Essay 1: Interracial Relationships

Intercultural Communications Class

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Introduction

Interracial relationships come with lots of pros and cons. Regardless if the relationship is friendly or romantic, there can always be something learned. Some pros could be gaining a new understanding of your partners’ cultural background. That new section of the world that you hadn’t even thought about is now open to you for learning, adapting, and sharing with the rest of the world. You also represent progression towards a change for the better. However, there are also the cons of interracial relationships, like those who don't approve of it. It makes it even harder when those that don't approve are those that are close to you. There are also the remarks from the random people of everyday life and even on the internet.

Rationale

To expand on this is to come to an understanding of what interracial couples go though, majorly with African Americans. There’s a certain level of understanding when it comes to relationships and a mutual understanding between two people of different colors. It can even apply to people of the same color, solely because they both have different backgrounds that neither of them has lived through. How a person was raised creates their morals, their principles, what they think is okay to do, what they would never even think about doing and etc. And since no one can be raised the exact same as the other, then there must be a line where their ideals can meet and that is where these relationships come into play. But to make it more specific and interesting to write about, this will be focused on the issues and innerworkings of interracial relationships.

Multiple problems may arise within the relationship as well. As two different races co- mingle and get to know each other, they also have stories to tell of their race as well. This so both partners are able to understand their different upbringing, thus better understanding each

other. However, when that point of understanding is missed then things get iffy between the pair.

Research

# Understanding

The article, “Do You Really Understand? Achieving Accuracy in Interracial Relationships”, written by Deborah Son Holoien, Hilary B. Bergsieker, J. Nicole Shelton, and Jan Marie Alegre, speaks about the misunderstanding of interacial couples. Their study consisted of 234 undergrads that were paired up with either the same race or they get cross paired as roommates. They then measured how “close” the pair was each day, over the span of 10 days.

Their goal was to find out if the participants could feel understood, racially, with their partners. Within those 10 days was a social scientific research that only required observation of their lives. As they got to know each other as roommates and different races, no numbers were involved; only a combination of ideals.

Being able to perceive exactly what one partner is trying to communicate to the other and plays a big role in how the relationship will go. “When people fail to accurately gauge how partners think and feel, they may provide too much or too little support, both of which are associated with decreased relationship satisfaction” (Holoien, Bergsieker, Shelton and Alegre 2014, p 76). From this quote alone, I’m able to find multiple examples of how this might happen. I get a strong sense that, for example, if there was an African American and a Caucasian in a relationship, there would be a lot to speak about. The history that just those two races have been enough to start a conversation and are also enough to turn the relationship into a hateful one. You wouldn’t even have to think back too far to understand how this may go down.

Say the AA (African American) is talking about current news that has to do with some other AA and the police. The feelings that are being expressed by the AA partner may not be reciprocated by the Caucasian partner. This will immediately create a divide between the two. But say the Caucasian said that they’d be sad if it happened to the AA partner or even their family. But the point of their conversation wasn't for them to feel bad for just them and their family. The point was to talk about the injustice as a whole, yet the Caucasian doesn’t understand that, thus breaking up their bond that could have been. This is what that quote above meant to me; the support wasn’t in the right place and it made the relationship implode.

# Racial Salience

Looking at the same article, they began to talk about some of the true reasoning behind interracial relationships with Blacks and Whites. “In such contexts, Whites’ desire to affiliate is more likely to reflect self-image concerns of not appearing prejudiced, preventing them from accurately perceiving partners.” (Holoien et al., 2014, p 78). Reading this, it makes me believe that most interracial couples are built on a foundation of a person thinking, “I'm not racist, and to show it, I’ll date someone who is a different color than me”. That already cuts off the basis of needing to understand a partner of a different color. Adding on, if the other partner, a black person, is getting into the relationship to form a real relationship, then they are already on a different wavelength. If there’s no type of communication of goals or interests in the relationships, then it’s bound to fail and go nowhere.

# Attitudes

In the article, “Attitudes Toward Interracial Relationships Among College Students: Race, Class, Gender, and Perceptions of Parental Views”, a study was done using 1173 college students. The study was to determine how college students felt about interracial relationships.

The authors, Carolyn J. Field, Sitawa R. Kimuna, Murray A. Straus, findings consist of the different attitudes that college students have on interracial relationships. One of the tables basically tells what the percentages of everyone's type from different areas. It also talks about which race experiences racial stress the most, African American was the highest on the list. I say all this to look to the simple fact that African Americans aren't necessarily favored by other races as much as they would like to be. This creates a segregation that can travel into new relationships without any knowledge of the infiltration.

# I wouldn’t.

Committing to an interracial relationship is a big step. It requires patience, perseverance, and a strong sense of morals. Or, you can just push all of that onto someone else as you watch from the sideline and approve of their goal. That is what was expressed in the article by Melissa

R.Herman and Mary E.Campbell, “I wouldn’t, but you can: Attitudes toward interracial

relationships”. They collected their data through surveys, and subsets of surveys to a select group of people.

Their results bore somewhat ugly truths of who they really are. This mindset of not wanting to bear a child by a black person but be okay with dating them is borderline selfish. “...and many of the respondents who say they are willing to have interracial relationships have not engaged in even the most basic interracial relationship (dating), which might be considered a prerequisite to the more serious forms of interracial intimacy.” (M. Campbell & M. Herman 2012, ps 343-358). This complete lack of urgency to not only understand but to at least get to know a black person in a romantic way is the basis of the entire study. My take on the quote above is simple. If people have no real interest in trying to find a black relationship partner, then

who’s to say they even want to get to know them? This, again, creates a divide. But now the divide has transcended into a flat-out dislike that is shown, clearly.

# Liked vs Respected

The critical perspective, as stated in the book, Intercultural Communication in Contexts,

by Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama, states that “A metatheoretical approach that includes many assumptions of the interpretive approach but that focuses more on macro contexts, such as the political and social structures that influence communication” (Martin and Nakayama p 64). The reason I’m bringing this up is because it ties in well with the next article. Composed by Hilary B. Bergsieker, J. Nicole Shelton, and Jennifer A. Richeson, “To Be Liked Versus Respected: Divergent Goals in Interracial Interactions” speak on how people wish to be looked upon by other races.

Their data was collected via online survey. They asked questions that were designed to evaluate the participants’ goals in made up interracial scenarios. The results bore what they had assumed. In front of their own race, they were comparable. However, in interracial instances, the minorities recorded that they wished to be seen as more competent.

“People care deeply about how others perceive them, a phenomenon believed to reflect a fundamental human need to belong in groups and maintain stable relationships…” “This need to belong causes people to monitor their social surroundings for indications of acceptance or rejection from others and to manage their behavior to minimize the possibility of exclusion” (Bergsieker, Shelton, Richeson 2010). Yet another simple quote that can be easily explained. If people are so worried about what everyone else will think about them, then there’s no room for character development. There’s no room to learn new things, thus creating a cultural divide for

some acceptance from people who don’t even know you. It cuts any potential for friendships and relationships with a different race.

# CBRI

This article speaks about color blindness. This is a different type of colorblind though. This color blindness has to do with racial ideologies. To spell it out, CBRI= Colorblind Racial Ideologies. Written by Mary E. Campbell and Vanessa Gonlin, “Is Blindness Contagious?

Examining Racial Attitudes among People of Color with Close Interracial Relationships”, they are performing a study to see if people of color “...are more likely to express colorblind racial attitudes if they have an intimate partner or close friends who are white.” (Campbell & Gonlin 2017, p 937).

The study consisted of 2,713 respondents, 1,357 were people of color. However, with limitations of race and age, it was knocked down to 1,128 respondents of color. They also combined data from earlier studies, and they included 4 out of the seven CBRI questions.

This article leaves an interpretive impression on me. Since they aren’t trying to necessarily predict anything, they're only trying to see if the people of color who have white friends experience CBRI. So, on one hand, not having an interracial relationship creates a divide between black people and white people. On the other hand, having a white friend may also impair one’s outlook on society and its racial belittlement.

# Race Doesn’t Matter

““Race doesn’t matter”: A dialogic analysis of interracial romantic partners’ stories about racial differences”, by Erin A. Brummett. The study conducted here assesses, “...constructions of racial differences within online stories narrated by individuals involved in interracial romantic relationships” (Brummett 2016). The sample of this study consisted of 76 stories of an interracial

relationship. From there, all the stories were read, and a theme was composed. They were also read in order to answer the initial research question.

The results came in negative, technically. Not the numbers being behind the 0, but negative meaning it gave interracial relationships a bad mark. This is definitely an interpretive approach, seeing how it only asks for an overview of the relationship between the races. It’s interesting that even though they gave it a try, they still face hardships from their own family members.

Conclusion

Being able to communicate your feelings towards another race comes with a lot of baggage. There can be good baggage, but there is definitely bad baggage. The bad baggage hinders the relationship and prevents more interracial relationships from forming in the future. The only way to stop the divide is to cross the divide, hypothetically and physically. I’m positive that I have a grasp on interatrial relationships, but with the addition of the research articles, I was able to gain a new understanding of how others view interracial instances.

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Essay 2

I will be writing on the performance of Duke Ellington and His Orchestra. They perform a multitude of songs while giving many a chance to solo. The event was held at Falkoner Center, Copenhagen on Jan 31, 1965. I was caught by surprise when I saw how the stage was set up since I had never actually seen a live jazz performance. They were in 3 rows: 5, 3, then 5, with the piano and drums on the side. The orchestra consisted of Cat Anderson, Cootie Williams, and Herbie Jones who played the trumpet. Ray Nance on the trumpet and the violin. Then we have Lawrence Brown, Chuck Connors, and Buster Cooper on trombone. Jimmy Hamilton played both the tenor sax and clarinet. Another double player is Russell Procope who played the alto sax and the clarinet. Johnny Hodges was on the alto sax. Paul Gonsalves played the tenor sax, John Lamb played the bass, and Sam Woodyard played was on the drums. Harry Carney was the only one who played 3 instruments, playing the baritone sax, clarinet, and bass clarinet.

A select few songs had caught my eye. As they ranged from an upbeat style of song to the more mellow and smooth style of jazz. The song is Afro Bussa, led by Sam Woodyard. I like this one for many reasons. The first reason being that it was the drummer that lead it. I never even thought of the drums being the lead of a song, but they did it and the music flowed so freely. Most songs start with a melody and then harmony ensues, but this one started with the rhythm and then the melody falls in after. I feel like, for this segment of the show, I paid a lot more attention to the beat in the background rather than the other instruments. I feel like this is only because they put the spotlight on the drummer, to begin with. And as they continue with the song, they add more and more instruments. This makes the song as a whole a lot more powerful, while still keeping its harmonic melody. There isn’t a second where you can predict what they’ll add to the mix next, and that’s what makes it so enjoyable. If I could name at least one thing that I didn’t like about them and this song, it would only be that they are blowing out there. The

give 100% effort in each song, which can prove to be a double-ended sword. It makes all the little mess-ups that much more noticeable, but I am no professional so I can’t necessarily tell when they mess up or if they’re just adding some flair to the song.

Another piece that I enjoyed was Chelsea Bridge, led by Paul Gonsalves. This song had a way slower tempo, especially compared to Afro Bussa. With the combination of the soft piano at the beginning of the powerful yet flowing style of Gonsalves and his sax, the song puts you in a sort of captivating sway as you remember the good times. As more and more notes are added to the mix, the form of the song stays intact. Most people would think that when you add more people it might get messed up or sound a little off, but they continued to play on. They gave the already soulful Gonsalves an even more soulful performance. He continued to lead them as they simply complimented his sound. A magnificent performance that shows just how fine-tuned they were as an orchestra. They raised and lowered their volumes while still giving him his lead sound and not overplaying him. One thing I could say that I disliked about it would be that I don’t think he ever got a chance to show out as the other leads did. Maybe he didn’t want to or maybe he didn’t feel the need to, but other than that, it was great.

Before I start talking about the next song they performed, I want to take the time to appreciate Duke Ellington and his banter before every song. That’s one part of why I chose this song, Meow, led by Cat Anderson. The funny aspect of the show just adds on to the overall performance and makes it that much better. Moving on, another reason why I chose to write about this one is that it was kind of an in the middle of Afro Bussa and Chelsea Bridge. It had a simple rhythm in the back while keeping an up-tempo mood in the front. It gives me a lot to focus on and doesn’t get boring. And on top of that, they gave him an encore. That just gave me a really good feeling because that meant that everyone who may have already moved on easily

transitioned back to give him a final go around at the mic. The only thing I disliked about it would be that it was too short. I personally liked this one the best, but it just felt like it was ended abruptly. However, I don’t know where else they could have taken it if it had gone on any longer. So maybe it’s a good thing that it ended when it did.

All in all, this entire performance was quite amusing to watch. They fluctuated between an upbeat tempo style of music to a soft, low tempo style of music and even managed to get in between the two. It seemed as if they didn’t get tired throughout the entire performance and they continued to flow together beautifully as they played their instruments.