-square analysis revealed that 66.7% of interminority multiracials ($n = 9$) were in 100% interracial couples whereas 75% of half-White multiracials ($n = 16$) were in partial-racial couples, $\chi^2(1, N = 25) = 4.17, p = .041$. Among interminority individuals in 100% interracial couples ($n = 6$), three of them were dating someone White. Of the half-White individuals in partial-racial couples ($n = 12$), seven of them were dating someone White.

6.5 Supplemental Findings: Sexuality

Given research indicating that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals are more likely to date interracially than heterosexuals, we assessed openness to interracial dating across sexual orientation (Jepsen & Jepsen, 2002; Lundquist & Liun, 2015; Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Schwartz & Graf, 2009). Indeed, “*individuals in same-sex couples are more likely than those in different-sex couples to be in interracial couplings*” (Kastanis & Wilson, 2014, p. 7).

A univariate ANOVA found a main effect of sexuality on openness to date someone Black, $F(2, 751) = 29.52, p < .001, \eta^2 = 7.3\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that bisexual ($M = 5.71, SE = .12$) and lesbian/gay subjects ($M = 5.60, SE = .21$) were more open to dating Black individuals than heterosexuals ($M = 4.65, SE = .09$) (both $ps < .001$).

A univariate ANOVA found a main effect of sexuality on openness to date someone Hispanic, $F(2, 750) = 25.9, p < .001, \eta^2 = 6.5\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that bisexual ($M = 6.06, SE = .10$) and lesbian/gay subjects ($M = 6.16, SE = .19$) were more open to dating Hispanic individuals than heterosexuals ($M = 5.22, SE = .08$) (both $ps < .001$).

A univariate ANOVA found a main effect of sexuality on openness to date someone South Asian Indian, $F(2, 521) = 13.52, p < .001, \eta^2 = 4.9\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that bisexual ($M = 5.23, SE = .13$) and lesbian/gay subjects ($M = 5.21, SE = .23$) were more open to dating South Asian Indian individuals than heterosexuals ($M = 4.32, SE = .13$) (both $ps < .001$).

A univariate ANOVA found a main effect of sexuality on openness to date someone Middle Eastern, $F(2, 748) = 25.38, p < .001, \eta^2 = 6.4\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that bisexual ($M = 5.41, SE = .12$) and lesbian/gay subjects ($M = 5.52, SE = .21$) were more open to dating Middle Eastern individuals than heterosexuals ($M = 4.46, SE = .09$) (both $ps < .001$).

A univariate ANOVA found a main effect of sexuality on openness to date someone White, $F(2, 751) = 4.69, p = .009, \eta^2 = 1.2\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that lesbian/gay subjects ($M = 6.0, SE = .21$) were more open to dating White individuals than heterosexuals ($M = 5.33, SE = .09, p = .009$).

A univariate ANOVA found a main effect of sexuality on openness to date someone multiracial, $F(2, 751) = 9.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = 2.5\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons found that bisexual subjects ($M = 6.36, SE = .09$) were more open to dating multiracial individuals than heterosexuals ($M = 5.90, SE = .07, p < .001$).

6.6 Supplemental Findings: Political Orientation

We conducted a mixed model ANOVA to assess differences in openness to date interracially based on political orientation/party (moderate/independent, conservative/Republican, progressive/Democratic). The analysis revealed a significant main effect of political orientation, $F(2, 326) = 8.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = 4.7\%$, a main effect of

openness to date various ethnoracial groups, $F(6, 1956) = 22.73, p < .001, \eta^2 = 6.5\%$, as well as an interaction effect, $F(12, 1956) = 6.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = 3.9\%$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons revealed that progressives/Democrats were more open to dating someone Black ($M = 5.73, SE = .11$) than conservatives/Republicans ($M = 4.23, SE = .45, p = .004$) and moderates/Independents ($M = 5.2, SE = .18, p = .035$); conservatives/Republicans were less open to dating someone Hispanic ($M = 4.31, SE = .37$) than moderates/independents ($M = 5.81, SE = .15$) and progressives/Democrats ($M = 6.14, SE = .09$) (both $ps < .001$); progressives/Democrats were more open to dating someone South Asian Indian ($M = 5.34, SE = .11$) than conservatives/Republicans ($M = 3.92, SE = .48, p = .014$) and (marginally) moderates/Independents ($M = 4.82, SE = .2, p = .071$); conservatives/Republicans were less open to dating someone Middle Eastern ($M = 3.69, SE = .47$) than moderates/independents ($M = 5.06, SE = .19, p = .02$) and progressives/Democrats ($M = 5.53, SE = .11, p < .001$); conservatives/Republicans were less open to dating someone East Asian ($M = 4.39, SE = .41$) than moderates/independents ($M = 5.96, SE = .17, p = .001$) and progressives/Democrats ($M = 6.0, SE = .1, p < .001$); finally, conservatives/Republicans were less open to dating someone Multiracial ($M = 5.0, SE = .34$) than moderates/independents ($M = 6.25, SE = .14, p = .002$) and progressives/Democrats ($M = 6.35, SE = .08, p < .001$).

7. General Discussion

Interracial relationships are accepted now more than ever before, with a steady increase in people believing that interracial marriages are good for society, and about two-thirds of families indicating that they would be comfortable with their children marrying interracially (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Despite this inclusive societal progress, interracial couples still face significant racial discrimination. The prejudice they face can come in many forms, such as in daily racial-microaggressions or blatant disapproval from parents, friends or peers (Willis et al., 2019; Leslie & Young, 2015). In fact, parental disapproval of a child's interracial relationship has been found to be influential and effective in dissolving the relationship (Edmonds & Killen, 2009), lowering relationship satisfaction, and increasing the likelihood that individuals remain in the *interracial closet* (Willis et al., 2019). This is consistent with our previous investigation which found that parental pressures were an especially strong influence in inter-minority dyads (Willis et al., 2019).

The goal of this investigation was to determine the racial hierarchy of romance that individuals of different racial backgrounds have when considering interracial romantic relationships. The findings of this investigation established additional support for a racial mating preference known as the Multiracial Dividend Effect (Lundquist & Lin, 2015). The general pattern of results was that participants of each monoracial group expressed greater openness for entering an interracial relationship with a multiracial individual than they did for any monoracial person of a different race. Moreover, consistent with the findings of Curington et al. (2015), this multiracial dividend effect was largely bidirectional as multiracials seemed more open to dating any monoracial group than monoracials were to dating each other across racial lines.

The results of this investigation stand in stark contrast to national discussions of living in a postracial world, and national surveys trumpeting that Americans are increasingly accepting of interracial relationships. It would be more accurate to say that Americans are increasingly accepting of interracial relationships with multiracial and White individuals, and increasingly accepting of interracial relationships with specific monoracial minority groups as a function of the race of the respondent. From this notion, we may reason that because participants are likely to imagine desirable multiracial individuals to be a mix of their own race and some other race, potential multiracial-monoracial couples would be more racially similar than interracial couples composed of two monoracial individuals.

Another noteworthy finding was the lack of willingness to date Middle Eastern and Black individuals compared to other monoracial groups. Black and Middle Eastern individuals were the least preferred groups overall, and there was no significant difference in the preference between them. We believe the negative bias towards Black and Middle Eastern individuals is related to their often-negative portrayals in the media, and we encourage future researchers to delve deeper into this topic.

8. Limitations

While this research provided evidence supporting the relatively new multiracial mating preference known as the dividend effect (Curington et al., 2015, 2021; Lundquist & Lin, 2015), and corroborated other lines of research suggesting a tri-racial hierarchy in dating preferences (Bonilla-Silva, 2002, 2004; Lee & Bean, 2007; Mcgrath et al., 2016; Robnett & Feliciano, 2011; Rudder, 2014; Walters, 2018), some limitations should be considered. First, in terms of subject demographics, there were too few Black subjects, so we were unable to conduct meaningful statistical analysis on the dating preferences of this groups. Interestingly, more participants were dating someone Black ($n = 28$) than there were Black subjects across the two waves of data collection ($n = 14$ monoracial; $n = 4$ multiracial).

An additional limitation was that subjects were asked to indicate their dating preferences towards multiracials but

were not asked about their preferences regarding specific multiracial combinations. It may also be the case that people prefer some monoracial backgrounds over certain multiracial backgrounds. We hypothesize that participants preferred multiracial individuals who partially shared their racial backgrounds, and that most participants imagined a multiracial person who was half-White, given that over 80% of multiracials are half-White (CensusScope, 2014). Thus, future research should investigate dating preferences towards specific multiracial combinations.

In addition, we asked participants to indicate their dating preferences, but not their marriage preferences. Marriage obviously entails a much larger level of commitment than dating, and since married couples frequently have children (in 2020, 78% of parents living with children were married), family members may pressure interracial couples to dissolve the relationship before marriage (Joyner & Kao, 2005; Census Bureau, 2020). Previous studies have documented the familial ostracism that interracial couples face and being accosted for having multiracial kids (Killian, 2001; Frankenburg, 1993). In addition, White women who have children with Hispanic or Black men are more likely to suggest the pregnancy was unintended compared to White monoracial couples or any couple with a minority woman (Smith, 2019). Therefore, future researchers on this topic may wish to study family planning in dating and married interracial couples across sexual orientation (specifically where both partners are monosexual rather than inter-orientation couples where one partner is bisexual).

One of the limitations is that only five ethnoracial options were included in the first wave of data collection: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial. This is a limitation because there are differences between how an outgroup of a race might perceive someone versus someone from the ingroup. With outgroup participants perceiving “White,” one would think of northwestern European characteristics which includes Nordic countries, and any country north or west of Italy, Poland, Austria, Spain, Portugal, and the Czech Republic (Bhopal & Donaldson, 1998). However, those who identify as “White” due to European background may have physical features that aren’t identifiable with what is considered “White” according to American media. Another issue was the use of “Arab” in the survey. “Arab” primarily refers to countries in the Arabian Peninsula, Asian countries south of Turkey and west of Iran, Egypt, and only some parts of North Africa. This excludes other members who identify as Middle Eastern, Central Asian, Western Asian, and North African. For future studies in which detailed ethnoracial information is critical, it may be helpful to provide several different options (e.g., European, Armenian, Ukrainian, North African, Central Asian, etc) for participants who may select “White” on most demographic surveys. We felt that the utilization of macrolevel classifications (i.e., South Asian Indian, not Sri Lankan) was appropriate in this investigation as they are sufficient to influence interpersonal outcomes on the basis of socially perceived ancestry (Shiao, 2019).

In addition, our first wave of data collection failed to distinguish between South Asian Indian and East Asian participants and lovers of participants. This is a limitation given that the experiences and dating preferences of those who come from an Indian/Pakistani background may be significantly different from those who come from an East Asian background (Mishra, 2013; Morning, 2001; Shankar & Srikanth, 1998). For instance, South Asian Indians experience more prejudice than East Asians (Lu et al., 2020). Moreover, we failed to include an option for Middle Eastern participants and Middle Eastern lovers in our first wave of data collection. As such, it is possible that some of the Middle Eastern participants from the first wave of data collection may have selected “Other” or “White” as their ethnoracial identity.

Ultimately, the amount of detail sought regarding participants’ ethnoracial background is going to change based on the goals of the investigation. For instance, we did not inquire as to the ethnoracial background of participants’ stepparents in this study for those whose parents divorced and remarried. If a future study investigated whether the parents of multiracial participants are more likely to interracially marry again, and whether or not they interracially married someone of a different race or the same race as their first marriage (thus reflecting the composition of their offspring), we would include items to gather that information. Given this investigation’s focus on the racial hierarchy of mate preferences, we figured that focusing on broad classifications was sufficient to allow us to understand how an individual (and a romantic couple) is likely perceived in social settings. For example, many research participants would likely mistake the attire of someone Sikh for someone Islamic. Similarly, distinguishing Laotian and Chinese matters far less in American social perception than East Asian and Middle Eastern, White and Hispanic, and Black and South Asian Indian.⁸

⁸ Christopher Columbus referred to Americans as Indians because he got lost while traveling to India, an event exemplifying profound failures in ethnoracial identification, navigation, and geography.

9. Conclusion

Interracial couples and multiracials embody the goal of decolonizing and deconstructing racial mate preferences. Like other studies on racial mating preferences, our results confirm the existence of a multiracial dividend effect (Curington et al., 2015, 2021; Lundquist & Lin 2015; McGrath et al., 2016; Parker, 2017). Future twin research could compare identical twins' interracial pair bond concordance rates to the rates of fraternal twins to determine the degree to which *disassortative mating* preferences differ on an innate level. In addition, one consideration is that interracial daters may develop something approximating a postracial outlook as a result of becoming more intimate with one another over time.

Lastly, future research should investigate if monoracial-multiracial couples are more resilient against the macro-cultural and familial pressures that non-traditional couples typically experience, or if their greater familial approval diminishes the necessity to grow their interpersonal resilience (Lehmiller & Konkel, 2012; Bhugra & De Silva, 2000). They may consider themselves to be *world-families* like other interracial couples and feel less pressure to create a *traditional identity* within their household (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014). It may be the case that the in-laws from the monoracial family feel the most pressure in a monoracial-multiracial union. Specifically, they may feel pressure not to be seen as prejudiced given they are the ONLY monoracial pair involved (the couple is interracial and the multiracial partner is the offspring of an interracial marriage). This difference in the racial composition of the different family units may adjust the inter-family power structure and bolster the resolve of interracial couples that include a multiracial partner in a way that typically is not true of interracial couples with two monoracial individuals.

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