

Faith and Black-White Interracial Marriages

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6 Abstract

7 The landmark 1967 Loving vs. Virginia Supreme Court ruling ended anti-miscegenation laws
8 in America. However, the historic event did not change how interracial marriages were viewed
9 from a societal standpoint (Alonso, 2000). Although such unions have increased in the 21st
10 century, problems associated with acceptance still abound (Jayson, 2011). The purpose of this
11 qualitative research study is to explore how faith impacts Black-White Christian marriages.
12 Does it help these couples cope with adversity and/or handle daily struggles better than those
13 who do not share the same beliefs? Or, is there no significant difference at all? William
14 Gudykunst's (1995) Anxiety-Uncertainty Management Theory will serve as a theoretical
15 framework for the study. It contends the development of healthy interethnic relations and
16 flexible interactions require a high degree of intergroup communication, and in the same vein,
17 a heightened level of out-group communication (Matusitz, 2012). Ideas for further research
18 will also be explored.

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20 **Index terms**— black-white interracial marriages, faith, struggles, further research.

21 It was a landmark decision that challenged controversial laws regarding interracial marriages in America.
22 The Supreme Court case of (1967) declared anti-miscegenation laws (laws banning interracial marriages) to
23 be unconstitutional. The Court unanimously held that prohibiting and punishing marriage based on racial
24 qualifications violated the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment (Alonso,
25 2000).

26 The case revolved around the interracial marriage of Mildred Jeter and her new husband, Richard Loving.
27 The newlyweds had recently taken their vows in nearby Washington, D.C., and were happy to begin their new
28 life together in Virginia. However, the year was 1958, and Virginia was one of 16 states that prohibited and
29 punished interracial marriages. Mildred was African American, and Richard was Caucasian. Four months into
30 their married life, they were indicted by a grand jury. This incident spawned a legal battle, catapulting their
31 case all the way to the Supreme Court (Mangum 2007).

32 Decades later, in the 21st century, Black-White interracial marriages are quite common ??Lewis & Yancey,
33 1977). The number of interracial couples has doubled every decade since 1960 (Killan, 2002). A 2010 Census
34 report indicates one in 10 American marriages have partners of a different race or ethnicity (Lai, 2012). However,
35 interracial marriage remains a "source of quiet debate over issues of identity, assimilation, and acceptance"
36 ??Mangum, 2007, para. 15). Bell and Hurd (2006) project that by the year 2020, the U.S. population

37 Author : E-mail : ramecaleary@aol.com will undergo a significant restructuring of its "ethnic" proportions.
38 The White population is expected to decrease from 76 to 50 percent, while the Black population is poised to
39 increase from 12 to 15 percent (Cordell, Betz, & Green, 2002).

40 We live in an era that reflects the historic 2008 election of America's first President of African American
41 heritage, Barack Obama (Yates, 2012). Our Commander in Chief has openly shared stories about his life growing
42 up in an interracial family, with a White mother and Black father. Elsewhere, in the media, reflections of this
43 diverse, melting pot (Nichols & Schwartz, 2001) are evidenced in television shows and commercial advertisements
44 ??Petersen, 2013). A 2013 Cheerios ad featuring an interracial family sparked considerable controversy via the
45 Internet. It featured a Black-White interracial couple and their biracial daughter. Negative comments posted

46 on Cheerios' Web site and on YouTube did not impact General Mills' decision to keep the commercial intact.
47 Negative comments were disabled on YouTube, as a wave of favorable posts applauded the organization for
48 maintaining its stance (Stevens, 2013).

49 With the landscape of America changing as interracial marriage becomes more prevalent (Jayson, 2011), does
50 this guarantee approval by others or the ability to cope within the confines of one's marriage? Absolutely not!
51 Meanwhile, how does faith factor into the equation? Could it play a significant role? The purpose of this
52 qualitative research study is to analyze Black-White Christian couples, focusing on how faith has impacted their
53 marriages. Five couples have agreed to candidly share various aspects of their lives, including triumphs and
54 struggles. Therefore, this paper will explore: (a) literature pertaining to the topic; (b) present a theoretical
55 framework; (c) introduce a methodological approach; (d) discuss findings; (e) and explore possibilities for further
56 research.

57 1 I.

58 Literature Review n recent decades, new research has emerged, revealing detailed information about interracial
59 marriages. A 2012 Pew Research Center study found that "8.4% of current marriages were between spouses
60 of a different race, up from 3.2% in 1980" ??Lai, 2012, para. 4).The research also concluded that interracial
61 marriages were more prevalent in Western states, with more than 26% in those areas being mixed. As a precursor
62 to marriage, studies pertaining to interracial dating have also emerged. Choi (2001) conducted a ()

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64 Faith and Black-White Interracial Marriages survey comprised of both young and old Blacks, Asians, and Latinos.
65 His research found that roughly 40% said they had dated someone of another race. Nearly 30% reported
66 serious relationships. Asian-American men and women, including Black men, were "most likely" to have dated
67 members of other racial groups. Research indicates that for some, these dating practices also lead to marriage
68 (Jayson, 2006). a) Black-White Interracial Marriages Among interracial marriages, the Black-White couple
69 mixture does not occur as often, but has faced the most criticism (Childs, 2005;Lewis & Yancey, 1995;Spickard,
70 1989). In contrast, the Black male-White female combination has elicited the highest level of all interracial
71 discrimination (Scott, 1987;Davidson, 1992). Regarding marital satisfaction among younger couples, Crester and
72 Leon ??1982) attest there are fewer teenage marriages among interracially married Black-White couples because
73 a high percentage of Black husbands, in this case, have been married before.

74 Although tolerance for interracial couples has increased, Dainton (1999) notes how there are still powerful
75 forces that make Black-White unions hard to endure. Many Black-White interracial couples report they face
76 discrimination from members of their own race (Orbe, 1999). Based on interviews with 50 interracial couples,
77 Luke and Carrington (2000) explored the many struggles interracial couples have when going public with their
78 relationships. Some areas impacted were their choice to marry interracially, including strained relationships with
79 family members, friends, and coworkers. Gullickson (2006) conducted a study using micro-level Census samples,
80 which traced the trend in Black-White interracial marriages from 1850-2000. The results showed the growth of
81 the Jim Crow racial state in the South and segregation in the North led to a drastic decline in the frequency
82 of interracial marriage from 1880 to 1930. The frequency of interracial marriage increased with the waning of
83 this system between 1930 and 1940, but only began to increase at a steady rate in the post-civil rights era.
84 When disaggregated by region, the results suggested a process of "latent" racism in the non-South and one of
85 unequal gender suppression in the South. Bramlett and Mosher (2002) explored the longevity of interracial
86 marriages in the United States. Data collected through the National Center for Health Statistics revealed that
87 41% of interracial couples divorced by the 10th year of marriage, compared to only 31% of same-race couples.
88 Their findings suggest that, although entering an interracial marriage tends to carry less social stigma, these
89 relationships are less likely to remain intact.

90 Bratter and King (2008) used the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth to compare the likelihood of divorce
91 for interracial couples to that of same-race couples.

92 Their research across marriage cohorts revealed that overall, interracial couples have higher divorce rates,
93 particularly for those marrying during the late '80s. Compared to White-White couples, White female-Black
94 male, and White female-Asian male marriages were more prone to divorce. In contrast, those involving non-
95 White females and White males, including Hispanics, had similar or lower risks of divorce.

96 b) The Faith Factor In terms of faith and marriage, Robinson (1994) conducted a study that explored the
97 role of religion in long-term marriages. The author posited that enduring marriages are shaped by the religious
98 commitment of the spouses due to the "impact their faith has on moral guidance, including social, emotional,
99 and spiritual growth" (p. 216). Robinson (1994) based her study solely on faith-based marriages. She admitted
100 it would be difficult to gauge how non-Christians cope with problems.

101 However, she argued that marriage enrichment programs at churches could play a significant role in keeping
102 Christian couples together, but emphasized she was unaware of any specific impact the programs may have had
103 on the subjects she studied.

104 Another research study examined the significance of faith in African American marriages and families. Loren,

105 Tanner, Nesterik, Chaney, and Baumgartner (2012) found that spiritual beliefs also impact the lives of wives,
106 husbands and their families.

107 In their qualitative analysis of parents and children, the authors concluded that while religion is considered
108 important for most African American families, it is admittedly the focal point for many. Heaney-Hunter (1997)
109 explored a different approach by examining possibilities for creating environments that nurture "active faith" in
110 marriage, regardless of race. She researched ways Christian families can comprehend what a healthy marriage
111 entails from a biblical perspective, while gaining a true understanding of how family life can be enriched in the
112 process.

113 A 2011 Pew Center Report revealed that only 51% of adults in the United States are currently married, a
114 record low in comparison to 50 years ago. The Association of Marriage and Family Ministries believes a decline
115 in faith among young Americans may be a reason for the downward trend (Zaimov, 2011). Eric Garcia, President
116 of the Association of Marriage and Family Ministries, shared a key factor in this downward spiral. "Young people
117 have grown up seeing two generations of failed marriages. They have been exposed to broken relationships in
118 their own homes and in their grandparents' homes, and they are not seeing why they should want to join such
119 an institution" (as cited in ??aimov, 2011, para. 4). Garcia added that if

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122 churches and other places of faith emphasized the importance of marriage as a union that God brings together,
123 there could be a turnaround in dwindling success rates. He stressed that restoring faith in America from a
124 Christian perspective would greatly help rebuild the entire institution.

125 The National Marriage Project conducted research focusing on what it deems, "the worrisome decline of
126 marriage in America" ??Trumbell, 2012, para. 15). The organization's findings concluded that from a faith-
127 based perspective, many younger Americans are postponing marriage, and it is not because they devalue its
128 importance. Rather, they are fearful the high divorce rates they witness with their parents may subject them
129 to failure. According to a 2012 Pew Research study, 41% of newborns live in single parent homes with mothers
130 that are either divorced or unwed. From a faith-based perspective, the organization's overarching concern was
131 the rapid decline of two-parent, heterosexual households ??Trumbell, 2012).

132 **5 II.**

133 **6 Theoretical Framework**

134 Anxiety-Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) will be used within the context of this qualitative study. It
135 emphasizes the relationship between knowledge, stereotyping, and prejudice.

136 It also posits the understanding that "the development of healthy interethnic relations and flexible interactions
137 require a high degree of intergroup communication, and at the same time, a high degree of out-group
138 communication" ??Matusitz, 2012, p. 89).

139 William Gudykunst (1995) developed AUM to explain effective face-to-face communication. Based on the
140 research of Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese's Uncertainty Reduction Theory (1975), AUM was intended
141 to be a practical means to improve the quality of intergroup and interpersonal relations. It focuses on the
142 "intercultural and interethnic encounters between ingroups and out-groups, and assumes that individuals attempt
143 to reduce uncertainty during initial interactions with strangers" ??Matusitz, 2012, p. 94). The theory also
144 contends that effective communication is the process of minimizing misunderstandings and increasing knowledge
145 (Gudykunst, Nashida, & Schmidt, 1989).

146 Littlejohn and Foss (2011) discuss how interethnic encounters between people where obvious differences exist
147 often trigger doubt and fear. Gudykunst (1995) stresses how uncertainty is our lack of understanding and ability
148 to predict outcomes, while anxiety is the feeling of being uneasy, tense, or apprehensive about what might happen
149 (Gudykunst, Chua, & Gray, 1987). Mindfulness is the process of thinking in new categories, being open and
150 receptive to new information and multiple perspectives (Griffin, 2012). Gudykunst (1995) admits that in order
151 to avoid miscommunication, which oftentimes leads to stereotyping and prejudice, people need to communicate
152 more effectively. He contends it can only be achieved by consciously thinking about our communication and
153 continually working at what we do in order to become more effective during interethnic encounters.

154 **7 III.**

155 **8 Justification for Study**

156 Although scholars have conducted research focusing on interracial marriages, in general, there has not been
157 specific emphasis placed on faith as it pertains to Black-White unions. A lot of prior research has emphasized
158 interracial marriages among other ethnicities such as Asians (Fujino, 1997), teen dating relationships (Grove,
159 1991)

160 **9 Methodological Approach**

161 This qualitative study will employ an applied research method, which Patton (2002) describes as "a means to
162 illuminate a societal concern" (p. 213). He adds the rationale is to "contribute knowledge that will help people
163 understand the nature of a problem in order to intervene, thereby allowing human beings to more effectively
164 control their environment" (p. 217). Within the context of this study, an overarching emphasis is how Black-
165 White interracial couples can address marital issues and build lasting unions, using examples set forth by those
166 interviewed in this study.

167 **10 a) Sample Size and Participants**

168 Purposeful sampling was utilized within the context of this study. The sample size consisted of five married
169 heterosexual couples. Specific characteristics are listed in Table ???. The Black-White unions also shared another
170 characteristic, their Christian faith. They were interviewed both individually and collectively. Some of the
171 participants attend the same church, while others are professional acquaintances of the researcher. Each couple
172 received a \$50.00 cash incentive.

173 **11 b) Instrument**

174 All in-depth interviews were audiotaped. Extensive notes were taken during each session and transcribed within
175 a 24-hour period. Since flexibility was a major factor, all couples selected interview locations that suited them.
176 Participants were also given the option to exercise anonymity, which they chose not to do. All subjects stressed
177 they wanted their names to be revealed and agreed to have their stories shared extensively, should the document
178 be submitted for publication. As a researcher, my voice will resonate within the context of this study. Why? The
179 Black-White interracial marriage topic hits close to home because I am a female of African American heritage,
180 and my husband, Arthur, is Jewish ? of Hebrew descent. We have been married 12 years, and I couldn't have
181 dreamed of a better mate. With that said, we have endured our share of struggles and triumphs, but have stayed
182 in the race together. As we explore the lives of the five couples interviewed in this study, personal elements from
183 my experience will be integrated in an italicized format.

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186 **13 d) Couples: A Formal Introduction**

187 After weeks of making personal connections and receiving referrals, the time had finally arrived. My momentum
188 was high, as I recollected initial conversations with couples regarding meeting times and locations. Everything
189 was in place, and I could finally begin the interview process. Of the five couples, three were interviewed in their
190 personal homes, while one met me in the workforce. The last connection was made via telephone.

191 Michael and Stacey Scott: It was a bright, sunny day with barely a cloud in sight. The Scotts gave me
192 impeccable directions to their Summerville, S.C., home. Their neighborhood was flanked with lush landscaping,
193 a palatial golf course, and manicured lawns as far as the eye could see. As I approached their driveway, a white
194 gazebo in the backyard caught my eye. Michael greeted me at the front door with a huge smile and hearty
195 handshake. As I entered the sitting room, Stacey gave me a big hug and said, "Hey girl."

196 As fellow parishioners at World Harvest Community Church in Charleston, S.C., we were not strangers. The
197 Scotts have been married 18 years, and for them, it has been a rewarding experience. Their house was immaculate.
198 When I turned around to get a full scope of my surroundings, I immediately noticed pictures of their three girls
199 near the staircase. As their dog scurried to another location, we all sat down to begin the conversation.

200 Brice and Dawn Chandler: I have known Dawn since high school, but we became reacquainted when I started
201 attending World Harvest Community Church in 2001. After 24 years of marriage, the Chandlers have two girls
202 who are both in college. They own a print shop called "The Numbers Game," a business that produces a vast
203 array of items for clients ? everything from books, to raffle tickets, etc. Their North Charleston, S.C., business
204 is nestled behind a small strip mall. As I approached the gravel driveway, I could see Brice standing outside. He
205 shook my hand and said, "C'mon in." The foyer looked like a hospitality suite, with beverages and treats neatly
206 aligned for clients and

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208 Faith and Black-White Interracial Marriages () C workers. A humming noise from the printing press resonated
209 in the background, as Brice grabbed some Windex to clean the table. I could hear Dawn doling out instructions
210 in the background before joining us in the conference area. At first glance she said, "Whew! I'm excited about
211 this interview."

212 Bill and Cecilye Kuhn: Cecilye and I have known each other since high school. Of all the couples, the Kuhns
213 have been married the longest, 25 years. She and Bill have two girls, one entering high school and the other
214 poised for college. Their Goose Creek, S.C., home is located in a quiet neighborhood.

215 As I approached the two-story house, I could see children riding their bicycles on the sidewalk, chatting with
216 their friends. When Cecilye greeted me at the door, the aroma of spaghetti filled the air, a scent that immediately
217 made me hungry. I said, "I hope I didn't interrupt something here." She chuckled, "Not at all." As Cecilye led
218 me through the foyer, I embraced an expansive living/dining area that was quite inviting. She was preparing a
219 men's supper for the church to be held later that evening. In the meantime, we snacked on some ice cream until
220 Bill arrived home from work.

221 Kevin and Elizabeth Porter: This was the only couple I did not interview in person. A close friend referred
222 them to me. Kevin and Elizabeth Porter live in San Antonio, Texas. Therefore, I recorded their conversation
223 via telephone. When I dialed Elizabeth's cell phone number, she asked if I would mind being placed on speaker.
224 I replied, "No problem." I immediately noticed the warmth in both of their voices. The Porters do not have
225 any children yet, but look forward to starting a family in the near future. Of all the couples interviewed, they
226 have been married the least amount of time, five years. As I shared part of my personal experience and chatted
227 briefly with them before we began the interview process, I could envision them sitting on a cozy couch, holding
228 hands, anticipating which questions would be asked of them. After I explained they would be interviewed both
229 individually and collectively, they were eager to begin.

230 Paul and Tonya Misuraca: As a colleague, Tonya and I have known each other for almost a decade. When
231 asked about contributing to the study, she immediately agreed to take part. She and her husband, Paul, have
232 been married 19 years. They have three children, two of whom are adopted. As I prepared myself to visit their
233 Hanahan, S.C., home, I relied on GPS navigation because it was an unfamiliar area. The neighborhood was
234 located near a busy thoroughfare. As I pulled into the cul-de-sac, their home was situated directly in the middle.
235 The cool, exterior paint and dark blue shutters made the house stand out in an aesthetically pleasing way. When
236 I rang the doorbell, Tonya smiled and whisked me indoors. Visions of flat screen televisions loomed in my head
237 as I noticed two HD TVs—one on the floor, the other in an adjacent seating area. While Tonya turned on a few
238 lamps, Paul emerged from the stairwell and immediately asked if I was thirsty. After handing me a cup of ice
239 for my bottled water, we all sat down in the den to begin the interview process. I was seated in front of a huge
240 glass table that displayed numerous family photos. I paused to give the Misuracas a warm smile before turning
241 on the digital recorder.

242 V. All five couples shared interesting stories about how they met. Four agreed there was no initial love
243 connection between both parties. Some even admitted they were perturbed with the other person. However, for
244 the Kuhns, sparks flew quickly. As Cecilye put it, "My friend invited me to a cookout a lot of the military guys
245 attended. Since Bill was in the Navy, she knew he would be there with his pals. She wanted me to meet him." Cecilye
246 was just getting out of a bad relationship and did not want to have her heart broken again. "I thought he was cute," she added. Although they had not met beforehand, Bill was smitten the first time he saw her. He
247 said, "I wanted to meet that girl. I didn't want my other Navy buddies to beat me to the punch. I wanted to
248 get to know her."

250 15 Findings and Discussion

251 In contrast, from a single party perspective, the Scotts and Chandlers had specific recollections. Stacey Scott
252 shared how she and Michael worked for the same company. That was when she realized he had an eye for her.
253 She noticed his stares, but in her opinion, he was too young. After receiving a note with a check "yes or no for a
254 possible date," she laughed, crumpled it up, and thought nothing of it. Dawn Chandler shared how she met Brice,
255 a firefighter at the time, after a terrible blaze. Although their relationship was cloaked under "friendship status"
256 for several months, she continued to drop hints until he realized she was interested in becoming an exclusive
257 couple.

258 From an aggravation standpoint, the Misuracas shared a riveting story. When Tonya first met Paul, he 20 2
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260 Faith and Black-White Interracial Marriages was her superior at the Sheriff's office. She was not happy when
261 he sent her on a search and rescue mission to find a deceased woman. She complained it was not her job, and
262 that it should be left to firemen and/or other authorities. She later proclaimed, "I finally had to let that go. We
263 found the body, but I wasn't ?? All five couples agreed it took some time to realize their mates were marriage
264 material. It did not happen overnight. All shared the common theme of how their spouses made them laugh
265 and feel special. The humorous factor of being able to have fun and enjoy one another's company resonated
266 throughout the scope of each interview. However, they all revealed more qualifications were necessary to move
267 their significant others into the realm of potential spouses.

268 Although Elizabeth Porter was initially upset after being stood up for a date, she later forgave Kevin, and the
269 rest is history. Kevin added, "I was the church playboy, but not in a bad way. I was a ladies magnet, but I had
270 prayed about what I wanted in a mate, and Elizabeth met the bill. I had to change my ways. She was the one
271 for me." The Scotts shared a heartwarming story of how they knew they were destined to be together.

272 Stacey candidly shared how she was previously involved in an abusive relationship. Her trust for men had
273 waned. Since they worked for the same company, one day when it was very hot outside, she gave Michael a
274 ride home because he had no other transportation. He made her laugh the entire time. Shortly thereafter, they
275 started dating. She proclaimed, "We were not saved at the time. We were living together, and every morning,

276 when I tried to get up, he would grab my hand and ask me not to leave. I had never felt that much love and
277 compassion before from another person. For me, that was when I knew he was the one."

278 The Misuracas discussed how they "struck gold" with each other. For Paul, he admitted how Tonya did sweet
279 things his ex-wife had never done. Of all the couples, Paul was the only participant who had previously been
280 married. He gushingly shared, "I could see her inner beauty, her morals. One of the reasons I decided to interview
281 each spouse individually was to gauge if their responses differed in any way, while comparing similarities and
282 differences. Remarkably, in the area of marital bliss, all five couples were right on target. From the Kuhns, who
283 have been married the longest at 25 years, to the Porters who have been married five years, they all agreed that
284 if they had it to do all over again, they would never entertain the idea of turning back the clock and choosing
285 another mate.

286 16 d) The Word ? Race

287 Researcher: What are you? For some reason, I am asked that question a lot. My genealogy is quite expansive,
288 so I just have to smile. When it happens, I say, "I am part of the human race." As the product of a military
289 family, I have traveled a lot, meeting people from all walks of life. I don't let the word 'race' consume me. I look
290 at the different shades of melanin and say, "Wow! God has such a creative imagination, and I like it." When it
291 comes to the word race, there was a common theme among those couples who had been in the military or had
292 grown up in such households. Three of the five couples fit this description. The Porters described how their lives
293 never revolved around the word. As an anthropology major in college, Elizabeth stressed, "It's not a real factor
294 in our marriage. No one really talks about it because there is a lot of diversity where we live in San Antonio,
295 Texas." She said the only time she witnessed an inkling of anything associated with race was when she took her
296 husband, Kevin, to a The Misuracas and Kuhns both have Navy affiliations. Their families have never seemed
297 to have issues with the word race. The Misuracas shared how their diverse lifestyles as children into adulthood
298 helped shape them into the "color blind" people they are today. Paul argued, "I grew up in Boston, and there
299 were some racist people there. I got along with everybody. I don't see black or white, red or yellow. When
300 someone uses the n-word, I see it as plain ignorance." Tonya's dad was a trucker who traveled a lot. She recalled
301 a touching story of family gatherings. "My dad had all kinds of people come to the house. Daddy would eat
302 off the same plate as the white guys. We were all family. My parents taught me that we are all one race, no
303 differences. That's how I was raised." The Kuhns admitted that when they started dating, the word never came
304 up in conversation. Cecilye added, "When other people mention the word race, they may have their differences,
305 but Bill and I don't. When we got married, it was not about making a statement. We both went into it with our
306 eyes wide open. We come from loving families, and there were no reservations on either side." As a Navy veteran,
307 Bill mentioned how he thought a lot of people had problems with the word because they had never experienced
308 relationships, whether personal, professional or dating, with people outside their own race. He added, "When
309 the word race is mentioned, I don't really think about it."

310 In contrast, the Chandlers shared a different perspective, one that did not include overarching love and
311 compassion from friends and loved ones. When the Chandlers started dating, they experienced severe images of
312 the "race card" on many fronts. Brice grew up in a rough section of North Charleston, S.C. As a child, he was
313 told, "We stay over here; you stay over there. Mixing of the races ? no. That didn't happen." When he and Dawn
314 started dating, people would chide him and say, "Can't you find someone in your own race, brother? You don't
315 need to be with her. There are 'sisters' out there." For Dawn, the word race reminds her of the Confederate flag.
316 She gets emotional when it impacts her children. Dawn shared a story of how her oldest daughter, Morgan, was
317 brazenly overlooked by her teachers at the private school she attended. "Morgan complained that her teachers
318 would not call on her. She was the only black girl in the class. Of course, they knew her parents were interracial.
319 If they had any beef with us, they should have come to us directly. We eventually took her out of that school."
320 e) Race and Family Decisions Researcher: As a married couple with no children, Arthur and I have been blessed
321 with never having been subjected to blatant racism face-to-face (e.g., at public gatherings, etc.). That doesn't
322 mean it hasn't happened behind our backs. We both share the belief that trusting in God in every aspect of our
323 decision making will yield the best results ? all the time. If we try to do it ourselves, we are bound to fail. Two
324 of the five couples agreed race does play an important factor when making family decisions such as travel, dining,
325 etc. The remaining three stressed how such decisions are not impacted by their race at all. For the Chandlers
326 and Scotts, stories about how they have carefully determined life's decisions resonated within the context of their
327 interviews.

328 First, the Chandlers described how family safety has been an overarching concern. Brice explained, "The first
329 thing a man thinks about is his family's safety ?going places like the mountains, beach, and other areas. There
330 is division. The world is still growing." He mentioned how he is always mindful of where he takes his family
331 because there have been several altercations. "Some guys have come up to my wife, Dawn, and asked her if I was
332 bothering her. That's not just on the outside. It has also happened in Christian circles." Dawn talked about her
333 oldest daughter, Morgan, and the touching question she asked one afternoon. "When Morgan was six, she asked
334 me why there were not any black kids in the television commercials she was watching. She wanted to know if she
335 was good enough. She also wondered why there were no black teachers at the private school she attended. That
336 really affected her." Dawn said that when she asked why there was no diversity in the teaching staff at Morgan's

337 school and did not get a straight answer, she admitted, "That was the last straw. Yeah! That's when we decided
338 to put Morgan in another school."

339 Next, the Scotts stressed how they exercise careful consideration, especially through prayer, when it comes to
340 making family decisions. Michael explained, "I am more sensitive to the feelings of protecting my children, family,
341 where we live, eat, or travel. I don't want to take the children where they have been mistreated. Fortunately,
342 God has shielded us in that area." Stacey discussed how race impacted their decisions when they moved from
343 various states to new locations. She added how it impacted the communities they selected.

344 In contrast, the Kuhns, Porters, and Misuracas shared how their family decisions did not factor race into the
345 equation. The Kuhns stressed that since both come from diverse, military backgrounds, nothing really comes as a
346 shock to them because they have lived in numerous areas. The Porters explained that since they live in a city that
347 is a diverse melting pot, San Antonio, Texas, people do not tend to give it a second thought. Kevin added, "It is
348 not looked upon as a disgrace or issue." The Misuracas interjected a humorous twist. Paul stressed, "Wherever
349 we go, we hold hands. When we were dating, I even had her riding in my police cruiser with me. When people
350 would see us kiss and stare at us, looking at us funny, I would laugh. They knew they couldn't come at me, even
351 if they wanted to." Tonya shared the touching story of how Paul worked four jobs so she could earn a graduate
352 degree. "That was a decision that impacted the entire family. The children didn't see much of Paul at the time
353 because he was working to pay my tuition. I would cook meals on the weekend and freeze them so he could have
354 something to eat during the week." All five couples shared a common theme regarding challenges and triumphs
355 in their lives. They stressed the importance of support from their spouses and a strong dependence on their faith
356 to get them through the tough times. One of the five couples admitted they had received an occasional stare
357 or two, but no significant challenges that had caused any strain on their marital relationship. In contrast, the
358 remaining four shared specific accounts of compelling moments in their lives that appeared as challenges initially.
359 However, they were later translated into the realm of significant triumphs.

360 The Kuhns shared how they had not encountered major challenges in their marriage that had direct ties to
361 their race. They attested that a lot of the curiosity comes from others, but they do not let it affect them. Cecilye
362 commented on some of the things people mentioned when she and Bill discussed starting a family. "People
363 wanted to know about the children, wondering how they would look. There are so many trivial and petty things.

364 People should learn to appreciate the differences and celebrate them. I am blessed because we don't have that
365 problem in my family or Bill's."

366 In contrast, the remaining four couples shared their accounts, stirring a sea of emotion. The Porters stressed
367 that although they do not face personal challenges as a couple, outside forces have tried to impact their marriage
368 in a negative way. Kevin candidly discussed how his mother had a hard time accepting his engagement and
369 marriage to Elizabeth. He admitted his father had no problem, but his mother and sisters could not embrace
370 Kevin's decision. Kevin explained, "That was in the beginning. When you start to know people, there is a
371 different perspective. They are looking forward to having a baby. My father has helped bring the family closer." The
372 Scotts recalled a black history program at his mother's church in Michigan. As she fought back tears, Stacey
373 revealed, "The guest speaker chose a topic that dealt with people who were white, and everything was about the
374 white man and how they were bad. I was the only white person in the audience, and it was hurtful. I rushed to
375 the parking lot and started bawling. Michael followed me outside, and we left." Michael added, "That situation
376 brought us closer together because it reminded us that there is still a great deal of ignorance in this world. We
377 are strong, but people need to overcome their hatred."

378 The Chandlers revealed how derogatory comments made against them and their children have been challenging,
379 but have seemed to bring their family closer together as one "united front." Brice argued, "On my former job
380 as a fireman, people were always coming up against me because of Dawn. I was denied promotions, docked in
381 pay, and given bad reviews. The hard knocks have just made me stronger." Dawn interjected, "Our kids see his
382 strength. They put him on a pedestal. They're proud of their dad."

383 The Misuracas have a resounding motto: "What makes you hurt will only make you stronger." Paul admitted
384 how he was obsessed other men were looking at Tonya when they first got married. As he described it, "I had a
385 terrible jealous streak, partly because she's so beautiful and younger than me." The Misuracas went through a
386 trying time nearly eight years ago. Another woman liked Paul, and as Tonya said, "I wasn't having that. Instead
387 of hitting the woman, I hit Paul. We separated for a short spell, but the love of our families and Christian
388 counseling helped get us through that rough patch.

389 It was painful going through that experience, but our family is much stronger now."

390 17 g) Christian Faith and Enduring Marriage

391 Researcher: As a married couple, Arthur and I have been thrown numerous curve balls. One incident involved
392 his favorite uncle, Jack. He refused to come to our wedding and later severed ties with Arthur and his own sister,
393 my mother-in-law. That was 12 years ago. Our prayer is that he will reconnect with the family. This has pained
394 Arthur tremendously. As a Christian couple, we are weathering the storm together. One Bible verse we reflect on
395 a lot is John 16:33 (KJV) which states, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.
396 In the world, ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

397 All five couples are Christians, but that was not the case when several of them started dating. The

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400 **19 C**

401 Scotts and Chandlers received Jesus as their personal savior after their wedding dates. In the Misuraca household,
402 Paul dedicated his life to Christ after meeting Tonya. In contrast, The Kuhns and Porters were saved before
403 they got married. Regardless of when they became Christians, the resounding familiarity is ? they are now. All
404 admitted their Christian faith has helped them get through the good times and the bad.

405 The Scotts emphasized their accountability as believers. Stacey contended, "I feel like my husband and our
406 interracial marriage has helped people to be accepting because we are loving. We are Christian, and I think
407 people have learned from us. We are just regular people like they are. We just look different." The Chandlers
408 attest they have had faith ever since they were married. Dawn shared, "I was not raised in a religious home. In
409 a nutshell, Brice and I edify one another, and our girls, too. We are in our Bible every day." The Kuhns note the
410 importance of being on the same page, spiritually. Bill adds, "That scripture about being equally yoked talks
411 about faith, not skin color. As a married couple, Cecilye and I walk in unison as one."

412 The Porters shared how their faith in God has encouraged them during a time when they are trying to start a
413 family. Kevin proclaimed, "I believe God will give us what we want, a family. Elizabeth has been distraught for
414 some time, but our church has been having classes for married couples. God is giving us wisdom and knowledge
415 on how to handle the situation." The Misuracas share the belief that God never makes mistakes. During his first
416 marriage, Paul recalled how he had a vasectomy. When he married Tonya, he had it reversed, but it took more
417 than a decade for her to conceive. After adopting two children, Nicholas and Yolanda, little Nia came shortly
418 thereafter. Tonya sighed and said, "I want to remind everyone to hold on to their faith. Your blessings may not
419 come when you expect them, but continue to trust in the Lord. I am a living example. He has never failed me.
420 Put your trust in the Lord." h) On a Lighter Note Researcher: Several years ago, Arthur and I visited one of his
421 good friends in Richmond, Indiana. Eddie and his wife, Charlotte, have a young daughter named Ariel. As we
422 all sat at the dinner table one evening, Ariel turned to me and said, "My! You have big lips." As I gazed at her
423 dad, who had literally turned 20 shades of red, I paused for a moment. I then leaned over to Ariel and replied,
424 "Better to kiss you with, my dear." I planted a huge kiss on her cheek and started laughing. Eddie's face turned
425 from flaming red to its natural complexion. I had diffused the situation in a comedic way. All five couples shared
426 the common theme of laughter when mentioning memorable moments with their spouses. The Scotts recalled
427 a story from their early days of marriage. As Michael explained, "I can think about a blonde moment she had.
428 Stacey was at work and thought her key fob was broken, so she called me for help. She was frantic because she
429 didn't know how she was going to get home. I told her to stick the key in the door and turn it. Man, I thought
430 that was funny." The Chandlers reminisced about their youngest daughter Randi's first day at college.

431 As Dawn explained, "Brice hated cell phones, so he didn't know how to text. Randi had been asking him
432 to learn for the longest. Brice finally broke down and wrote his first text so he could communicate with his
433 daughter. It was comical, but so touching."

434 For the Porters, Elizabeth's after-church choir renditions make Kevin want to put her voice on mute. "The
435 songs carry over into the car and at home ? until she gets tired, but then she sings louder to counter her
436 tired state." The Misuracas could barely keep their composure as they talked about the pre-wedding rehearsal
437 of their"first dance." Tonya chuckled, "Paul forgot what to do, so he started crying. We all got a good laugh
438 from that." The Kuhns shared how they lost their car at Disney World and got caught in a torrential downpour.
439 According to Cecilye, "We went back to what we thought was the parking lot. No one could find the car. We
440 thought someone had stolen it. Turns out, we were in the wrong lot. I was fuming! Meanwhile, Bill was standing
441 there grinning and laughing the whole time." i) A Collective Front: Advice and Additional Comments It was
442 interesting to hear what all five couples shared from an advice perspective for Black-White interracial couples
443 who are dating or considering marriage. A resonating theme among all of them was the fact that listening to
444 others' advice can be good, but if it is unfruitful and does not have any edifying characteristics, it should not be
445 applied

446 **20 Ideas for Further Research**

447 As a researcher dealing with a limited time frame, there were avenues for possible exploration that were
448 not addressed in this study. Although couples from Colorado and various parts of California were invited
449 to participate, extenuating circumstances prevented them from contributing. Therefore, an idea for further
450 consideration would be to conduct a similar qualitative study involving Black-White interracial marriages from
451 various regions of America, which would provide a greater geographical representation of these couples, in general.
452 Since social media platforms and ()

453 **21 C**

454 Faith and Black-White Interracial Marriages advanced technological capabilities have taken the world by storm,
455 an additional approach would be to conduct a qualitative study involving Black-White interracial couples around
456 the world (e.g., Europe and Africa). The goal would be to gauge similarities and differences from a faith

457 perspective. This research would not only pertain to Christians, but also include participants such as Muslims,
458 Buddhists, atheists, etc.

459 **22 VII.**

460 **23 Summary**

461 In 2007, forty years after the landmark Loving vs. Virginia Supreme Court ruling, Mildred Loving shared her
462 21st century perspective. "My generation was bitterly divided over something that should have been so clear
463 and right. But I have lived long enough now to see big changes. The older generation's fears and prejudices
464 have given way, and today's young people realize that if someone loves someone, they have a right to marry" (as
465 cited in Sullivan, 2007, para. 9). While researching scholarly information for this study, it was apparent that a
466 faith-based, Christian perspective regarding Black-White interracial marriages had not been explored.

467 Therefore, this qualitative study will serve as a much-needed addition to the current body of research.

468 Throughout the context of the paper, several themes arose that were reflective of Gudykunst's (1995) Anxiety-
469 Uncertainty Management Theory. The Chandlers' accounts of work hostility and derogatory encounters with
470 people in passing emphasized the breakdown in intergroup and interpersonal relationships, as evidenced in this
471 study. Familial relationships described by the Scotts, Kuhns, and Misuracas demonstrated that effective in-group
472 and out-group communication can yield positive intercultural and interethnic encounters ??Matusitz, 2004). Even
473 during situations where at least one family member was not receptive to a Black-White interracial union in the
474 beginning, as evidenced with the Chandlers and Porters, attempts to avoid miscommunication were addressed
475 over time. Meanwhile, to give readers a broader scope of the research process, a transcript from the Scotts'
476 interview is located in Appendix B.

477 **24 Appendix B**

478 Interview Transcript: Michael and Stacey Scott ??une 20, 2013 Rameca: Michael and Stacey, thank you very
479 much for agreeing to participate in this research. It means so much. I think a lot of people, both Christian
480 and non-Christian, can learn a wealth of information from this study. That is why I am so grateful for your
481 assistance. This is going to be a laid back interview process. I will be interviewing each of you separately and
482 then be bringing you back as a couple for some collective questions. Who would like to go first? Michael: I will.

483 **25 Michael (Individual Interview)**

484 Rameca: How and where did you meet this lovely lady, Stacey? Michael: Actually, we met the first time when
485 we were much younger, around 12. I saw her from afar. We officially met at a phone technology company when I
486 was on summer break from college. She and I were both employees. Plus, we grew up in the same city, Lexington,
487 North Carolina.

488 Rameca: What made you realize Stacey was "the one" for you? Michael: I actually liked her when I saw her,
489 the physical aspects. Did I know she was the one when I first saw her? No. We dated for three years. It was after
490 a year I realized she was the one. I can't really say there was an "aha" moment. We spent a lot of time together
491 from the time we started dating until we were married. We actually lived together before we got married. We
492 were not saved at the time. We gave our lives to Christ the same year we were married, after our wedding day.
493 Michael: When the word is mentioned, there is not actually an emotion that comes with it because when I see
494 her, I do not see color, and when she sees me, she doesn't, either. When I see other interracial couples that I
495 don't know ? in church or other places, I don't have any specific thoughts that come to mind because they are
496 people, part of God's creation. Race does not seem to be a factor at all in my mind.

497 **26 Rameca:**

498 In what ways has race impacted your decisions as a married couple? Michael: The primary way it has impacted
499 our decisions is with moving. We have moved to three different states, North Carolina, Michigan, and South
500 Carolina. It has impacted where we live, like the neighborhoods we choose. We know with communities, you
501 will have people that will fill a certain way no matter where you go. Specifically, neighborhoods, God has given
502 us clarity, we have prayed for discernment, walking through a home and praying for God's will. We know that
503 people have been persecuted. It affected our moving to Summerville, S.C., where we live now. We were told it
504 was predominately white, and that black people there should not go out after dark. We were glad we let the
505 Lord lead us instead of other people. He has protected us, and we have not seen that.

506 Rameca: What circumstances, if any, have challenged your marriage?

507 In contrast, which circumstances have brought you closer together as a couple?

508 Michael: A negative aspect as it pertains to racial things ? well. A predominate challenge would be just
509 how the world sees races and differences-mixing races, like some of the things they say or do. Voting is another
510 example. Since I am an African-American male, a lot of people look at me and assume I am a Democrat, but I
511 am actually a Republican. They assume I am a Republican because my wife is Caucasian. I hear things people
512 say. For example, friends of the family liked to throw in their two cents. My mother's friends would say things.
513 She would tell my brother and me that we were "color struck." My brother is married to a lady who has a fair

514 complexion, but is not white. When Stacey and I started dating, some people at the Baptist church we attended
515 made hurtful remarks, but we decided to ignore them. I have had people that have not been a fan of mine,
516 but that's their problem. Okay, now for the positives. I think just being best friends, having great attitudes,
517 and believing we can conquer the world together. As long as we have God and each other, we can accomplish
518 anything. The things we endured together, we could not have done alone.

519 Rameca: What specific role has your Christian faith played within the context of your marriage? Michael: We
520 were married, before we became Christians, as I said before. I have always known God has had his hand on my
521 life since I was a child. I gave my life to God at age 11. It was in a forced way, during a church service. I was
522 nudged into doing it with no in my life when I could have been killed or injured, like my motorcycle accident.
523 I knew since I was not killed, there must have been a purpose for my life, but I was not ready yet. It wasn't
524 because of anything like wanting to drink do drugs or act crazy ? because I never had an interest in those things.
525 I never thought I was good enough. I thought I had to clean my life up and be good before I could accept Jesus
526 as my personal savior. A lady at work told me something different when I was at work in the cafeteria. She told
527 me God wanted us to come as we were. A day or two later, Stacey and I were at home, lying in the bed, and with
528 tears, I gave my life to Christ, and she gave her life to Christ as well. We did it within 12 hours of each other.
529 How it has affected our marriage in an amazing way was is that we remember if we do not let God down, we
530 cannot let our family down. I cannot afford to fail because of my commitment to God, our marriage, and family.
531 It could also affect my family's future walk with God. As a youth pastor, I do want to be a negative influence
532 on the kids. We are to seek God's kingdom first. I try my best to live the life every day. Our Christian faith
533 has affected our marriage, so the word divorce is not in our vocabulary. Sleeping on the couch is not an option.
534 If we are upset with one another, we do not let the sun go down without making things right. We discuss our
535 problems. Rameca: Michael, can you think of a humorous story about Stacey you would like to share? Michael:
536 I can think of a blonde moment she had. Stacey is actually a red head. That is one of the things I love about
537 her. One day, she was at work. At the time, we lived in Michigan, and I worked for Chrysler. She was working
538 for an engineering company and called to let me know she couldn't get into the car because the key fob wasn't
539 working. I asked her if she was sure. She said she was. Stacey was frantic because she didn't know how she was
540 going to get home. I told her to stick the key in the door and turn it. She sighed and said, "Okay! Bye." Man, I
541 thought that was funny.

542 27 Stacey (Individual Interview)

543 Rameca: Stacey, how and where did you meet Michael?

544 Stacey: I did know him a little because my sister and his sister were friends. Then, he started working at the
545 phone technology company, the same place I was employed. He stared at me a lot. He would make crazy eyes
546 at me. He looked like a little boy to me. He was younger. I did not pay attention. Plus, I was coming out of
547 a very abusive relationship. So, I was not looking to date. He wrote a note, asking me if I would go out with
548 him. It had two boxes, and he wanted me to check yes or no on the paper. I laughed, crumpled it up and threw
549 it away. I didn't go out with him. One day, he needed a ride home because it was very hot outside. He made
550 me laugh the entire time. So, he asked me out in person, and I said yes. I had a three and a half daughter from
551 a previous relationship at the time. We started dating, and coming out of a very abusive relationship. I wasn't
552 used to being treated like a lady. I almost had to learn to behave and to be a lady because I wasn't used to being
553 treated like one.

554 Rameca: What made you realize Michael was the one? Stacey: Like I said, we were not saved before we
555 got married. We were not in church to the point of having made a commitment. We lived together, and in the
556 morning, he would grab my hand and not want me to get up. He never wanted to let me go. I had never been
557 treated like that before. That is what made me realize he was the one. Stacey: I am more sensitive to the feelings
558 or protection of my children, even the protection of my whole family-where we live, where we go eat, where we
559 travel. I am always constantly thinking of that. I don't want to take my children anywhere when they can be
560 mistreated.

561 Rameca: Have you ever had a situation where that has happened? Stacey: No. I think it is the covering or
562 hand of God over our lives. I know the Lord is our protector, and He will keep us and our children. I have people
563 compliment me and tell me how beautiful my children are ? and our family.

564 Rameca: What circumstances, if any, have challenged your marriage?

565 In contrast, which circumstances have brought you closer together as a couple?

566 Stacey: The challenge to me was our move from Michigan to South Carolina. We had been members of that
567 church for eight years. We were warned about Summerville, S.C., and moving here. We were told that in South
568 Carolina, people still fly the rebel flag. In the past, sometimes we would go to church with 20 2 30 ()C

569 Faith and Black-White Interracial Marriages Michael's mother. I am kind of naïve and gullible. I do not see
570 hatred all the time. I remember during black history month, there was a speaker who spoke against people with
571 white skin. Everything was about the white man, and I was the only white person sitting there. I got up, made
572 it to the parking lot and started crying. That experience was absolutely heartbreaking. Michael came outside,
573 and we left. The things that have brought us closer together as a couple ? he surprised be for my 40th birthday.
574 He wrote the sweetest letter to celebrate me. He invited friends and family from many places to come celebrate.

575 He had somebody take me shopping. When I came home, I had family and friends I had not seen for years. Some
576 had traveled for days.

577 Rameca: What specific role has your Christian faith played within the context of your marriage? Stacey: It
578 guides what I am supposed to do as a wife. I know how much he loves the Lord. I know every decision we make,
579 we will pray about it, and God is going to direct him. It helps me as a mother, and also with the daily decisions
580 we make as a family. For our children, most of the time, it is hard because every note I write to the teacher, and
581 everything we do, will acknowledge the Lord. We stand strong. We live for the Lord, not for the school system.
582 They do play music we do not like or approve of at the middle school. I cannot force them to change it. We
583 can only stay after our three girls and tell them what is right and wrong. Rameca: Stacey, can you think of a
584 humorous story about Michael that comes to mind? Stacey: He makes me laugh every single day. If we don't
585 laugh, then I'm concerned. I know he's tired sometimes, so I have to give him space.

586 He has ministries at church, and that is a lot of responsibility. I can't really think of one particular story.

587 **28 Michael and Stacey (Collective Interview)**

588 Rameca: Now that you have answered questions separately, it is time to bring both of you back as a couple.
589 My first question is: What advice would you give Black-White interracial couples who are currently married or
590 considering it? Stacey: They have to live for God, and be wholeheartedly sold out. Michael: That is imperative.
591 One thing that I would add is not to idly pass by advice from people because of the things they say.

592 They sometimes mention things because they do love you. God has given us a person he has for us, and you
593 need to be aware of that. Be aware that there will be obstacles. If the advice is not scriptural, it is opinion. Be
594 able to distinguish between the two.

595 Stacey: Some people take the unequally yoked scripture and say it is for interracial people, speaking against
596 those marriages. People use that to build their hatred. If you need to bring that out, you have an issue.

597 Michael: God created the human race. We are all his children. Rameca: This is the last question. Can you
598 think of anything we have not discussed that you would like to add? Stacey: I feel like my husband and our
599 interracial marriage has helped people to be accepting because we are loving people. We are Christian, and I
600 think people have learned from us. We are just regular people like they are. We just look different. I think
601 our relationship has affected people who may not have approved because we live for the Lord and are sold out.
602 There are friends whose opinions have changed because he adores me and I adore him. It is strange for people.
603 It brings us closer together as an interracial couple. We depend on each other.

604 Michael: It brings us closer. We teach our children that when it comes to race, there is no race. We do
605 not allow them to say black, white, or yellow when referencing people, in general. We try to get them not to
606 automatically default to race. As parents, we teach our children. They only know what they are taught and
607 observe. We see kids repeat what they learn.

608 Stacey: Michael's first cousin said he thought it was amazing that he was black and I was white. The kid said
609 he thought it was awesome. I tell my kids to accept who they are because created that beautiful skin with that
610 beautiful hair. I have to remind myself of that because there are some things we do not like about ourselves. I
611 have to remind myself that we are each a beautiful creation from God.

612 Rameca: Michael and Stacey, I enjoyed the time we spent together this evening. Thank you very much for
613 participating in this research. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. In the meantime, I will
614 inform you when the study is finalized. ^{1 2}

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Figure 1:

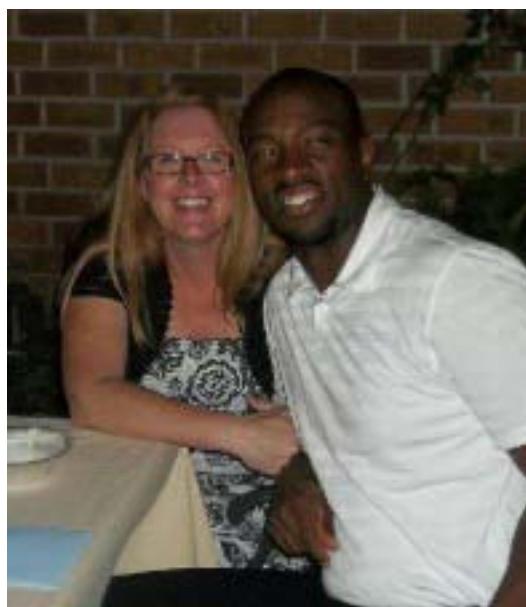


Figure 2:



Figure 3:



Figure 4:



Figure 5:



Figure 6:

b) The One!

Researcher: As a news anchor/reporter working

[Note: for a television station, I was very cautious when it came to relationships. I wanted someone to like me for myself, not my profession. Arthur pursued me for three months before I let him take me to lunch. After giving him a chance, I realized he was a dedicated Christian and caring individual. Since I didn't want to waste my time, I put him in prayer. I specifically asked God to let my mother know if Arthur was the person I should marry and to have "her" tell me. That answer came a few weeks later, right before he embarked on a trip to Israel. My mother said, "Rameca, I think Arthur is a nice guy. I wouldn't be surprised if the two of you got married."]

Figure 7:

[Note: kidding! I know you better than that." He always comes back with, "Okay, I'm just making sure you remember ? ha ha."]

Figure 8:

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[Note: C]

Figure 9:

VI.

Figure 10:

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