



Published in final edited form as:

J Fam Theory Rev. 2023 December ; 15(4): 793–821. doi:10.1111/jftr.12535.

Racial Discrimination and Romantic Relationship Dynamics among Black Americans: A Systematic Review

TeKisha M. Rice¹, August I.C. Jenkins², Shardé McNeil Smith², Chelsea Alexander², Casey M. McGregor³

¹Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

²University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

³Lipscomb University

Abstract

Despite increasing research, the links between racial discrimination and Black Americans' romantic relationship dynamics remain unclear. Guided by models of mundane extreme environmental stress (Peters & Massey, 1983), sociocultural family stress (McNeil Smith & Landor, 2018), and Black marital outcomes (Bryant et al., 2010), we conducted a systematic review of the literature examining racial discrimination and relationship dynamics among Black Americans in same-race and interracial romantic relationships. Synthesizing findings from 32 published empirical articles, we find support for manifestations of each component of MEES in Black intimate life. We uncover evidence that racial discrimination is associated with compromised relationship functioning for Black Americans. Several psychosocial resources were also identified as either buffering these associations or posing drawbacks/limitations for Black Americans. We discuss notable gaps in the literature and directions for future research including intersectional investigations, broader examination of the MEES context, and de-centering whiteness among studies of interracial relationship dynamics.

Keywords

racial discrimination; social stress; Black Americans; romantic relationships; interracial relationships

Racial discrimination – explicit or subtle racially-based differential treatment – is a chronic social stressor that alienates individuals racialized as Black (henceforth referred to as Black Americans/people), produces differential outcomes, and limits equal opportunity and access to resources (Cuevas & Boen, 2021). Nearly three-quarters of Black adults report experiencing racial discrimination in their lifetime (Lee et al., 2019). Racial discrimination is considered a major pathway through which racism is generally related to disparities

Correspondence concerning this article should be directed to TeKisha M. Rice, Department of Human Development and Family Science, Virginia Polytech Institute and State University, 295 West Campus Drive, 315 Wallace Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24060. tmrice@vt.edu.

In an effort to advance public engagement with this scholarship, the authors have curated a [freely available playlist](#) of songs that capture the findings presented in this review.

for racial/ethnic minorities and specifically related to adverse outcomes among Black Americans (Clark et al., 1999; Cuevas & Boen, 2021; Williams et al., 2019). Several reviews have summarized the pernicious effects of racism and racial discrimination on health outcomes, documenting the adverse consequences of discrimination for physical (e.g., blood pressure, cardiovascular activity) and mental (e.g., psychological wellbeing, self-esteem) health (e.g., Paradies, 2006; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Williams et al., 2003; Williams et al., 2000). Though these reviews have contributed substantially to understanding the negative effects of racism and racial discrimination on Black individuals' health, they underestimate the capacity of racism to reach beyond the individual and affect Black families and interpersonal relationships. Thus, although romantic relationships are considered among the most important interpersonal relationships in adults' lives, the links between racial discrimination and Black Americans' social functioning are less well-understood, specifically concerning romantic relationship dynamics.

Understanding the role of racial discrimination in Black relationship processes is important given research demonstrating that the experience and management of stress is an interpersonal process (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009). As such, scholars have characterized racial discrimination as a “mundane” and “extreme” stressor that is shouldered amongst all family members (Peters & Massey, 1983; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). Importantly, the mundane extreme environmental stress (MEES) model accounts for the sociohistorical context that fuels discrimination (Peters & Massey, 1983). According to MEES, racial discrimination is a characteristic of an environment where “racism and subtle oppression” are a “constant threat and actual periodic occurrence...sometimes subtle, sometimes overt... continuous, and debilitating” (Peters & Massey, 1983, p. 195–196). Racial discrimination is viewed as a *mundane*, yet simultaneously *extreme* experience for Black romantic partners due to its commonality in daily life and its adverse implications for partners' perceptions, behaviors, and interactions. Additionally, racial discrimination is considered to be an *environmentally-based stressor* because it is upheld by and experienced within a social context, which can consume romantic partners' physical, emotional, and psychological resources that could be allocated otherwise (Carroll, 1998). As a result, Black individuals and families may have active and/or inactive responses to living in an environment characterized by MEES that affect relational dynamics.

Moreover, given the inequalities among Black Americans related to marriage and intimate relationships, elucidating the connections between racial discrimination and relationship dynamics may potentiate avenues to mitigate relationship disparities among Black adults and redress the interpersonal impacts of racism. Compared to other racial groups, Black adults are less likely to marry (Horowitz et al., 2019), marry at a later age and divorce at the highest rate (Raley et al., 2015), and experience lower levels of relationship quality (Bulanda & Brown, 2007). Thus, identifying patterns and key findings in extant literature that clarify the effect of discriminatory experiences on Black intimate relationships may be crucial to disrupting these deeply entrenched disparities in romantic relationships. Further, understanding the ways race can intersect with other salient or marginalized identities (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status) that leave individuals vulnerable to the impacts of racial discrimination on their romantic relationships is important to enhancing the relational benefits for Black Americans across varying social locations.

The purpose of this article is to systematically review the research on racial discrimination and Black Americans' romantic relationships. In our efforts to identify, interpret, and situate findings from the extant literature on this topic, we rely on MEES along with two conceptual models as guiding frameworks—the sociocultural family stress model (McNeil Smith & Landor, 2018; SFS) and Bryant et al.'s (2010) conceptual model on Black marital outcomes (henceforth referenced as the Black marital outcomes model). The SFS model makes a unique contribution to theorizing racial discrimination and relationship dynamics by highlighting Black families' heterogeneity and intersecting social positions within a MEES context through its integration of contextual family stress theory (Boss et al., 2016), MEES (Peters & Massey, 1983), and intersectionality tenets (Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 1991). In particular, the SFS model posits that members within a family occupy multiple intersecting social positions that affect (a) their experiences with, and perceptions of, stressors, (b) their resources for coping with stressors, and (c) their capacity for resilience. The SFS model expands on how MEES infiltrates the family stress process by including other oppressive mechanisms (e.g., sexism, colorism, heterosexism) as intersecting with racism. Accordingly, Black Americans within and across family systems may have different experiences with racial discrimination based on their level of privilege or oppression within society. At the intersection of racism and sexism, Black romantic partners who are heterosexual may be exposed to varying experiences of racial discrimination and have different access to coping resources. For example, a Black, mixed-gender couple with a Black man and Black woman may experience, perceive, and cope with discrimination differently than a mixed-gender couple where one partner is Black and the other is white. Furthermore, the effects of racial discrimination on the relationship dynamics of a heterosexual mixed-gender Black couple may look different than the effects of racial discrimination on the relationship dynamics of a same-sex Black couple at the nexus of racism, heterosexism, and sexism.

Similarly, the Black marital outcomes model underscores how Black romantic relationships are susceptible to, and can be resilient against, the detrimental effects of racial discrimination by emphasizing the sociohistorical force behind manifestations of racial discrimination that lead to the systematic devaluation and subordination of Black Americans, making it an especially harmful stressor. Ubiquitous encounters of racial discrimination foster emotional and psychological distress for Black Americans. The stress from racial discrimination can be amplified by other stressful events, resulting in more intense, negative psychological and physical reactions, which in turn spill over to affect their intimate relationship outcomes (e.g., marital quality and stability). Further, because racial discrimination can affect romantic partners' feelings and behaviors, discrimination also erodes relationship outcomes through adverse impacts on relationship interactions, such as fewer displays of warmth and more displays of hostility. Importantly, individual characteristics and psychosocial resources afforded to couples, such as partner support and problem-solving skills, can weaken the effects of racial discrimination on relationship dynamics for Black Americans.

Drawing on the propositions of these guiding conceptual frameworks, we focused on three research questions for the current review:

1. How does the literature on racial discrimination and Black Americans' romantic relationships reflect the manifestation of the larger MEES context?
2. How has racial discrimination been examined as a stressful event in Black Americans' romantic relationships?
3. What role have psychosocial resources played in the link between racial discrimination and Black Americans' romantic relationships?

Authors' Positionality

Our approach to this review may be influenced by the authors' positionality. Specifically, Jacobson and Mustafa (2019) state that positionality is a "research tool" because researchers are one of the main instruments for generating and analyzing data—making it necessary to examine researchers' motivations for conducting research, how their backgrounds and experiences affect their motivations, and the way their social positions impact perceptions or interpretations of social phenomena and research approaches. As such, we explicitly locate our positions to allow "those who read our work to better grasp how we produced the data" (Jacobson & Mustafa, p. 2).

All authors received interdisciplinary training in the field of Family Science. Authors also have training in Psychology, Sociology, and/or Marriage and Family Therapy. The first author is a US-born, heterosexual, Black, cis-female who is currently middle-class and has a working-class background. The second author is a US-born, heterosexual, Black, cis-female who is from a working- to middle-class background. The third author is a US-born, heterosexual, Black, married, cis-female who is currently middle-class but has a working-class background. The fourth author is a Black, heterosexual woman from who has a working-class background, and the fifth author is a White, married, heterosexual cis-female who is currently middle-class and has a poor/working-class background.

We acknowledge several assumptions that informed our execution of this review. First, we view racial discrimination as one way that Black Americans are continually affected by historical and systemic racism. We recognize that individuals may experience discrimination for several reasons but hold that the complex systems of oppression and privilege that shape lived experiences within society cannot be disentangled. As such, we expect that racial discrimination affects individuals of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds who concurrently occupy multiple other social positions that designate varying degrees of power. Similarly, although we elect to focus on romantic relationships and US samples, we acknowledge that racial discrimination can affect multiple family systems and non-familial interpersonal relationships across geographic contexts. Finally, we note that family scientists have conceptualized intersectionality as identity, power, or both (Curtis et al., 2020). We view intersectionality as an assessment of intersecting systems of oppression and apply this perspective in our review and discussion of findings.

Method

Literature Search Strategy

The current study was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). We limited our search to peer-reviewed articles published from 2000 to 2021 to align with other recent systematic/scoping reviews utilizing an intersectional perspective (e.g., Randall & Curran, 2023), facilitating the ability to draw comparisons, contrasts, and other conclusions across multiple reviews. The 2000s was also a notable period of change and shifts in the sociopolitical climate around race, especially with the rise of technology and the election of President Barack Obama.

We retrieved the sample of studies via a Boolean search in four electronic databases on June 1, 2021: PsycInfo, SocIndex, Academic Search Ultimate, and the Social Sciences Citation Index. In each database, team members entered the following Boolean search phrase: (“African American” OR Black OR “Black American”) AND (Discrimination OR “racial discrimination” OR racism OR “unfair treatment”) AND (Dating OR Marriage OR romantic relationships OR “close relationships” OR “intimate relationships” OR couples). Keywords were selected based on those used in the titles and abstracts of prominent articles on the topic (e.g., Bryant et al., 2010). Results of the searches were exported into Zotero for compilation, then imported into Covidence for data management.

Study Selection

Articles included in our review met five inclusion criteria. Studies must have (a) reported on Black Americans and (b) used a US-based sample. Articles that aggregated Black Americans into racial minority/non-white groups or that failed to report sample demographics were excluded. We included studies reporting interracial relationships as long as the sample included responses from Black participants. Next, studies must have also reported on (c) romantic relationship dynamics and (d) some aspect of racial discrimination. Studies that only reported relationship demographics (e.g., relationship length) were excluded. Articles that focused on other types of discrimination (e.g., classism, heterosexism/homophobia) were excluded unless they were intersectional in nature (e.g., racialized sexism). Finally, articles must have (e) been empirical and connected racial discrimination with relationship dynamics within the results. Qualitative studies had to discuss racial discrimination and relationship dynamics within the findings (e.g., theme, author description of theme). At a minimum, quantitative studies had to report bivariate results for racial discrimination and relationship dynamics. Additional details on inclusion and exclusion criteria can be viewed on the [open science framework](#).

Figure 1 displays the PRISMA diagram outlining the study selection. The initial search results generated 1,052 studies across databases. Covidence identified and removed 335 duplicates. The first author reviewed duplicates to ensure no studies were excluded by technical error. The titles and abstracts of 717 studies were screened for relevance by two independent team members; 588 of these were excluded. At the title/abstract screening, we achieved 83.6% agreement across seven team members. The full text of 129 studies was

then evaluated against the inclusion/exclusion criteria by two independent team members. An additional 89 studies were excluded with 90.8% agreement among team members. At each stage, conflicts were resolved by discussion among team members and/or by a third reviewer. Forty articles were selected for initial inclusion in the review; however, during the coding and analysis process, we determined that 8 of these articles did not meet all inclusion criteria. Thus, the final sample included 32 publications. The 32 publications included in this review represent 33 separate studies given that Clavel et al. (2017) included two studies in one publication.

Data Extraction

For each study, two team members were assigned to independently extract data into a codebook. The codebook included information about the study sample and method (e.g., average relationship length; methodological approach) as well as all findings related to discrimination and relationship dynamics and how they were connected. We assessed consensus through meetings where data extracted from team members were compared. Discrepancies and uncertainties were resolved through discussion. If consensus could not be reached by discussion, a third team member conducted an independent review and the majority decision was selected. The final dataset was compiled for analysis, where the first author maintained analytical memos documenting reoccurring themes in the data. All team members then reviewed and refined themes and compared the original articles to the themes to ensure all characteristics were accurately represented.

Findings

Figure 2 displays publication trends over the past 20 years and Table 1 outlines the characteristics of included studies. Publications on racial discrimination and Black Americans' relationship dynamics were relatively consistent over time, at approximately one publication annually across the first decade and displayed steady increases since 2016. Of the 32 publications included in this review, approximately 68% utilized quantitative methods and 32% used qualitative methods. In addition, 62.5% were cross-sectional, 37.5% were longitudinal, and 62.5% sampled romantic dyads (vs. individuals in romantic relationships). The sample sizes ranged from 10 to 1,555, with a total of 11,939 participants across all the studies. Most publications focused on Black individuals in same-race relationships and approximately 22% examined interracial relationships. A total of 72% of publications used one or more theoretical frameworks, with theories of stress/stress spillover being the most prominent (e.g., family stress theories, the vulnerability-stress-adaptation model).

Conceptualizations of Racial Discrimination and Relationship Dynamics

Our review of the literature included an analysis of how racial discrimination and relationship dynamics have been conceptualized in extant research (see Table 2). We extracted keywords from the included publications for conceptualizations of the constructs of interest. When racial discrimination and relationship dynamics were not clearly defined, we relied on how they were operationalized.

Conceptualizations of racial discrimination varied within and across studies. We note that examples below may be viewed as other forms of racism; however, for the purposes of this study we relied on the definitions offered by authors. The term racial discrimination was used more frequently than perceived discrimination (with one study using anticipated discrimination) and was frequently conceptualized as a stressor or as causing stress. For example, discrimination was described as a *social stressor* (Doyle & Molix, 2017) and as a *pervasive or debilitating stressor* (McNeil et al., 2014). In addition, terms like *contextual, historical, racial climate, and societal dynamics* were used, demonstrating discrimination was conceptualized as a stressor reflective of the broader social environment. Other times, discrimination was conceptualized as *poor or unfair treatment* both interpersonally and institutionally. For example, Kogan et al. (2016) described discrimination as “being ignored, overlooked, or subjected to minor mistreatment based on one’s race” (p. 999) whereas Awosan and Hardy (2017) described discrimination as “denial of access, inequality, and instability of social capital” (p. 466). Finally, some scholars conceptualized discrimination in terms of prejudiced *attitudes, stereotypes, and worldviews*. Notably, authors’ conceptualizations of racial discrimination often reflected a both-and rather than an either-or perspective. That is, authors conceptualized discrimination in more than one way (e.g., as a social stressor and as poor or unfair treatment).

Across the studies, relationship dynamics were conceptualized along positive and negative dimensions. Most studies conceptualized positive relationship dynamics in terms of *relationship attributions and behaviors*. The positive relationship attributions included relationship satisfaction, happiness, stability, and commitment, as well as feelings of love, closeness, trust, and warmth in romantic relationships. Positive relationship behaviors included effective communication, support, openness, collaboration, and cohesive couple identity. Finally, studies conceptualized negative relationship dynamics as *relational strains*, such as distress, hostility, instability, aggression, and violence.

Black Americans’ Romantic Relationships in a MEES Context

Our first research question asked how extant findings on racial discrimination and Black Americans’ romantic relationships reflect manifestations of the broader MEES context. We summarize our findings by each component of MEES, where mundane captures the commonness of racial discrimination; extreme reflects the tainting of Black partners’ worldview and perception; environmental notes how threats originate from the social environment; and stress describes how racial discrimination drains partners’ energy through its effects on individual and relational outcomes.

Mundane—Findings acknowledged that racial discrimination is mundane by highlighting the common and day-to-day experience of racism for Black Americans in intimate partner relationships. Terms and phrases such as common, regular, omnipresent and ubiquitous (Nightingale et al., 2019), daily (Awosan & Hardy, 2017; Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Killian, 2012; Murry et al., 2001), “constant waves and winds” (Awosan & Hardy, 2017, p. 475), and “always present and lingering” (Nightingale et al., 2019, p. 46) were used to describe the mundane characteristic of racism and racism-related stress for Black couples. These findings demonstrated a heightened sense of race consciousness – defined as “one’s awareness of

[their]racial identity and group membership” (Durant & Sparrow, 1997, p. 340) – that emerged as a result of partners’ coupling experiences. For example, partners entered into and navigated their relationships with an awareness of the U.S. racial history and how it may influence their couple dynamics. For same-race Black couples, this included conversations and a shared understanding of historical events, such as slavery, the murder of Rodney King, and the Civil Rights Movement (Awosan & Hardy, 2017). For interracial couples, this included an awareness of America’s history of anti-miscegenation and opposition to interracial relationships, even if they tried to “transcend or rise beyond” such history (Byrd & Garwick, 2006, p. 29; Childs, 2005). Some Black partners took on the role of educating their white partners to “increase partner awareness of ... hostilities and histories” (Bell & Hastings, 2011 p. 249; Byrd & Garwick, 2006).

Extreme—Several studies identified how Black couples navigate their relationship in a racialized context that is extreme given that it impacts their perceptions, worldview, and psyche. This was found through evidence indicating that Black couples may operate using a lens of fear, caution, and apprehension out of concern of being judged by others due to their race. For example, Black couples who attended therapy with a white clinician reported censoring what they said for fear of judgment or being misunderstood (Nightingale et al., 2019). Furthermore, some interracial couples actively disassociated from one another in public spaces as to not look “as provocative” (Killian, 2003, p. 9). Some partners also feared retaliation by their co-workers if they disclosed they were in an interracial relationship (Hibbler & Shinew, 2017). Others anticipated opposition from their loved ones, so were cautious of revealing their interracial relationship to their family and friends (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Childs, 2005).

The extremeness of racism also showed up in findings demonstrating that one’s racial identity was intricately tied to the racialized nature of their relationship. In one case, this occurred at the intersection of racism and colorism. Nightingale et al. (2019) reported a Black couple’s experience where one partner had a dark-complexion skin tone, and the other partner had a light-complexion skin tone, which “dictated the different ways in which they saw themselves and were treated by others” (p. 46). Among interracial couples, the blackness of the Black partner was questioned by themselves, family members, and other Black community members (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Childs, 2005). For instance, a participant reported that she felt like she was “selling out” by dating a white man (Childs, 2005, p. 556). Furthermore, the legitimacy of a Black partner’s racial identity was challenged when white partners adopted a color-blind ideology which consequently ignored the lived racial experiences of Black Americans (Pryor, 2018). Although some participants in interracial couples felt like their blackness was questioned, others reported that it did not challenge their self-worth (Bell & Hastings, 2011) and that being in an interracial relationship had no impact on their racial identity (Childs, 2005).

In addition to racism impacting an individual partner’s racial identity, the impact on the couple identity was also evidenced. In particular, residing in a MEES context forced couples to view their couple identity through a racialized lens. Some interracial couples viewed their relationship as making a difference in society by breaking racial barriers (Bell & Hastings, 2011). Partners also felt the need to articulate a cohesive couple/family identity, however the

ability to do so varied. Some interracial couples were able to develop a shared worldview whereas others had difficulty (Byrd & Garwick, 2006). Moreover, some couples left their racial and ethnic culture behind after coupling to create a new identity; however, the process of leaving one's culture behind often fell on the Black partner more than the white partner (Killian, 2003, 2012).

Environmental—Findings related to the environmental component of MEES focused on how societal expectations, norms, and stereotypes originated outside of the couple system. Black couples reported experiencing racism from work (Cowdery et al., 2009; Nightingale et al., 2019), their community (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Childs, 2005) and public spaces more generally (Hibbler & Shinew, 2017; Killian, 2003). Furthermore, geographical region influenced interracial couples' experiences in the U.S., with couples reporting more racial incidents in some regions compared to others (Bell & Hastings, 2011). The American South was specifically identified as a region where interracial couples were cautious of going even if they had never personally traveled or experienced racial tensions in that area (Hibbler & Shinew, 2017; Killian, 2003).

In addition to identifying specific contexts where racism was present, studies identified rejection and opposition from extended families and friends as a prominent source of external stress, particularly for interracial couples. Some interracial couples anticipated negative reactions from their families (Byrd & Garwick, 2006), and others were met with rejection and disapproval when family members became aware of their interracial relationship (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Childs, 2005; Hibbler & Shinew, 2017; Pryor, 2018). Notably, the families of Black partners were more accepting of interracial relationships in comparison to the families of white partners (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Hibbler & Shinew, 2017).

Stress—Findings across studies highlighted the intense and energy-consuming impact of racism and race-related stress on the individual and couple's psychological and relational wellbeing. Black partners in same-race relationships felt overwhelmed and distressed by racism and discrimination (Awosan & Hardy, 2017; Nightingale et al., 2019). Similarly, Black partners in interracial relationships felt frustration, pain, confusion, and disappointment from racism and disapproval of their relationship (Killian, 2012; Pryor, 2018).

Some articles found that racial discrimination amplified experiences of psychological and relational stressors for Black partners, providing further evidence of the impact of racism on coupled Black Americans. For example, Murry and colleagues (2008) found that the link between relationship dynamics (satisfaction, stability, warmth, and hostility) and psychological functioning was stronger for women who reported more racial discrimination than for women who reported less racial discrimination. Similarly, a recent longitudinal and dyadic study highlighted that when husbands reported higher levels of racial discrimination, wives' satisfaction was negatively associated with husbands' depressive symptoms and husbands' depressive symptoms were negatively associated with wives' satisfaction. Husbands' depressive symptoms were also negatively associated with wives' satisfaction when wives reported greater levels of racial discrimination (Jenkins et al., 2020). Moreover,

in a sample of Black men, Kogan et al. (2016) found that anger during adolescence mediated the association between harsh parenting in childhood and romantic commitment behaviors in early adulthood only when men reported higher levels of racial discrimination. These findings highlight how racial discrimination can amplify both relationship processes and individual well-being for Black individuals and couples, particularly at the intersection of race and gender social positions.

Discrimination as a Stressful Event in Black Americans Romantic Relationships

Our second research question asked how racial discrimination has been examined as a stressful event in Black Americans' romantic relationships. We summarized our findings around positive relationship dimensions and negative relationship dimensions.

Positive Relationship Dimensions—Most literature in our review included findings assessing racial discrimination as a stressful event that compromised positive relationship qualities. For example, discrimination undermined partners' capacity to connect with one another and created challenges for maintaining their relationship (Awosan & Hardy, 2017). Similarly, experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace was associated with men, but not women, reporting lower levels of relational love (Sun et al., 2020). Experiencing racial discrimination also appears to undermine partners' capacity to communicate effectively. For example, findings of a dyadic study indicated that when one partner reported more discrimination, they rated themselves as less effective in racial socialization conversations (Jones & Neblett, 2019).

Marital satisfaction was also shown to be negatively impacted by racial discrimination. Among married Black couples, unfair treatment was linked to lower levels of marital satisfaction but only when financial strain was not accounted for (Lincoln & Chae, 2010). Interestingly, for interracial couples, there are different discriminatory effects on marital satisfaction when measured individually compared to as a couple. Among a sample of Black partners in an interracial marriage, Baptist et al. (2019) found that perceived couple discrimination was associated with lower marital satisfaction, however, perceived individual discrimination was not associated with their marital satisfaction. Only one study examined the mechanistic pathway explaining the connection between racial discrimination and relationship qualities. Among a sample of African American fathers, racial discrimination was linked to lower relationship quality through perceived stress (Kerr et al., 2018). Although multiple longitudinal and cross-sectional studies demonstrated negative associations between racial discrimination and positive relationship dynamics, some studies reported no significant associations between the two constructs. For example, Lavner and colleagues (2018) found that racial discrimination was not associated with one's own or one's partner's relationship satisfaction.

Negative Relationship Dimensions—Scholars have also examined the associations between racial discrimination and negative relationship dimensions. Findings in this area largely indicated that discrimination is related to more relationship strains (e.g., conflict, aggression). For instance, racial discrimination has been concurrently associated with greater spousal strain (Doyle & Molix, 2014; Priest et al., 2020) for same-race Black

couples. Among interracial couples, disagreements in how to interpret experiences of racial discrimination contributed to conflict between partners (Byrd & Garwick, 2006). Discrimination was positively associated with men's reports of psychological aggression towards female partners and women's reports of physical aggression towards male partners (Lavner et al., 2018). Relatedly, discriminatory experiences in adolescence were related to more anger which, in turn, predicted higher levels of intimate partner violence (IPV) in young adulthood among Black men (Sutton et al., 2020). Overall, these findings indicate that discrimination is typically (but not always) associated with lower levels of positive relationship dynamics and consistently associated with greater levels of negative relationship dynamics among coupled Black partners.

Discrimination and Psychosocial Resources for Black Americans' Romantic Relationships

Our third research question focused on the role of psychosocial resources in the connections between racial discrimination and Black Americans' romantic relationships. We identified several examples of salient psychosocial resources including: a shared cultural understanding, partner support, and flexible coping. Notably, we also identified *drawbacks or limitations* of psychosocial resources.

Shared Cultural Understanding—Multiple studies identified a shared cultural understanding between Black romantic partners as a relevant resource for dealing with experiences of discrimination. As described above, residing within a MEES context challenged the racial identity and worldview of Black partners, but having a partner with a similar racial identity/perspective could serve as a psychosocial resource for relationship functioning. For example, shared understanding of “the trials and tribulations” Black people face contributed to a cultural relatability and unspoken bond, brought couples together, facilitated the initiation of intimate relationships, and aided in the development of strong emotional bonds between Black romantic partners (Awosan & Hardy, 2017, p. 472). This shared understanding saved partners from having to explain themselves, their experiences, and why certain racial encounters mattered (Nightingale et al., 2019). Instead of recounting the impacts of racism, having a cultural shorthand provided couples with a release that allowed them to share the burden of racism.

The ability to leverage shared understanding as a psychosocial resource was also relevant for interracial couples. For example, some interracial couples focused on their shared values rather than their differences (Killian, 2003). As stated above, many interracial couples reported co-creating an integrated worldview or standpoint around race, which Byrd and Garwick (2006) define as “developing shared beliefs about roles, relationships, and values within a racial context” (p. 26). This shared perspective shaped how couples and families understood and made meaning of racial events and being a biracial family in the world.

Partner Support—Partner support was another relevant psychosocial resource for Black Americans and captured the essential emotional, mental, and/or instrumental support romantic partners provided when navigating experiences of discrimination. Partners' experiences with discrimination were linked with their ability to provide support to their romantic partners within their relationships. When individuals experienced more

discrimination they were subsequently viewed (by their partner and objective observers) as being more supportive towards their romantic partners over time, even after accounting for the effects of financial strain (Clavé et al., 2017). Moreover, experiences of discrimination were positively related to perceptions of providing racism-specific support to romantic partners (McNeil Smith et al., 2020). Romantic partners also turned to each other for support when they encountered experiences of discrimination, as their relationships provided an opportunity to receive affirmation and affiliation during times of discrimination. Couples describe instances of leaning on their partners as they manage their reactions to or make sense of negative racial experiences outside the relationship (Nightingale et al., 2019). Other couples reported a sense of solidarity and “pulling together” to protect each other from the effects of discrimination (Cowdery et al., 2009, p. 27). In response to societal inequality, individuals put their partners’ (or family’s) needs before their own by de-emphasizing issues of power in favor of a more collaborative dynamic where partners worked to meet each other’s practical and instrumental needs (Cowdery et al., 2009).

However, studies have also highlighted gender discrepancies in this area, as Black men’s experiences with discrimination have tended to be magnified or prioritized over women’s (Awosan & Hardy, 2017). For instance, Black women described feeling extra pressure to protect or support their Black male partners in coping with experiences of societal inequity, which reinforced men’s power within marriages (Cowdery et al., 2009). Moreover, higher levels of perceived spousal support buffered Black men’s, but not women’s, mental health from the adverse effects of discrimination (McNeil et al., 2014). These findings suggest that partner support may be a salient resource for Black couples during times of discrimination, but expectations concerning support provision may not be equitably attributed between Black men and women.

Flexible Coping—A resource that appeared notable for, and unique to, interracial couples was having a range of coping strategies available to them and exercising flexibility in choosing and implementing the strategies that best suited them (Killian, 2003). For example, when interracial couples constructed their family identities/worldviews as referenced above, many interracial couples chose to integrate aspects of the Black experience and aspects of the mainstream white experience to create a harmonious interracial perspective, whereas other couples elected to keep their perspectives separate but equally respected. Still, some kept both perspectives separate and were unable to agree on how to interpret race-related experiences with the outside world, resulting in hostility between partners (Killian, 2003). Couples also attempted to take preventive efforts to limit their exposure to discriminatory experiences or reclaim a sense of personal agency (e.g., viewing their relationship as assisting in break down racial barriers) through educating their romantic partners or others about racial issues (Bell & Hastings, 2011).

Interracial couples discussed using several strategies specifically in response to racist insults/threats including (a) directly responding to these encounters, (b) ignoring them, (c) rationalizing them, (d) reframing these encounters, or (e) simply getting used to and accepting them (Bell & Hastings, 2011). Similarly, Killian (2003) found that interracial couples would (a) avoid talking about race or negative racial encounters to limit negative repercussions for their relationship, (b) downplay the role of race in discriminatory

experiences, (c) restrict their travel, (d) act as strangers or as if they were not in a romantic relationship when in public, (e) make efforts to subvert racial stereotypes, and (f) confront individuals during hostile encounters.

The Double-Edged Sword of Psychosocial Resources: Drawbacks and Limitations—We also identified drawbacks to or limitations of psychosocial resources for coupled Black Americans. For example, when talking about the utility of a shared cultural understanding, Black partners also discussed a sense of sadness and anguish that came with being partnered with someone who sympathizes with their negative racial experiences and would be subject to their own experiences of discrimination (Awosan & Hardy, 2017). That is, partners had mixed emotions about their shared cultural understanding – this sense of comfort and unity coexisted with a sense of sorrow that their partner would share in the emotional consequences of racial trauma. Similarly, Black couples endorsed respect towards each other as a valuable and desirable relationship characteristic, as Black people receive little respect outside the home (Cowdery et al., 2009). Yet, partners were also highly sensitized to instances of disrespect *within* the home, effectively contributing to distrust between partners (Cowdery et al., 2009).

Though couple therapy is typically considered a beneficial resource for romantic relationships, for Black couples it was shrouded in cultural stigma—a barrier for accessing treatment (Nightingale et al., 2019). Having a white therapist was a stressful experience for Black couples who feared they were (or could become) forced into confirming or disproving racial stereotypes. In addition, Black couples were concerned about needing to censor themselves to avoid therapists' judgements. Notably, having a Black therapist created a shared cultural understanding which circumvented couples' concerns (Nightingale et al., 2019).

There were also limitations to the accessibility of some psychosocial resources for Black Americans. For instance, interracial couples withdrew from some of their social networks to minimize exposure to racial discrimination, or couples' social networks withdrew from them because they were an interracial couple (Hibbler & Shiner, 2002). However, these couples also reported an unexpected upside of these strained relationship networks, as partners were forced to develop strong coping skills and this incurred a heightened sense of relational connection/ intimacy. Joint leisure activities also left interracial couples exposed to potential or actual experiences with racism and hostility from others (Hibbler & Shiner, 2002). Thus, heightened vigilance was critical for couples to feel safe engaging in leisure activities—though this also placed constraints on whether and where couples went in public and how they interacted.

Discussion

Drawing on MEES (Peters & Massey, 1983), SFS (McNeil Smith & Landor, 2018), and the Black marital outcomes models (Bryant et al., 2010), we systematically reviewed the research on racial discrimination and Black Americans' romantic relationships. By employing these models, this study situates partnered Black Americans within their historical and sociocultural context, highlighting the role of structural oppression and racism

in couple processes and functioning. Doing so is important for providing a counternarrative to past research approaches, which frequently view Black families from a deficit or pathological perspective. In an effort to advance public engagement with this scholarship, the authors have curated a [freely available playlist](#) of songs that capture the findings presented in this review.

Informed by these models, our review of the literature demonstrates that racial discrimination is experienced as mundane, extreme, environmental, and stressful for Black romantic partners. We uncovered strong empirical support for the four major components of the MEES model (Peters & Massey, 1983), highlighting its utility as a framework for guiding research on Black romantic relationships and families. Racial discrimination was a common occurrence that contributed to heightened racial consciousness and awareness of U.S. racial history and events. The MEES context tainted partners' worldviews and perceptions which created fear and apprehension in their day-to-day lives as well as skewed their perceptions of themselves (e.g., racial identity) and couple identity. Discrimination experienced in work, extended family, community, and geographic environments manifested within romantic relationships, and partners experienced emotional and psychological distress in response to actual and potential racist events. These findings are echoed by recent research demonstrating the influence of historical context and contemporary racial discrimination on Black romantic partners' relationship dynamics (Rice, 2023) and psychological distress (Barr et al., 2022). Further, the current results highlight the importance of the perceptions of stressful events (i.e., the c-factor) posited in expansions of the MEES model (i.e., the SFS model; McNeil Smith & Landor, 2018). Perceptions of actual and anticipated discrimination events can have implications for how partners cope and the extent to which couples exhibit resilience or crisis.

Additionally, we found that, when racial discrimination was examined as a stressful event in Black Americans' romantic relationships, it was generally associated with fewer positive relationship dimensions (though some studies demonstrated null associations) and more negative relationship dimensions (i.e., relational strains). These findings are consistent with both the theoretical postulate that racial discrimination undermines relationship functioning (Bryant et al., 2010; McNeil Smith & Landor, 2018) as well as empirical findings from recent work published since our literature search further supporting this idea (e.g., Brooks et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2022). Moreover, discrimination was related to compromised relational integrity for Black Americans even when assessed across various methods (e.g., longitudinal, cross-sectional, qualitative).

Finally, we found that several psychosocial resources were salient for the links between racial discrimination and relationship dynamics among Black and interracial couples. Extant research highlights the importance of a shared cultural understanding and partner support in mitigating the adverse impacts of racism. Further, exercising a flexible coping style in response to instances of discrimination was especially beneficial for interracial partners. These findings align with Bryant and colleagues' (2010) propositions that partner support, control/mastery, and problem-solving skills can mitigate the adverse effect of stressors on relationship outcomes. Importantly, although the SFS and Black marital outcomes model posit psychosocial resources as potential mitigators of stress, we also found that they could

be viewed as a double-edged sword for Black relationships, posing drawbacks or limitations for individuals and couples.

In addition to the results related to our primary research questions, several other notable findings arose from this review. First, across multiple studies, gender differences and unique associations among Black partners in interracial relationships emerged. This finding suggests that racial discrimination may be related to relationship dynamics in specific ways for Black men and women in mixed-gender relationships and/or same-race partners relative to interracial couples. In alignment with the SFS model, couples occupy multiple intersecting social positions that shape their lived racial, gender, and racialized gender experiences. As such, findings in this review show that although partners in same-race, mixed-gender Black couples are both contending with racism-related stressors, their access to resources, perceptions, and consequences vary across gender. For example, same-race Black couples had a sense of shared cultural understanding, yet Black men's emotional wellbeing was shown to be prioritized over Black women's well-being. For interracial couples, whiteness and its benefits were present and idealized in their relationships in ways that were not present in same-race Black couples. In particular, interracial couples made efforts to prove the legitimacy of their relationship through the adoption of a colorblind ideology. By doing so, these couples suppressed the role of racism thereby highlighting the privilege of whiteness in their relationship. Despite efforts to minimize the impact of racism on the relationship for interracial couples in ways that same-race Black couples could not, anti-Black racism continued to seep into interracial relationships. These experiences also undoubtedly vary across gender for interracial couples although we were unable to parse out their racialized gendered experiences in this review (e.g., Black husband, white wife; Black wife, white husband).

Second, although scholars frequently conceptualized racial discrimination as a historical or contextual-level stressor, it was primarily operationalized as an interpersonal experience. Assessments of discrimination as an interpersonal stressor may overlook the societal/institutional aspects of discrimination that are typically captured in conceptualizations of discrimination. That is, interpersonal discrimination occurs within an environmental context that is upheld by social institutions. Thus, findings in our review support Bonilla-Silva's (2023) observation that family scholars focus more on prejudice and attitudes and less on the racialized history and social systems that uphold the existing racial structure. For example, examining contemporary and historical spatial inequality (Williams, 2023) will further contextualize the racialized relational experiences of Black partners as they engage with external racist encounters in various spaces and places (e.g., work, the South). Efforts towards capturing the multi-faceted nature of racism may be critical to understanding differences in how Black families adapt to racist encounters as well as the potential effectiveness of different coping mechanisms and resources for responding to racial discrimination. Engaging in this process for same-race and interracial Black couples is necessary, the historical efforts to center whiteness using racist policies and practices that shape relationship formation and maintenance for Black individuals (e.g., legality of marriage during enslavement; anti-miscegenation laws; Landor & McNeil Smith, in press). Doing so, delves into aspects of the MEES and SFS models that account for the experiences of Black same-race couples and interracial couples that include a Black partner.

Gaps and Directions for the Future

Based on the propositions of our guiding conceptual models and the existing empirical support from the literature, we identified several gaps in the current knowledge base, yielding ripe directions for future research. First, there is a dearth of investigations considering the intersections of racism with other systems of oppression. The SFS model highlights that family members' multiple intersecting positions affect the stress and resilience processes; yet the diversity of Black American families is not well represented nor has it been systematically assessed in connection with couples' relational vulnerability to experiences of multiple forms of discrimination. Burgeoning research highlights gender as a critical factor in these associations (e.g., disproportionate negative impacts for Black women's mental health when supporting their male partners; McNeil Smith et al., 2020). Still, other studies have assessed the concomitant effect of financial or socioeconomic strain on relationship dynamics along with discrimination (e.g., Clavel et al., 2017). This previous work reveals important information about how the linkages between discrimination and relationship functioning occur across gendered and economic lines for Black Americans; yet, numerous gaps in this area remain. Further, no study included in our review captured issues related to heterosexism or classism, ableism, colorism, and/or religious oppression or how the multiple identity characteristics that exist along these dimensions can impact exposure, responses, and reactions to discriminatory experiences within Black intimate relationships. Relatedly, all studies examining discrimination among interracial couples focused exclusively on Black-white interracial relationships, despite the fact that Black Americans also partner with other racial groups (see Pew Research Center, 2017). Similarly, there were no examinations of ethnic diversity within the Black American population, which leaves room for understanding the heterogeneity of Black couple experiences across a host of ethnic identities (e.g., Haitian, Jamaican, Afro-Caribbean), including those who identify as multiracial.

In addition, little empirical attention has been given to the role of time in the associations between racial discrimination and relationship dynamics. This is not completely surprising given that this body of literature is relatively new. However, we note that historical and developmental time can influence the ways racial discrimination impacts relationship dynamics for Black Americans. Although some extant conceptual models consider the relevance of historic time and contemporary events (e.g., Hardy & Laszloffy, 2002), it is notable that aside from noting the historical legacy of slavery, none of the conceptual models guiding our review attended to historical and contemporary events that could shape exposure to racial discrimination and subsequent relationship dynamics (e.g., Jim Crow era, election of President Donald Trump, the murder of George Floyd). Contextualizing the experiences of Black couples in historical time is important given evidence in our review that couples communicate about these events and create a shared understanding of how to navigate the lingering effects of these racialized incidents. Thus, we encourage future research and theorizing on this topic to explicitly situate their findings in the current political, social, and demographic landscape. This is imperative in light of the Summer 2020 national racial reckoning (Pew Research Center, 2020), the more blatant, rampant nature of contemporary racist encounters (particularly via social media; English et al., 2020), and the changing

demographic landscape and expected increase in interracial marriages in the future (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Furthermore, despite the presence of racism-related stress throughout the lifespan (Gee et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2020), there is no conceptual model or framework for the relational effects of discrimination over time. Consequently, there was little examination of these processes in the empirical literature, with most research focused on the effects of discrimination on romantic relationships at a single point in time during early-to-middle adulthood (see Sutton et al., 2020 for exception). This is consistent with findings from another recent review examining longitudinal and dyadic research on romantic relationships, which found that studies assessing the links between discrimination and relationship functioning overtime were scant (Galovan et al., 2022). Accordingly, we view the lack of research on middle and older aged Black American couples as a critical and urgent gap in the literature given the recent findings showing that individuals in middle and older adulthood whose partners experience racial discrimination may be at increased risk for cardiovascular disease (Barr et al., 2022) and accelerated aging (Simons et al., 2021).

Finally, the SFS (McNeil Smith & Landor, 2018) and Black marital outcomes (Bryant et al., 2010) models identify individual characteristics, couple interactions, and psychosocial resources as potential mediators of the link between racial discrimination and relationship dynamics. Yet to date, research has primarily focused on constructs that buffer the link between discrimination and relational dynamics rather than the *processes* that facilitate this link. In addition, no studies within this review considered how same-race Black couples coped with racism and racial discrimination. Future research should examine the mechanisms that contribute to lower relational well-being and the utilization of specific resources and coping strategies in the midst of racial discrimination.

In addition to providing critical directions for future research, this systematic review of the literature also yields insight relevant for clinicians and policymakers to practically contribute to the mitigation of existing disparities for Black Americans and the effects of racism on couple dynamics. Clinicians and other counselors working with Black individuals or couples (e.g., clergy) should assess and attend to the role of racism and racial discrimination (both interpersonal manifestation as well as broader systemic and environmental issues of racism from which interpersonal discrimination is derived) that bear on multiple relational dynamics. Practitioners should assess the ways racial discrimination can both foster more negative relational dimensions and detract from positive ones. Additionally, they should inventory the psychosocial resources available to individuals and couples to cope with discriminatory experiences as well as the potentially unintended relational and psychological consequences of utilizing such resources. Partners can also be coached in developing additional coping strategies, such as becoming active members of their community or civically engaged to reclaim a sense of agency (Kelly et al., 2020). Further, community-implemented relationship education and strengthening programs, particularly those that are federally funded, should explicitly infuse anti-racism into the programming, providing information about manifestations of racism and teaching strategies for couples to identify the adverse effects of discrimination on their relationships. Such programming should contextualize the relevance of discrimination for relational/psychological functioning

and assist partners in recognizing and navigating potential difficulties in these domains. Moreover, policy initiatives aimed at remediating the effects of racism in other domains (workplace, education) may spill over and have broader implications for individuals' relationships and psychological health.

Limitations

Although this review provides important insights to the developing literature on racial discrimination and Black Americans' romantic relationships, there are limitations. Our criteria excluded dissertations and unpublished literature which may have introduced publication bias given that statistically nonsignificant findings are less likely to be published in peer-reviewed journals. Relatedly, our review does not capture important research published in books. For example, Hunter's (2017) examination of archival records documents the lives of enslaved Black couples in the 19th century; Moore (2011) investigates the experiences of gay Black women; and McDonald and Cross-Barnet (2018) discuss ethnic diversity in Black marriage. In addition, our review excluded research published prior to 2000; however, we note that work published before 2000 informed the conceptual models we selected and that research published since we conducted our search echo the findings of this review (e.g., Brooks et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2022). Another limitation is that our analyses did not attend to the disciplinary fields where studies were published which could highlight discipline-specific strengths and areas for growth in this literature.

Conclusion

Our systematic review makes an important contribution to the literature on racial discrimination and Black Americans' romantic relationships. Through our synthesis and interpretation of the extant research through the lens of MEES, SFS, and the Black marital outcomes models, we find that Black partners in relationships have the added stress of living in a MEES context; racial discrimination directly undermines relational well-being; and couples must draw on their psychosocial resources to reduce the impact of racism on their relationships. Existing findings in this area are consistent with many theoretical postulations but also provide important opportunities for future empirical research to help refine and add additional nuance to theory. Scholars are encouraged to pursue work that yields an understanding of how racial discrimination influences Black Americans' romantic relationships consistent with an intersectional perspective, especially at the nexus of gender, class, and sexual orientation, decentering whiteness in their assessments of interracial relationships involving Black individuals and attending to the temporal and developmental context of individuals and relationships. In doing so, researchers, clinicians, and policymakers can contribute to the broader goal of mitigating existing racial disparities in relationship processes among coupled Black Americans.

Acknowledgments

Portions of this research were supported by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (Grant No. DGE - 1144245) awarded to TeKisha M. Rice, and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (F31MD015215) awarded to August I. C. Jenkins. Portions of the findings have been presented at the National Council on Family Relations.

References

- Awosan CI, & Hardy KV (2017). Coupling processes and experiences of never married heterosexual black men and women: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 43(3), 463–481. 10.1111/jmft.12215 [PubMed: 28205237]
- Baptist J, Craig B, & Nicholson B (2019). Black–White marriages: The moderating role of openness on experience of couple discrimination and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 45(4), 635–649. 10.1111/jmft.12362 [PubMed: 30325528]
- Barr AB, Simons RL, Beach SR, & Simons LG (2022). Racial discrimination and health among two generations of African American couples. *Social Science & Medicine*, 296, 114768. 10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.114768 [PubMed: 35168058]
- Barton AW, Beach SRH, Bryant CM, Lavner JA, & Brody GH (2018). Stress spillover, African Americans' couple and health outcomes, and the stress-buffering effect of family-centered prevention. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 32(2), 186–196. 10.1037/fam0000376 [PubMed: 29658756]
- Bonilla-Silva E (2023). It's not the rotten apples! Why family scholars should adopt a structural perspective on racism. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 15(2), 192–205. 10.1111/jftr.12503
- Boss P, Bryant CM, & Mancini JA (2016). *Family stress management: A contextual approach*. Sage Publications.
- Brooks JE, Ly LM, & Brady SE (2021). Race talk: How racial worldview impacts discussions in interracial relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 38(7), 2249–2267. 10.1177/02654075211011530
- Bryant CM, Wickrama KAS, Bolland J, Bryant BM, Cutrona CE, & Stanik CE (2010). Race matters, even in marriage: Identifying factors linked to marital outcomes for African Americans. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 2(3), 157–174. 10.1111/j.1756-2589.2010.00051.x
- Bulanda JR, & Brown SL (2007). Race-ethnic differences in marital quality and divorce. *Social Science Research*, 36(3), 945–967. 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2006.04.001
- Byrd MM, & Garwick AW (2006). Family identity: Black-White interracial family health experience. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 12(1), 22–37. 10.1177/1074840705285213 [PubMed: 16443995]
- Carroll G (1998). Mundane extreme environmental stress and African American families: A case for recognizing different realities. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 29(2), 271–284. 10.3138/jcfs.29.2.271
- Castle Bell G, & Hastings SO (2011). Black and white interracial couples: Managing relational disapproval through facework. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 22(3), 240–259. 10.1080/10646175.2011.590405
- Chao RCL, Mallinckrodt B, & Wei M (2012). Co-occurring presenting problems in African American college clients reporting racial discrimination distress. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 43(3), 199–207. 10.1037/a0027861
- Childs EC (2005). Looking behind the stereotypes of the “Angry Black Woman”: An exploration of Black women's responses to interracial relationships. *Gender & Society*, 19(4), 544–561. 10.1177/0891243205276755
- Clark R, Anderson NB, Clark VR, & Williams DR (1999). Racism as a stressor for African Americans: A biopsychosocial model. *American Psychologist*, 54(10), 805–816. 10.1037//0003-066x.54.10.805 [PubMed: 10540593]
- Clavé FD, Cutrona CE, & Russell DW (2017). United and divided by stress: How stressors differentially influence social support in African American couples over time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 43(7), 1050–1064. 10.1177/0146167217704195 [PubMed: 28903708]
- Collins PH (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33(6), s14–s32. 10.1525/sp.1986.33.6.03a00020
- Cowdery RS, Scarborough N, Knudson-Martin C, Seshadri G, Lewis ME, & Mahoney AR (2009). Gendered power in cultural contexts: Part II. Middle class African American heterosexual couples with young children. *Family Process*, 48(1), 25–39. 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2009.01265.x [PubMed: 19378643]

- Crenshaw K (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. 10.2307/1229039
- Cuevas AG, & Boen C (2021). Tip of the iceberg: Measuring racial discrimination in studies of health. *Stress and Health*, 37(5), 1043–1050. 10.1002/smi.3047 [PubMed: 33739613]
- Curtis MG, Ellis ÉM, Ann S, Dai Y, & Bermúdez JM (2020). Intersectionality within family sciences and family therapy journals from 2010 to 2020. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 12(4), 510–528. 10.1111/jftr.12399
- Doyle DM, & Molix L (2014). Perceived discrimination as a stressor for close relationships: Identifying psychological and physiological pathways. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 37(6), 1134–1144. 10.1007/s10865-014-9563-8 [PubMed: 24659156]
- Durant TJ Jr, & Sparrow KH (1997). Race and class consciousness among lower-and middle-class blacks. *Journal of Black Studies*, 27(3), 334–351. 10.1177/002193479702700303
- Edmond MB, Granberg E, Simons R, & Lei MK (2014). Distressing relationships, anger, and stress amplification in a sample of young adult African Americans. *Journal of Adult Development*, 21(1), 13–29. 10.1007/s10804-013-9175-5
- English D, Lambert SF, Tynes BM, Bowleg L, Zea MC, & Howard LC (2020). Daily multidimensional racial discrimination among Black US American adolescents. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 66, 101068. 10.1016/j.appdev.2019.101068 [PubMed: 33994610]
- Galovan A, Orbach T, Debrit E, Shrout R, & Rice TM (2022). Taking stock of the longitudinal study of romantic couple relationships: The last 20 years. *Personal Relationships*, 30(1), 147–216. 10.1111/per.12452
- Gee GC, Walsemann KM, & Brondolo E (2012). A life course perspective on how racism may be related to health inequities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(5), 967–974. 10.2105/AJPH.2012.300666 [PubMed: 22420802]
- Hardy KV & Laszloffy TA (2002). Couple therapy using a multicultural perspective. In Gurman A & Jacobson N (Eds.), *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* (3rd ed., pp. 569–593). Guilford Press.
- Hibbler DK, & Shinew KJ (2002). Interracial couples' experience of leisure: A social network approach. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(2), 135–156. 10.1080/00222216.2002.11949966
- Horowitz JM, Graf N, & Livingston G (2019). Marriage and cohabitation in the U.S <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/11/06/marriage-and-cohabitation-in-the-u-s/>
- Hunter TW (2017). *Bound in wedlock: Slave and free Black marriage in the nineteenth century*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 10.4159/9780674979208
- Jacobson D, & Mustafa N (2019). Social identity map: A reflexivity tool for practicing explicit positionality in critical qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1–12. <https://doi.org/1609406919870075>.
- Jenkins AI, Fredman SJ, Le Y, Sun X, Brick TR, Skinner OD, & McHale SM (2020). Prospective associations between depressive symptoms and marital satisfaction in Black couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 34(1), 12–23. 10.1037/fam0000573 [PubMed: 31368724]
- Jones SC, Anderson RE, Gaskin-Wasson AL, Sawyer BA, Applewhite K, & Metzger IW (2020). From “crib to coffin”: Navigating coping from racism-related stress throughout the lifespan of Black Americans. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 90(2), 267–282. 10.1037/ort0000430 [PubMed: 32105125]
- Jones SCT, & Neblett EW (2019). Black parenting couples' discussions of the racial socialization process: Occurrence and effectiveness. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 28(1), 218–232. 10.1007/s10826-018-1248-4
- Kelly S, Jérémie-Brink G, Chambers AL, & Smith-Bynum MA (2020). The Black Lives Matter movement: A call to action for couple and family therapists. *Family Process*, 59(4), 1374–1388. 10.1111/famp.12614 [PubMed: 33217004]
- Kerr J, Schafer P, Perry A, Orkin J, Vance M, & O'Campo P (2018). The impact of racial discrimination on African American fathers' intimate relationships. *Race and Social Problems*, 10(2), 134–144. 10.1007/s12552-018-9227-3
- Killian KD (2003). Homogamy outlaws: Interracial couples' strategic responses to racism and to partner differences. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 2(2–3), 3–21. 10.1300/J398v02n02_02

- Killian KD (2012). Resisting and complying with homogamy: Interracial couples' narratives about partner differences. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 25(2), 125–135. 10.1080/09515070.2012.680692
- Kogan SM, Yu T, & Brown GL (2016). Romantic relationship commitment behavior among emerging adult African American men. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78(4), 996–1012. 10.1111/jomf.12293 [PubMed: 28989183]
- Landor AM, & McNeil Smith S (in press). Systemic racism and romantic relationships. In Ogolsky B, (Ed.), *The socio-cultural context of romantic relationships*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lavner JA, Barton AW, Bryant CM, & Beach SRH (2018). Racial discrimination and relationship functioning among African American couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 32(5), 686–691. 10.1037/fam0000415 [PubMed: 29781635]
- Lee RT, Perez AD, Boykin CM, & Mendoza-Denton R (2019). On the prevalence of racial discrimination in the United States. *PloS One*, 14(1): e0210698. 10.1371/journal.pone.0210698 [PubMed: 30629706]
- Leslie LA, & Letiecq BL (2004). Marital quality of African American and white partners in interracial couples. *Personal Relationships*, 11(4), 559–574. 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2004.00098.x
- Lincoln KD, & Chae DH (2010). Stress, marital satisfaction, and psychological distress among African Americans. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(8), 1081–1105. 10.1177/0192513X10365826
- McDonald KB, & Cross-Barnet C (2018). *Marriage in Black: The pursuit of married life among American-born and immigrant Blacks*. Routledge, New York.
- McNeil Smith S, & Landor AM (2018). Toward a better understanding of African American families: Development of the sociocultural family stress model. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10(2), 434–450. 10.1111/jftr.12260
- McNeil Smith S, Williamson LD, Branch H, & Fincham FD (2020). Racial discrimination, racism-specific support, and self-reported health among African American couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 37(3), 779–799. 10.1177/0265407519878519
- McNeil SN, Fincham FD, & Beach SR (2014). Does spousal support moderate the association between perceived racial discrimination and depressive symptoms among African American couples? *Family Process*, 53(1), 109–119. 10.1111/famp.120 [PubMed: 24251910]
- Moore M (2011). *Invisible families: Gay identities, relationships, and motherhood among Black women*. University of California Press.
- Murry VM, Brown PA, Brody GH, Cutrona CE, & Simons RL (2001). Racial discrimination as a moderator of the links among stress, maternal psychological functioning, and family relationships. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(4), 915–926. 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00915.x
- Murry VM, Harrell AW, Brody GH, Chen YF, Simons RL, Black AR, ... & Gibbons FX (2008). Long-term effects of stressors on relationship well-being and parenting among rural African American women. *Family Relations*, 57(2), 117–127. 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2008.00488.x [PubMed: 20657726]
- Nightingale M, Jones SC, & Smith SD (2019). Black American couples' perceptions of the significance of race and racial conversations in therapy: A qualitative study. *Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships*, 6(2), 37–57. 10.1353/bsr.2019.0020
- Ong AD, Urganci B, Burrow AL, & DeHart T (2022). The relational wear and tear of everyday racism among African American couples. *Psychological Science*, 33(8), 1187–1198. 10.1177/09567976221077041 [PubMed: 35772020]
- Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, ... & Moher D (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *International Journal of Surgery*, 88(105906). 10.1016/j.ijssu.2021.105906
- Paradies Y (2006). A systematic review of empirical research on self-reported racism and health. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 35(4), 888–901. 10.1093/ije/dyl056 [PubMed: 16585055]
- Pascoe EA, & Smart Richman L (2009). Perceived discrimination and health: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135(4), 531–554. 10.1037/a0016059 [PubMed: 19586161]
- Peters MF, & Massey G (1983). Mundane extreme environmental stress in family stress theories: The case of Black families in White America. *Marriage & Family Review*, 6(1–2), 193–218. 10.1300/J002v06n01_10

- Pew Research Center. (2017, May 18). Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 years after Loving V. Virginia. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/05/18/1-trends-and-patterns-in-intermarriage/>
- Pew Research Center. (2020, October 6). Amid national reckoning, Americans divided on whether increased focus on race will lead to major policy change. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/10/06/amid-national-reckoning-americans-divided-on-whether-increased-focus-on-race-will-lead-to-major-policy-change/>
- Priest JB, McNeil Smith S, Woods SB, & Roberson PNE (2020). Discrimination, family emotional climate, and African American health: An application of the BBFM. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 34(5), 598–609. 10.1037/fam0000621 [PubMed: 31999160]
- Pryor E (2018). Love sees no color: The pervasiveness of color-blindism within Black-white intimate interracial relationships. *Michigan Sociological Review*, 32, 92–130. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26528598>
- Randall AK, & Bodenmann G (2009). The role of stress on close relationships and marital satisfaction. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29(2), 105–115. 10.1016/j.cpr.2008.10.004 [PubMed: 19167139]
- Raley RK, Sweeney MM, & Wondra D (2015). The growing racial and ethnic divide in U.S. marriage patterns. *The Future of Children*, 25(2), 89–109. 10.1353/foc.2015.0014 [PubMed: 27134512]
- Rice TM (2023). Echoes of slavery: Reflections on contemporary racial discrimination in Black Americans' romantic relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 40(8), 2637–2659. 10.1177/02654075231154934
- Riina EM, & McHale SM (2010). Parents' experiences of discrimination and family relationship qualities: The role of gender. *Family Relations*, 59(3), 283–296. 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2010.00602.x [PubMed: 22068292]
- Simons RL, Simons LG, Lei MK, & Landor AM (2012). Relational schemas, hostile romantic relationships, and beliefs about marriage among young African American adults. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 29(1), 77–101. 10.1177/0265407511406897 [PubMed: 22328799]
- Simons RL, Lei MK, Klopack E, Beach SR, Gibbons FX, & Philibert RA (2021). The effects of social adversity, discrimination, and health risk behaviors on the accelerated aging of African Americans: Further support for the weathering hypothesis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 282(113169). 10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113169
- St. Jean Y, & Feagin JR (1998). The family costs of white racism: The case of African American families. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 29(2), 297–312. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41603566>
- Sun X, McHale SM, & Crouter AC (2020). Perceived underemployment and couple relationships among African American parents: A dyadic approach. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 26(1), 82–91. 10.1037/cdp0000285 [PubMed: 30920249]
- Sutton TE, Gordon Simons L, Martin BT, Klopack ET, Gibbons FX, Beach SRH, & Simons RL (2020). Racial discrimination as a risk factor for African American men's physical partner violence: A longitudinal test of mediators and moderators. *Violence Against Women*, 26(2), 164–190. 10.1177/1077801219830245 [PubMed: 30822237]
- Williams DR, Lawrence JA, & Davis BA (2019). Racism and health: evidence and needed research. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 40, 105–125. 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040218-043750
- Williams DR, & Williams-Morris R (2000). Racism and mental health: The African American experience. *Ethnicity & Health*, 5(3–4), 243–268. 10.1080/713667453 [PubMed: 11105267]
- Williams DR, Neighbors HW, & Jackson JS (2003). Racial/ethnic discrimination and health: Findings from community studies. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(2), 200–208. 10.2105/AJPH.93.2.200 [PubMed: 12554570]
- Williams DT (2023). Racism and the mechanisms maintaining racial stratification in Black families. *Journal of Family & Theory Review*, 15(2), 206–218. 10.1111/jftr.12511

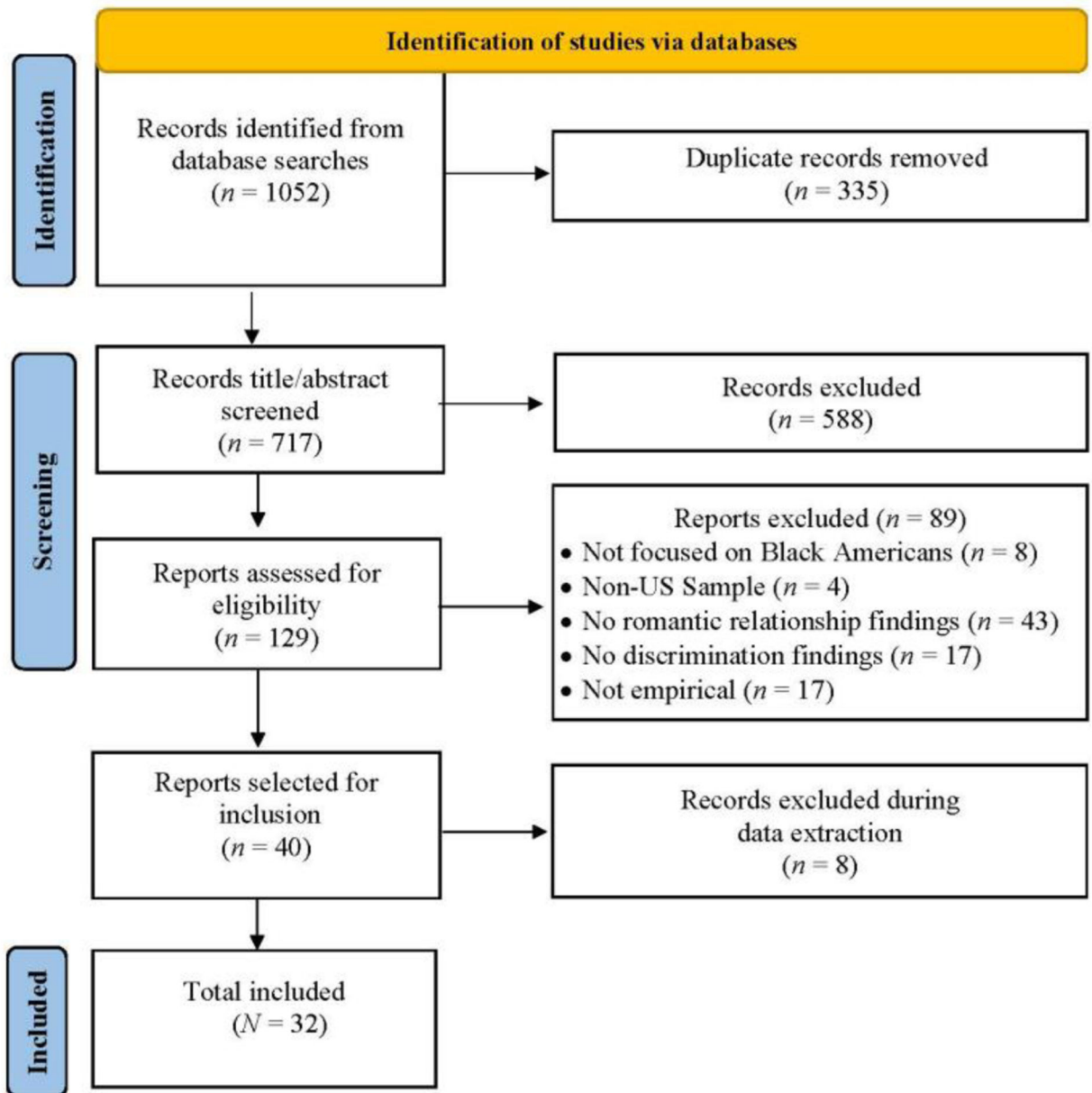


Figure 1. PRISMA diagram of studies selected for inclusion

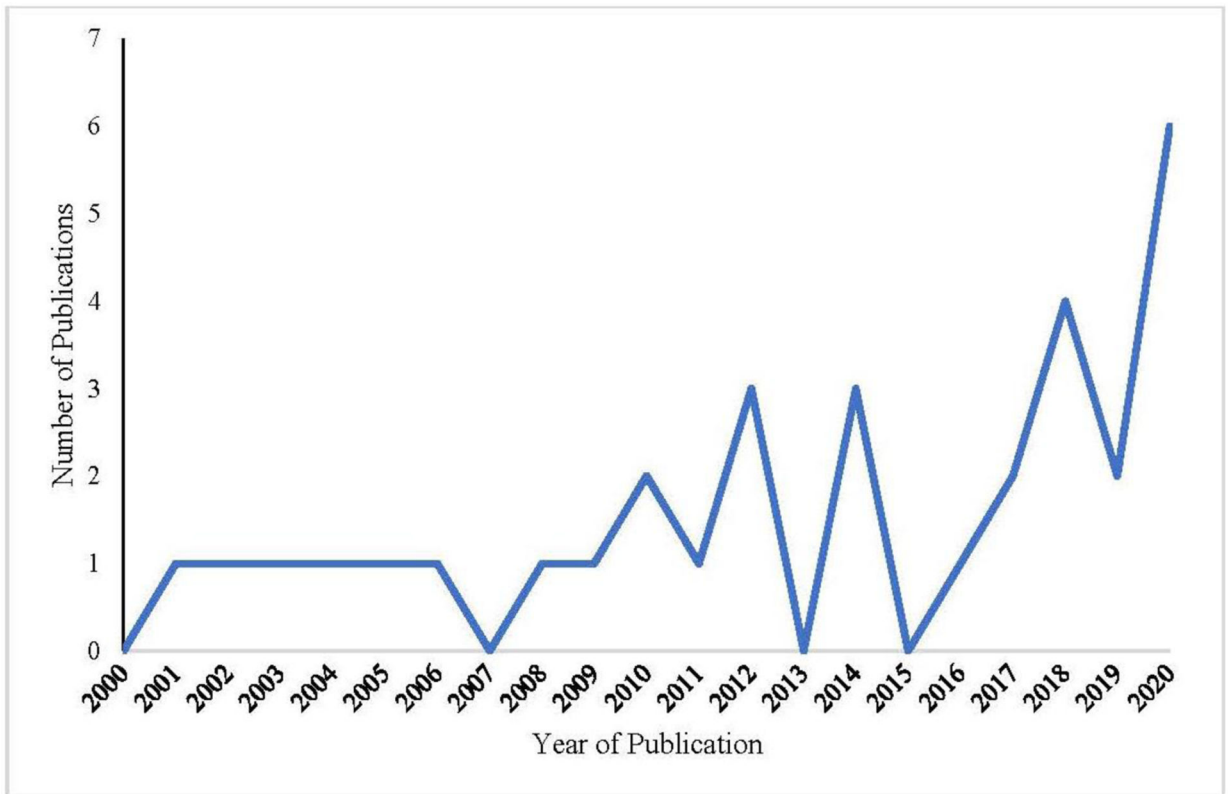


Figure 2.
Number of publications per year examining racial discrimination and relationship functioning from 2000-june 2020.

Table 1.

Characteristics of Included Articles

Author	Theory	Method	N	Dyadic Sample	% Female	Race	Age (years)	Sexual Orientation	Relationship Status	Relationship Length (years)	% Parents
1 Awosan & Hardy (2017)	Africana womanism Symbolic Interactionism	QL C	26	Mixed	50%	100% Black/AA 19.2% bi- or multi-racial	M = 28.73 SD = 2.66 Range: 25–35	NR	50% in relationship 50% single	NR	NR
2 Baptist et al. (2018)	NR	QT C	356	Yes	50%	50% Black/AA 50% White	Black/AA partners: M = 31.78 SD = 4.38 White partners: M = 31.94 SD = 4.13	NR	100% married	M = 6.63, SD = 4.57 Range: 0–21.40	100%
3 Barton et al. (2018)	The Family Stress Model Stress Spillover	QT L	692	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	Men: M = 39.89 SD = 9.62 Range: 21–83 Women: M = 36.51 SD = 7.44 Range: 23–73	100% hetero-sexual	63% married 37% cohabitating	Married couples: M = 9.97 Range: 0–56 Cohabitating couples: M = 6.73 Range: 0–23	100%
4 Bell & Hastings (2011)	Facework	QL C	38	Yes	50%	50% Black/AA 50% White	Range: 19–50 years	100% hetero-sexual	63% dating 26% married 11% engaged	Range: 0–18	16%
5 Byrd & Garwick (2006)	Family Health Systems Interracial Family Identity	QL C	16	Yes	50%	50% Black/AA 50% White	NR	NR	100% married	Range: 5–12 years	100%
6 Chao et al. (2012)	Racism-Related Stress Model	QT C	1,555	No	59%	100% Black/AA	M = 23.14 SD = 5.78 Range: 18–53	NR	NR	NR	NR
7 Childs (2005)	NR	QL C	14	No	100%	100% Black/AA	Student sample Range: 18–23 Non-student sample: Range: 24–47	NR	Student sample: NR Non-student sample: 100% married	NR	NR
8 Clavé et al. (2017)	ABCX Model Vulnerability–Stress–Adaptation Model (VSA) Conservation of Resources Model	QT L	Study 1: 326 Study 2: 426	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	Women: M = 38 SD = 7.55 Range: 27–73 Men: M = 41	100% hetero-sexual	88% married	Married couples: M = 13.20 Cohabitating Couples: M = 5.40	100%

	Author	Theory	Method	N	Dyadic Sample	% Female	Race	Age (years)	Sexual Orientation	Relationship Status	Relationship Length (years)	% Parents
9	Cowdery et al. (2009)	NR	QL	30	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	SD = 8.97 Range: 22–74 Men M = 32 Women M = 30 Full Range: 22–40	100% hetero-sexual	100% married	Range: 0–18	100%
10	Doyle & Moltix (2014)	Biopsychosocial Model of Racism	QT	592	No	62.5%	100% Black/AA	M = 51.64 SD = 11.90 Range: 34–85	NR	NR	NR	NR
11	Edmond et al. (2014)	NR	QT	637	No	56.5%	100% Black/AA	M = 21 Range: 19–25	87.4% hetero-sexual 2.2% lesbian/gay < 10% bi-sexual	100% nonmarital romantic relationships	NR	100%
12	Hibbler & Shines (2002)	Social Network Theory	QL	12	Yes	50%	50% Black 50% White	Full sample M = 34.10 Husbands M = 33.70 Range: 21–43 Wives M = 34.50 Range: 21–44	NR	100% married	Range: 5–15	NR
13	Jenkins et al. (2020)	Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress Model (MEES) Interpersonal theories of depression	QT	336	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	Men M = 43.57 SD = 7.21 Women M = 40.75 SD = 5.66	100% hetero-sexual	96% married	M = 14.16 SD = 6.88	
14	Jones et al. (2019)	Ecological Frameworks Co-parenting frameworks	QT	88	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	NR	NR	91% married	Full Sample M = 14.46 SD = 5.40 Married couples: M = 11.43 SD = 5.20	100%
15	Kerr et al. (2018)	Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model	QT	203	No	100% men	100% Black/AA	M = 27 Range: 19–58	NR	21.6% married 71.9% non-marital relationship 6.4% no relationship	NR	100%

	Author	Theory	Method	N	Dyadic Sample	% Female	Race	Age (years)	Sexual Orientation	Relationship Status	Relationship Length (years)	% Parents
16	Killian (2003)	NR	QL C	24	Yes	50%	50% Black 50% White	Range: 23–49	NR	100% married	>1	100%
17	Killian (2012)	NR	QL C	40	Yes	NR	50% Black 50% White	Range: 23–57	NR	100% married	>1	100%
18	Kogan et al. (2016)	Emerging Adulthood	QT L	315	No	100% male	100% Black/AA	Time 1 M = 11.6 SD = 0.35 Time 9? M = 21.1 SD = 0.70	NR	NR	NR	NR
19	Lavner et al. (2018)	Stress Spillover Biopsychosocial Model of Racism	QT C	688	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	Women: M = 36.54 Range: 23–73 Men: M = 39.84 Range: 21–83	100% hetero-sexual	63% married	Married sample: M = 9.97 Range: 0 – 56 Non-marital cohabitators: M = 6.73 Range: 0.25 0.23	100%
20	Leslie & Letiecq (2004)	Marital processes with sociocultural contexts (Bradbury et al., 2000)	QT C	152	Yes	50%	50% Black 50% White	M = 37.10 SD = 9.30	NR	100% married	African American males & White females M = 8.5 White males & African American females M = 6	70.4%
21	Lincoln & Chae (2010)	The Process of Social Stress Theory	QT C	962	No	46.5 %	100% Black/AA	M = 45.97 SD = 0.60	NR	100% married	M = 15.87 SD = 0.66	90.4%
22	McNeil et al. (2014)	Social Stress Theory	QT C	974	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	> 21	100% hetero-sexual	100% engaged or married	M = 9.75 SD = 9.26	NR
23	Murry et al. (2001)	The Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress Model (MEES)	QT C	386	No	100%	92% Black/AA 8% ethnically mixed or other	M = 35	NR	100% married or cohabitating	NR	100%
24	Murry et al. (2008)	Family Stress	QT L	361	No	100%	NR	M = 39	100% hetero-sexual	100% married or engaged	Married sample: M = 13 SD = 8.90 Non-marital M = 5.50 SD = 5.00	100%
25	Nightingale et al. (2019)	NR	QL C	10	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	Range: 23–62	NR	80% married 20% committed relationship	Range: 5 – 37	60%

	Author	Theory	Method	N	Dyadic Sample	% Female	Race	Age (years)	Sexual Orientation	Relationship Status	Relationship Length (years)	% Parents
26	Priest et al. (2020)	Biobehavioral Family Model	QT C	220	No	62.5%	94.2% Black/AA	M = 51.64 SD = 11.90	NR	NR	NR	NR
27	Pryor (2018)	Color-blind Ideology	QL C	42	Yes	50%	50% Black 50% White	Women: M = 38 Men: M = 39 Full Range: 25-60	100% hetero-sexual	81.2% married	NR	65%
28	Rina & McHale (2010)	NR	QT L	156	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	Men M = 44.59 SD = 7.79 Women M = 41.91 SD = 6.12	NR	84.62% married	> 4	100%
29	Simons et al. (2012)	Attachment Theory	QT L	760	No	58.2%	100% Black/AA	Wave 2: M = 12.50 Wave 5: M = 20	NR	100% in a romantic relationship	NR	NR
30	McNeil Smith et al. (2020)	Interdependence Resilience theories	QT C	974	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	Full Range: 20-77 Women: M = 38.22 SD = 9.18 Men: M = 39.87 SD = 9.71	100% hetero-sexual	100% married or engaged	Full sample: M = 10.75 SD = 8.63 Married sample: M = 9.81 SD = 9.22	NR
31	Sun et al. (2020)	Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model	QT L	328	Yes	50%	100% Black/AA	Men: M = 43.11 SD = 6.96 Women: M = 40.53 SD = 5.48	100% hetero-sexual	90.8% married	Married sample M = 12.72 SD = 6.30 Non-married sample M = 7.87 SD = 3.98	100%
32	Sutton et al. (2020)	General Strain Theory Social Learning Theory	QT L	200	No	100% men	100% Black/AA	Wave 2: M = 12.30 Wave 6: M = 23.60	NR	Wave 6 27.0% partnered	NR	NR

Notes: NR = Not Reported; QT = Quantitative; QL = Qualitative; C = Cross-sectional; L = Longitudinal; Age of sample at Time 1; AA = African American

Table 2.

Overview of study findings and conceptualizations

Study	Discrimination Conceptualization				Relationship Dynamics Conceptualization		Articles with Findings Related to Research Questions		
	Social Stressor	Broader Social environment	Poor or Unfair Treatment	Attitudes, Stereotypes, Worldviews	Relationship Attributions & Behaviors	Relational Strains	RQ1: Discrimination as a MEES Context	RQ2: Discrimination as a stressful event	RQ3: Psychosocial Resources
Awosan & Hardy (2017)	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Baptist et al. (2018)	X				X			X	X
Barton et al. (2018)	X	X			X			X	
Bell & Hastings (2011)	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Byrd & Garwick (2006)				X			X	X	X
Chao et al. (2012)	X	X			X	X		X	
Childs (2005)							X		
Clavé et al. (2017)	X	X		X	X				X
Cowdery et al. (2009)		X	X		X		X		X
Doyle & Molix (2014)	X					X		X	
Edmond et al. (2014)	X					X	X		
Hibbler & Shines (2002)				X	X		X		X
Jenkins et al. (2020)	X	X			X		X		
Jones et al. (2019)		X			X			X	
Kerr et al. (2018)			X		X			X	
Killian (2003)		X	X	X	X		X		X
Killian (2012)	X			X	X		X		
Kogan et al. (2016)			X		X		X		
Lavner et al. (2018)	X	X	X		X	X		X	
Leslie & Letiecq (2004)	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Lincoln & Chae (2010)	X				X			X	
McNeil et al. (2014)	X	X			X				X
Murry et al. (2001)			X		X				X
Murry et al. (2008)	X				X	X	X		

Study	Discrimination Conceptualization				Relationship Dynamics Conceptualization		Articles with Findings Related to Research Questions		
	Social Stressor	Broader Social environment	Poor or Unfair Treatment	Attitudes, Stereotypes, Worldviews	Relationship Attributions & Behaviors	Relational Strains	RQ1: Discrimination as a MEES Context	RQ2: Discrimination as a stressful event	RQ3: Psychosocial Resources
Nightingale et al. (2019)	X				X	X	X		
Priest et al. (2020)			X		X		X		X
Pryor (2018)	X				X	X		X	X
Riina & McHale (2010)	X			X	X		X		
Simons et al. (2012)					X	X		X	
McNeil Smith et al. (2020)	X		X			X		X	
Sun et al. (2020)		X			X			X	
Sutton et al. (2020)	X		X			X		X	