

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION
AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES

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Science

In an attempt to better understand factors contributing to relationship satisfaction among African American heterosexual couples, this study explored the impact of communication behavior and partner acceptance on relationship satisfaction among African American heterosexual couples. Additionally, the moderating role of ethnic identity on African American relationship processes and couple satisfaction was also explored. Results indicated that communication behaviors and partner acceptance were significantly related to relationship satisfaction among African American couples. Additionally, crossover effects were found such that the communication behaviors and partner acceptance of one partner significantly impacted the relationship satisfaction of their spouse. However, these results varied by gender. Finally, analyses exploring the moderation effect of ethnic identity found that female ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction. Research and clinical implications of these findings for African American heterosexual relationships are discussed.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG AFRICAN
AMERICAN HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES

By

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Dedication

It is with great pride that I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my great grandmother, Mildred Anna Smith. Phenomenal does not begin to capture the essence of the woman you were. I always knew you to be my kindred spirit, my sanity, my heart. You meant the world to me and I miss you everyday. THANK YOU for all you've given to me and the legacy you've entrusted me with. I love you!!!!

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My family: Thank you for your unconditional love, prayers, support, and wisdom...I'd be lost without it.

My friends: You are the family I have chosen. Your laughter, support, prayers, and listening ear(s) have sustained me.

My classmates: Amanda, Annie, Hannah, Joanna, Kate, Katie, Kirk, Nicole, and Reena... I could not imagine sharing this journey with nine other people. You've taught me so much and I'm blessed to have met you!

God: "Never would have made it without you...I would have lost it all, but now I see how you were there for me. And, I can say: I'm stronger, I'm wiser, I'm better, much better. When I look back over all you brought me through, I can see that you were the one I held onto and I never would've made it without you." ~Marvin Sapp

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ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The rate of marriage in the African American community is declining at an alarming rate. According to the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI, 2006), African American families are less likely to contain a married couple than all other groups. When compared to 81 percent of white families, only 46 percent of African American families contained a married couple. Recent statistics also report that African American women are 25 percent less likely than white women to ever marry in their lifetimes (Besharov & West, 2001). Additionally, African American women are half as likely as white women to be presently married (Besharov & West, 2001). Although the likelihood of marriage has declined over time in the general population, the decline in marriage seems to be more pronounced for African Americans. For example, according to Besharov & West (2001), between 1950 and 1998 the rate of never married women aged 40 and over decreased from 9 percent to 5 percent for white women. However, the rate of never married African American women aged 40 and over increased from 5 percent to 15 percent.

Furthermore, African American couples that do marry have a greater likelihood of separation and divorce. Approximately, half of the marriages of African American women end within 10 years (Cherlin, 2005), 12 percent of which end in divorce (Olson & DeFrain, 2005). Again, although the divorce rate has increased over time across racial-

ethnic groups within the United States, the increase in marriage dissolution has been more pronounced for African Americans (Broman, 1993). When compared to whites, research has indicated that African American marriages tend to have lower levels of marital satisfaction, a finding thought to be a contributor to the increased divorce rate among this group (Broman, 2005; 1993).

Nonetheless, these bleak statistics do not reflect the desire of African Americans to marry. Researchers report despite the elevated divorce rate and decline in marriage rate, African Americans still recognize and value the importance of marriage and desire to marry (La Taillade, 2006; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). In a study of African American marital disruption, Clarkwest (2007) found that African American couples were more disapproving of divorce than white couples. Additionally, research has indicated that marriage does seem to offer many benefits for African Americans. For African Americans, marriage is linked to positive psychological outcomes (La Taillade, 2006), decreased likelihood of psychiatric illness (Williams, Takeuchi, & Adair, 1992), and increased physical health (AAHMI, 2006).

Since marriage offers many benefits to both African American and white heterosexual couples, many researchers in conjunction with governmental initiatives have focused on understanding factors that both predict and protect against marital dissolution. Although a larger collection of empirical research has examined factors contributing to relationship satisfaction among the general population (largely white), the results have nonetheless indicated several important predictors of relationship satisfaction for American couples. Two factors that have demonstrated consistent significant

relationships with couple satisfaction, both concurrently and longitudinally, are couple communication behaviors (O'Mahen, Beach, & Tesser, 2000; Pasch & Bradbury, 1998; Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002) and partner acceptance (Doss & Christensen, 2006; Doss, Thum, Sevier, Atkins, & Christensen, 2005; Jacobson, Christensen, Cordova, & Eldridge, 2000). However, to date very few studies have examined the effects of dyadic processes within a sample of African American heterosexual couples.

Since African Americans have largely been neglected in research on couple relationships, efforts such as the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative and limited empirical research have been directed at understanding factors, both common across all couples and specific to African American relationships that detract from and contribute to relationship success and longevity among African Americans. Broman (1993) found lower educational status and economic strain to be predictors of marital dissolution for African Americans. Experiences of economic marginalization among this group have particularly limited the economic stability of African American men, making them less likely to marry (La Taillade, 2006). Furthermore, discrepant occupational status and discrepant gender role values among partners may create further distress for African American couples. Additional experiences of racism and discrimination have also been negatively related to marital satisfaction among African Americans (La Taillade, 2006).

Boyd-Franklin (2003) and other researchers have found social support from extended family, kin, and the community to be positively related to African American couple relationships by “potentially providing emotional and instrumental support to the couple, promoting positive exchanges between partners, and increasing partners’

satisfaction with the relationship” (La Taillade, 2006, p.345). Additionally, participation in religious activities and spirituality has consistently been found to protect against relationship dissolution and divorce for African American couples (Clarkwest, 2007; La Taillade, 2006).

Recent attention has been directed towards the role of ethnic identity in African American couple relationships. Throughout the literature, definitions of ethnic identity have included factors such as a sense of belonging and peoplehood, positive group evaluation, ethnic interest and involvement in activities associated with the group, knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about the ethnic group, and many other related factors (Yeh & Hwang, 2000). In African American couple relationships, Okafur (2007) contended that cultural factors may shape (1) the way spouses perceive, understand, and interpret emotional experiences, and (2) the way spouses behave toward one another. Although largely unexplored, Okafur (2007) suggested that the exploration of cultural factors, such as ethnic identity is necessary and essential to the understanding of processes linked to healthy African American relationship functioning. A few investigations support Okafur’s contention. In a study of African American couple relationships, Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin (1990) found a positive relationship between positive feelings toward one’s ethnic group and partner supportiveness in African American couples. Additionally, La Taillade (2006) suggested that positive feelings toward one’s ethnic group may serve as a protective factor from experiences of discrimination within African American couple relationships. However, further research on the role of ethnic identity in African American couple relationships is warranted.

Purpose of the Current Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of ethnic identity in a dyadic context. Specifically, this study examines the impact of ethnic identity on the relationship between spousal behavior (constructive communication, destructive communication, and partner acceptance) and relationship satisfaction in African American heterosexual relationships. This study hopes to contribute to the literature by 1) examining key relationship processes that have been found to predict relationship satisfaction in white couple samples within a sample of African American couples, and 2) investigating the unique impact of ethnic identity on African American relationship processes and couple satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework

Behavioral Theory

Behavioral theories of marital satisfaction evolved from Thibault and Kelley's (1959) interdependence theory (cited in Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Behavioral theories of marital satisfaction assert that overt behavioral exchanges between partners are directly related to marital satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Rodrigues, Hall, & Fincham, 2005). "The underlying premise [of behavioral theory] is that the exchange of positive, rewarding behaviors enhance marital satisfaction, whereas negative, punishing behavioral exchanges decrease marital satisfaction" (Rodrigues, Hall, & Fincham, 2005, p.86). Simply stated, satisfying interactions justify and promote satisfaction in the couple relationship. Interactions between partners provide the couple with feedback concerning the quality of their relationship.

In prior research, this theoretical perspective has largely been explored in problem-solving situations among couples (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Results of prior investigations demonstrated that distressed couples were more likely to engage in and reciprocate negative exchanges than nondistressed couples (Rodrigues, Hall, & Fincham, 2005). In the present study, couple communication will be assessed based on the ways partners communicate about conflict in their relationship. In this study, constructive or positive communication behaviors describe the degree to which partners communicated about conflict in ways that were relationship enhancing. Destructive or negative communication behaviors describe the degree to which partners communicated about conflict in ways that were damaging to the relationship. Based on behavioral theory, it is expected that constructive communication behaviors will be positively related to relationship satisfaction. Conversely, it is expected that destructive communication behaviors will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction.

Social Identity Theory and Symbolic Interactionism

Ethnic identity is largely rooted in social identity theory. As such, ethnic identity is considered to be the “part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his membership in social groups” (cited in Phinney, 1990, p. 500). Persons within a group are thought to possess similar beliefs and to exhibit similar behaviors (Liebkind, 1992). In ethnic groups, shared beliefs, practices, and values of the ethnic group contribute to the formation of an ethnic identity. As such, ethnic identity acts as a template to develop knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about a person’s ethnic group. It also serves as a cognitive information processing framework within which a person perceives and defines objects, situations, events, and other people (Yeh and Hwang, 2000).

Ethnic identity also has links to symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is largely concerned with the meaning assigned to symbols and behaviors of a given group (White & Klein, 2002). As such, this theory helps “sensitize us to the ways in which people create shared meanings of how [group] members should act toward one another” (Cherlin, 2005, p. 25). In much the same way, ethnic identity provides a framework by which people interpret and understand the behavior of group members. This has significant implications for same-race African American couple relationships.

In African American heterosexual relationships, both members of the couple belong to the same ethnic group. As a result, partners in African American couple relationships may operate on the assumption of shared values, beliefs, and attitudes with their spouse. This assumption may both guide the behavior of individual partners as well as influence the interpretation of their spouse’s behavior as a member of their ethnic group, significantly impacting relational processes that contribute to couple relationship satisfaction (Bell et al., 1990; Okafur, 2007). As implied in symbolic interactionism, the ethnic identity of African American partners may explain the ways in which members of the couple create shared understandings of how partners should act toward one another. For example, consider the relationship between couple communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction for African American couples. Research has demonstrated a significant relationship between increased positive communication behaviors and increased relationship satisfaction (Doss et al., 2005). Research has also demonstrated a significant relationship between decreased negative communication behaviors and increased relationship satisfaction (Doss et al., 2005). However, the results of these studies were found for couples in general but not for African American couple

relationships in particular. In African American couple relationships, facets of ethnic identity such as ethnic pride may further impact this relationship, increasing the likelihood of positive communication behaviors and protecting against negative communication behaviors. For example, pride in oneself and in one's partner as a member of a shared ethnic group may increase the likelihood of partners communicating with each other respectfully and in ways that are relationship enhancing.

In much the same way, ethnic identity may further impact the relationship between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction in African American couples. Prior research has demonstrated a significant relationship between partner acceptance and increased relationship satisfaction (Doss et al., 2005). Furthermore, the meaning of partner acceptance in same-race African American couples may be heightened due to each partner's membership in a stigmatized social group. Gaines (2001) defined stigmatized individuals as those persons belonging to a devalued social group "whose distinguishing characteristics are readily visible (e.g. persons of color)" (p. 113). He suggested that for intraracial couples, (e.g. African Americans, who are more likely to marry within race) the socioemotional support provided through partner acceptance may serve as a source of validation and esteem, particularly in the face of discrimination (Gaines, 2001). Gaines (2001) also mentioned that the ability to maintain partner acceptance in relationships including paired stigmatized individuals may be positively related to supportive group orientations (e.g. Afrocentrism or ethnic identity). For African Americans, ethnic identity involves a sense of belonging and peoplehood that promotes acceptance of oneself and acceptance of other members of one's ethnic group. This link between ethnic identity and couple relationships has also demonstrated in prior research

suggesting a positive relationship between ethnic identity and partner supportiveness in African American couple relationships (Bell et al., 1990). As a result, ethnic identity may promote the acceptance of partner behavior in same-race African American couples.

Since it is theorized that ethnic identity may influence the association between communication behaviors (see Figures 1 & 2) and relationship satisfaction and the association between partner acceptance (see Figure 3) and relationship satisfaction, this study will explore the moderating effects of ethnic identity on relationship satisfaction in African American couple relationships.

Figure 1. Hypothesized moderation effect of ethnic identity on the relationship between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction

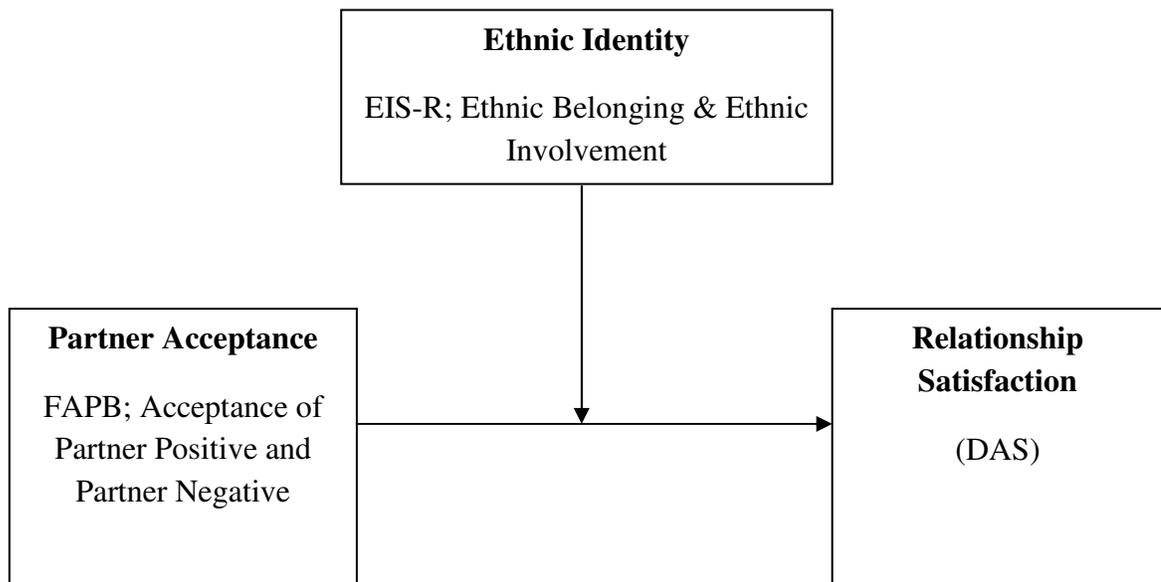


Figure 2. Hypothesized moderation effect of ethnic identity on the relationship between constructive communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction

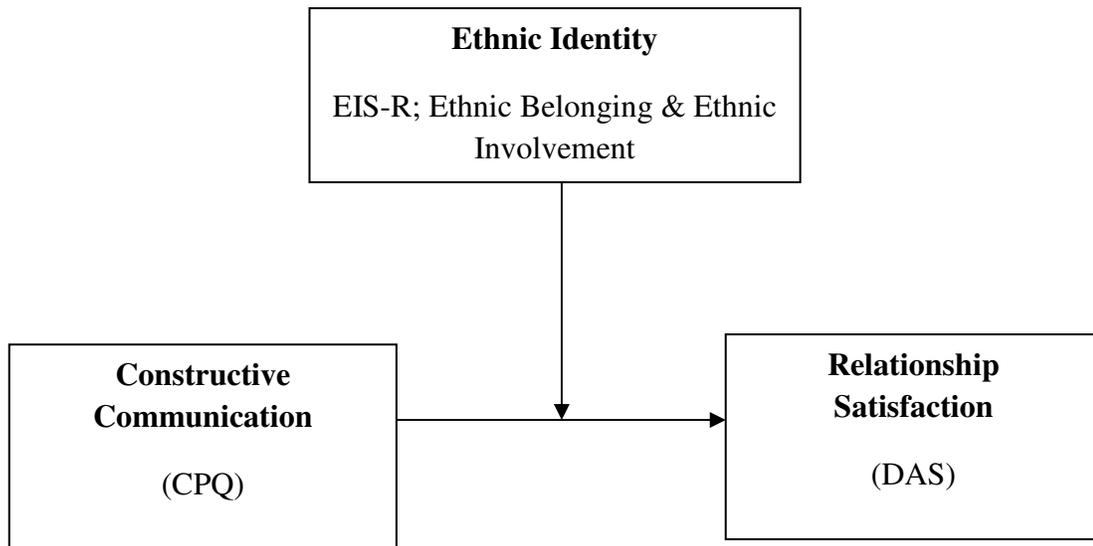
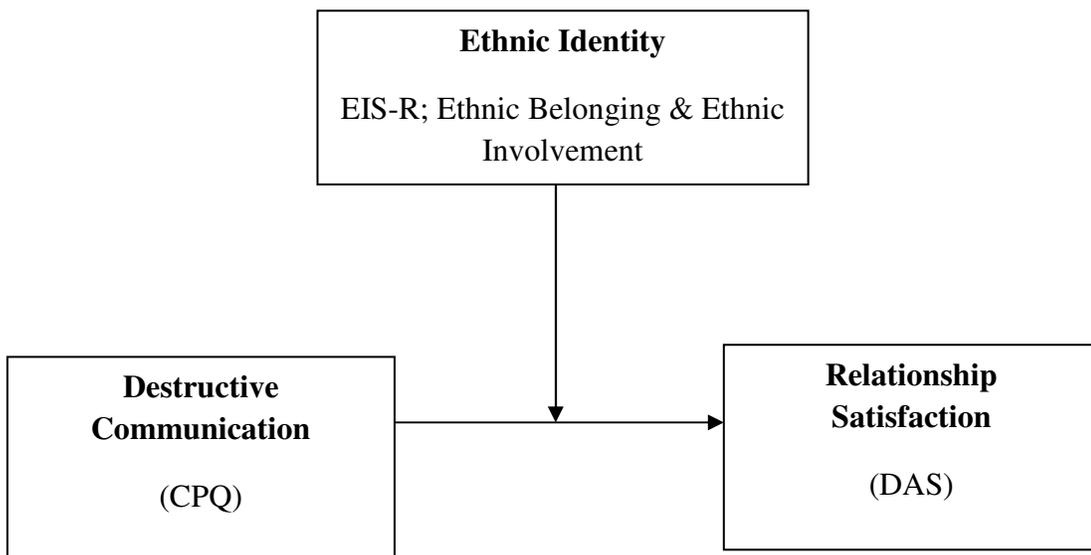


Figure 3. Hypothesized moderation effect of ethnic identity on the relationship between destructive communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction



Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Communication Behaviors and Relationship Satisfaction

In an attempt to understand factors that predict and prevent relationship dissolution, prior research has widely examined the impact of communication behaviors on couple relationship satisfaction. Specifically, researchers have examined links between constructive (positive) and destructive (negative) communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction. Constructive communication behaviors refer to styles of communicating within couple relationships that are relationship enhancing, and can include demonstrations of empathy, respect, caring, approval, and assent (Epstein & Baucom, 2002). Conversely, destructive communication behaviors refer to styles of communicating that are damaging to the couple relationship. The literature examining communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction widely demonstrates that happy couples exhibit a higher rate of positive communication than do distressed couples (Epstein & Baucom, 2002; Olson & DeFrain, 2003).

Destructive or negative communication includes behaviors such as criticism, contempt, blame, and hostility (Epstein & Baucom, 2002). According to Epstein and Baucom (2002), negative communication can perpetuate a feeling of negativity between partners and may be damaging to partner self-esteem. Negative communication behaviors can be particularly deleterious to couple relationships when exercised during conflict. Destructive communication behaviors (e.g. blame, criticism, threat, etc.) minimize resolution or change and may increase conflict (Olson & DeFrain, 2003). However, constructive communication during conflict can facilitate change in a way that is

relationship enhancing (e.g. mutual discussion of problems, expression of feelings, and understanding of views).

Prior research has demonstrated a strong relationship between communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction (Christensen, Eldridge, Catta-Preta, Lim, and Santagata, 2006; Christensen & Heavey, 1996; Stanley et al., 2002). Christensen and Shenk (1991) examined the relationship between communication behaviors, conflict, and relationship satisfaction in a sample of nondistressed (22), clinic (15), and divorcing (25) couples. Couples were administered widely used self-report instruments assessing communication behaviors (Communication Patterns Questionnaire, CPQ; Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) and relationship satisfaction (Dyadic Adjustment Scale, DAS; Spanier, 1976). Results indicated that nondistressed couples evidenced more constructive communication behaviors (e.g. mutual discussion of problems, expression of feelings, understanding of views, negotiation of solutions, and resolution of problems) than clinic or divorcing couples. Additionally, more destructive styles of communication (e.g. mutual avoidance) were evidenced in clinic and divorcing couples than in nondistressed couples.

Christensen, Eldridge, Catta-Preta, Lim, and Santagata (2006) explored the relationship between communication patterns and relationship satisfaction cross-culturally. The researchers administered self-report measures of communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction to a sample comprised of 115 Brazilians, 107 Italians, 70 Taiwanese, and 51 Americans (total 343 participants). Although persons of African descent were included in both the Brazilian and American subsamples, the total

number of those participants remains unclear. Also, it is unclear how many of these participants self-identified as African American or being of African descent. Partial correlations controlling for gender were conducted to explore the relationship between constructive communication and relationship satisfaction. Results of the analyses indicated positive correlations between constructive communication and relationship satisfaction for all groups (Brazilians, Italians, Taiwanese, and Americans), affirming the positive relationship between constructive communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction found in prior research.

Julien, Chartrand, Simard, Bouthillier, and Bégin (2003) explored the relationship between communication and relationship satisfaction in a study of heterosexual, gay, and lesbian couples. A sample of 121 cohabitating couples (43 heterosexual, 46 gay, and 33 lesbian) were included in the study. Relationship satisfaction was assessed using a self-report measure (DAS; Spanier, 1976). Communication behaviors were measured using observational data collected via two 20-minute videotaped couple interactions where partners were prompted to discuss salient personal problems. Interviews were coded by trained team who rated the interactions based on displays of negative (e.g. withdrawal) and positive (problem-solving) communication behaviors. Results indicated that positive communication behaviors were positively associated with relationship satisfaction for all couples. Negative communication behaviors were negatively associated with relationship satisfaction for all couples as well.

Additional research has explored the relationship between negative communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction. In a study examining

communication, conflict, and commitment, Stanley et al. (2002) explored the relationship between negative communication, marital satisfaction, and divorce potential among 908 couples, 7.9 percent of which were African American. Results indicated significant positive correlations between negative communication and divorce potential for both male and female partners. Additional correlational analyses also indicated significant negative associations between negative communication and marital satisfaction for both males and females.

Partner Acceptance and Relationship Satisfaction

For the past decade, the promotion of acceptance in romantic relationships has been an important trend in the prevention of relationship discord (Doss & Christensen, 2006). According to Doss and Christensen (2006), “acceptance can refer to the level of approval or positive reception to any event, positive or negative” (p. 289). Jacobson et al. (2000) have particularly emphasized the role of acceptance in couple relationships and have developed a model of couple therapy, integrative behavioral couple therapy (IBCT) that highlights its importance. IBCT assumes that there are some problematic partner behaviors that are resistant to change. Consequently, IBCT believes improvements in these areas can be accomplished by helping spouses accept aspects of their partners that were previously considered unacceptable in a way that facilitates closeness and intimacy in the couple relationship (Jacobson et al., 2000).

Jacobson et al. (2000) conducted a study comparing acceptance focused couple treatment (IBCT) with traditional behavioral couple therapy (TBCT). The study tested the effectiveness of each approach and its links with relationship satisfaction. In this

investigation, 21 couples requesting therapy were screened and randomly assigned to the acceptance focused or traditional behavioral treatment conditions. Couples were given treatment for a maximum of 26 sessions. All sessions were videotaped and coded to assess for change in couple behavior and also adherence to treatment protocol. Finally, couples were administered the DAS and the Global Distress Scale (Snyder, 1979 cited in Jacobsen et al., 2000) before the start of treatment and immediately following treatment. Results exploring the relationship between treatment approach and relationship satisfaction indicated that couples in the acceptance focused approach, IBCT, experienced greater improvements in their relationship satisfaction than couples in the TBCT approach. Result of this study indicated that including acceptance work in therapy may be a critical means of creating behavioral change and closeness in couple relationships.

Doss et al. (2005) examined the role of partner acceptance as a mechanism of change across therapeutic approaches. Partner acceptance, communication behaviors, and relationship satisfaction were assessed in 134 couples randomly assigned to IBCT and TBCT (traditional behavioral couple therapy) conditions. The sample was largely white (husbands: 79.1 percent, wives: 76.1 percent), with less than 10 percent of the sample African American (husbands: 6.7%, wives: 8.2%). Doss et al. (2005) found partner acceptance (measured by the Frequency and Acceptability of Partner Behavior Inventory; Jacobson & Christensen, 1997) to be significantly related to longitudinal increases in relationship satisfaction (measured by the DAS; Spanier, 1976). However, links between acceptability of partner positive and partner negative behavior and relationship satisfaction varied by gender. For wives, acceptance of partner positive but not partner

negative behavior was related to increases in relationship satisfaction during the first half of treatment. However, husbands' acceptance of partner negative but not partner positive behavior was related to increases in satisfaction during the first half of treatment. Doss et al. (2005) suggested that the increases in relationship satisfaction evidence emotional acceptance from partners as a critical mechanism of change in couple therapy. Emotional acceptance of partner behavior may foster closeness in the relationship and work to increase satisfaction.

Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction in African American Couples

The literature on couple research and treatment has tended to overlook ethnic minority couple relationships, and African American couples in particular. As a result, select researchers (Broman, 1993) have begun to examine relationship satisfaction in African American couples. Some studies have examined race as a predictive factor in marital quality while others have examined stressors, protective factors, or relational processes unique to African American relationships. Broman (1993) indicated that African Americans tended to have lower relationship quality than whites. The differences were thought to be explained by stressors uniquely impacting African American relationships such as experiences of discrimination, economic marginalization, and financial strain.

Experiences of discrimination can be detrimental to relationship satisfaction in a variety of ways. Boyd-Franklin (2003) suggested that couples may bring their experiences of discrimination into their couple relationship and displace the anger from these experiences on their partner. This may result in increased conflict in the couple

relationship, making the couple vulnerable to increased relationship distress.

Additionally, the internalization of racist stereotypes of African American men and women as a result of discriminatory experiences has also been thought to adversely affect marital relationships. However, results from a recent study by Kelly and Floyd (2001) indicated that internalization of negative stereotypes alone did not generally predict decreases in relationship satisfaction.

Economic marginalization, particularly as it relates to African American men and unemployment has been identified as a predictor of marital decline and relationship distress. Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995) identified the “high unemployment rates among African American men as [one of] the most important reasons for the decline in marriage” (as cited in Boyd-Franklin, 2003, p. 95). The financial strain associated with unemployment among African American men has been found to predict future relationship instability (see La Taillade, 2006).

A recent study explored the impact of financial strain and neighborhood economic disadvantage on African American marital relationships (Cutrona, Russell, Abraham, Gardner, Melby, & Cogner, 2003). In this study, 202 African American couples recruited from varying geographic regions in the U. S. and from varying neighborhood contexts (affluent, inner city, and rural areas) completed questionnaires assessing relationship quality and financial strain. Additionally, an observational assessment of marital interaction quality was obtained through videotaped interactions where couples were instructed to discuss questions provided by the researchers. Questions were designed to elicit both supportive and conflictual responses. Interaction tapes were then rated in terms

of the frequency and intensity of spousal behavior during the interaction. Results of this study indicated that financial strain was predictive of lower marital quality for African American couples. However, contrary to hypotheses, higher neighborhood economic disadvantage was associated with higher marital quality. The researchers postulated that this result may be explained by differing experiences of discrimination occurring in varying neighborhood contexts. Researchers suspected that affluent African American families living in largely white communities may experience higher levels of discrimination in their neighborhood contexts creating additional strain impacting marital quality.

In addition to the literature examining culture-specific stressors affecting African American couples, research has also considered culture-specific protective factors and strengths unique to African American couple relationships. Social support from romantic partners, family, extended kin networks, and the wider community is a factor consistently identified as a protective factor for African American couples (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; La Taillade, 2006). For African American couples, social support may protect the relationship by “potentially providing emotional and instrumental support to the couple, promoting positive exchanges between partners and increasing partners’ satisfaction with the relationship” (La Taillade, 2006, p.345).

Religion and spirituality have also been consistently found to protect against relationship dissolution and divorce for African American couples (Clarkwest, 2007; La Taillade, 2006). For decades, the clinical literature has identified religion and spirituality to be coping resources for African Americans. Participation in religious activities and

spirituality have offered African Americans a means of coping with injustice and discrimination while simultaneously offering a means of connection and support from their ethnic group (La Taillade, 2006). Wilcox and Wolfinger (2004) found that compared to mothers attending church infrequently, “churchgoing African American married mothers are thirty-one percent more likely to report that they have excellent relationships with their husbands” (p. 3). This difference is speculated to be linked with programs supporting couples within the church, the reinforcement of cultural, religious, and relationship values that promote positive partner behaviors and relationship commitment, and access to social support.

Ethnic Identity

Conceptualizations of ethnic identity. Since ethnic identity largely encompasses many of the aforementioned protective factors (e.g. social interaction and support, participation in ethnic group activities), research has examined the protective quality of ethnic identity in African American couple relationships. However, there have been inconsistencies across studies in both the definition and measurement of ethnic identity. Much of the research on ethnic identity has been based on the study of group identity by social psychologists (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Tajfel (1981) defined ethnic identity as “the part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (cited in Phinney, 1990, p. 500).

There is consensus that ethnic identity is a multidimensional construct; however, there is no widely accepted definition on what the construct actually includes (Phinney,

2000). Facets such as a sense of belonging and sense of peoplehood within a group, culture, and setting have largely been included in definitions of ethnic identity throughout the literature (Phinney, 1990, 2007; Yeh & Hwang, 2000). Other related factors such as self-labeling, positive evaluation, preference for the group, ethnic interest, and knowledge and involvement in activities associated with the group have also been considered in the conceptualization of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1995 cited in Yeh & Hwang, 2000).

La Taillade (2006) suggested that ethnic identity is comprised of various cognitive, behavioral, and relational experiences that contribute to an individual's sense of being a member of an ethnic minority group. As noted earlier, Yeh and Hwang (2000) described ethnic identity as template to develop knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about a person's ethnic group. As such, "ethnic identity works as a cognitive, information processing framework within which a person perceives and defines objects, situations, events, and other people" (Yeh & Hwang, 2000, p. 420). Ethnic identity may function as a framework through which members of an ethnic group create shared meaning and understanding of how they should treat one another. Therefore, ethnic identity may have significant implications for African American dyadic relationships.

Ethnic identity and African American couple relationships. A few recent studies have begun to consider the impact of ethnic identity and cultural factors in heterosexual African American couples. However, few studies distinctly consider the impact of ethnic identity. The majority of prior research has examined the impact of Afrocentricity in African American heterosexual relationships. Although Afrocentricity considers many of the same facets that define ethnic identity, it also considers an awareness of oppression

and recognition of African American survival priorities which are typically considered when studying racial identity. However, taken together with the dearth of research examining African American couples, prior research examining Afrocentricity in Black couple relationship provides a good model to consider when specifically examining ethnic identity in African American couples.

Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin (1990) explored the impact of positive feelings about one's group and heritage on male and female perceptions of heterosexual African American relationships. Bell et al. (1990) predicted that perceptions of Black heterosexual relationships would be related to Afrocentric cultural consciousness. In this investigation, 88 Black males and 89 Black females were administered measures assessing African self-consciousness, subject perceptions (values, attitudes, and beliefs) about Black heterosexual relationships, and demographic information. In an attempt to obtain a socioeconomically-diverse sample, college students, unskilled workers, professionals, and the elderly were recruited from local communities in Florida. Names were randomly selected from state employment rosters, local colleges, and churches in the community. Results of this study indicated that positive feelings toward one's ethnic group and heritage were associated with supportiveness in African American relationships.

More recently, Kelly and Floyd (2006) examined the impact of Afrocentric perspectives on marital trust and adjustment for African American couples. In this study, Afrocentricity was defined as a "pro-African American perspective involving African Americans' positive appraisal of their ethnicity and endorsement of African derived

cultural practices” (Kelly & Floyd, 2006, p. 3). Specifically, Afrocentricity referred to an “awareness of one’s African identity and cultural heritage; recognition of African American survival priorities; participation in the development of people of African descent; and recognition of oppression” (Kelly & Floyd, 2006, p. 3). Ninety-three African American married couples completed measures of demographic factors, African self-consciousness, marital trust, and marital adjustment.

Results indicated that, contrary to the authors’ predictions, Afrocentricity was not significantly associated with marital functioning for husbands or wives. These results mirrored results from an earlier study by Kelly and Floyd (2001), which did not evidence a positive relationship between Afrocentricity and African American marriage. Discrepant findings between the results of this study and the earlier work of Bell et al. (1990) highlight the uncertain relationship between African American cultural factors linked with ethnic identity and African American couple relationships.

Ethnic identity and individual functioning. Phinney (1989) described the process of ethnic identity development as a developmental task of adolescence (cited in French et al., 2006; Ponterro & Park-Taylor, 2007). As a result, several investigations have examined ethnic identity development among adolescents. Phinney, Cantu, and Kurtz (1997) investigated ethnic and American identities as predictors of self-esteem among adolescents. This study surveyed 669 native-born high-school students in ethnically diverse high schools in Los Angeles, California. Of the 669 students, 232 self-identified as African American, 372 as Latino, and 65 as White to examine the relationship between identity and adjustment among minority youth. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

(MEIM) assessed ethnic identity. American identity was assessed using a single question asking adolescents to rate how strongly they thought of themselves as American. Results indicated that American identity was only a significant predictor of self-esteem for White adolescents. However, ethnic identity was a significant predictor of self-esteem for all adolescents: African American, Latino, and White. Across groups, higher group identity (ethnic or American) was related to higher self-esteem (Phinney, 1990).

Seaton, Scottham, and Sellers (2006) examined the relationship between ethnic identity exploration and psychological well-being in African American adolescents, comparing adolescents with achieved, foreclosed, and diffused identities. Adolescents with an achieved ethnic identity have explored the personal meaning of belonging to their ethnic group and have committed to that identity. In contrast, adolescents with foreclosed ethnic identities have committed to an identity based on the opinions of others (family/friends) but have not explored what having an ethnic identity means to them. Finally, adolescents with a diffused ethnic identity have not committed to an ethnic identity and have not begun the process of exploring what having an ethnic identity means to them. Results indicated that adolescents with an achieved ethnic identity had fewer depressive symptoms and higher well-being than adolescents with either foreclosed or diffused ethnic identities.

Ethnic identity and relational functioning. While these above investigations have demonstrated the importance of having a positive ethnic identity for individual functioning and development, the implications of having a positive ethnic identity within a relational context has received less attention. Although ethnic identity largely involves

individual processes that are related to outcome variables (e.g. self-esteem and depressive symptoms), the importance of these processes also suggest significant implications in a dyadic context.

As previously stated, ethnic identity is thought to provide a framework by which people interpret and understand the behavior of group members. Consequently, the ethnic identity of African American partners may explain the ways in which members of the couple create shared understandings of how partners should act toward one another. This assumption of shared meaning coupled with assumptions of shared ethnic values, may both influence individual behaviors as well as the interpretation spousal behaviors in relationships where both partners are African American. Therefore, ethnic identity may significantly impact relational processes such as communication behaviors and partner acceptance that contribute to couple relationship satisfaction.

As previously discussed, researchers have linked increases in positive communication with increases in relationship satisfaction (Doss et al., 2005). Decreases in negative communication behaviors have been linked to increases in relationship satisfaction as well (Doss et al., 2005). Because individuals with a positive ethnic identity are more likely to engage in frequent and positive interactions with ethnic group members, it is likely that having a positive ethnic identity is associated with increased likelihood of using constructive communication behaviors with one's partner, as well as decreased likelihood of engaging in destructive communication. Additionally, ethnic identity may change the magnitude of the relationship between communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction, such that partners who have a positive ethnic identity will be

more likely to communicate constructively with one's partner, thus increasing satisfaction with the relationship.

Similarly, ethnic identity may influence the relationship between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction in African American couples. Ethnic identity involves a sense of belonging and peoplehood that promotes pride and acceptance of oneself, as well as pride and acceptance of other members of one's ethnic group. Prior research has demonstrated a significant relationship between partner acceptance and increased relationship satisfaction (Doss et al., 2005). Therefore, it is likely that ethnic identity may promote pride in and acceptance of one's partner in same-race African American heterosexual relationships. Additionally, ethnic identity may alter the magnitude of the relationship between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction, such that partners who demonstrate a positive ethnic identity will be more accepting of their same-race partner, thus increasing satisfaction with the relationship.

Hypotheses

Based on a review of the literature and theoretical framework concerning communication behaviors, partner acceptance, relationship satisfaction, and ethnic identity, the following hypotheses were generated for African American heterosexual couples:

- 1) Acceptance of partner positive behaviors will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners.
- 2) Acceptance of partner negative behaviors will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners.

- 3) Constructive communication will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners.
- 4) Destructive communication will be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners.
- 5) Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between acceptance of partner positive behaviors and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater acceptance of their partner will report greater satisfaction with their relationship.
- 6) Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between acceptance of partner negative behaviors and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater acceptance of their partner will report greater satisfaction with their relationship.
- 7) Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between constructive communication and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater likelihood of using constructive communication will report greater satisfaction with their relationship.
- 8) Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between destructive communication and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and lower likelihood of using destructive communication will report greater satisfaction with their relationship.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Sample

The sample for this investigation is a secondary dataset drawn from a larger study conducted by Dr. Jaslean La Taillade of the University of Maryland. The original project examined psychological, relational, and environmental predictors of relationship satisfaction and stability for African Americans in interracial couple relationships. The sample to be used in the current investigation includes 112 same-race heterosexual African American couples recruited from metropolitan areas on the west coast (Washington, Oregon, California), and metropolitan areas in the southeast portions of the country (Georgia, North and South Carolina). However, the majority of the couples in this sample were recruited from the east coast (83.9%). Of the 112 couples, 59 were non-distressed and 53 were distressed. Non-distressed couples include those in which both partners scored above 100 on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), the measure of relationship satisfaction used in this investigation. Distressed couples include those in which at least one partner scored below 100 on the DAS.

Means, ranges, and percentages for age, education, monthly income, relationship duration, and marital status of participants is listed in Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the sample indicated that the mean ages of male and female partners, respectively, were 37.1 and 35.8 years ($SD=10.5$). Males reported a mean of 13.1 years of education and females reported a mean of 13.3 years ($SD=2.3$). Descriptive statistics for monthly income indicated a mean of \$2,158 for males and \$1656 for females ($SD=1272.3$)¹. The

¹ Distressed and non-distressed couples were compared on all demographic measures. Female partners in distressed relationships reported having significantly less income than female partners

mean duration of relationship for the couples in this sample was 9.9 years (SD=10.5). Of the couples, 54.5% were married, 11.6% were engaged, 23.2% were never married but living together, 9.8% were never married and not living together, and 0.9% were separated, divorced, or remarried.

Table 1. Means of Participant Age, Education, Monthly Income, and Relationship Duration (N = 112).

Variables	Females			Males		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age	35.8	11.85	18 – 64	37.1	12.13	20 – 64
Years of Education	13.3	2.04	2 – 18	13.1		9 – 20
Monthly Income	\$1,656	\$1272	\$0 – \$6,200	\$2,158	\$1710	\$0 – \$10,000
Couple						
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range			
Relationship Duration	9.9	10.52	0.6 – 44.0			
Relationship Status	Percentages					
Married	54.5					
Engaged	11.6					
Never Married, Living Together	23.2					
Never Married, Not Living Together	9.8					
Separated, Divorced, or Remarried	0.9					

Note. N = 112.

in non-distressed relationships. (M=1,222.14, SD=947.27, M=2015.75, SD=1,399.32 for distressed and non-distressed female partners respectively; $t(84)=-3.01$, $p<.01$).

Measures

Communication Behaviors

The Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ; Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) will be used to assess constructive and destructive communication behaviors (see Appendix C). For the purposes of this study, constructive communication behaviors describe the degree to which partners communicated about conflict in ways that were relationship enhancing. Sample items include mutual discussion of problems, expression of feelings, understanding of views, and negotiation of solutions and resolutions to problems. Using a sample of 70 married couples (75% white, 2 % African American), Christensen and Heavey (1996) established reliability for this subscale and construct validity, as demonstrated by the strong positive associations between constructive communication and relationship satisfaction. The reliability for this subscale was also confirmed within the present sample (Cronbach's alpha = .83).

For the purposes of this study, destructive communication behaviors describe the degree to which partners communicated about conflict in ways that were damaging to the relationship. The Destructive Communication subscale was not one of the standard CPQ subscales but was constructed by La Taillade and Matthew (2007) from CPQ items not used in other subscales. Sample items of this subscale include mutual blame, mutual threat, and verbal and physical aggression. In the present sample, the Cronbach's alpha for the Destructive Communication subscale is .87. Additionally, the reliability and validity of the entire CPQ have been demonstrated in previous research (Christensen et al., 2006; Heavey, Larson, Zumtobel, & Christensen, 1996; La Taillade & Matthew, 2007). Overall, the scale includes 23 items which are rated on a 9 point Likert-scale

from 1 (“very unlikely”) to 9 (“very likely”). Scores for the constructive and destructive subscales will be generated and used in analyses.

Partner Acceptance

The Frequency and Acceptability of Partner Behavior inventory (Christensen & Jacobson, 1997) was used as a measure of the respondent’s acceptance of their partner’s positive and negative behaviors (see Appendix D). This measure lists 24 positive and negative behaviors that occur in relationships, and asks respondents to rate the extent to which they find their partner’s behavior acceptable at its current frequency. The items are scored on a likert-type scale from 1 (“very unlikely”) to 9 (“very likely”). An average rating across all positive behavior items indicates acceptance of partner’s positive behaviors; similarly, an average rating across all negative behavior items reflects acceptance of partner’s negative behaviors (La Taillade & Matthew, 2007). Sample items assessing for partner positive behaviors include “In the past month, my partner was supportive of me when I had problems” or “In the past month, my partner was physically affectionate.” Sample items assessing for partner negative behaviors include “In the past month, my partner was dishonest with me” or “In the past month, my partner was inappropriate with members of the opposite sex”. Scores for acceptance of partner positive and partner negative behavior will be generated and used in the proposed analyses.

Several studies were conducted to establish the psychometric properties of this instrument (Jacobson et al., 2000; Doss & Christensen, 2006). Each study included diverse clinical and community samples which included a small percentage of African American couples. The results of these studies demonstrated strong validity and internal

consistency of the measure across couple types (Doss & Christensen, 2006). The reliability of both subscales was also demonstrated in this sample of African American heterosexual couples. The Cronbach's alpha for the acceptance of partner positive behaviors is .93 and the Cronbach's alpha for the acceptance of partner negative behavior is also .93.

Ethnic Identity

For the purposes of this study, ethnic identity is operationalized as the degree to which one possesses pride in one's ethnic group and the degree of ethnic involvement in one's ethnic group. These two components will be assessed using the Ethnic Identity Scale - Revised (EIS-R; La Taillade & Cauce, 1995), a measure developed for assessing ethnic identity among African Americans (see Appendix A). This inventory contains 21 items, and all items are rated on a 5-point Likert-scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). In this sample, the component of ethnic pride (Cronbach's alpha = .75) includes items such as, "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own racial group," and "I have great pride in my ethnic heritage." In this sample, the component of ethnic involvement (Cronbach's alpha = .79) includes items such as, "I participate in activities involving people who share my own racial and ethnic background." Scores for the two components (ethnic pride and ethnic involvement) will be summed and used as a composite measure of ethnic identity in analyses.

Relationship Satisfaction

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) will be used to assess relationship satisfaction (see Appendix B). The DAS is a widely used instrument designed to measure overall relationship satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha = .96). This

questionnaire contains 32 items measuring dyadic satisfaction, consensus, cohesion, and affectional expression. This instrument also demonstrates validity in comparing distressed and non-distressed couples, and has been utilized in previous studies examining African American heterosexual couples (Kelly & Floyd, 2006). The reliability of the DAS was also confirmed in the present sample of African American heterosexual couples (Cronbach's alpha = .92).

Table 2. List of Variables, Measures, and Item Numbers

Variables	Measures	Item Numbers
Constructive Communication	Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ)	2a, 2b, 4b, 1c, 3c
Destructive Communication	CPQ	1b, 3b, 10a, 10b, 11a, 11b
Acceptance of Partner Positive Behaviors	Frequency and Acceptability of Partner Behaviors (FAPB)	1 acceptance (a), 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, 6a, 7a, 8a, 9a, 10a, 11a, 12a, 13a
Acceptance of Negative Partner Behaviors	FAPB	14 acceptance (a) , 15a, 16a, 17a, 18a, 19a, 20a, 21a, 22a, 23a, 24a
Ethnic Identity	Ethnic Identity Scale-Revised (EIS-R)	1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 12, 16
Ethnic Pride	(EIS-R)	10, 12, 16
Ethnic Involvement	(EIS-R)	1, 2, 3, 7
Relationship Satisfaction	Dyadic Adjustment Scale	1-32

Procedure

The procedure in the original investigation (La Taillade & Matthew, 2007) from which data for the present study will be derived was as follows. African American

couples were recruited from metropolitan areas on the west coast (Washington, Oregon, California), and metropolitan areas in the southeast portions of the country (Georgia, North and South Carolina). All couples were recruited via newspaper advertisements, local community organizations, posted announcements, and “snowball” sampling. Postings expressed a need for African American couples to participate in a study on communication in couple relationships. Flyers specified that African American couples who were married or in a committed heterosexual relationship for at least one year were eligible to participate. The monetary incentive (\$40 if both members of a couple completed and returned their questionnaires) was also listed on the flyer. Efforts were made by the researchers to recruit couples of varying class backgrounds (i.e., by posting announcements in local employment publications), as class is often confounded with racial and ethnic background.

Couples were screened by phone to determine their eligibility for the study, and those couples in which both partners were 18 years of age or older and in a committed relationship of at least one year’s duration were included in the study. Each member of the identified and eligible couples was mailed the questionnaires, a demographic form, a consent form, and a brief description of the study. Couples were asked to complete the questionnaires independently in their place of residence. Questionnaire packets included the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ; Christensen & Sullaway, 1984), the Frequency and Acceptability of Partner Behavior questionnaire, and the Ethnic Identity Scale-Revised (EIS-R; La Taillade & Cauce, 1995).

Male and female partners were asked to return their packets separately in their respective pre-paid addressed envelopes a week after receipt of the packets. Follow-up telephone calls were made if a questionnaire packet was not received from both partners. Couples who completed and returned the questionnaires received \$40 for their participation.

Data Analysis Plan

Hypotheses and Statistical Procedures

The following are descriptions of the proposed data analyses plan to test the hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

Acceptance of partner positive behaviors will be positively related to relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners.

Hypothesis 2

Acceptance of partner negative behaviors will be positively related to relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners.

Hypothesis 3

Constructive communication will be positively related to relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners.

Hypothesis 4

Destructive communication will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners.

To test hypotheses one through four, bivariate correlations were conducted to examine the associations between partner acceptance (acceptance of partner positive and

negative communication behaviors) and relationship satisfaction and the associations between communication behaviors (constructive and destructive) and relationship satisfaction.

Hypotheses 5

Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between acceptance of partner positive behaviors and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater acceptance of their partner will report greater satisfaction with their relationship.

Hypothesis 6

Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between acceptance of partner negative behaviors and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater acceptance of their partner will report greater satisfaction with their relationship.

Hypothesis 7

Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between constructive communication and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater likelihood of using constructive communication will report greater satisfaction with their relationship.

Hypothesis 8

Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between destructive communication and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and lower likelihood of using destructive communication will report greater satisfaction with their relationship.

Interaction terms were created to determine whether ethnic identity moderates the relationship between acceptance of partner positive behaviors, acceptance of partner negative behaviors, communication behaviors, and relationship satisfaction. The interaction terms were created by multiplying each of the predictor variables (partner acceptance, communication behaviors) and ethnic identity, respectively.

Hierarchical linear regression analyses were used to determine the extent to which ethnic identity moderates the relationship between communication behaviors (constructive and destructive) and relationship satisfaction. The communication subscale was entered first to examine its unadjusted association with relationship satisfaction. Ethnic identity was entered in the second block to examine the adjusted association of the communication subscale with relationship satisfaction. The interaction of the communication subscale and ethnic identity was entered on the third block. Due to multicollinearity between the two communication subscales, separate regression analyses were conducted for constructive and destructive communication.

Similarly, hierarchical linear regression analyses were used to determine the extent to which ethnic identity moderates the relationship between partner acceptance (acceptance of partner positive behavior and acceptance of partner negative behavior) and relationship satisfaction. Partner acceptance was entered first to examine its unadjusted association with relationship satisfaction. Ethnic identity was entered in the second block to examine the adjusted association of partner acceptance with relationship satisfaction. The interaction of partner acceptance and ethnic identity was entered on the third block. Due to multicollinearity between the two partner acceptance variables, separate

regression analyses were conducted for acceptance of partner positive and negative behavior.

Separate regression analyses were conducted for male and female partners. In the couple literature it has been expected that the behaviors of one partner affect their own as well as their partner's relationship satisfaction. Therefore, in this exploratory analysis, the impact of male and female behavior will be explored in relation to their own relationship satisfaction as well as their partner's relationship satisfaction.

Chapter 6: Results

Reports of Communication Behaviors, Partner Acceptance and Relationship Satisfaction

Means and standard deviations for female and male communication behaviors, partner acceptance, relationship satisfaction, and ethnic identity variables are listed in Table 3. Two-tailed t-tests were used to compare male and female partners on independent and dependent variables. There was not a significant mean difference between male and female reports of constructive communication or destructive communication behaviors. However, mean score reports on constructive and destructive communication behaviors indicated that both male and female partners were more likely to use constructive communication behaviors than destructive communication behaviors. With regard to partner acceptance, there was no significant mean difference between male and female acceptance of partner positive or partner negative behavior. However, mean scores on partner acceptance indicated that male partners were more likely to accept partner positive behaviors than partner negative behaviors. Similarly mean scores indicated that female partners were more likely to accept partner positive behaviors than partner negative behaviors. There were no significant mean differences on relationship

satisfaction for males and females. However, mean scores on relationship satisfaction indicated that males had a slightly higher relationship satisfaction than female partners. Concerning ethnic identity, female partners reported significantly higher ethnic identity score than male partners $t(111) = -1.98, p < .05$.

Table 3. Male and Female Reports of Communication Behaviors, Partner Acceptance, Relationship Satisfaction and Ethnic Identity Variables (N = 112).

Variables	Females		Males		Range
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Constructive Communication	6.61	1.81	6.61	1.68	1 – 9
Destructive Communication	2.94	1.91	3.10	1.88	1 – 9
Acceptance of PPB	6.79	1.95	6.97	1.85	0 – 9
Acceptance of PNB	5.12	2.89	5.10	2.93	0 – 9
Relationship Satisfaction	104.11	18.64	105.39	16.48	0-151
Ethnic Identity	7.97	1.46	7.64	1.57	1 – 10

Note. N = 112. Acceptance of PPB = Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior.

Acceptance of NPB = Acceptance of Negative Partner Behavior.

Hypotheses 1 and 2: Partner Acceptance and Relationship Satisfaction

Bivariate correlation analyses investigated the relationships between acceptance of partner positive and partner negative behavior (as measured by the FAPBI) with relationship satisfaction (as measured by the DAS) for both female and male partners (see Table 4). As predicted, there was a significant positive relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .69, n = 112, p < .01$). Results also evidenced a significant positive relationship between

female acceptance of partner negative behavior and female relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .27, p < .01$). Bivariate correlations exploring the relationship between male acceptance of partner positive and negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction mirrored the results found for women. As predicted, there was a significant positive relationship between male acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .63, p < .01$). Results also yielded a significant positive relationship between male acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .23, p < .05$).

Additional bivariate correlations were conducted to explore the relationship between acceptance of partner positive and partner negative behavior and the relationship satisfaction of their spouses. There was a significant positive relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behaviors and male relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .64, p < .01$). A significant positive relationship also existed between female acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .23, p < .05$). Similarly, there was a significant positive relationship between male acceptance of partner positive behavior and female relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .48, p < .01$). Contrary to hypotheses, the correlation between male acceptance of partner negative behavior and female relationship satisfaction not significant.

Hypothesis 3: Constructive Communication and Relationship Satisfaction

The relationship between constructive communication (as measured by the CPQ) and relationship satisfaction (as measured by the DAS) was investigated for females and males using bivariate correlations (see Table 4). As predicted, results indicated a significant positive relationship between female constructive communication and female

relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .49, p < .01$). There was also a significant positive relationship between male constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .37, p < .01$).

Additional bivariate correlations were conducted to investigate the relationship between female constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction. As predicted, there was a significant positive relationship between female constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = .29, p < .01$). Additional correlations also investigated the relationship between male constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction. Contrary to predictions, the relationship between male constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction was not significant.

Hypothesis 3: Destructive Communication and Relationship Satisfaction

The relationship between destructive communication (as measured by the CPQ) and relationship satisfaction (as measured by the DAS) was investigated for females and males using bivariate correlations (see Table 4). As predicted, a significant negative relationship was found between female destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = -.51, p < .01$). A significant negative relationship was also found between male destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = -.56, p < .01$).

Additional bivariate correlations were conducted to investigate the relationship between destructive communication and the relationship satisfaction of participants' spouses. As predicted, there was a significant negative relationship between female destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = -.46, p < .01$).

Similarly, there was a significant negative relationship between male destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction ($r(110) = -.37, p < .01$).

Table 4. Correlations between Acceptance of Partner Positive and Partner Negative Behaviors, Constructive Communication, Destructive Communication, and Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Female DAS	-	.49**	-.51**	.69**	.27**	.22*	.65**	.12	-.37**	.48**	.07	.04
2. Female CC		-	-.36**	.54**	.26**	.18	.29**	.38**	-.25**	.34**	.12	.07
3. Female DC			-	-.49**	-.22*	-.23*	-.46**	-.17	.62**	-.34**	-.11	-.05
4. Female APPB				-	.28**	.22*	.64**	.40**	-.40**	.66**	.17	.01
5. Female APNB					-	.27**	.23*	.03	-.22*	.17	.50*	.02
6. Female EIS						-	.20*	.08	-.14	.20*	.23*	.31**
7. Male DAS							-	.37**	-.56**	.63**	.23*	-.12
8. Male CC								-	-.24**	.44**	.05	.02
9. Male DC									-	-.44**	-.14	-.05
10. Male APPB										-	.28**	.10
11. Male APNB											-	-.05
12. Male EIS												-

Note: DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Score; CC = Constructive Communication; DC = Destructive Communication; APPB = Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior; APNB = Acceptance of Partner Negative Behavior; EIS = Ethnic Identity Score.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Analyses Examining Ethnic Identity as a Moderator

Hypotheses predicted that ethnic identity would moderate the relationship between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater acceptance of their partner would report greater satisfaction with their relationship. Separate hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted for acceptance of partner positive and negative behaviors for both males and females. Interaction terms were created to determine whether ethnic identity moderated the relationship between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction. The interaction terms for partner acceptance and ethnic identity were created by multiplying the ratings for partner acceptance and the ratings for ethnic identity respectively.

Similarly, hypotheses also predicted that ethnic identity would moderate the relationship between constructive and destructive communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners. Separate hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted for constructive and destructive communication behaviors for both males and females. Interaction terms were created to determine whether ethnic identity moderated the relationship between communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction. The interaction terms for communication behaviors and ethnic identity were created by multiplying the ratings for communication behaviors and the ratings for ethnic identity respectively.

For all regression analyses, the independent variable of interest (e.g. acceptance of positive or negative behaviors; constructive or destructive communication behaviors) was

entered into the first block, ethnic identity into the second block, and the interaction of the independent variable of interest with ethnic identity into the third block.

Hypothesis 4: Ethnic Identity and Partner Acceptance

Female Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior and Female Ethnic Identity

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 5). Regression analyses revealed that female acceptance of partner positive behavior was significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=.69, p < .001$), accounting for 46.9% of the variance in female relationship satisfaction. When ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of female acceptance of partner positive behavior remained significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=.67, p < .001$). However, female ethnic identity was not significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female ethnic identity was created to determine whether female ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 5). Contrary to predictions, this model was not significant. Female ethnic identity did not moderate the relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female relationship satisfaction.

Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for female acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 5). Analyses indicated that female acceptance of partner positive behavior was significantly predictive of her partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=.64, p < .001$), accounting for 40.3% of the

variance in male relationship satisfaction. When ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of female acceptance of partner positive behavior remained significantly associated with her partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=.62, p < .001$). Female ethnic identity was not predictive of male relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female ethnic identity was created to determine whether ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 5). As predicted, this model was significant. The interaction between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female ethnic identity was significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-.82, p < .05$) accounting for 43% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. Female's acceptance of partner positive behavior interacted with her own ethnic identity to increase male relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesized moderation effect of female ethnic identity in the relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction was supported.

Table 5. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Female Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior and Female Ethnic Identity Interactions Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Female Relationship Satisfaction						Male Relationship Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
FAPPB	6.53***	0.66	6.38***	0.68	6.53†	3.38	5.36***	0.62	5.24***	0.64	11.59***	3.12
FEIS			0.90	0.91	1.02	2.92			0.68	0.85	5.97*	2.69
FAPPB x FEIS					-0.19	0.43					-0.82*	0.39
R^2	0.47		0.01		0.00		0.40		0.00		0.02	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2	97.31***		0.98		0.00		74.37***		0.63		4.32*	

Note. For females, n = 112; For males, n = 112. FAPPB = Female Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior. FEIS = Female Ethnic Identity Score.

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

A median split was performed on female ethnic identity and female acceptance of partner positive behavior, and male partners' relationship satisfaction scores were compared at high and low levels of female ethnic identity and female acceptance of partner positive behavior to determine the nature of this interaction (see Table 6). Overall, results indicated that female acceptance of partner positive behaviors appeared to have a greater impact on male relationship satisfaction than female ethnic identity. However, when female acceptance of partner positive behaviors was low, female ethnic identity appeared to have a greater impact on male relationship satisfaction. When female acceptance of partner positive behaviors was high, female ethnic identity had less of an impact on male relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it appears that female ethnic identity has a compensatory effect on male relationship satisfaction; perhaps elevating male relationship satisfaction in couple relationships where female acceptance of partner positive behaviors is lower.

Table 6. Interaction between Female Ethnic Identity and Female Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior with Male Relationship Satisfaction

	High FAPPB	Low FAPPB
	Male Relationship Satisfaction (DAS)	
High FEIS	113.02	98.53
Low FEIS	110.35	92.74

Note. FAPPB = Female Acceptance of Positive Partner Behavior. DAS = Male Dyadic Adjustment Scale. FEIS = Female Ethnic Identity Score

Post hoc analyses separating out the components of ethnic identity (ethnic pride and ethnic involvement) were conducted to better understand how female ethnic identity impacted male relationship satisfaction. Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted examining each component of female ethnic identity, female acceptance of partner positive behavior, and male relationship satisfaction.

Female ethnic pride. Results of hierarchical linear regression examining female acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction confirmed prior analyses indicating that female acceptance of partner positive behaviors was significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction ($\beta=69.17, p < .001$), accounting for 40.3% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. When female ethnic pride was considered, the adjusted association of female acceptance of partner positive behavior was no longer significant. Female ethnic pride was not predictive of male relationship satisfaction. The interaction of female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female ethnic pride was created to determine whether female ethnic pride moderated the relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction. Results indicated that the interaction between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and ethnic pride was significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-2.63, p < .001$).

Since this interaction was significant, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted to compare male partners' relationship satisfaction scores at high and low levels of female ethnic pride and female acceptance of partner positive behavior to determine the nature of this interaction. Results indicated that female acceptance of partner positive behavior appeared to have a greater impact on male relationship

satisfaction than female ethnic pride. However, when female acceptance of her partner's positive behavior was low, female ethnic pride appeared to have a compensatory effect, elevating male relationship satisfaction (see Table 7).

Table 7. Interaction between Female Ethnic Pride and Female Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior with Male Relationship Satisfaction

	High FAPPB	Low FAPPB
	Male Relationship Satisfaction (DAS)	
High FEP	110.52	98.48
Low FEP	118.68	94.32

Note. FAPPB = Female Acceptance of Positive Partner Behavior. DAS = Male Dyadic Adjustment Scale. FEP = Female Ethnic Pride.

Female ethnic involvement. Hierarchical linear regressions examining female acceptance of male positive behavior and female ethnic involvement again confirmed prior results indicating that female acceptance of partner positive behaviors was significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction, accounting for 40.3% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. When female ethnic involvement was considered, the adjusted association of female acceptance of partner positive behavior remained significant ($\beta=5.16, p < .001$). Female ethnic involvement was not significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction. The interaction of female acceptance of partner positive behavior and female ethnic involvement was created to determine whether female ethnic pride moderated the relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction. Results indicated that the

interaction between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and ethnic involvement was not significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction.

The results of the post hoc analyses revealed that overall, female acceptance of partner positive behavior had a greater impact on male relationship satisfaction. However, when acceptance is low, ethnic identity has a compensatory effect. In particular, female ethnic pride appeared to result in greater male relationship satisfaction at lower levels of female acceptance. However, female ethnic involvement did not appear to have a significant impact on male relationship satisfaction.

Male Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior and Ethnic Identity

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for male acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 8). Results indicated that male acceptance of partner positive behavior was significantly predictive of his own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=.63, p < .001$), accounting for 39.3% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. When male ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of male acceptance of partner positive behavior remained significantly predictive of his own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=.65, p < .001$). Male ethnic identity was also significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-.19, p < .01$). These two predictors accounted for 42.8% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of male acceptance of partner positive behavior and male ethnic identity was created to determine whether male ethnic identity moderated the relationship between male acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 8). Contrary to hypotheses, male ethnic identity did not moderate the

relationship between male acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for male acceptance of partner positive behavior and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 8). Results indicated that male acceptance of partner positive behavior was significantly predictive of his partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=4.83, p < .001$), accounting for 23% of the variance in female relationship satisfaction. When male ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of male acceptance of partner positive behavior remained significantly associated with his partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=4.84, p < .001$). Male ethnic identity did not significantly predict female relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of male acceptance of partner positive behavior and male ethnic identity was created to determine whether male ethnic identity moderated the relationship between male acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 8). Contrary to hypotheses, male ethnic identity did not moderate the relationship between male acceptance of partner positive behavior and female relationship satisfaction.

Table 8. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Male Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior and Male Ethnic Identity Interactions Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Female Relationship Satisfaction						Male Relationship Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
MAPPB	4.83***	0.85	4.84***	0.85	2.46	4.20	5.56***	0.66	5.73***	0.65	5.45†	3.20
MEIS			-0.15	1.00	-2.47	4.13			-1.95	0.76**	-2.23	3.14
MAPPB x MEIS					0.32	0.56					0.04	0.42
<i>R</i> ²	0.23		0.00		0.00		0.39		0.04		0.00	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> ²	32.57***		0.02		0.34		70.65***		6.62**		0.01	

Note. For females, n = 112; For males, n = 112. MAPPB = Male Acceptance of Partner Positive Behavior. MEIS = Male Ethnic Identity Score. †*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

Female Acceptance of Partner Negative Behavior and Ethnic Identity

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for female acceptance of partner negative behavior and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 9). Results indicated that female acceptance of partner negative behavior was significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.71, p < .01$), accounting for 7.1% of the variance in female relationship satisfaction. When female ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of female acceptance of partner negative behavior remained significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.84, p < .05$). There was a trend for female ethnic identity to be a significant predictor of female relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.45, p < .10$). Together these factors accounted for 9.1% of the variance in female relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of female acceptance of partner negative behavior and female ethnic identity was created in order to determine whether ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female acceptance of partner negative behavior and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 9). Contrary to predictions, female ethnic identity did not moderate the relationship between female acceptance of partner negative behavior and relationship satisfaction.

Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for female acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 9). Results indicated that female acceptance of partner negative behavior was significantly predictive of her partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.32, p < .01$), accounting for 5.4% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. When female ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of female acceptance of partner negative behavior remained

significantly predictive of her partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.12, p < .05$). Female ethnic identity was not significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of female acceptance of partner negative behavior and female ethnic identity was created to determine whether ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 9). Contrary to hypotheses, female ethnic identity did not moderate the relationship between female acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction.

Table 9. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Female Acceptance of Partner Negative Behavior and Female Ethnic Identity Interactions Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Female Relationship Satisfaction						Male Relationship Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
FAPNB	1.71**	0.60	1.45*	0.61	1.91	3.25	1.32**	0.53	1.12**	0.55	1.19	2.91
FEIS			1.84	1.21	2.11	2.27			1.47	1.08	1.52	2.03
FAPNB x FEIS					-0.06	0.40					-0.01	0.36
R^2	0.07		0.02		0.00		0.05		0.02		0.00	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2	8.34**		2.32		0.02		6.27**		1.86		0.00	

Note. For females, n = 112. For males, n = 112. FAPNB = Female Acceptance of Partner Negative Behavior. FEIS = Female Ethnic Identity Score.

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Male Acceptance of Partner Negative Behavior and Ethnic Identity

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for male acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 10). Results indicated that male acceptance of partner negative behavior was significantly predictive of his own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.26, p < .05$), accounting for 5.1% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. When male ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of male acceptance of partner negative behavior remained significantly predictive of his own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.23, p < .05$). Male ethnic identity was not significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of male acceptance of partner negative behavior and male ethnic identity was created to determine whether male ethnic identity moderated the relationship between male acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 10). Contrary to hypotheses, male ethnic identity did not moderate this relationship.

Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for male acceptance of partner negative behavior and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 10). Results indicated that male acceptance of partner negative behavior was not significantly predictive of his partner's relationship satisfaction. When male ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of male acceptance of partner negative positive behavior was not significantly associated with his partner's relationship satisfaction. Male ethnic identity was not significantly predictive of female relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of male acceptance of partner negative behavior and male ethnic identity was created to determine whether male ethnic identity moderated the relationship

between male acceptance of partner negative behavior and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 10). Contrary to hypotheses, male ethnic identity did not moderate this relationship.

Table 10. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Male Acceptance of Partner Negative Behavior and Male Ethnic Identity Interactions Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Female Relationship Satisfaction						Male Relationship Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
MAPNB	0.45	0.61	0.46	0.61	1.49	3.21	1.26*	0.52	1.23*	0.52	2.19	2.75
MEIS			0.26	1.14	0.95	2.42			-1.37	0.97	-0.72	2.07
MAPNB x MEIS					-0.13	0.40					-0.12	0.34
R^2	0.01		0.00		0.00		0.05		0.02		0.00	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2	0.57		0.05†		0.12†		5.80*		1.98		0.13	

Note. For females, n = 112. For males, n = 112. MAPNB = Acceptance of Partner Negative Behavior. MEIS = Ethnic Identity Score.
 † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Hypotheses 5: Constructive Communication and Ethnic Identity

Female Constructive Communication and Female Ethnic Identity

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for female constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 11). Results indicated that female constructive communication was significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=5.03, p < .001$), accounting for 23.8% of the variance in female relationship satisfaction. When female ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of female constructive communication remained significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=4.78, p < .001$). Female ethnic identity was marginally predictive of female relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.75, p < .10$). Together these factors accounted for 25.6% of the variance in female relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of female constructive communication and female ethnic identity was created to determine whether female ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 11). Contrary to predictions, the interaction between female constructive communication and female ethnic identity was not predictive of female relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesized moderation effect of female ethnic identity in the relationship between female constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction was not supported.

Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for female constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 11). Results indicated that female constructive communication was significantly predictive of her partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=2.62, p < .01$), accounting for 8.2% of the variance in male

relationship satisfaction. When female ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of female constructive communication remained significantly predictive of her partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=2.37, p < .01$). Female ethnic identity was marginally predictive of male relationship satisfaction ($\beta=1.72, p < .10$). Together these factors accounted for 10.5% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of female constructive communication and female ethnic identity was created to determine whether ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 11). Contrary to predictions, the interaction between female constructive communication and female ethnic identity was not predictive of male relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesized moderation effect of female ethnic identity in the relationship between female constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction was not supported.

Table 11. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Female Constructive Communication and Female Ethnic Identity Interactions Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Female Relationship Satisfaction						Male Relationship Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
FCC	5.03***	0.86	4.78***	0.87	10.27**	4.16	2.62**	0.83	2.37**	0.84	6.50†	4.05
FEIS			1.75†	1.07	6.07†	3.37			1.72†	1.04	4.97	3.28
FCC x FEIS					-0.69	0.51					-0.52	0.50
<i>R</i> ²	0.24		0.02		0.01		0.08		0.02		0.01	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> ²	34.32***		2.68†		1.82		9.86**		2.76†		1.09	

Note. For females, n = 112. For males, n = 112. FCC = Female Constructive Communication. FEIS = Female Ethnic Identity Score.

†*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

Male Constructive Communication and Male Ethnic Identity

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for male constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 12). Results indicated that male constructive communication was significantly predictive of his own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=3.63, p < .001$), accounting for 15.1% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. When male ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of male constructive communication remained significantly predictive of his own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=3.65, p < .001$). However, male ethnic identity was not significantly predictive of male relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of male constructive communication and male ethnic identity was created to determine whether male ethnic identity moderated the relationship between male constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 12). Contrary to predictions, the interaction between male constructive communication and male ethnic identity was not predictive of male relationship satisfaction. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for male constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 12). Results indicated that male constructive communication was not significantly predictive of his partner's relationship satisfaction. When male ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of male constructive communication was not significantly associated with his partner's relationship satisfaction. Male ethnic identity did not significantly predict female relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of male constructive communication and male ethnic identity was created to determine whether ethnic identity moderated the relationship between male constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 12). Contrary to hypotheses, male ethnic identity did not moderate the relationship between male constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction.

Table 12. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Male Constructive Communication and Male Ethnic Identity Interactions Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Female Relationship Satisfaction						Male Relationship Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
MCC	1.29	1.05	1.29	1.06	2.40	5.02	3.63***	0.87	3.65***	0.87	7.61†	4.10
MEIS			0.44	1.13	1.40	4.39			-1.29	0.93	2.14	3.59
MCC x MEIS					-0.14	0.63					-0.51	0.52
R^2	0.01		0.00		0.00		0.14		0.02		0.01	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2	1.51		0.15		0.05		17.34***		1.95		0.98	

Note. For females, n = 112. For males, n = 112. MCC = Male Constructive Communication. MEIS = Male Ethnic Identity Score.
 † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 6: Destructive Communication and Ethnic Identity

Female Destructive Communication and Female Ethnic Identity

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for female destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 13). Results indicated that female destructive communication was significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-5.01, p < .001$), accounting for 39.1% of male relationship satisfaction. When female ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of female destructive communication remained significantly predictive of her own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-4.76, p < .001$). However, female ethnic identity was not significantly predictive of female relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of female destructive communication and female ethnic identity was created to determine whether female ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 13). Contrary to hypotheses, female ethnic identity did not moderate the relationship between female destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for female destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 13). Results indicated that female destructive communication was significantly predictive of her partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-3.97, p < .001$), accounting for 29.3% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. When female ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of female destructive communication remained significantly predictive of her

partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-3.77, p < .001$). Female ethnic identity did not significantly predict male relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of female destructive communication and female ethnic identity was created to determine whether female ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 13). Contrary to predictions, the interaction between female destructive communication and female ethnic identity was not predictive of male relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesized moderation effect of female ethnic identity in the relationship between female destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction was not supported.

Table 13. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Female Destructive Communication and Female Ethnic Identity Interactions Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Female Relationship Satisfaction						Male Relationship Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
FDC	-5.01***	0.80	-4.76***	0.82	-6.68†	4.07	-3.97***	0.73	-3.77***	0.75	-7.76**	3.71
FEIS			1.37	1.07	0.54	2.03			1.11	0.98	-0.62	1.85
FCC x FEIS					0.24	0.50					0.50	0.45
<i>R</i> ²	0.26		0.01		0.00		0.21		0.01		0.01	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> ²	39.09***		1.65		0.23		29.31***		1.28		1.21	

Note. For females, n = 112. For males, n = 112. FDC = Female Destructive Communication. FEIS = Female Ethnic Identity Score.
 †*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

Male Destructive Communication and Male Ethnic Identity

Hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for male destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 14). Results indicated that male destructive communication was significantly predictive of his own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-4.88, p < .001$), accounting for 49.3% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction. When male ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of male destructive communication remained significantly predictive of his own relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-4.94, p < .001$). Male ethnic identity was marginally predictive of male relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-1.51, p < .10$). Together these factors accounted for 3.38% of the variance in male relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of male destructive communication and male ethnic identity was created to determine whether male ethnic identity moderated the relationship between male destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction (see Table 14). Contrary to hypotheses, male ethnic identity did not significantly moderate the relationship between male destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Additional hierarchical linear regressions were conducted for male destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 14). Results indicated that male destructive communication was significantly predictive of his partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-3.62, p < .001$), accounting for 13.3% of the variance in female relationship satisfaction. When male ethnic identity was considered, the adjusted association of male destructive communication remained significantly predictive of his

partner's relationship satisfaction ($\beta=-3.61, p < .001$). Male ethnic identity did not significantly predict female relationship satisfaction.

The interaction of male destructive communication and male ethnic identity was created to determine whether male ethnic identity moderated the relationship between male destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction (see Table 14). Contrary to predictions, the interaction between male destructive communication and male ethnic identity was not predictive of female relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesized moderation effect of male ethnic identity in the relationship between male destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction was not supported.

Table 14. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Male Destructive Communication and Male Ethnic Identity Interactions Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Female Relationship Satisfaction						Male Relationship Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
MDC	-3.62***	0.88	-3.61***	0.89	0.57	4.76	-4.88***	0.70	-4.94***	0.69	-5.39	3.71
MEIS			0.25	1.06	1.74	1.97			-1.51†	0.82	-1.67	1.54
MCC x MEIS					-0.55	0.61					0.06	0.48
<i>R</i> ²	0.13		0.00		0.01		0.31		0.02		0.00	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> ²	16.92***		0.06		0.80		49.31***		3.38†		0.02	

Note. For females, n = 112. For males, n = 112. MDC = Male Destructive Communication. MEIS = Male Ethnic Identity Score.

†*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

Table 15. Summary Table of Results

Hypotheses	Supported/Not Supported			
	M/M	M/F	F/F	F/M
Hypothesis 1: Acceptance of partner positive behaviors will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hypothesis 2: Acceptance of partner negative behaviors will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Hypothesis 3: Constructive communication will be positively associated with relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Hypothesis 4: Destructive communication will be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hypothesis 5: Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between acceptance of partner positive behaviors and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater acceptance of their partner will report increased satisfaction with their relationship	No	No	No	Yes
Hypothesis 6: Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between acceptance of partner negative behaviors and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater acceptance of their partner will report increased satisfaction with their relationship	No	No	No	No
Hypothesis 7: Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between constructive communication and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater likelihood of using constructive communication will report increased satisfaction with their relationship	No	No	No	No
Hypothesis 8: Ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between destructive communication and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and lower likelihood of using destructive communication will report increased satisfaction with their relationship	No	No	No	No
Key: M/M = Male variable of interest → Male relationship satisfaction M/F = Male variable of interest → Female relationship satisfaction F/F = Female variable of interest → Female relationship satisfaction F/M = Female variable of interest → Male relationship satisfaction				

Chapter 7: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine within a sample of African American couples key relationship processes that have been found to predict relationship satisfaction in white couple samples and to investigate the moderating role of ethnic identity on African American relationship processes and couple satisfaction. The results of this study indicate that partner acceptance and communication behaviors are significantly related to relationship satisfaction in African American heterosexual couple relationships. Overall, higher reports of partner acceptance, whether positive or negative, higher reports of constructive communication, and lower reports of destructive communication are significantly associated with higher reports of relationship satisfaction. The results of this study also provide partial support for the moderating role of ethnic identity, particularly ethnic pride, in predicting relationship satisfaction for male partners in African American couples. However, partner acceptance and communication behaviors had a more consistent impact on relationship satisfaction for males and females than did ethnic identity.

Consistency of the Findings with Hypotheses and Research Literature

The hypothesis that partner acceptance would be positively related to relationship satisfaction is supported by the positive association between male and female acceptance of partner positive behavior and their own as well as their partners' satisfaction with the relationship. These findings support the research of Doss et al. (2005) conducted with largely white samples which indicated a positive relationship between higher partner acceptance and higher relationship satisfaction. Our findings also support existing literature that suggests the emotional acceptance of partner behavior may foster closeness

in the relationship resulting in greater relationship satisfaction (Jacobsen et al., 2006).

Results of this study suggest that the process of emotional acceptance of partner positive behavior in African American couples may similarly work to impact relationship satisfaction for these couples.

The cross gender correlations or crossover effect found between acceptance of partner positive behaviors and relationship satisfaction expands the existing literature on partner acceptance, especially within African American couple relationships. Prior research investigating partner acceptance in white couples has primarily examined the relationship between acceptance of partner behavior and individual relationship satisfaction (Doss et al., 2005) and has not examined the cross gender correlations of partner acceptance as frequently. This crossover effect found with African American male and female acceptance of partner positive behavior indicates that partner acceptance may not only influence the experience of the partner receiving the behavior, but also the partner performing the actual behavior. The reciprocal influence of male and female acceptance of partner positive behavior on male and female relationship satisfaction highlights the importance of acceptance of partner positive behavior for African American couple relationships.

This hypothesis was also partially supported by the positive associations between acceptance of partner negative behavior and relationship satisfaction. Higher acceptance of partner negative behavior by males and females was positively associated with higher reports of participants' own relationship satisfaction supporting the research of Doss et al. (2005). Additionally, a crossover effect was found for female acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction, such that higher female acceptance

of partner negative behavior was positively related to higher relationship satisfaction of their male partners. Jacobson et al. (2000) emphasized the importance of partner acceptance in couple relationships, particularly as it relates to problematic partner behaviors. Jacobson et al. (2000) argued that changes in the way the receiving partner experiences the problematic behavior (e.g. emotional acceptance) of their spouse may facilitate closeness and satisfaction in the couple relationship. As a result, higher female acceptance of partner negative behavior may work to increase the satisfaction males experience in their relationships. However, the cross gender correlation exploring the association between male acceptance of partner negative behavior and female relationship satisfaction was not significant. Therefore, it appears that higher male acceptance of partner positive behavior appears to have a stronger impact on female relationship satisfaction than did male acceptance of their partner's negative behavior. Perhaps males' acceptance of their partner's negative behavior is not as central to females' satisfaction with the relationship.

The positive associations found between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction may support Gaines' (2001) notion that partner acceptance in intraracial relationships may be a key socioemotional process among partners from stigmatized groups. For these same-race African American couples, partner acceptance may offer a sense of support and acceptance that may be seldom found outside of their relationship. As a result, the acceptance given to and received from partners in African American couple relationships may increase relationship satisfaction for male and female partners and may serve as buffer against discrimination experienced outside of the relationship (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; La Taillade, 2006). This may be especially true for African

American male partners who are subject to increased experiences of racism and discrimination in society (Broman, 1993, Boyd-Franklin, 2003, La Taillade, 2006). This may explain results indicating that female acceptance of partner positive and negative behavior were consistently positively associated with the relationship satisfaction of African American male partners. However, the importance of partner acceptance for African American females should not be minimized

The hypothesis that constructive communication behaviors would be positively associated with relationship satisfaction was specifically supported by the positive association between female constructive communication and female relationship satisfaction and by the positive association between male constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction. These results indicate that a higher reported likelihood of constructive communication behaviors by male and female partners is positively associated with higher reports of participants' own relationship satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the much of the research conducted with majority white samples which suggest that constructive communication behaviors are positively associated with relationship satisfaction (Christensen et al., 2006; Julien et al., 2003).

Additionally, this hypothesis was further supported by the positive association between female constructive communication and male relationship satisfaction. Higher reports of female constructive communication were significantly associated with higher reports of male relationship satisfaction. This crossover effect is particularly important in that it highlights the reciprocal influence of female constructive communication on both the relationship satisfaction of her partner and herself. However, contrary to predictions, the association between male constructive communication and female relationship

satisfaction was not significant and consequently did not support this hypothesis. This finding contradicts prior research on predominantly white couple samples suggesting that constructive communication behaviors from both partners are positively associated with relationship satisfaction (Christensen et al., 2006; Julien et al., 2003).

The results of this study present interesting links between the impact female constructive communication and female acceptance of partner behavior have on male relationship satisfaction. For the African American males in this study, it appears that perhaps acceptance and positive behaviors from their partners (e.g. mutual discussion of problems, understanding of views, and negotiation of solutions and resolutions to problems) are consistently related to their happiness in their relationships. However, for African American females, acceptance and positive behaviors from their partners (e.g. constructive communication) do not appear to be as consistently related to African American females' satisfaction with their relationships. Perhaps the African American women in this study have additional sources of support and acceptance from family and friendship networks. As demonstrated in prior research, continued relationship with support and family networks predicts greater relationship satisfaction and stability for African American females, but not for males (Hatchett, Veroff, & Douvan, 1995; La Taillade, 2007). This might account for the differing impact of acceptance and positive behaviors on relationship satisfaction for African American males and female partners.

The hypothesis that destructive communication would be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction was supported by the negative association between female destructive communication and female relationship satisfaction and by the negative association between male destructive communication and male relationship satisfaction.

Lower reports of male and female destructive communication are negatively associated with participants' reports of their own relationship satisfaction. This finding is consistent with much of the literature that states that destructive communication behaviors are negatively associated with relationship satisfaction (Julien et al., 2003; Stanley, 2002). Cross gender correlations supported this hypothesis as well. Lower reports of female destructive communication are negatively associated with higher reports of relationship satisfaction by their male partners. Similarly, lower reports of male destructive communication are negatively associated with higher reports of relationship satisfaction by their female partners. These results are consistent with previous literature examining destructive (negative) communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction (Christensen et al., 2002; Julien, 2002; Stanley, 2002) and they highlight how males' and females' destructive communication behaviors are significantly associated with each others' satisfaction with the relationship. These findings also confirm that the relationship between destructive communication behaviors and relationship satisfaction found within largely white research samples also exists within an entirely African American research sample. Simply stated, African American male and female partners who were less likely to use destructive communication behaviors (e.g. mutual blame, mutual threat, and verbal aggression) had greater relationship satisfaction and had partner with a greater relationship satisfaction than males and females with a higher likelihood of using destructive communication behaviors.

The hypothesis that ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater acceptance of their partner will report

greater satisfaction with their relationship was only supported in one instance. Female ethnic identity moderated the relationship between female acceptance of partner positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction, such that female acceptance of partner positive behavior interacted with female ethnic identity to increase male relationship satisfaction. Ethnic identity largely includes factors such as positive evaluation and acceptance of oneself and other members of one's ethnic group (Phinney, 1995 cited in Yeh & Hwang, 2000). As previously discussed, a significant positive association was found between female acceptance of male positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction. Taken together, the highest level of male relationship satisfaction occurred where female acceptance of partner acceptance was high and female ethnic identity was high. Overall, female acceptance of partner positive behavior appeared to have a greater impact on male relationship satisfaction. However, when female acceptance of partner positive behavior was lower, female ethnic identity appeared to increase male relationship satisfaction, suggesting a compensatory effect.

These findings confirm and expand the literature concerning partner acceptance and ethnic identity in African American couple relationships. As discussed earlier, Gaines (2001) suggested that partner acceptance may provide socioemotional support in minority intraracial relationships. Gaines also suggested that the ability to maintain this acceptance in relationships including paired stigmatized individuals may be positively related to ethnic identity. The research of Bell et al. (1990) also suggested a positive relationship between ethnic identity and partner supportiveness in African American couple relationships. The moderation effect of female ethnic identity in the relationship between female acceptance of male positive behavior and male relationship satisfaction

confirms the speculations of Gaines (2001) and also illustrates the important roles female ethnic identity and female acceptance of male partner positive behavior may serve in African American couple relationships. Ethnic identity paired with acceptance of male positive behavior may heighten the support and acceptance that African American male partners receive in their romantic relationships. The ethnic identity of female partners may provide a sense of belonging, closeness, and intimacy that males may not receive outside of their relationship. Additionally, acceptance of partner positive behavior may provide critical acknowledgement and affirmation of the positivity African American male partners bring to their relationship, a factor that is often overlooked in society and in research. Perhaps, females with higher ethnic identity scores may be more attuned to their partners' need for support and validation within their couple relationships. Taken together, the support, acceptance, and closeness provided by female ethnic identity and female acceptance of partner positive behavior appear to work together to increase the satisfaction males experience in their relationships.

However, no additional support was found for the hypothesis that ethnic identity moderates the relationship between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners. Female ethnic identity did not moderate the relationship between female acceptance of partner negative behavior and male relationship satisfaction. Perhaps for the men in this sample, the acceptance of their positive behaviors is more influential to their relationship satisfaction than the acceptance of their negative behaviors. Female ethnic identity also failed to moderate the relationships between female acceptance of partner positive behavior with female relationship satisfaction and female acceptance of partner negative behavior with female relationship satisfaction.

Perhaps for the women in this study, the support and acceptance with ethnic identity for their male partners is achieved outside of their relationship in other ethnic social support relationships or social networks.

Contrary to predictions, male ethnic identity failed to moderate the relationships between male acceptance of partner behavior (positive and negative) and male relationship satisfaction. Male ethnic identity also failed to moderate the relationships between male acceptance of partner behavior (positive and negative) and female relationship satisfaction. These results are consistent with the results of the correlational analyses in this study in which male ethnic identity was not significantly related to any of the relationship variables examined in this study. As previously discussed, perhaps the African American women in this study have a greater access to the support and acceptance associated with ethnic identity in interactions outside of their romantic relationships. Perhaps the receipt of support and acceptance in other intraracial friendship and social support networks provides the women in this sample with the support associated with the validation and support offered to males through female ethnic identity. These findings disconfirm the hypothesized moderation effect of male ethnic identity. The discrepant moderation effects found for male and female ethnic identity also highlight the uncertain role ethnic identity may play in African American couple relationships (Bell et al., 1990; Kelly & Floyd, 2001; 2006).

The hypothesis that ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between constructive communication and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and greater use of constructive communication will report greater satisfaction with their relationship was disconfirmed.

Similarly, the hypothesis that ethnic identity will moderate the relationship between destructive communication and relationship satisfaction for both male and female partners, such that partners with positive ethnic identity and lower use of destructive communication will report greater satisfaction with their relationship was also disconfirmed. Ethnic identity did not moderate the relationships between communication behaviors, neither constructive nor destructive, and relationship satisfaction for male or female partners. Perhaps the effect of communication behaviors (positive and negative) on relationship satisfaction may be more direct and may not be affected by ethnic identity.

The results of this study suggest that ethnic identity may be more related to partner acceptance than to communication behaviors in African American heterosexual couple relationships. These results suggest that the mechanism by which ethnic identity may impact the relationship satisfaction of African American couples may be partner acceptance. Particularly, the socioemotional acceptance and support associated with partner acceptance may work together with factors of ethnic identity such as ethnic pride to impact African American relationship satisfaction.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This investigation is one of the few studies that have examined key relationship processes that have been found to predict relationship satisfaction in white couple samples within a sample of African American heterosexual couples. As a result, this study expands the literature on African American couple relationships and adds a greater understanding of the impact partner acceptance and communication behaviors have on relationship satisfaction among these couples. This study also expands the literature on

ethnic identity by examining the phenomena among an adult sample and by specifically investigating its impact within the context of adult romantic relationships. Additionally, this study adds to the literature examining romantic relationships among stigmatized individuals by furthering the understanding of the socioemotional process of partner acceptance for intraracial couples and by adding to the empirical understanding of the impact ethnic identity has on that process.

Another noteworthy strength of this study is its sample size. Researchers examining factors within the African American community are often met with the challenge of recruiting large samples (Karney, Kreitz, and Sweeney, 2004; Kelly, 2007; Rogge, Cobb, Story, Johnson, Lawrence, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2006). This is largely related to the stigma and healthy cultural suspicion (Boyd-Franklin, 2003) African Americans possess concerning scientific and mental health research that have resulted from the unethical treatment of African American participants in research studies such as the Tuskegee Experiment (Kelly, 2007). However, this study included 112 African American heterosexual couples (224 participants), a satisfactory sample size given the challenge of recruiting African Americans in research studies.

Although this study offered many strengths and interesting findings concerning partner acceptance, partner communication behaviors, and relationship satisfaction among African American heterosexual couples, there were also limitations of the present study. One such limitation of this study is that the instrument used to measure ethnic identity (EIS-R; La Taillade & Cauce, 1995) is not one that is widely validated throughout the literature. Although the validity of the instrument was demonstrated in this study and in limited prior research (La Taillade, 2000), the psychometric properties

of the instrument have not been as widely tested as other measures of ethnic identity such as the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R; Phinney & Ong, 2007).

As a result, using a lesser known measure limits the ability to compare the findings of this study with other studies examining ethnic identity among African American samples.

Additionally, the way ethnic identity is conceptualized by this instrument and in this study may not have adequately captured the conceptualization of ethnic identity for these participants. In this study, ethnic identity was operationalized to include the components of ethnic pride and ethnic involvement. However, the component of ethnic pride may have greater implications for the interactive relational processes occurring between partners in African American heterosexual couples. Post hoc analyses exploring the moderating role of female ethnic identity revealed that only female ethnic pride was significantly predictive of relationship satisfaction for African American males. Analyses exploring female ethnic involvement were not significant. Perhaps, in this study, ethnic involvement is less related to couple processes and should be excluded from the conceptualization of ethnic identity. Future studies exploring ethnic identity as it relates to couple relationships should reconsider the conceptualization of ethnic identity.

Another potential limitation of this study is the level of relationship satisfaction reported in the sample. This sample of African American heterosexual couples was a relatively satisfied as indicated by their scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). This could be a potential limitation of the study in that the impact of ethnic identity may be less prominent for African American couples who are relatively satisfied in their relationships. However, the impact of ethnic identity may be more salient among African American distressed couples. In order to gain a clearer understanding of the

impact of ethnic identity on African American heterosexual relationships, this study should be replicated among a sample of African American clinical couples seeking treatment.

Implications and Future Directions

Implications for Research

This study investigated the unique impact of ethnic identity on African American relationship processes and couple satisfaction. More information could be gathered in future research by comparing differences on ethnic identity scores between partners. Differential levels of ethnic identity within the couple relationship may contribute to the interactional processes between partners and may better explain the relationship between ethnic identity, partner acceptance, partner communication behaviors, and relationship satisfaction. Couples where one partner has a high ethnic identity score and one partner as a low ethnic identity score may differ significantly on the levels of acceptance offered to their partner compared to couples where both partners have high ethnic identity scores. Additionally, differential levels of ethnic identity between partners may also contribute to the perceived relationship satisfaction of African American male and female partners. In future studies, comparing differences between partners on ethnic identity scores would allow for a clear investigation of how ethnic identity interacts with relational processes and overall relationship satisfaction. Overall, future research should also continue to examine male and female ethnic identity in order to better understand the impact it has in intraracial romantic relationships. Furthermore, a more widely used instrument of ethnic identity may be useful for measuring ethnic identity and for comparing results with those of other studies examining ethnic identity among African Americans.

Future research should also compare intraracial couples with interracial couples to see whether the impact of ethnic identity differs for these two relationship types. Perhaps the salience of ethnic identity may be more apparent for African Americans in relationships with a different race partner, in which concerns regarding allegiance to one's own group may be challenged. This might explain the lack of significant findings regarding the moderation effect of ethnic and the African American intraracial sample used in this study. Prior research investigating the impact of racial identity on marital satisfaction in interracial couples (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004) has demonstrated the importance of racial identity for African American partners in these relationships. Results of this study indicated that racial identity was the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction for African American partners in interracial relationships. Future studies should similarly investigate the impact of ethnic identity in interracial African American/white couples and compare the results with those found for intraracial African American couples.

Perhaps ethnic identity may also function to improve relationship satisfaction by buffering against the culturally specific stressors that negatively impact African American couples, specifically discrimination. Ethnic identity could be a culturally specific resource for African American couple relationships, as compared to resources that are common across couples regardless of partners' racial and ethnic backgrounds such as partner support (Pasch & Bradbury, 1998). Consequently, an additional next step for this research would be to assess for experiences of discrimination within the sample of intraracial African American heterosexual couples. As previously stated, experiences of discrimination may augment the level of satisfaction African American men and

women experience in their couple relationships (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Kelly, 2006; Kelly & Floyd, 2001). Future investigations examining partner acceptance, communication behaviors, and relationship satisfaction among African American couples should include measures that assess for experiences of discrimination in order to examine the possible buffer effect ethnic identity may have in these relationships. Additionally, since experiences of discrimination may vary by geographic region and socioeconomic status (Cutrona, Russell, Abraham, Gardner, Melby, & Cogner, 2003), future research should also investigate the impact of these demographic variables on relationship satisfaction among African American heterosexual couples.

This study investigated the impact of the relational processes of partner acceptance and communication behaviors on relationship satisfaction among African American heterosexual couples. However, it is also possible that relationship satisfaction may also contribute to the communication behaviors and degree of acceptance between partners. African American partners who are more satisfied in their relationship may communicate better or be more accepting of their partners' behavior. Consequently, future research should examine these causative factors in order to better understand how they are working to impact African American couple relationships.

Implications for Clinical Practice

The results of this study are useful for clinical practice for several reasons. This study examines the impact of partner acceptance in African American heterosexual relationships. Partner acceptance is a key emotional process that has been examined in clinical practice for years. Integrative behavioral couple therapy (IBCT) is an approach to clinical practice that believes "in every couple relationship, there are some "unsolvable"

problems in which the agent is unwilling or unable to change to the extent that the recipient desires” (Dimidjian, et al., 2002, p.253). In the IBCT approach, instead of working directly to change those unsolvable problem behaviors, this approach works to change the way the behavior is experienced by the receiving partner (La Taillade & Jacobson, 1995). The theory of change in this approach is that by promoting acceptance of partner behaviors and partner differences, areas of conflict can become sources of intimacy and closeness. Several studies have tested this approach and found positive relationships between partner acceptance and relationship satisfaction (Doss & Christensen, 2006; Doss et al., 2005; Jacobson et al., 2000).

The results of this study confirm this relationship among African American heterosexual couples. Female acceptance of partner behavior (positive and negative) was significantly related to her own relationship satisfaction as well as to the relationship satisfaction of her partner. Male acceptance of partner behavior (positive and negative) was also significantly related to his own relationship satisfaction. Male acceptance of partner positive behavior, however, was also significantly related to the relationship satisfaction of his partner. Furthermore, this study highlights culturally specific explanations for the importance of the socioemotional process linked with partner acceptance in intraracial African American couple relationships. Therefore, clinicians working with African American couples should be mindful of the significant impact partner acceptance may have in African American intraracial relationships and should work to encourage acceptance among these couples to foster relationship satisfaction.

The results of this study also indicate the importance of female ethnic identity in this sample of African American couple relationships. Female ethnic identity was positively associated with her own relationship satisfaction and the satisfaction of her partner. Compared with the impact male ethnic identity has on female relationship satisfaction, results suggest that female ethnic identity has a more consistent impact on the relationship satisfaction of her male partner and may be more central to the happiness male partners find in their relationship. Further, analyses examining partner acceptance suggests that acceptance of partner behavior, particularly partner positive behavior, may be the mechanism by which ethnic identity impacts African American relationship satisfaction. Consequently, clinicians should also assess and explore ethnic identity among the same-race African American couples they treat to better understand the impact it may have in their relationships. Particular attention should be given to the impact female ethnic identity may have on African American males and their satisfaction in their relationships in treatment.

Finally, this study demonstrates the significant impact communication behaviors have on relationship satisfaction among African American couples. Boyd-Franklin (2003) mentioned the importance of providing African American couples with the skills to communicate with each other about difficult issues in ways that are relationship enhancing. This study confirms the significant impact higher constructive communication behaviors and lower destructive communication behaviors have on higher relationship satisfaction for African American couples. Clinicians working with African American couples should assess for couple communication behaviors through self-report measures such as the CPQ (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) and other observational measures to

identify partner communication behaviors. Communication skills training and problem-solving skills training from the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy approach would be potentially beneficial to African American couples in treatment to help them communicate in ways that contribute to higher satisfaction within their relationship.

Appendix A

EIS-R

The questions listed below pertain to your ethnic background and experiences. We are interested in how your feelings and behavior are affected by your ethnicity.

Directions: Please indicate how often you do the following.

Often	Not at all				Quite
1. Incorporate aspects of my racial and ethnic background into my general lifestyle	1	2	3	4	5
2. Spend time trying to learn more about my own racial and ethnic background, such as its history, traditions, and customs	1	2	3	4	5
3. Think about my ethnicity	1	2	3	4	5
4. Participate in activities involving people of multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
5. Spend time with persons who share my racial and ethnic background	1	2	3	4	5
6. Spend time trying to learn more about racial and ethnic groups different from my own, such as their history, traditions, and customs	1	2	3	4	5
7. Participate in activities involving people who share my own racial and ethnic background	1	2	3	4	5

8. Spend time with persons whose racial and ethnic background is different from my own	1	2	3	4	5
9. Think about how my life and opportunities are affected by my racial and ethnic background	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own racial and ethnic group (s)	1	2	3	4	5
11. I enjoy being around people from racial and ethnic backgrounds other than my own	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have great pride in my ethnic heritage	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel quite comfortable interacting with people who share my racial and ethnic background	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel closest to people who share my racial and ethnic background	1	2	3	4	5
15. My racial and ethnic background is something I rarely think about.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I enjoy being around people from my own racial and ethnic background	1	2	3	4	5
17. I feel about equally comfortable around people who share my racial and ethnic background and people whose background is different from my own	1	2	3	4	5
18. I understand pretty well what my racial and ethnic background means to me, in terms of my beliefs and experiences	1	2	3	4	5
19. My family is something I rarely ever think about.	1	2	3	4	5

20. My family is an important part of who I am. **1 2 3 4 5**

21. My racial background is an important part of who I am. **1 2 3 4 5**

Appendix B

Dyadic Adjustment Scale²

Most people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

		Almost			Almost	Always
	Always	Always	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	Disagree
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	Disagree	Disagree	
1. Handling family finances	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Matters of recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Religious matters	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Demonstration of affection	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Friends	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Sex relations	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Philosophy of life	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Amount of time spent together	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Making major decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Household tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Leisure time interests and activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Career decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or termination of your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Do you confide in your mate?	1	2	3	4	5	6

20. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. How often do you and your mate get on each others' nerves?	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Almost			
		Every Day	Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely
					Never
23. Do you kiss your mate?	1	2	3	4	5
			Most of		Very Few
			Them		Of Them
		All of Them		Some of Them	None
					Of Them
24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	1	2	3	4	5

How often do the following occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Less Than Once a Month	Once/ Twice a Month	Once/ Twice a Week	Once a Day	More Often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Laugh together	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Calmly discuss something	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Work together on a project	1	2	3	4	5	6

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree or disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in the past few weeks (circle yes or no).

	Yes	No
29. Being too tired for sex	1	2
30. Not showing love	1	2

31. The bubbles on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, “happy”, represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the number which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?
Circle one number only for the most accurate statement.

- 1 I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
- 2 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
- 3 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
- 4 It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- 5 It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- 6 My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

Appendix C

Communication Patterns Questionnaire

Directions: We are interested in how you and your partner typically deal with problems in your relationship. Please rate each item on a scale of 1 (=very unlikely) to 9 (=very likely).

A. WHEN SOME PROBLEM IN THE RELATIONSHIP ARISES,

	Very Unlikely									Very Likely
1. <u>Mutual Avoidance.</u> Both members avoid discussing the problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
2. <u>Mutual Discussion.</u> Both members try to discuss the problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
3. <u>Discussion/Avoidance.</u> Man tries to start a discussion while woman tries to avoid a discussion.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Woman tries to start a discussion while man tries to avoid a discussion.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

B. DURING A DISCUSSION OF A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM,

1. Mutual Blame. Both members blame, accuse, and criticize each other.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. Mutual Expression. Both members express their feelings to each other.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. Mutual Threat. Both members threaten each other with negative consequences.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Mutual Negotiation. Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Very
Unlikely

Very
Likely

5. Demand/Withdraw.
Man nags and demands while woman withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Woman nags and demands while man withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. Criticize/Defend.

Man criticizes while woman defends herself. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Woman criticizes while man defends himself. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7. Pressure/Resist.

Man pressures woman to take some action or stop some action, while woman resists. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Woman pressures man to take some action or stop some action, while man resists. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

8. Emotional/Logical.

Man expresses feelings while woman offers reasons and solutions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Woman expresses feelings while man offers reasons and solutions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. Threat/Back down.

Man threatens negative consequences and woman gives in or backs down. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. <u>Mutual Resolution</u> . Both feel that the problem has been solved.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. <u>Mutual Withholding</u> . Neither partner is giving to the other after the discussion.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. <u>Mutual Reconciliation</u> . After the discussion, both try to be especially nice to each other.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. <u>Guilt/Hurt</u> . Man feels guilty for what he said or did while woman feels hurt.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Woman feels guilty for what she said or did while man feels hurt.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Very								Very
	Unlikely								Likely
7. <u>Reconcile/Withdraw</u> . Man tries to be especially nice, acts as if things are back to normal, while woman acts distant.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Woman tries to be especially nice, acts as if things are back to normal, while man acts distant.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. <u>Pressure/Resist</u> . Man pressures woman to apologize or promise to do better, while woman									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

resists.

Woman pressures man to apologize or
promise to do better, while man resists.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. Support Seeking.

Man seeks support from others (parent,
friend, children).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Woman seeks support from others
(parent, friend, children)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Appendix D

Male / Female (circle one)

Frequency and Acceptability of Partner Behavior

Instructions:

In every relationship there are positive behaviors that individuals like their partner to do, and negative behaviors that individuals don't like their partner to do. The following pages list typical behaviors that can cause relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction. For each behavior listed below:

A) Give an estimate of the frequency of that behavior in the **past month**. Estimate the number of times (0-9) that behavior has occurred this past month either per day, week, or month by circling the appropriate number and time frame you are referring to. For instance, if a behavior occurred twice a week, you can either estimate it as 2 times per week or 8 times per month. In the example below, the spouse indicated that his/her partner initiated physical affection about 2 times per week in the last month. If a behavior occurred at least once in the past month, do **NOT** estimate it as zero times per day or zero times per week.

B) After you have estimated the frequency of the behavior in the past month, then rate how acceptable it is to you that this behavior has occurred at the specified frequency in the past month. Use the low end of the scale to rate behaviors whose frequency in the last month is unacceptable, intolerable, and unbearable. Use the high end of the scale to rate behaviors whose frequency in the last month is acceptable, even desirable. **If the behavior has not happened in the last month, respond with zero times per month then rate how acceptable it is to you that the behavior has not happened in the past month.** In the example below, the spouse feels that the frequency of her spouse initiating affection two times per week in the last month is moderately unacceptable.

Times per:	Day			Week			Month		
How acceptable is it to you that your partner was physically affectionate <u>at this frequency in the past month?</u>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally					Totally				
Unacceptable					Acceptable				

2. In the past month, my partner was verbally affectionate (e.g., complimented me, told me he/she loves me, said nice things to me)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per:	Day			Week			Month		
How acceptable is it to you that your partner was verbally affectionate <u>at this frequency in the past month?</u>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally					Totally				
Unacceptable					Acceptable				

How acceptable is it to you that your partner did child care at this frequency in the past month?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally									Totally
Unacceptable									Acceptable

5. In the past month, my partner confided in me (e.g., shared with me what he/she felt, confided in me his/her successes and failures)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner confided in you at this frequency in the past month?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally									Totally
Unacceptable									Acceptable

6. In the past month, my partner engaged in sexual activity with me (e.g., can include sexual intercourse or any other significant sexual activity, whether initiated by you or your partner)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner engaged in sexual activity with you at this frequency in the past month?

 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Totally

Totally

Unacceptable

Acceptable

7. In the past month, my partner was supportive of me when I had problems (e.g., listened to my problems, sympathized with me, helped me out with my difficulties)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner was supportive at this frequency in the past month?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally					Totally				
Unacceptable					Acceptable				

8. In the past month, my partner did social or recreational activities with me (e.g., went to movies, dinner, concerts, hiking, etc. with me, include times when partner initiated these events as well as times when you or others initiated them)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner did social or recreational activities with you at this frequency in the past month?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally					Totally				
Unacceptable					Acceptable				

9. In the past month, my partner socialized with my family or my friends (e.g., visited my family or friends with me, was responsive when they called, joined me for outings with my family or friends)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per:		Day		Week		Month				
How acceptable is it to you that your partner socialized with your family or friends <u>at this frequency in the past month?</u>										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Totally					Totally				
	Unacceptable					Acceptable				

10. In the past month, my partner discussed problems in our relationship with me and tried to solve those problems (e.g., talked with me about relationship problems, tried to constructively solve those problems)

Frequency:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Times per:		Day		Week		Month				
How acceptable is it to you that your partner discussed relationship problems with you <u>at this frequency in the past month?</u>										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Totally					Totally				
	Unacceptable					Acceptable				

How acceptable is it to you that your partner participated in financial responsibilities at this frequency in the past month?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Totally

Totally

Unacceptable

Acceptable

13. Positive behavior(s) not included that you found important in the last month

Behavior: _____

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per:

Day

Week

Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner _____ at this frequency in the past month?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Totally

Totally

Unacceptable

Acceptable

Partner Negative Behaviors

14. In the past month, my partner was critical of me (e.g., blamed me for problems, put down what I did, made accusations about me)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner was critical of you at this frequency in the past month?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Totally

Totally

Unacceptable

Acceptable

15. In the past month, my partner was not responsive to me (e.g., didn't listen when I tried to tell him/her something, ignored my needs for attention, spent too much time by him/her self or with his/her friends)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner was not responsive to you at this frequency in the past month?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally					Totally				
Unacceptable					Acceptable				

16. In the past month, my partner was dishonest with me (e.g., lied to me, failed to tell me things I wanted or needed to know, twisted the facts so I didn't find out what really happened)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner was dishonest with you at this frequency in the past month?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally					Totally				
Unacceptable					Acceptable				

17. In the past month, my partner was inappropriate with members of the opposite sex (e.g., was too flirtatious with other men/women, had secret meetings with them, made passes at them, or had affairs)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per:	Day			Week			Month			
How acceptable is it to you that your partner was inappropriate with members of the opposite sex <u>at this frequency in the past month?</u>										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Totally						Totally			
	Unacceptable						Acceptable			

18. In the past month, my partner did not follow through with his/her agreements (e.g., didn't do what she/he said she/he would do, went back on his/her word)

Frequency:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Times per:	Day			Week			Month			
How acceptable is it to you that your partner did not follow through with his/her agreements <u>at this frequency in the past month?</u>										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Totally						Totally			
	Unacceptable						Acceptable			

19. In the past month, my partner was verbally abusive with me (e.g., swore at me, called me names, yelled or screamed at me)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner was verbally abusive at this frequency in the past month?

 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Totally

Totally

Unacceptable

Acceptable

20. In the past month, my partner was physically abusive with me (e.g., pushed, shoved, kicked, bit or hit me, or threw things at me)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner was physically abusive at this frequency in the past month?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally					Totally				
Unacceptable					Acceptable				

21. In the past month, my partner was controlling and bossy (e.g., did things without consulting with me first, insisted on his/her way, didn't listen to what I wanted, manipulated things so she/he got what she/he wanted)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner was controlling and bossy at this frequency in the past month?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally					Totally				
Unacceptable					Acceptable				

22. In the past month, my partner invaded my privacy (e.g., opened my mail, listened in on my conversations with friends or family)

Frequency: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per:	Day			Week			Month			
How acceptable is it to you that your partner invaded your privacy <u>at this frequency in the past month?</u>										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Totally								Totally	
	Unacceptable								Acceptable	

23. In the past month, my partner engaged in addictive behavior (such as smoking, using drugs, drinking alcohol, etc.) that bothered me. NOTE: Please include what the behavior was _____.

Frequency:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Times per:	Day			Week			Month			
How acceptable is it to you that your partner engaged in this addictive behavior <u>at this frequency in the past month?</u>										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Totally								Totally	
	Unacceptable								Acceptable	

24. Negative behavior(s) not included that you found important in the last month.
 Behavior: _____

Frequency:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Times per: Day Week Month

How acceptable is it to you that your partner _____ at this frequency in the past month?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Totally Unacceptable Totally Acceptable

Items of Most Concern to You:

Out of the behaviors you rated on this questionnaire, what are the 5 behaviors (positive or negative) that were of most concern to you or that troubled you the most in the last month? Please indicate the item number of the behavior on this questionnaire and the topic of the item. For example, if item 18 was of most concern, you would write the number 18, then indicate the issue was criticism (see example below). PLEASE DO NOT put more than one item on each line, and please do your best to choose 5 items as requested.

EXAMPLE:

Item of Most Concern: Item # on this questionnaire 18 Item Topic criticism

WHAT IS YOUR:

Item of **Most** Concern: Item # on this questionnaire _____ Item Topic _____

Item of **2nd** Most Concern: Item # on this questionnaire _____ Item Topic

Item of **3rd** Most Concern: Item # on this questionnaire _____ Item Topic

Item of **4th** Most Concern: Item # on this questionnaire _____ Item Topic

Item of **5th** Most Concern: Item # on this questionnaire _____ Item Topic

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