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## Parental Relationship Quality and Stereotypic Role Endorsement as Predictors of Marriage Attitudes of African Americans

Bernasha Monique Anderson

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

PARENTAL RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND STEREOTYPIC ROLE ENDORSEMENT AS  
PREDICTORS OF MARRIAGE ATTITUDES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

BY

BERNASHA M. ANDERSON

CHICAGO, IL

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To my God, thank you for your grace and guidance along this journey. Thank you for allowing my dreams to become my lived experience. Thank you to my ancestors; I am because we are. To my family and friends, thank you for your love, encouragement, and prayers. Thank you to my program and internship cohort members, Hanna Chang, Marissa Floro, Mijin Kim and Whitney Wheeler for providing assistance, support, and community. Special thanks to my grandmother, Betty Simon and best-friend, Latrice Thomas for bringing laughter and light into my world. Thank you to everyone who took the time to participate in my dissertation study. To my faculty members, Dr. Elizabeth Vera, Dr. Eunju Yoon, Dr. Steven Brown, and Dr. Rufus Gonzales, thank you for instilling knowledge both within and beyond the classroom. Thank you to the Counseling Psychology program and Graduate School for blessing me with this opportunity. I am grateful for all of my mentors and educators for providing wisdom and passing on the torch. You helped me to uncover my truth and purpose--to empower, to enrich, to educate, and to serve our communities. Onward!

Education was both a sacred right and responsibility because without it, no one born into the world could become fully human. Our humanity is defined and distinguished by the development of knowledge and particularly self-knowledge, therefore it is critically necessary for each generation to learn who and what they are.

—Dr. Na'im Akbar

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## ABSTRACT

As the marriage rate of African Americans continues to decline, concern has been expressed about the stability of the African American family system among members of the community. There is currently a dearth of studies examining marriage attitudes among African Americans in the counseling psychology literature. The current study sought to expand the existing scholarship by exploring parental relationship quality and stereotypic role endorsement as predictors of African American women and men's marriage attitudes. Additionally, gender was examined as a moderator.

Participants ( $n = 140$ ) completed three measures including the *Parental Marital Conflict Scale* (Wang, 2004), the *Marital Attitude Scale* (Shi, 2009), and the *Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale* (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2004). Findings indicated that parental conflict and stereotypic role endorsement do not predict marriage attitudes of African American women and men. Support for gender as a moderator was not found as the current sample contained a dearth of African American male-identified participants. Age emerged as a statistically significant predictor of marriage beliefs. As such, younger participants reported more favorable marriage attitudes compared to older participants who reported less favorable marital beliefs. Gender differences were also found. Women reported greater endorsement of the *Mammy* and *Superwoman* stereotypic roles compared to men. Implications for clinical practice, suggestions for future research, and study limitations are discussed.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Marriage among African Americans has been a recurrent subject of debate since its decline in the 1960's. During the 1960's, approximately 78% of African Americans reported being married (Cherlin, 2005). Contrastingly, only 56% of African American women (ages 25-44) and 62% of African American men (ages 25-44) reported marriages nearly forty years later (Goodwin, McGill, & Chandra, 2009). Currently African Americans have lower marriage rates, marry later in life, and have higher rates of divorce compared to White Americans (Dixon 2009; Raley, Sweeney, & Wondra, 2015). Popular media forums propose explanations for the decline in the African American marriage rate, as well as present an array of positions in support of and against marriage (Coontz, 2017; Davis & Karar, 2009; Jones, 2006). Meanwhile, researchers also suggest hypotheses for the recession of marriages among African Americans and compare outcomes between single and married African American individuals (Davis, Williams, Emerson, & Hourd-Bryant, 2000; Dixon, 2009; Hill, 2006; Loughran, 2002). The marriage rate decline causes understandable concern within the African American community regarding the current state and future of the African American family system.

Scholars have attempted to identify psychological and contextual factors that explain the race marriage gap. The current chapter will first discuss the psychological legacy of slavery and the history of African American marriages. This chapter will also introduce the contextual influences of gender, race, social class and education. The second half of this chapter will

examine: (a) implications for the African American family system; (b) existing explanations for the marriage race gap in the current literature; and (c) alternative explanations for the marriage race gap proposed by the researcher. Finally, the purpose of the study, research questions, and hypotheses will be proposed.

### **Psychological Legacy of Slavery**

Although slavery ended approximately 150 years ago, the residual effects of psychological trauma impact African Americans in present-day (Akbar, 1996). According to Akbar, “In order to fully grasp the magnitude of our current problems, we must reopen the books on the events of slavery” (p. 3). Slave capturers implemented intentional psychological abuse to eradicate the slave's former identity and replace it with the falsity that they were inferior to Whites. One of the earliest recorded incidents of abuse by the health profession was when African slaves were diagnosed with mental illnesses for the purposes of psychological oppression. One such disorder was known as *Drapetomania*, a psychological disorder coined by American physician Samuel Cartwright in 1851 when slaves attempted to flee captivity and pursue freedom (Cartwright, 1851). *Dysaesthesia Aethiopica*, also known as “rascality” was diagnosed among slaves who rebelled against being kidnapped from their native land (Cartwright, 1851). As a result of psychological oppression, African slavery served to miseducate African captives about their true identities which has resulted in present-day African Americans rejecting characteristics about their personal selves and instead adopting White characteristics (Akbar, 1999). Akbar posits, “In the case of African Americans, there is the oppressive miseducation that makes us reject our talents and ourselves because we don't look or act Caucasian enough” (p. 26).

He asserts that slavery influenced African Americans' beliefs related to self-worth, career, property attainment, and the African American family (Akbar, 1996). Thus, slavery was an attack on the African slave's identity. When the African slave was forced into captivity, she was robbed of her heritage and customs. Her culture's values were stripped and her identity was shattered. Slavery brought many losses for African captives including the loss of languages, traditions, and spiritual practices. It can be argued that the greatest loss suffered by African slaves was the loss of the African family system. Although the remnants of this psychological violence continues to impact African Americans' beliefs about themselves in the present-day, African slaves survived by developing new identities. One such identity was the marital identity. In spite of capturers' attempts to deny marriage to African slaves, African captives found ways to engage in marriages ceremonies within their communities (Parry, 2015).

### **History of African American Marriages**

During African slavery in the United States, African Americans were prohibited from marrying (Parry, 2015). Despite African slaves being denied access to legal marriage, captives found alternative approaches to honor their value of marriage. Historians utilized the accounts of ex-slaves through the Work Progress Administration (WPA), to gain insight into the marriage and wedding practices of African captives. These narratives informed historians that African American marriages of field slaves were constituted through weddings performed by elders as community members watched in support. Parry explains, "Because slave marriages were not recognized as legally binding contracts in the slave states, the "broomstick law" provided legitimacy to the wedding from the perspective of the slave community" (p. 294). The broomstick law was enacted through the broomstick ritual which was performed at non-

domesticated slaves' weddings. The ritual included the betrothed couple standing before two family members or friends who each held one end of a broomstick. At the end of the wedding ceremony, the elder would conclude the ceremony with the couple jumping over the broomstick. This act was a demonstration of the commitment to marriage for the African American couple (Parry, 2015).

While numerous acts of degradation targeted African American women and men separately; the denial of equal marriage rights was a direct and deliberate attack on the African American family system. Patterson (1998) asserts that slavery was the origin of sabotage for the African American marriage. Evidence of such sabotage was illustrated by: (a) the illegality of marriage by African slaves in several states; and (b) the implementation of legal sanctions preventing African slaves from marrying in specific states. Although many African Americans were able to commit to marriage through cultural customs passed on from the previous generations, the prohibition of marriage continues to impact African American marriages in present day.

### **Present-Day African American Marriages**

Scholars assert varying positions on present-day African American marriages (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Pinderhughes, 2002). Pinderhughes states that despite African American families being distinguished by their strong connections, the African American marriage is characterized by its tenuous relationships. Moreover, the author declares that African American marriages are presently in a disastrous state of crisis characterized by their frailty, chaos, and hostility. In contrast, Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) explain that married African Americans report higher levels of personal happiness and overall life satisfaction when compared to African

Americans who have never been married, separated, or divorced. However, the authors contend that differences exist related to gender. As such, African American married women experience a greater number of life stressors than African American men.

Despite the benefit espoused by married African American women when compared to single African American women, married African American women are less satisfied within their marriages when compared to married White women (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). According to Jones and Shorter-Gooden, “Black women are often forced to shift in intimate relationships with Black men, sublimating their own needs, strengths, and desires” (p. 207). The authors suggest that married middle-class African American women report more depression than married middle-class White married women. Therefore, although these discoveries suggest that marriages lead to enhanced emotional well-being, this appears more impactful for men when compared to women and White Americans when compared to African Americans.

Not only is there a concern regarding the quality of current African American marriages when compared to White marriages, there is also a concern related to the divorce rate within the African American community. Preceding literature informs that African Americans have higher divorce rates (at approximately 67%) when compared to White Americans (at approximately 50%) (Staples, 1994). Previous researchers draw a link between slavery and concerns associated with African American marriages. Scholars argue that slavery has led to lower rates of marriages and a less marital satisfaction among African American women and men.

### **African Americans and Marriage Trends**

African Americans' experiences related to marriage, gender, socioeconomic status, and education contrast the experiences of communities from other ethnic groups. Regarding gender,

the experiences of African American women differ from the experiences of women with other racial identities. During the first half of the twentieth century, African American women married at earlier ages when compared to White women (Cherlin, 2005). At the present, African American women's median age at first marriage is approximately four years older at age 30 compared to White women's median age of 26 (Raley et al., 2015). Currently, African American women are more likely to never marry, marry later in life, and report higher rates of marital instability when compared to White and Latinx women (Raley et al., 2015). According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 56.2% of African American women ages 25-44 reported being married within their lifetime compared to 83.7% of White women ages 25-44 (CDC, 2010). Recent projections indicate that only two-thirds of African American women will marry in their life-time (CDC, 2010).

Researchers have found disparities in African Americans' socioeconomic status when compared to White Americans. In 2014, the median household income for African Americans was approximately \$43,300 in contrast to White Americans' median household income of approximately \$71,300 (Pew Research Center, 2016). African Americans are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to White and Asian Americans. In 2014, approximately 26% of the African American U.S. population were identified as poor, while only 10% of the White American population and 12% of the Asian American population were considered poor. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, by age 35 there is a lower rate of marriage for African American men ages 35-44 who live below the poverty line when compared to African American men who live at least 200% above the line of poverty. Head of households who report higher educational levels typically have higher annual incomes. However, the income



race gap persists across all educational levels. In 2014, the median adjusted household income of African Americans who hold at least a Bachelor's degree was \$82,300, in contrast with White Americans' income of \$106,600 (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Previous literature has also found that educational disparities experienced by African Americans exceed those from other ethnic groups. The college degree has become the marker for financial well-being. Although the rates for college attendance have increased since the 1960's across all ethnic groups, a racial educational gap exists. Although there is a racial marriage gap among all education levels of African Americans when compared to White Americans, the racial marriage gap is most concentrated among African American individuals who did not attend college. African Americans are less likely to obtain a high school diploma and a college degree compared to White and Asian Americans. Approximately 36% of Whites ages 25 and older hold a Bachelor's degree compared to 23% of African Americans (Pew Research Center, 2016). These trends in gender, educational, and economic inequities for African Americans are problematic for the African American family unit.

### **Implications**

Researchers posit that African American marriages have developmental, educational, and financial implications for the well-being of African American children and adults (Hamilton, Goldsmith, & Darity, 2009; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Sun & Li, 2011). In present-day approximately 69% of African American children are born outside of a marital relationship compared to 30% of White children and 40% of Latinx children. Moreover, three-fifths of African American children are projected to be raised outside of a marital relationship when

compared to only one-fifth of White children. These data illustrate that the African American community is growing at rates that exceed present-day marriage rates.

Previous research suggests that family structure has vast implications on the outcomes of children (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Raley et al., 2015; Sun & Li, 2011). Children from two parent households differ from children from one parent households regarding academic achievement. Sun and Li (2011) found that children of two parent households had greater improvements in their reading and math performances over time when compared to children from single-parent households where information on race was not provided in the study. Additionally, Astone and McLanahan (1991) found that high school sophomores who indicated living in single-parent households reported less assistance with school work and less parental supervision compared to sophomores in two-parent households in a sample of Latinx, African American and White adolescents. While many children from single-parent households thrive, researchers suggest that single parent households experience greater financial distress which can lead to childhood developmental deficits (Raley et al., 2015).

Pinderhughes (2002) reports that African American men with secure employment are twice as likely to marry than African American men without consistent employment. According to the United States Census Bureau (2000), families containing married couples reported the highest median income at \$81,025 compared to single male head of household's median income of \$53,684 and single female head of household's median income of \$36,151. African American households reported the lowest median income at \$35,398, compared to Asian households at \$74, 297, Latinx households at \$42,491, and White households at \$60,256 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015). These data indicate that African American single head of households experience

greater financial hardships when compared to other ethnic groups. Coupling a single African American household with the raising of children leads to greater distress and difficulty meeting the financial needs of the family.

### **Hypotheses Concerning the Decline of African American Marriages**

Previous literature asserts that the decline of African American marriages can be best explained by (a) stressors from experiences of oppression; (b) the sex ratio imbalance; (c) a limited number of marriageable male partners; and (d) contentious relationships between African women and men (Billingsley & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1998; Cherlin, 1999; Guttentag & Secord, 1983; Lawson & Thompson, 1994; Pinderhughes, 2002; Raley et al., 2015).

African Americans frequently experience constraint of economic opportunities, the discrediting of their social identities, and the utilization of social practices and legislative policies that legitimize discrimination. The emotional distress that African Americans experience from incidents of oppression places strain on marital relationships resulting in conflict and marriage disillusion (Billingsley & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1998; Lawson & Thompson, 1994; Pinderhughes, 2002). According to Pinderhughes,

As receptacles for anxiety, conflict, confusion, and contradiction within the social system, African Americans have been required to live with multiple and ongoing stressors, and their family and couple functioning have become highly vulnerable. The adaptations they have made in coping with this societal role have become a part of their culture and, as such, these adaptations have both facilitated and undermined marriage. (p. 270)

While some scholars point to the experience of oppression as a hypothesis for the marriage race gap, others suggest that the sex ratio imbalance theory explains this marriage disparity (Guttentag & Secord, 1983; Pinderhughes, 2002). Present day African American women outnumber the number of African American men. In 2002, The U.S. Census Bureau

reported a sex ratio of approximately 81 African American men for every 100 African American women. The sex ratio imbalance theory insists that because African American women outnumber African American men this results in (a) a dearth of African American male marriage partners; and (b) African American men gaining power from their limited numbers which they use to engage in multiple simultaneous non-committal romantic relationships with African American women. The literature suggests that African American men having multiple prospects decreases the chances of entering a monogamous marriage (Guttentag & Secord, 1983; Pinderhughes, 2002).

Other scholars assert that the decline in marriage can be attributed to the dearth of marriageable African American men (Cherlin, 1999). They posit that the shortage of eligible male partners is attributed to (a) incarceration rates; (b) unemployment rates; and (c) death rates in the United States (Beathea, 1995; King & Allen, 2009). Black men are more than six times as likely to be incarcerated in local jails and state and federal prisons compared to White men and account for 46% of the total state and federal prison population (Pew Research Center, 2013; United States Census Bureau, 2000). In 2000, approximately 10% of Black men in the U.S. (ages 20-39) were serving prison sentences compared to 3% of Hispanic and 1% of White men (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Hence, African American men are incarcerated at rates that exceed White American men, reducing the number of possible marriage candidates.

Unemployment has also been associated with the lack of eligible African American male partners (Darity & Meyers, 1986). Darity and Meyers claim that African American men's economic marginalization makes them less attractive marriage candidates because they are unable to financially provide for their families. From 2005-2017, African American men had the

highest rates of unemployment of all ethnic groups. As the recession came to an end in 2009, 18% of African American men were unemployed in comparison to 13.9% of Latino men, 9% of Asian men, and 8.8 % of White men (Adjeiwaa-Manu, 2017). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), African Americans account for 22% of unemployed U.S residents, while representing only 11% of the U.S. labor market. As a result, the unemployment rate among African Americans is approximately 13%, where the unemployment rate of White Americans is only 6% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). According to the Pew Research Center (2016), African Americans are twice as likely to be poor or unemployed as White Americans. However, researchers suggest that an increase in employment opportunities for African American women may contribute to the decline in African American marriages. Despite African Americans having the highest unemployment rate of all ethnic and racial groups in the U.S., African American women have slightly higher rates of employment compared to African American men (Adjeiwaa-Manu, 2017). As such, researchers suggest that increases in African American women's financial statuses decreases their need to seek out marriage partners.

The final argument in the dearth of eligible African American male partners is the high death rate among African American men. The death rate of African American men exceeds that of men from all other racial and ethnic groups (Murphy, Xu, Kochanek, Curtin, & Arias, 2008). In 2008, there were 151,000 deaths of African American men compared to 89,000 deaths of White men (Murphy et al., 2008). The scholarship provides support for the argument that the decline of African American marriages is linked to the lack of marriageable African American male candidates.

Pinderhughes (2002) points to contention within the African American female-male relationship as another reason for the shortage of African American marriages. During African slavery slave owner, William Lynch penned a letter to his fellow slave holding community instructing them to magnify differences among their slaves in order to create an environment of jealousy and distrust for the purposes of control and domination (Lynch, 2009). Among his hateful teachings were lessons on how to rupture intimate relationships between African female and male captives. This marked the beginning of a legacy of strife in the romantic relationships of African American women and men that continues in present-day.

As such, Pinderhughes (2002), suggests that the predominant reasons for the conflict between African American women and men are: (a) power differentials; (b) the endorsement of stereotypes where one partner engages in stereotyping their mate; and (c) the internalization of stereotypes where one partner views themselves through a stereotypic lens and enacts behaviors depicted by the stereotype. Regarding the power differential hypothesis Pinderhughes asserted, “Power in the home becomes a complex nodal issue for the couple” (p. 275). Although men hold a greater degree of power in mainstream culture, African American men are denied access to the same degree of power as White men. As a result, African American men's experience of powerlessness is reinforced by flexible gender roles, and African American women's higher educational attainment and subsequent higher income level leading to conflict in the relationship.

Additionally, African American men report more rigidity in their perceptions of power distribution when compared to other groups. As such, they place a greater importance on traditional “sex-role power distribution and male authority” in contrast to African American women, White women, and White men (Pinderhughes, 2002). Pinderhughes states that African

American men's daily experiences of oppression from the greater society leads to feelings of invisibility and inferiority. As a result, African American women attempt to compensate for their partners' pain leading to problematic relationship patterns. Pinderhughes suggests that stereotypic endorsement explains the marriage race gap. If couples begin to view their partners through the lens of stereotypic roles and images, couples experience higher rates of discord.

Previous researchers' hypotheses of (a) distress experienced from oppression; (b) a sex ratio imbalance of African American women to men; (c) a dearth of eligible African American male partners; and (d) a history of contentious relationships between African American women and men appear to partially explain the decline of African American marriages. Although previous proposed explanations account for a portion of the marriage gap, these explanations do not completely explain the dearth of African American marriages. If these explanations were sufficient, members of the African American community would have never begun marrying during slavery and would not continue to marry in the present-day. Regarding the argument that unemployment rates or socio-economic status explains the marriage race gap, findings illustrate that the African American marriage rate began declining during a time where the wages of African American men were increasing as evidenced by employed African Americans experiencing growth in wages between years 1960 and 1980 due to educational attainment. Also, if unemployment fully explained the racial marriage gap, the marriage rate for people with similar educational backgrounds among all racial groups would be similar. If education explained the marriage gap, a marriage racial gap for college educated African Americans would not exist (Raley et al., 2015). For instance, in 2012, approximately 71% of African American

college educated women married compared to 88% of White college educated women. Also, the rate of marriage remains the same for all education levels for White Americans.

The dearth of eligible marriage partners is not sufficient to explain the decline in marriages. In the U.S. African American women outnumber African American men, where there are 81 men for every 100 women. Research indicates that for women and men ages 25-44, 62.1% of African American men reported being married compared to only 56.2% of African American women (CDC, 2002). Hence, African American men are marrying at rates that exceed African American women. African American men are more likely to enter interracial marriages when compared to African American women. In 2013, approximately 25% of Black men married someone who did not identify as African American compared to only 12% of Black women who married someone of a difference race (Wang, 2015).

Thus, existing theories for the dearth of African American marriages point to between group distinctions related to sex ratio imbalance, educational attainment, and socioeconomic statuses of African Americans compared to other racial groups. However, within group comparisons have yet to be explored in the extant literature which may illuminate the marriage attitudes of present-day African Americans. While the aforementioned marital trends that explore between group comparisons may account for the experiences of some African Americans, other African Americans' experiences may be best explained by within group differences. It is important to gain insight into the experiences of African Americans whose experiences are not reflected in the aforementioned marriage trends in order to learn what other factors explain present-day African Americans' marriage attitudes. This dissertation proposes two additional explanations that have not been well documented in existing literature on this topic: (a) the lack



of cohesive parental relationships; and (b) negative attitudes regarding marriage. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the marriage attitudes of present-day African American women and men in relation to the level of conflict present in their parental relationships. Additionally, Pinderhughes' (2002) explanation of stereotype endorsement of African American women will be examined in relation to marriage attitudes. Findings from this study will have implications for clinicians who provide psychotherapeutic services to African American couples and/or individuals.

### **Purpose of Study**

There is a dearth of literature that examines the marriage attitudes and the variables that influence the marriage attitudes of African Americans. Specifically, the variable parental relationship quality impacts on marriage attitudes has been explored among White samples; however, previous literature has yet to address this relationship among African Americans. The purpose of this study is to explore: (a) the relationship between parental relationship quality and marriage attitudes of African American women and men; and (b) the relationship between stereotypic roles and marriage attitudes of African American women and men. Additionally, gender will be explored as a possible moderator.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Based on the purpose of this study, the following research questions and hypotheses will be examined:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: Does parental relationship conflict predict marriage attitudes of African American women and men?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: Does gender moderate the relationship between parental relationship conflict and marriage attitudes of African American women and men?

RQ<sub>3</sub>: Does stereotype endorsement predict marriage attitudes of African American women and men?

RQ<sub>4</sub>: Does gender moderate the relationship between stereotype endorsement and marriage attitudes of African American women and men?

Hyp<sub>1</sub>: There will be an inverse relationship between parental relationship conflict and marriage attitudes.

Hyp<sub>2</sub>: Gender will moderate the relationship between parental relationship conflict and marriage attitudes of African American women and men. The relationship between parental relationship conflict and marriage attitudes will be stronger for women.

Hyp<sub>3</sub>:

a. Mammy

Women: There will be a positive relationship between the internalization of the *Mammy* stereotype and marriage attitudes.

Men: There will be a positive relationship between the endorsement of the *Mammy* stereotype and marriage attitudes.

b. Sapphire

Women: There will be a positive relationship between the internalization of the *Sapphire* stereotype and marriage attitudes.

Men: There will be a negative relationship between the endorsement of the *Sapphire* stereotype and marriage attitudes.

c. Jezebel

Women: There will be a positive relationship between the internalization of the *Jezebel* stereotype and marriage attitudes.

Men: There will be a negative relationship between the endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotype and marriage attitudes.

b. Superwoman

Women: There will be a positive relationship between the internalization of the *Superwoman* stereotype and marriage attitudes.

Men: There will be a positive relationship between the endorsement of the *Superwoman* stereotype and marriage attitudes.

Hyp<sub>4</sub>: Gender will moderate the relationship between stereotype endorsement and marriage attitudes of African American women and men. The relationship between stereotype endorsement and marriage attitudes will be stronger for men.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The marriage attitudes of African Americans is understudied within the psychological literature. African Americans have lower rates of marriage, marry later in life, and have higher divorce rates compared to other racial groups (Dixon 2009; Raley et al., 2015). As a result, previous scholarship has attempted to explain the marriage race gap by comparing group differences between African Americans and other racial groups. However, the extant literature has a dearth of studies that consider unique within group comparisons among African Americans. Also, this scarcity of scholarship which expands earlier decades does not speak to the unique experiences of present-day African Americans. Current research is needed that explores within group comparisons of African Americans and addresses the distinctive experiences of modern-day African Americans in the midst of the recent sociopolitical, pop-cultural, technological, and economical shifts. This chapter will critically examine the literature on parental relationship quality, stereotypic roles of African American women, and marriage attitudes of African American women and men. The contextual influence of gender will also be explored. Included studies reflect the most relevant to the purpose of the current study. The review includes a summary and critique of the existing research and how the current research study will contribute to the discourse on the present-day marriage attitudes of African American women and men.

### **Social Learning Theory**

Numerous psychological theories provide evidence for the influence of early life experiences on individuals' present-day behaviors and attitudes (Bandura, 1971; Bowlby, 1988; Fairbairn, 1952). Among these theories is social learning theory (Bandura, 1971). Bandura asserts, "In the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others" (p. 3). Related to direct experiences, learning is influenced by consequences that either reward or punish specific actions. Individuals are continuously presented with situations where one of two outcomes take place: (a) successful behaviors are reinforced; or (b) unsuccessful behaviors are punished and subsequently abandoned by the individual. Concerning the observation of behaviors, social learning theory attests that the influence of modeling is influential in individuals gaining new behavior patterns (Bandura, 1971).

Bandura (1971) explains that the majority of behaviors illustrated by individuals are learned either intentionally or unintentionally through the process of modeling. Social learning pertains to the current study in the areas of: (a) parental relationship quality; (b) stereotypic role endorsement of African American women; and (c) attitudes towards marriage. More specifically, an individual's family of origin (i.e., parental relationship quality) is the starting point for what is learned about attitudes regarding race (i.e., stereotypic roles) and attitudes related to romantic relationships (i.e., marriage). An individual's earliest perceptions are generated from their parents through direct and indirect experiences and modeling. Therefore, an individual's (a) parents' relationship quality and (b) parents' endorsement of stereotypes may influence offspring's marital attitudes.

## **Parental Relationship Quality**

Understanding the factors that impact the marriage attitudes of African Americans is important in part because marital relationships have been linked to (a) overall quality of life; (b) positive health outcomes; (c) financial stability; and (d) educational attainment of children (Hamilton et al., 2009; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Sun & Li, 2011). One such factor, parental relationship quality has been found to influence the marital perceptions of offspring.

Because of the proximity and intensity of children's observations of their parents' marriages while growing up, it seems particularly likely that children's attitudes about marriage and its alternatives will be shaped by these early impressions. As a result, children's marriage-related attitudes are expected to be influenced by the extent to which parents' relationships provide primarily positive or negative images of marriage.

(Cunningham & Thornton, 2006, p. 661)

Previous researchers attest that the parental relationship impacts the marriage attitudes of offspring (Perry, 2013; Thornton, 1991; VanNess-Knolls, Bronstein, & Fox, 1997). Perry (2013) found that there was a general consensus among African American male participants that their families of origin had impacted their perceptions of marriage. The majority of the participant pool cited experiences occurring within their nuclear and/or extended families when asked to indicate the largest influence of their marriage attitudes. Thornton (1991) found that participants whose parents were divorced were more likely to cohabitate than enter a marriage when compared to participants whose parents were married. In a sample of White adolescents, VanNess-Knolls et al. (1997) found that female adolescents from families with higher marital conflict levels held negative attitudes about marriage. Social Learning theory asserts that

individuals learn schemas for behavior through direct experiences and observations. Together, these combined findings present evidence that marriage attitudes are influenced through the direct observation of the parental relationship.

### **Marriage Attitudes**

Previous research on the marriage attitudes of African Americans is limited and has produced mixed findings. Some researchers have found that African Americans have more favorable attitudes towards marriage, while others suggest that African Americans have less favorable marriage attitudes. King (1999) investigated within group differences of African American women. The researcher found that marriage attitudes were influenced by participants' education level, family structure, marital status, and religion. Results produced mixed findings dependent on participants' social identities and childhood experiences. Although the majority of the participants reported the belief that marriage enhances maturity and does not limit individual growth, most respondents reported that they did not believe that marriage was for everyone. Participants also reported that they did not believe that a successful career should be more important than a successful marriage or that marriage provides fewer advantages than previous decades. King found evidence that participants believed that present-day individuals are less committed to marriage than earlier generations. Overall, participants who were married and reported higher incomes and educational levels, indicated more positive marriage attitudes. While participants who were younger, never married, and less educated expressed the least favorable attitudes toward marriage. Participants who were less educated and self-identified as Baptist Christians were more likely than well-educated non-Baptist Christians to agree that everyone should marry. Participants who had never married and reported lower educational

levels were more likely to endorse the belief that a successful career should be more important than a successful marriage when compared to married women with higher education levels. Finally, results suggested that older non-Baptist participants who reported being raised by both a man and a woman were less likely to feel that present-day individuals are less committed to marriage when compared to previous generations.

Perry (2013) examined within group comparisons of a sample of African American men where he examined marriage attitudes and found statistically significant effects for age and income. Results demonstrated that men younger than age 25 endorsed marriage attitudes that were significantly less favorable than men ages 26 to 39 and men ages 40 and older. Men who reported incomes less than \$25,000 endorsed less favorable marriage attitudes when compared to men earning incomes between \$25,000-\$49,000.

Stackman, Reviere, and Medley (2016) examined within group comparisons of African American women and men related to (a) gender; (b) the type of school participants attended; (c) attitudes towards marriage; and (d) attitudes towards interracial dating within a sample of African American college students enrolled at either historically Black (HBCU) or predominantly White (PWI) institutions. Results indicated that overall African American women and men at both types of institutions had positive attitudes towards marriage. Findings suggested that overall participants from both historically Black and predominantly White institutions responded similarly in the study. Specifically, participants responded similarly at both types of institutions related to (a) neutral and undecided attitudes towards marriage and (b) negative attitudes towards marriage. Results indicated that differences in attitudes towards marriage and



interracial dating between participants attending either a HBCU or PWI were not statistically significant.

Despite these combined findings, there remains a dearth of literature exploring within group differences of African Americans' attitudes towards marriage. Although these previous studies explore within group differences among African Americans, the extant literature is limited to the aforementioned studies. Also, these previous findings appear contradictory. Although Stackman et al. (2016) found that younger African American men held positive marital attitudes, Perry (2013) found that younger men held negative attitudes towards marriage. Moreover, these studies have examined the constructs of age, religion, education, and income, leaving gaps in the literature regarding the impact of the parental relationship on marriage attitudes of African American adults.

### **Parental Relationship Quality and Marriage Attitudes**

Perry (2013) explored the relationship between African American men's parents' marital status and their attitudes towards marriage and a statistically significant effect was found. Results of an ANOVA indicated that men whose parents had never married and/or where never romantically involved, held marriage attitudes that were less favorable when compared to men whose parents were married, and men whose parents were divorced. This study also reported exploring the relationship between parental relationship quality and marriage attitudes through a measure which assessed *family cohesion*. However, the findings from this measure were not included in the study. Although Perry is the sole study to date that has examined the relationship between parental relationship quality and marriage attitudes among African Americans, other researchers have examined this relationship within non-African American samples. For example,

Huang and Lin (2014) explored the relationship between parental relationship conflict, family structure (e.g., intact versus divorced parents), gender, and marriage attitudes within a sample of Taiwanese undergraduate students. Results of the study indicated that participants' marital attitudes were negatively correlated with the level of conflict reported within their parents' relationship. As such, participants from families with higher parental conflict had less favorable attitudes towards marriage when compared to participants from families with lower parental conflict.

Moreover, Cunningham and Thornton (2006) explored the relationship between young adults' parental marital quality and their attitudes towards singlehood, divorce, cohabitation, and premarital sex utilizing data from a panel study of White parents and young adults. The relationship between participants' parental marital quality and participants' decision to remain single or marry was not statistically significant. However, the researchers found that parental marriage quality predicted parent-child attitude similarity. More specifically, participants with more positive parental marital quality were more likely to endorse similar attitudes as their parents regarding being single, pre-marital sex, and cohabitation.

Riggio and Weiser (2008) examined marriage attitudes, parental marital status, parental conflict, attitude embeddedness, and personal relationship outcomes in a majority White college sample. The researchers found that participants of divorced parents indicated higher degrees of conflict between parents when compared to participants with married parents. In addition, they reported a main effect of parental marital status on participant's marriage attitudes where participants of divorced parents indicated more negative attitudes when compared to participants with married parents.

VanNess-Knolls et al. (1997) explored the impact of past and present family conflict on marriage attitudes of White adolescents in a longitudinal study. VanNess-Knolls et al. found that adolescent girls who reported greater parental relationship conflict placed less value on entering into a future marital relationship when compared to adolescent girls who reported less parental relationship conflict.

Taken together, previous literature has found a relationship between individuals' parental relationship quality and their attitudes towards marriage where positive parental relationships have led to positive attitudes towards marriage (Huang & Lin, 2014; Perry, 2013; Riggio & Weiser, 2008; VanNess-Knolls et al., 1997). However, there is limited literature that has examined the impact of parental relationship quality on marriage attitudes of African Americans (Perry, 2013). The majority of studies that explored this relationship were comprised of majority White samples (Cunningham & Thornton, 2006; Riggio & Weiser, 2008; VanNess-Knolls et al., 1997) with exception of one that examined this relationship among African American men (Perry, 2013) and another that explored this relationship among a sample of Taiwanese college students (Huang & Lin, 2014). However, there are current gaps in the literature related to: (a) African American women's parental relationships and marriage attitudes; and (b) the influence of an individual's endorsement of stereotypic roles of African American women. Considering the impact of slavery and the negative and positive implications for marriage related to African Americans it appears that it is important to gain insight into present-day African American women and men's attitudes regarding marriage.

In summary, the aforementioned studies provide support for the current research questions and hypotheses. Higher parental relationship conflict led to negative attitudes about

marriage in non-Black studies. There currently exists one study that explored the relationship of these constructs within an African American sample; however, this study did not explicitly report the study's findings (Perry, 2013). This paucity of studies underscores the dearth of literature on the relationship between parental relationship quality and marriage attitudes of African Americans. Additionally, Perry defined parental relationship quality as family cohesion and examined this variable related to marriage attitudes. The aforementioned non-Black studies defined parental relationship quality as conflict level present within the parental relationship. Therefore, to date there are no studies that examine the relationship between parental relationship conflict and marriage attitudes among African Americans. Thus, studies are needed to understand the relationship between parental relationship quality defined as conflict level and marriage attitudes among African Americans. Also, Perry explored family cohesion and marriage attitudes within an all-male sample; therefore, a current gap in the literature is the exploration of these variables among African American women. Due to the lack of research exploring parental relationship quality defined as conflict level in African American samples, it is important to explore how this variable impacts the marital attitudes of both present-day African American women and men.

### **Historical Legacy of Stereotypic Roles of African American Women**

Stereotypic roles of present day African American women originated during African slavery (Abdullah, 1998; Mitchell & Herring, 1998; West, 1995). Stereotypes of the African woman took the form of three predominant categories: (a) Mammy; (b) Sapphire; and (c) Jezebel (Mitchell & Herring, 1998). The *Mammy* stereotype depicts a woman responsible for the daily operations of the plantation master's home and is a caregiver to the slave owner and his family.

As such, the *Mammy* image is illustrated as a big bodied woman with dark skin, kinky hair and African features. When slavery ended and African American women entered the work force, working class African American women became more likely to be overweight than African American women from high socioeconomic statuses. “The Mammy image continues to represent the economic and working conditions of many poor Black women” (West, 1995). Related to the *Mammy* stereotype, previous literature suggests that binge eating is utilized as a coping skill among African American women to address emotional deprivation and stressors. Lighter skin African American women with straighter hair are afforded more vocational, educational, financial and social opportunities when compared to darker skin Black women leading to disparities within the community and feeling of shame (West, 1995). West attests that African American women are at risk for developing eating disorders as they feel pressure to live up to White standards of beauty and body size. As the *Mammy* archetype is known for her provision of physical labor, present-day African American women are in charge of the majority of house responsibilities. This work-life imbalance can lead to mental health problems including depression and elevated stress levels (Dunston, 1990). Moreover, Abdullah (1998) postulated that women who internalize the *Mammy* stereotype possess supportive and nurturing personality characteristics where their drive to provide for others may come at the expense of their own personal needs.

*Sapphire* is the second stereotypic image originating in slavery. The *Sapphire* role was the antithesis of the Mammy symbol and portrayed a loud and argumentative woman who conveyed harsh candor. This caricature first appeared in the 1940's on the *Amos and Andy* television and radio shows. The stereotype depicted a woman who was controlling, nagging,

emasculating and argumentative towards African American men (Mitchell & Herring, 1998). In terms of appearance, she was depicted as large but not overweight with brown or dark brown skin. These women engage in loud and aggressive behavior as they assume and have received messages from others that this is the only way to be heard. Oppressive messages received from society often times invalidates experiences of and displays of anger (Grier & Cobbs, 1968). As a result, unexpressed anger may lead to the development of mental health concerns including depression, low self-esteem and anxiety among African American women (Munhall, 1994). There are positive and negative outcomes when African American women oppose the denial of their anger and actively engage in and display their anger. A reclamation of anger expression may prevent the onset or exacerbation of mental health concerns. On the other hand, interpersonal relationship conflict occurs if anger is misdirected towards family members and friends rather than oppressive systems. Additionally, problems with assertiveness originated from the *Sapphire* stereotypic role. On the other end of this spectrum, is an avoidance and/or discomfort with emotional expression beyond anger expression (Greene, 1990) where Black women augment their behaviors in an attempt to be viewed as nonthreatening when interacting with individuals from other ethnic groups (Lineberger & Calhoun, 1983). African American women's efforts to engage in assertiveness can be stereotyped as being "aggressive" or "hostile". As a result, they restrict their assertive impulses in order: (a) to protect others (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003) or (b) assume responsibility for the discomfort of others (Greene, 1994). Women who internalize the *Sapphire* stereotypic role may have difficulty articulating their needs (Mitchell & Herring, 1998). Problems also ensue when the emotion of anger is used to mask feelings of vulnerability.

*Jezebel*, also known as *Bad Black girl*, is the third stereotypic role depicted by a woman of African descent that is driven by hyper-sexualized and animalistic behavior (Jones & Shorter-Gooden). This image was created to justify the rape of African female slaves. The *Jezebel* caricature was born at a time when White slave owners controlled African American women's sexuality and reproduction. Rape perpetuated by Black and White men was utilized as a tool for the purpose of increasing the slave population. African female captives were portrayed as being seductive and exploiters of men's sexual weaknesses. In terms of physical appearance, she was depicted a woman with mixed ancestry, light complexion and European features. In present day, approximately 21% of African American women are raped and approximately 38% of African American women experience sexual violence other than rape within their lifetimes (Centers for Disease Control, 2014). This stereotype perpetuates victim blaming and prevents Black women from being viewed as sexual assault survivors when compared to women from other ethnic groups. Lastly, West (1995) also suggested that the internalization of this stereotype may also result in women experiencing sexual performance anxiety and/or sexual dysfunction.

Finally, as a way to protect from the realities of the aforementioned stereotypes, some African American women may adopt the persona identified as *Superwoman* (Mitchell & Herring, 1998). The *Superwoman* stereotype is demonstrated as a pillar of strength and resiliency. She is known for her ability to accomplish multiple tasks at one time. Women who endorse the *Superwoman* stereotypic role are tasked with the burden of avoiding asking for help. They continuously presents the external façade of having a well put together life while internally they may feel weak and like a failure if they are in need of help.

Although the viewing of African American women through the lens of stereotypes originated in slavery, this practice continues in present-day. These stereotypic roles created have negatively impacted the perceptions of the majority culture and minority cultures within the United States. Furthermore, previous literature postulates that African American men's endorsement of cultural stereotypes negatively influences their experiences with African American women (Bethea, 1995). Bethea found that the stereotypes that African American men endorse about African American women include viewing them as authoritarians and less desirable than women from other ethnic groups. Moreover, in a qualitative study, Marbley (2003) postulated that African American men view White women as status symbols and as forms of upgrades in comparison to African American women. Not only do African American men view African American women stereotypically, but African American women may internalize these images (Abdullah, 1998; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Mitchell & Herring, 1998; Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004). The internalization of stereotypic roles among African American women provides insight into the marriage attitudes of African American women. Finally, these archaic stereotypes originating in slavery impact the marriage attitudes of present-day African Americans (Abdullah, 1998; Mitchell & Herring, 1998; West, 1995).

### **Literature on the Stereotypic Roles of African American Women**

Witherspoon, Thomas, and Speight (2005) explored stereotypical roles as a predictor of psychological distress among three hundred and forty four African American women. Results of a multiple regression model indicated that the four stereotypic roles were responsible for approximately twenty percent of the variance in psychological distress. However, the *Sapphire* stereotype was the only stereotypic role that was statistically significant. Additionally, canonical



correlations were used where two sets of variables were created. The first set of variables included the four stereotypic roles and the second set of variables included psychological functioning. The canonical loadings indicated that the *Sapphire* and *Superwoman* stereotypic roles are positively associated with symptoms of paranoia, depression, interpersonal insensitivity, and hostility. In addition, the authors found differences in age. For instance, older women (age 51 or older) scored lower on the *Superwoman* stereotypic role compared to younger women ages 36 to 40.

Thomas et al. (2004) explored the relationship between the *Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel*, and *Superwoman* stereotypic roles and self-esteem among African American women. The researchers found an inverse relationship between the *Mammy* stereotype and self-esteem and between the *Sapphire* stereotypic image and self-esteem. Thus, the researchers found that the *Mammy* and *Sapphire* stereotypes account for 19% of the variance in self-esteem. Finally, there are limited studies in the extant literature that explore African American women's stereotypic roles. The previous literature has explored the relationship between stereotypic roles of African American and self-esteem and psychological distress. The literature lacks the exploration of the relationship between African American women stereotypic roles and marriage attitudes.

### **Gender**

Previous literature has found within group comparison related to gender. For instance, Huang and Lin (2014) indicated that Taiwanese male participants with higher parental conflict had significantly more positive marriage attitudes in contrast to Taiwanese female participants with higher parental conflict. VanNess-Knolls et al. (1997) explored the relationship between parental conflict and marital attitudes of White adolescents. A statistically effect for gender was

found. The researchers found that adolescent girls ascribed a greater significance on entering into a future marriage compared to adolescent boys. Also, adolescent females from families with greater parental conflict were less interested in entering a marriage at some point in their lives when compared to female adolescents who reported lower parental conflict. Although Stackman et al. (2016) found that both African American women and men held positive marriage attitudes, results differed by gender where 90.5% of women and 77.5% of men held favorable attitudes towards marriage suggesting that women were more likely to have positive attitudes towards marriage when compared to men. Both women and men who reported unfavorable attitudes towards marriage responded similarly (2.7% women and 5.6% men). However, results also indicated gender differences for participants reporting undecided or neutral attitudes (6.8% women and 16.9% men). The researchers examined marriage attitudes by gender and institution and found statistically significant gender differences where women at both HBCUs and PWIs indicated more positive marriage attitudes (90.1% HBCU and 91.0% PWI) in contrast to men (78.7% HBCU and 75% PWI) at both types of institutions. Conversely, negative attitudes towards marriage were not statistically significant by gender and institution.

In summary, the extant literature lacks research studies that have explored parental relationship conflict as a predictor of African American women and men's marriage attitudes. In addition, the current scholarship exploring the experiences of African American identified individuals has yet to explore the endorsement of stereotypes of African American women as a predictor of marriage attitudes of African American women and men. Understanding the marital beliefs of present day African Americans can be helpful in better understanding the trends within

statistics on marriage rates of African Americans as well as understanding important within group differences within the African American community.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter will be divided into four sections. First, the researcher will present a description of the participants. Next, previous literature and effect size will be explored. Subsequently, the psychometric properties of the Parental Marital Conflict Scale (Wang, 2004), the Marital Attitudes Scale (Shi, 2009), and the Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale (SRBWS; Thomas et al., 2004) will be discussed. Finally, the procedures conducted to collect data will be presented.

#### **Participants**

Participants included 150 self-identified African Americans, 86% women and 14% men between the ages of 18-66 years old. Inclusion criteria required participants to (a) identify as an African/Black/Caribbean American woman or man; (b) identify as straight/heterosexual; (c) be 18 years old or older; (d) identify as single; and (e) have observed their parents interacting with each other during their childhood. Among this sample, 53 indicated having obtained a high school diploma (35.3%), 14 reported earning an associate's degree (9.3%), 37 indicated that they had received a bachelor's degree (24.7%), and 46 reported earning a graduate degree (30.7%). There were 96 participants that reported being single (64.0%), 33 indicated that they were in a relationship and not cohabitating (22%), 15 shared that they were in a relationship and cohabitating (10%), and six reported that they were separated/divorced (4.0%). Within the sample, eight participants reported that their parents were single (5.3%), five indicated that they

their parents were involved in a relationship and not cohabitating (3.3%), two shared that their parents were in a relationship and cohabitating (1.3%), 42 reported their parents as separated/divorced (28.0%) and 93 indicated that their parents were married (62.0). There were 34 participants who reported being unemployed (22.7%), 33 indicated that they were employed part-time (22.0%), 68 participants stated that they were full time employees (45.3%), and 15 participants indicated other form of the employment (e.g., retired, graduate students). Among sample participants, 79 reported an income under \$25,000 (52.7%), 34 indicated an income of \$25,001-\$50,000 (22.7%), 21 stated that they earn \$50,001-\$75,000 (14.0%), 12 reported an income of \$75,001-\$100,000 (8%), and 4 indicated that they received an annual income of \$100,001-\$250,000 (2.7%).

### **Effect Size**

According to an a priori power analysis using G\*power 3.1.7, the sample size needed to detect a minimum effect size of .02 detectable at 80% power with an alpha level of .05, for a two tail test is 647 participants. The effect size .02 was used because it is the smallest possible effect size for moderation given that these variables have not been studied extensively. Perry (2013) reported that African American males' family structure was a statistically significant predictor of their marriage attitudes ( $\beta = -0.201, p < 0.01$ ). Multiple regression analysis found parental relationship structure among several significant predictors of participants' marriage attitudes that were responsible for 41.3% of the variance in marriage attitudes (Perry, 2013). Parental relationship structure yielded the second largest beta after religiosity ( $\beta = 0.331, p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that it accounts for a large portion of the variance in marriage attitudes. Riggio and Weiser (2008) found a main effect of parental marital status for participants' marriage

attitudes utilizing an ANOVA ( $F(1, 367) = 6.73, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = .02$ ) where participants with divorced parents reported more negative marriage attitudes ( $M = -1.02, SD = 6.9$ ) when compared to participants with married parents ( $M = 0.73, SD = 5.6$ ).

Cunningham and Thornton (2006) explored parental marital quality as a predictor of participants' marriage attitudes using regression analysis ( $B = 0.04, p > 0.05$ ); however, this was not found to be statistically significant. VanNess-Knolls et al. (1997) examined children's perception of the parents' marital disagreement and utilizing a hierarchical regression and found that marital disagreement and gender were responsible for 6% of the variance in children's attitudes towards and that the interaction between marital disagreement and gender were responsible for an additional 18% of the variance in marriage attitudes above and beyond the main effects. Additionally, participants' perception of their parents' marital dissatisfaction was explored in a hierarchical regression and found that scores on the marital dissatisfaction scale and participants' gender were responsible for 4% of the variance in marriage attitudes and that the interaction of marital dissatisfaction and gender were responsible for an additional 13% of variance above and beyond the main effects. According to Cohen (1988),  $f = .10$  represents a small effect size. Thus, the variability in the findings of previous research studies suggested that a minimum effect size be explored.

## **Instruments**

### **Demographic Questionnaire**

A demographic questionnaire was developed for the study. The questionnaire included questions designed to collect information about participants' background. Information was gathered regarding participants' race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, current

socioeconomic status, family of origin's socioeconomic status, current social class, family of origin's social class, highest level of education, parents' level of education, current region of residence, family of origin's region of residence, current marital status, and employment status.

### **Parental Relationship Conflict**

Parental relationship conflict was evaluated with the Parental Marital Conflict Scale (Wang, 2004). *The Parental Marital Conflict Scale* is a 22-item measure that assesses participants' perceptions of conflict within their parental relationship. Responses are given on a 5-point scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*) with higher scores indicating a higher degree of parental conflict. The (a) *Frequency* and (b) *Strength* subscales were utilized for this study. The *Frequency* subscale includes items such as: "My parents often argued." The *Strength* subscale items include: "During arguments, my parents often hit each other." The original Cronbach alpha estimates reported included:  $\alpha = 0.92$  (*Frequency*) and  $\alpha = 0.87$  (*Strength*) (Huang & Lin, 2014). The Cronbach alpha estimates for the current study were:  $\alpha = 0.94$  (*Frequency*) and  $\alpha = 0.82$  (*Strength*). A variable was created to represent a parental conflict score. The parental conflict variable was created from combining the *Frequency* and *Strength* subscales of the *Parental Marital Conflict Scale* (Wang, 2004). The internal consistency score for the parental conflict variable created for this study is  $\alpha = .93$ . The parental conflict variable was obtained by self-reported items which asked participants to rate the frequency and intensity of their experience of parental conflict.

### **Marital Attitudes**

Participants' marital attitudes were evaluated using *The Marital Attitudes Scale* (Shi, 2009). *The Marital Attitudes Scale* is a 28-item measure that explores participants' attitudes

towards marriage using a 5-point scale ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree. Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes about marriage. The *Emotions for marriage* and *Intention to marriage* subscales were used in the current study. *The Emotions for marriage* subscale includes the item, "I think marriage is beautiful." *The Intention to marry* subscale consists of the following item: "I will try married life in the future." With respect to the psychometric properties the following internal consistency scores were reported:  $\alpha = 0.92$  (*Emotions for marriage*) and  $\alpha = 0.85$  (*Intention to marriage*) (Huang and Lin, 2014). The internal consistency scores for the current study is  $\alpha = .81$  (*The Emotions for marriage*) and  $\alpha = 0.87$  (*The Intention to marry*). The researcher created a variable to represent marriage attitudes for the current study. The marriage attitudes variable was created from the *Emotions for marriage* and the *Intention to marry* subscales of the *Marital Attitudes Scale* (Shi, 2009). The internal consistency score for the marriage attitudes variable created for this study is  $\alpha = .88$ . The marriage attitudes variable was obtained by self-reported items which asked participants to rate their marital beliefs and intentions.

### **Stereotypic Roles**

Stereotypic roles were assessed using Thomas et al.'s (2004) Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale (SRBWS). This measure contains 34-items that explore stereotypes of African American women. The scale contains four subscales: (a) *Mammy*; (b) *Sapphire*; (c) *Jezebel*; and (d) *Superwoman*. Responses are given on a 5-point scale ("1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree") with higher scores reflecting a greater endorsement of the four stereotypic roles. All subscales measure participants' agreement that African American women possess the specific set of characteristics associated with each stereotype. The *Mammy* subscale measures participants'



belief that African American women are nurturing caregivers who sacrifice their own self-care to provide care for others. The *Sapphire* subscale gauges participants' endorsement of the belief that African American women are argumentative loud and aggressive within her interpersonal relationships. The *Jezebel* subscale assesses whether participants believe that African American women embody animalistic and hyper-sexualized behaviors and utilize sex as a tool to manipulate men. Lastly, the *Superwoman* subscale measures participants' belief that African American women are strong and successful where they all possess the ability to simultaneously achieve their personal goals while elevating their communities.

Participants receive a score for each of the four scale scales. Mean scores are calculated for each subscales. The *Mammy* subscale includes items such as, "I often put aside my own needs to help others," "I feel guilty when I put my own needs before others," and "People often expect me to take care of them." *Sapphire* items include: "Black women are often loud and obnoxious," "Black women need to nag others to get a response," and "If given a chance, Black women will put down Black men." *Jezebel* items include: "Black women are all about sex," "Black women will use sex to get what they want," and "Men can be controlled with sex." Finally, the *Superwoman* subscales includes the following items, "Black women have to be strong to survive," "I am often expected to take care of family members," and "If I fall apart, I will be a failure." The original reliability coefficients for the SRBWS were 0.52 (*Mammy*), 0.70 (*Sapphire*), 0.72 (*Jezebel*), and 0.67 (*Superwoman*) (Thomas et al., 2004). Thomas et al. found that endorsement of the *Mammy* and *Sapphire* stereotypic roles were negatively correlated with explicit self-esteem scores. The reliability coefficients for the SRBWS in the current study were 0.59 (*Mammy*), 0.76 (*Sapphire*), 0.52 (*Jezebel*), and 0.78 (*Superwoman*). One item was reverse

coded on the Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale (SRBWS; Thomas et al., 2004) following the authors' suggestion.

### **Intentions of Marrying/Partnering Intra- or Interracially**

The intentions of marrying/partnering intra- or interracially will be assessed using a two item measure developed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The items includes: (a) "How likely are you to marry or enter a long term relationship?"; and (b) "If you plan to marry or enter a long term relationship, please indicate your preference for race." The first item will be assessed on a 5-point scale ranging from 1-very unlikely to 5-very likely. The second item will be assessed on a 10-point scale ranging from 1-extremely likely to marry or enter a long term relationship with someone outside of my race/ethnic group to 10-extremely likely to marry or enter a long term relationship with someone within my race/ethnic group.

### **Procedures**

Request to conduct research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Loyola University Chicago. The IRB of Loyola University Chicago granted permission for the recruitment of participants nationwide through: (a) social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter); and (b) email listservs. Participants received a link to access the electronic survey utilizing the survey tool, Opinio. At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to enter an optional raffle drawing for a \$20 gift card. Participants' email addresses were not connected to survey data, and were maintained in a confidential file.

### **Multiple Regression Analyses**

Five hierarchical multiple regressions were used to conduct a moderation analysis. The first hierarchical multiple regression determined if gender moderated the relationship between parental

conflict and marriage attitudes. In this analysis, parental conflict, gender, and the interaction of the two variables (the moderator term) were predictors and marriage attitudes was the outcome variable. In the first step of the analysis, the variable, age was entered in order to control for this variable. Parental conflict and gender were regressed against marriage attitudes in the second step to determine how much variance the two aforementioned predictor variables combined accounted for in the outcome variable. In the third step, the interaction term was regressed against marriage attitudes to determine if the moderator term accounted for the variance within marriage attitudes. A significant  $F$  value ( $p < .05$ ) would signify that these two variables predict marriage attitudes and the  $R^2$  would indicate how much variance parental conflict and gender account for in marriage attitudes. In addition, the standardized beta weights were considered to determine the nature of the relationship between these two predictor variables and marriage attitudes.

The remaining hierarchal multiple regressions, were used to conduct a moderation analysis to determine if gender moderated the relationships between stereotypic roles (*Mammy, Sapphire, Jezebel, and Superwoman*) and marriage attitudes. In these regressions, stereotypic role endorsement, gender, and the interaction term of the two variables (the interaction term) were predictor variables and marriage attitudes served as the outcome variable. Age was entered into the first step. In the second step, the stereotypic role and gender were regressed against marriage attitudes to determine how much combined variance the two aforementioned predictors accounted for in the outcome variable. The interaction term was regressed against marriage attitudes to determine if a moderator accounted for the variance within marriage attitudes. A significant  $F$  value ( $p < .05$ ) would signify that these two variables predict marriage attitudes and

the  $R^2$  would indicate how much variance stereotypic roles and gender account for within marriage attitudes. Additionally, the standardized beta weights were considered to determine the nature of the relationship between the stereotypic roles, gender, and marriage attitudes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The current chapter will first present the main findings of this study. The previously proposed hypotheses will also be discussed. The second half of this chapter will present post-hoc analyses and findings. Table 1 presents frequency distribution information for ordinal variables.

#### **Data Analytic Plan**

Prior to analysis, variables were screened for accuracy of data entry, extreme values, and missing values. No substantial missing variables were found. Missing variables were not imputed; rather variables of interest were calculated as the mean of participant responses to subscales (see Table 2).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Age, Gender, Education Level, Relationship Status, Parental Relationship Status, Employment, and Income

Variables	<i>n</i>	Groups	Frequency	Percent	M	SD
Age	140	18-20	46	30.7	26.5	8.5
		21-24	29	19.3		
		25-29	19	12.6		
		30-34	24	16.0		
		35-39	11	7.4		
		40-49	9	5.9		
		50-70	2	1.4		
Gender	150	Women	129	86.0		
		Men	21	14.0		
Education Level	150	High School	53	35.3		
		Associates	14	9.3		
		Bachelors	37	24.7		
		Graduate	46	30.7		
Relationship Status	150	Single	96	64.0		
		Relationship and not cohabitating	33	22.0		
		Relationship and cohabitating	15	10.0		
		Separated/Divorced	6	4.0		
		Parental Relationship Status	8	5.3		
Employment	150	Relationship and not cohabitating	5	3.3		
		Relationship and cohabitating	2	1.3		
		Separated/Divorced	42	28.0		
		Married	93	62.0		
		Unemployed	34	22.7		
		Part-time	33	22.0		
		Full-time	68	45.3		
Income	150	Other	15	10.0		
		< \$25,000	79	52.7		
		\$25,001-\$50,000	34	22.7		
		\$50,001-75,000	21	14.0		
		\$75,001-\$100,000	12	8.0		
		\$100,001-\$250,000	4	2.7		

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Internal Consistency for Continuous Study Variables

	PMCS	MA	Mammy	Sapphire	Jezebel	Superwoman
Mean	2.40	3.98	3.49	2.43	2.26	3.73
SD	.86	.56	.561	.578	.417	.511
Skewness	.77	-.65	-.025	.533	.279	-.399
Kurtosis	.15	.05	-.216	.900	-.286	.910
Cronbach's alpha	.93	.88	.589	.759	.521	.780

*Note.* PMCS = Parental Marital Conflict Scale; MA = Marriage attitudes; Mammy = SRBWS *Mammy* subscale; Sapphire = SRBWS *Sapphire* subscale; Jezebel = SRBWS *Jezebel* subscale; Superwoman = SRBWS *Superwoman* subscale

### Correlations

Intercorrelations among age, gender, predictor variables (parental conflict and stereotypic roles of African American women) and the outcome variable (marriage attitudes) were conducted and presented in Table 3. Statistically significant relationships from this table include age and the *Jezebel* stereotypic role, gender and the *Mammy* stereotypic role, gender and the *Superwoman* stereotypic role, parental conflict and the *Sapphire* stereotypic role, the *Mammy* stereotypic role and the *Superwoman* stereotypic role, the *Sapphire* stereotypic role and the *Jezebel* stereotypic role, the *Sapphire* stereotypic role and the *Superwoman* stereotypic role, and finally the *Jezebel* stereotypic role and the *Superwoman* stereotypic role. Participant's age and the *Jezebel* stereotypic image are negatively correlated suggesting that younger participants were more likely to endorse the *Jezebel* stereotype. Gender and the *Mammy* and *Superwoman* stereotypes were inversely correlated suggesting that women were more likely to endorse these images compared to men. The parental conflict variable and the *Sapphire* stereotypic role were

positively correlated indicating that participants who reported greater conflict between their parents were more likely to endorse the *Sapphire* stereotype. The *Mammy* stereotypic image was positively associated with the *Superwoman* stereotype suggesting that participants who endorsed one of these stereotypic roles were likely to endorse the other as well. The *Sapphire* stereotypic image held positive correlations with the *Jezebel* and the *Superwoman* stereotypes suggesting that participants who endorsed the *Sapphire* role were also likely to endorse these stereotypes. Lastly, the *Jezebel* and *Superwoman* stereotypes were positively associated suggesting that participants who held endorsed the *Jezebel* stereotypic role were also likely to endorse the *Superwoman* caricature.

Table 3. Intercorrelations among Age, Gender, Parental Conflict, *Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel*, and *Superwoman* Subscales, and Marriage Attitudes

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	—	-.054	-.104	-.013	-.132	-.184*	-.091	-.165
Gender	-.054	—	.109	-.223**	.104	.096	-.274**	-.023
Parental Conflict	-.104	.109	—	.038	.203*	.157	.157	-.003
Mammy	-.013	-.223**	.038	—	.128	.115	.670**	-.063
Sapphire	-.132	.104	.203*	.128	—	.432**	.273**	-.028
Jezebel	-.184*	.096	.157	.115	.432**	—	.259**	-.092
Superwoman	-.091	-.274**	.157	.670**	.273**	.259**	—	-.022
Marriage Attitudes	-.165	-.023	-.003	-.063	-.028	-.092	-.022	—

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level

Women = 0; Men = 1

### Gender Differences

A Cohen's D procedure was performed to address the gender imbalance ( $N = 129$  women;  $N = 21$  men). Cohen (1988) indicated that  $d = 0.2$  is considered a *small* effect size,  $d = 0.5$  represents a *medium* effect size and  $d = 0.8$  signifies a *large* effect size. Therefore, if two groups'



means do not differ by 0.2 standard deviations or more, the difference is trivial, regardless of the difference being statistically significant (Cohen, 1988). For these analyses, independent sample t-tests were executed and means and standard deviation scores were used to calculate Cohen's D. Independent-sample t-tests were executed on the following variables: marriage attitudes, parental conflict, and the stereotypic roles (*Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel* and *Superwomen*). An independent-samples t-test investigated gender differences related to participants' marriage attitudes. The results indicated that scores for women ( $M = 4.0$ ,  $SD = .54$ ) and men ( $M = 3.9$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) were not statistically different  $t(24) = .23$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $d = 0.1$ . The Cohen D value suggests that the difference between these scores is below the threshold of a small effect size. The results of an independent-samples t-test examining gender differences related to experiences of parental conflict found that scores for women ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) were not statistically different when compared to scores for men ( $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ),  $t(148) = -1.34$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $d = -0.3$ . While the t-test failed to reach significance, the Cohen D value suggests that the effect of gender on parental conflict is interpretable as small, with men having higher mean experiences of conflict. The independent-samples t-test conducted for endorsement of the *Sapphire* stereotypic role determined that gender differences did not exist when comparing scores from female-identified ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = .55$ ) and male-identified participants ( $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = .75$ ),  $t(148) = -1.27$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $d = -0.3$ . While the t-test failed to reach significance, the Cohen D value suggests that the effect of gender on the endorsement of the *Sapphire* stereotype is small, with men having higher scores than women. An independent-samples t-test inspecting gender differences related to the endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotype found that no differences between scores provided by women ( $M = 2.2$ ,  $SD = .42$ ) compared to scores given by men ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = .43$ ),  $t(148) = -$

1.17,  $p > .05$ ,  $d = -0.3$ . While the t-test failed to reach significance, the Cohen D value suggests that the effect of gender on the endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotype is small, with men having higher scores than women.

Although gender differences were not found for the marriage attitudes, parental conflict, *Sapphire* stereotypic role and *Jezebel* stereotypic role variables, differences in gender were found for the *Mammy* stereotypic roles and *Superwoman* stereotypic role variables. The results of an independent-samples t-test examining gender differences of participants' *Mammy* subscale scores indicated that scores were significantly higher for women ( $M = 3.5$ ,  $SD = .53$ ) than for men ( $M = 3.2$ ,  $SD = .65$ ),  $t(148) = 2.79$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .6$ . The Cohen D value suggests that the effect of gender on endorsement of the *Mammy* stereotype is moderate, with women having higher scores than men. Finally, the independent-samples t-test conducted for endorsement of the *Superwoman* stereotypic role, found statistically significant gender differences. The results signified that scores were significantly higher for women ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SD = .46$ ) compared to men ( $M = 3.4$ ,  $SD = .64$ ),  $t(148) = 3.47$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = 0.7$ . The Cohen D value suggests that the effect of gender on endorsement of the *Superwoman* stereotype is moderate, with women having higher scores than men.

### **Hierarchical Multiple Regression on Parental Conflict and Marriage Attitudes**

Prior to conducting the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, the researcher examined whether participants' education level, income, and employment status were significantly related to their marriage attitudes and parental conflict level, and thus should be controlled in the regression analysis. Given the educational diversity within the sample, a one-way MANOVA was conducted that examined differences within marriage attitudes and parental conflict scores

across educational levels (high school diploma, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, graduate degree) Wilk's  $\lambda = .981$ ,  $F(6, 290) = .463$ ,  $p = .836$ . No significant multivariate effect due to participants' educational attainment was found. A MANOVA examining participants' income level Wilk's  $\lambda = .921$ ,  $F(8, 288) = 1.506$ ,  $p = .155$  found no significant multivariate effect. Finally a MANOVA exploring participants' employment was executed Wilk's  $\lambda = .976$ ,  $F(6, 290) = .586$ ,  $p = .741$ . No significant multivariate effect due to participants' level of employment was found.

A hierarchal multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether parental conflict predicts marriage attitudes of African American women and men. Participants' age was controlled for in the first step of the hierarchal regression equation examining parental conflict and marriage attitudes because the variable age was significant when correlated with the marriage attitudes variable,  $r = -.165$ ,  $p = .05$ . The variables gender and parental conflict were entered into the second step of the regression equation. In the final step, an interaction term incorporating gender and parental conflict was included to test for gender as a moderator. Table 4 provides a summary of the hierarchal regression analysis for age, gender, parental relationship conflict, the interaction term of gender and parental conflict (moderation), and marriage attitudes. The results illustrated a significant predictor of age at every step in the regression equation. In the first step, age contributed significant variance to the outcome variable marriage attitudes  $F(1, 138) = 3.88$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $R^2 = .03$ . Therefore, 3% of the variability in marriage attitudes is being accounted for by participants' age. Gender and Parental conflict (Step 2) did not contribute significant variance to the outcome variable above and beyond step one  $F(3, 136) = .04$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $R^2 = .03$ . The results do not support the hypothesis that parental conflict predicts

marriage attitudes of African women and men. The interaction term of gender and parental conflict did not contribute significant variance to regression equation above and beyond step two  $F(4, 135) = .08, p > .05; R^2 = .03$ . Thus, support was not found for the hypothesis indicating that gender moderates the relationship between parental conflict and marriage attitudes.

However, male-identified participants were underrepresented in the sample which may have prevented the finding of moderator effects.

Table 4. Hierarchal Regression of Age, Gender, Parental Conflict, the Interaction Term of Gender and Parental Conflict, and Marriage Attitudes

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*	.03	.02	.03	3.88*
Step 2							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*				
Gender	-.03	.14	-.02				
Parental Conflict	.010	.06	.02	.03	.01	.00	.04
Step 3							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*				
Gender	-.14	.42	-.09				
Parental Conflict	.00	.06	.01				
GenderxParental Conflict	.044	.16	.07	.03	.00	.00	.08

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change

\*  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

### Hierarchal Multiple Regressions on SRBWS and Marriage Attitudes

#### Hierarchal Multiple Regression on Mammy Stereotypic Role

Hierarchal multiple regression analysis was used to determine if endorsement of the stereotypic roles of Black women (*Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel*, and *Superwoman*) are significant predictors of marriage attitudes of African American women and men. Individual hierarchal

multiple regression analyses were conducted as each stereotype is measured on a distinct scale. With regards to the *Mammy* stereotypic role, age was entered into the first block as age was statistically significant when correlated with the marriage attitudes variable,  $r = -.17, p = .05$ . Next, participants' mean score for the *Mammy* subscale and gender were entered into the second block. In the final block, the interaction term for gender and the *Mammy* mean score was included to test gender as a moderator. Age was a statistically significant predictor of marriage attitudes at every step in the regression analyses. In the first block of the equation, age contributed significant variance to marriage attitudes  $F(1, 138) = 3.88, p < .05; R^2 = .03$ . Gender and endorsement of the *Mammy* stereotypic role did not account for the variance explained within participants' marriage attitudes above and beyond the first step  $F(2, 136) = .49, p > .05; R^2 = .03$ . As such, the results do not support the hypothesis that endorsement of the *Mammy* stereotype predicts marriage attitudes of African American women and men. The interaction term of gender and the *Mammy* subscale did not produce a statistically significant impact on the outcome variable above and beyond the prior steps  $F(1, 135) = .07, p > .05; R^2 = .04$ . These findings do not support the hypothesis that gender moderates the relationship between *Mammy* stereotypic role endorsement and marriage beliefs of African American women and men. The current study contained a small sample of male participants which may have prohibited the finding of moderator effects. Table 5 provides a summary of the hierarchical regression analysis for age, gender, the *Mammy* stereotypic role, the interaction of gender and *Mammy* stereotypic role endorsement (moderation) and marriage attitudes.

Table 5. Hierarchical Regression of Age, Gender, the *Mammy* Stereotypic Role, the Interaction Term of Gender and the *Mammy* stereotypic role, and Marriage Attitudes

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*	.03	.02	.03	3.88*
Step 2							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*				
Gender	-.05	1.38	-.03				
Mammy	-.08	.09	-.08	.03	.01	.01	.49
Step 3							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*				
Gender	-.25	.74	-.15				
Mammy	-.09	.10	-.09				
Gender x Mammy	.06	.22	.12	.04	.01	.00	.07

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change. Mammy = SRBWS Mammy subscale.

\*  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

### Hierarchical Multiple Regression on Sapphire Stereotypic Role

Regarding the *Sapphire* variable, age was entered into the first step of the hierarchical multiple regression equation because the variable age was significant when correlated with the marriage attitudes variable,  $r = -.17$ ,  $p = .05$ . Gender and participants' mean score for the *Sapphire* subscale were entered into the second step of the equation. The final block contained the interaction term for gender and the *Sapphire* stereotype. Table 6 provides a summary of the hierarchical regression analysis for age, gender, *Sapphire* stereotypic role endorsement, the interaction term of the *Sapphire* stereotype and gender (moderator) and marriage attitudes. Age was a statistically significant predictor of marriage attitudes at every step in the regression analyses. Age had a statistically significant impact of the marriage attitudes  $F(1, 138) = 3.88$ ,  $p = .05$ ;  $R^2 = .03$  in the first step of the equation. The findings of the regression analysis indicated that gender and endorsement of the *Sapphire* stereotypic role did not explain the variability

within marriage attitudes above and beyond the first step of the analysis  $F(2, 136) = .31, p > .05$ ;  $R^2 = .03$ . The results do not support the hypothesis that *Sapphire* stereotypic role endorsement predicts marital beliefs of African women and men. Furthermore, the findings did not provide evidence that gender moderates the relationship between endorsement of the *Sapphire* stereotype and marriage attitudes of African American women and men beyond the prior predictors  $F(1, 135) = .00, p > .05$ ;  $R^2 = .03$ . The study contained a gender imbalance due to an undersized sample of male participants which may have prevented the identification of moderator effects.

Table 6. Hierarchical Regression of Age, Gender, the *Sapphire* Stereotypic Role, the Interaction Term of Gender and the *Sapphire* Stereotypic Role, and Marriage Attitudes

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*	.03	.02	.03	3.88*
Step 2							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*				
Gender	-.02	.14	-.01				
Sapphire	-.06	.08	-.07	.03	.01	.00	.31
Step 3							
Age	-.01	.01	-.18*				
Gender	-.04	.51	-.02				
Sapphire	-.06	.10	-.07				
Gender x Sapphire	.01	.20	.01	.03	.00	.00	.00

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change. Sapphire = SRBWS Sapphire subscale.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

### Hierarchical Multiple Regression on Jezebel Stereotypic Role

The *Jezebel* stereotypic image was explored next as a predictor of marriage attitudes. The first step of the hierarchical regression analyses controlled for participants' age as this variable was statistically significant when correlated with the marriage attitudes variable,  $r = -.17, p = .05$ .

The following step included gender and the participant's mean score on the *Jezebel* subscale

(Step 2). The interaction term for gender and participants' mean *Jezebel* score was entered into the final step of the regression analysis to test gender as a moderator. The variable age was a statistically significant predictor of participants' marriage attitudes for all steps in the regression equation. Age was responsible for approximately 3% of the variance explained in marriage attitudes  $F(1, 138) = 3.88, p = .05; R^2 = .03$  in step one of the analysis. Participants' gender and endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotype did not account for the variability within marriage attitudes above and beyond the first step  $F(2, 136) = 1.66, p > .05; R^2 = .05$ . The findings do not support the hypothesis that endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotypic role predicts African women and men's marriage attitudes. The results did not provide support for hypothesis four, as gender did not moderate the relationship between parental conflict and marriage attitudes  $F(1, 135) = .075, p > .05; R^2 = .05$ . The sample contained a limited number of male participants which may have prevented the detection of moderator effects. Table 7 provides a summary of the hierarchical regression analysis for age, gender, *Jezebel* stereotypic role endorsement, the interaction of gender and the *Jezebel* stereotype (moderation) and marital beliefs.



Table 7. Hierarchal Regression of Age, Gender, the *Jezebel* stereotypic role, the Interaction Term of Gender and the *Jezebel* stereotypic role, and Marriage Attitudes

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*	.03	.02	.03	3.88*
Step 2							
Age	-.01	.01	-.19*				
Gender	-.00	.14	-.00				
Jezebel	-.21	.12	-.16	.05	.03	.02	1.66
Step 3							
Age	-.01	.01	-.19*				
Gender	.20	.76	.13				
Jezebel	-.20	.13	-.14				
Gender x Jezebel	-.09	.32	-.13	.05	.02	.00	.08

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change. Jezebel = SRBWS Jezebel subscale.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

### Hierarchal Multiple Regression on Superwoman Stereotypic Role

The *Superwoman* stereotypic role was the final variable examined as a predictor of marriage attitudes of African American women and men. Table 8 provides a summary of the hierarchal regression analysis for age, gender, *Superwoman* stereotypic role endorsement, the interaction of gender and the *Superwoman* stereotype (moderation), and marriage beliefs. Age was entered into the first step because this variable was significant when correlated with the marriage attitudes variable,  $r = -.17$ ,  $p = .05$ . The following step included gender and participants' mean score on the *Superwoman* subscale (step 2). The interaction term of gender and the *Superwoman* mean score was entered into the third step of the hierarchal regression equation to test gender as a moderator. In the first step of the hierarchical regression analysis, age was a statistically significant predictor of the outcome variable at every step in the equation. Age had a statistically significant impact on participants' marriage attitudes  $F(1, 138) = 3.88$ ,  $p =$

.05;  $R^2 = .03$ . Endorsement of the *Superwoman* stereotypic role and participants' gender did not explain the variance within marriage attitudes above and beyond step one  $F(2, 136) = .30, p > .05$ ;  $R^2 = .03$ . The findings did not support the hypothesis that *Superwoman* stereotypic role endorsement predicts marriage beliefs of African American women and men. Finally, evidence for gender as a moderator was not found  $F(1, 135) = .14, p > .05$ ;  $R^2 = .03$ . It should be noted that the study's small sample of male participants may have prevented the recognition of moderator effects.

Table 8. Hierarchical Regression of Age, Gender, the *Superwoman* stereotypic role, the Interaction Term of Gender and the *Superwoman* Stereotypic Role, and Marriage Attitudes

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*	.03	.02	.03	3.88*
Step 2							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*				
Gender	-.05	.14	-.03				
Superwoman	-.07	.10	-.07	.03	.01	.00	.30
Step 3							
Age	-.01	.01	-.17*				
Gender	-.35	.81	-.22				
Superwoman	-.09	.11	-.08				
Gender x Superwoman	.08	.23	.18	.03	.00	.00	.14

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change. Superwoman = SRBWS Superwoman subscale.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

## Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 predicted that parental relationship conflict would predict marriage attitudes of African American women and men where there would be an inverse relationship between parental conflict and marriage attitudes. This hypothesis was not supported. Hypothesis 2 postulated that gender would moderate the relationship between parental conflict and marriage

attitudes. Support for this hypothesis was not found. Although it should be noted that the current study was underpowered and contained a small sample of male participants which may have prevented the detection of moderator effects. Hypothesis 3 asserted that there would be either positive or negative relationships between stereotypic roles and marriage attitudes. This hypothesis was not supported. Hypothesis 4 predicted that gender would moderate the relationship between stereotypic role endorsement and marriage attitudes and that the relationship would be stronger for men. Support for this hypothesis was not found.

### **Post Hoc Analyses**

After correlations among predictor variables were observed, parental conflict was intercorrelated with the *Sapphire* stereotypic role. The researcher conducted four new hierarchal regressions using parental conflict as the predictor variable and the four stereotypic roles (*Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel*, and *Superwoman*) as the criterion variables. Support for three out of the four hierarchal regressions was found. Parental conflict predicted participants' endorsement of the *Sapphire*, *Jezebel* and *Superwoman* stereotypes.

### **Hierarchal Multiple Regression on Parental Conflict and the Mammy Stereotypic Role**

Parental conflict was examined as a predictor of *Mammy* stereotypic role endorsement. Gender and parental conflict were entered into the first block of the equation. The interaction term of gender and parental conflict was entered into the second block to test gender as a moderator. Support for parental conflict as a predictor of *Mammy* stereotypic role endorsement was not found. The second step of the regression analyses did not contribute unique variance to the outcome variable above and beyond the first step of the equation. Therefore, evidence for gender as a moderator was not found  $F(1, 146) = 1.87, p > .05; R^2 = .07$ . The sample contained a

dearth of male-identified participants which may have prevented the detection of moderator effects. Table 9 provides a summary of the hierarchal regression analysis for gender, parental conflict, the interaction term of gender and parental conflict, and the *Mammy* stereotypic image.

Table 9. Hierarchal Regression of Gender, Parental Conflict, the Interaction Term of Gender and Parental Conflict, and the *Mammy* Stereotypic Role

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Gender	-.37	.13	-.23**				
Parental Conflict	.04	.05	.06	.05	.04	.05	4.18*
Step 2							
Gender	.10	.37	.06				
Parental Conflict	.08	.06	.12				
GenderxParental Conflict	-.18	.13	-.32	.07	.05	.01	1.87

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed. \*\*  $p < .01$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

### Hierarchal Multiple Regression on Parental Conflict and the Sapphire Stereotypic Role

Parental conflict was examined as a predictor of participants' endorsement of the *Sapphire* stereotypic role. Gender and parental conflict were entered into the first step of the regression analysis. The interaction term of gender and parental conflict was entered into the second step (moderator). Parental conflict history did not predict participants' *Sapphire* stereotypic role endorsement. Step two of the regression equation did not contribute unique variance to the outcome variable above and beyond the first step of the equation indicating that gender does not act as a moderator  $F(1, 146) = .55, p > .05; R^2 = .05$ . The study contained a gender imbalance which may have prevented the discovery of moderator effects. Table 10

provides a summary of the hierarchal regression analysis for gender, parental conflict, the interaction term, and the *Sapphire* stereotypic role.

Table 10. Hierarchal Regression of Gender, Parental Conflict, the Interaction Term of Gender and Parental Conflict, and the *Sapphire* Stereotypic Role

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Gender	.14	.14	.08				
Parental Conflict	.13	.05	.19*	.05	.04	.05	3.69*
Step 2							
Gender	-.13	.38	-.08				
Parental Conflict	.11	.06	.17				
Gender x Parental Conflict	.10	.14	.18	.05	.03	.00	.55

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

### Hierarchal Multiple Regression on Parental Conflict and the Jezebel Stereotypic Role

Parental conflict was explored as a predictor of participants' endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotype. Age was entered into the first block of the regression analysis to control for this variable because it was statistically correlated with the *Jezebel* variable  $r = -.18, p < .05$ . Gender and parental conflict were entered into the second step. The interaction term of gender and parental conflict were entered into the final step of the regression analysis. Age was a statistically significant predictor of marriage attitudes at every step in the regression analyses. In the first step of the regression equation, age contributed significant variance to participants' endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotypic role  $F(1, 138) = 4.82, p < .05; R^2 = .03$ . The second step of the regression analysis did not add statistically significant variance to the outcome variable above and beyond the first step  $F(2, 136) = 2.97, p > .05; R^2 = .07$ . The final step of the regression

analysis did not contribute variance above and beyond the previous steps indicating that gender did not moderate the relationship between parental conflict and *Jezebel* stereotype endorsement  $F(1, 135) = 1.50, p > .05; R^2 = .08$ . Male-identified participants were underrepresented in the current sample which may have prevented the detection of moderator effects. Table 11 provides a summary of the hierarchal regression equation for age, gender, parental conflict, the interaction term (moderator), and the *Jezebel* stereotype.

Table 11: Hierarchal Regression of Age, Gender, Parental Conflict, the Interaction Term of Gender and Parental Conflict, and the *Jezebel* Stereotypic Role

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Age	-.01	.00	-.18*	.03	.03	.03	4.82*
Step 2							
Age	-.01	.00	-.16*				
Gender	.11	.10	.10				
Parental Conflict	.08	.04	.17*	.07	.05	.04	2.97
Step 3							
Age	-.01	.00	-.17*				
Gender	-.23	.30	-.20				
Parental Conflict	.06	.04	.13				
Gender x Parental Conflict	.14	.11	.32	.08	.06	.01	1.50

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

### Hierarchal Multiple Regression on Parental Conflict and the Superwoman Stereotypic Role

Parental conflict was investigated as a predictor of participants' endorsement of the *Superwoman* stereotype. Gender and parental conflict were entered into the first step of the regression analysis. The interaction term of gender and parental conflict was entered into the

second step (moderator). Parental conflict was a statistically significant predictor at both steps of the analysis. The first step of the regression equation contributed significant variance to *Superwoman* stereotypic role endorsement  $F(2, 147) = 9.13, p < .001; R^2 = .11$ . The second step of the regression analyses did not contribute variance above and beyond the first step of the equation indicating that gender does not act as a moderator  $F(1, 146) = 2.14, p > .05; R^2 = .12$ . Moderator effects were unable to be identified due to a gender imbalance. Table 12 provides a summary of the hierarchal regression analysis for gender, parental conflict, the interaction term, and the *Superwoman* stereotypic role.

Table 12. Hierarchal Regression of Gender, Parental Conflict, the Interaction Term of Gender and Parental Conflict, and the *Superwoman* Stereotypic Role

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1							
Gender	-.43	.12	-.30***				
Parental Conflict	.11	.05	.19*	.11	.10	.11	9.13***
Step 2							
Gender	.01	.33	.01				
Parental Conflict	.15	.05	.24**				
Gender x Parental Conflict	-.17	.12	-.33	.12	.11	.01	2.14

Note.  $N = 140$ . Adj. = Adjusted.  $\Delta R^2 = R^2$  change.  $\Delta F = F$  change.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed. \*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed.

Women = 0; Men = 1

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

This chapter will explore the implications of the results presented in the previous chapter. The objective of this study was to gain insight into within group differences of African American women and men's marital attitudes. First, the correlational findings will be presented. Next, the findings from the main and post-hoc analyses will be discussed. Third implications for clinical practice and suggestions for future research will be examined. Finally, the limitations of the study will be explored.

#### **Significant Correlation**

One significant relationship emerged among the variables of age and stereotypic roles. Age was found to have an inverse correlation with the *Jezebel* stereotypic image. This finding indicates that younger participants indicated higher scores on the *Jezebel* subscale. Previous scholarship has not explored the relationship between age and the *Jezebel* stereotype. Perhaps this finding suggests that younger participants view African American women through the *Jezebel* stereotypic lens due to a combination of developmental and cultural factors.

#### **Age and Jezebel**

Although the hyper-sexualized narrative of African American women originated in slavery, this objectification continues in present day. Stephens and Philips (2003) attest, "Beliefs and attitudes about African American women's sexuality appear to be sanctioned by a culture that continues to embrace stereotypes about race and sexuality" (p. 4). The present-day culture



that perpetuates oppressive sexual images of Black women includes but is not limited to hip hop, and the media including film, television, and social media. Perhaps the population that is most vulnerable to these messages are young adults. Young adults' limited life experiences and developmental stages make them more susceptible to integrating stereotypes into their worldviews. Whereas older adults may possess more developmental maturity and have the benefit of having greater life experiences where they have been exposed to a full range of African American women and are able to differentiate between stereotypes and real women. The current sample was largely represented by young adults where there was a mean age of 26.51 and 62.6% of the sample reported ages younger than age 30. The current cultural zeitgeist is heavily influenced by hip hop, rap, television, film, and social media which all perpetuate the objectification of Black women. These platforms are responsible for the production of the current hyper-sexualized narratives around African American women's bodies. Due to underrepresentation of positive images of African American women in television and film, young adults have yet to see a full range of diversity in African American women's experiences. Moreover, the argument can also be made that even if younger participants have some experiences with positive images of Black women, the over saturation of negative messages such as the *Jezebel* image may have a greater influence on their perceptions of African American women. Perhaps this saturation of oppressive and sexually exploitive messages about African American women's identities perpetuated by the current culture have skewed present-day African American women and men to view African American women through the lens of the *Jezebel* caricature.

In terms of racial identity development, younger participants may be at earlier stages of development within the Black racial identity developmental model (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991). Earlier development indicates that an individual lacks awareness of racism and oppression experienced by communities of color. Younger participants may lack insight into the oppressive experiences of African American women instigated by sexualized depictions in present-day mainstream culture.

### **Age**

One of the most significant findings from the main analyses is the finding that age was a statistically significant predictor of marriage attitudes. The results indicate that the addition of age provided a significant contribution at every step of the hierarchical regression assessing parental conflict as a predictor and the four regression analyses that explored stereotypic role endorsement as predictors. These findings suggest that younger participants reported more favorable marital beliefs and older participants endorsed less favorable marriage attitudes. Age also arose as a statistically significant predictor of *Jezebel* stereotypic role endorsement in the post-hoc analyses. Results indicated that younger participants endorsed higher scores on the *Jezebel* subscale.

### **Parental Conflict and Marriage Attitudes**

One of the major objectives of this study was to examine parental conflict as a predictor of marriage attitudes among African Americans and to determine if gender moderates this relationship. In the current sample, parental conflict did not predict the marriages attitudes of African American women and men and gender did not moderate this relationship. Male participants were underrepresented in the current study which may have prevented the detection

of moderator effects. Age emerged as a statistically significant predictor of African Americans' marriage attitudes. The findings imply that younger African Americans reported more positive marriage attitudes when compared to older participants. The results also suggest that identifying an individual's age may provide insight into their beliefs about marriage.

Previous literature has found parental discord to be a predictor of marriage attitudes in White and Asian samples (Cunningham & Thornton, 2006; Huang & Lin, 2014; Riggio & Weiser, 2008; VanNess-Knolls et al., 1997). Perhaps these findings were not replicated in an African American sample because the parental relationship is not a main influence of marital beliefs of African Americans. The African American family unit is known for its strong extended family bonds (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 2005). Conceivably, African Americans' feelings about marital relationships may be influenced by other models within the family unit beyond parental figures. Hines and Boyd-Franklin explain,

Within the African American family system, it is fairly common for a child to be informally adopted by a grandparent or other extended family member ... Young adults frequently rely on extended-kin network's support ... this support may also facilitate the transition into adulthood .... (p. 89)

Another explanation for why parental conflict failed to predict marriage attitudes may be that neither the parental attitudes nor the marriage attitudes measure were validated for African American samples. Both measures were previously validated within in a sample of Taiwanese women and men. These measures were used for this study because they had strong reliability coefficients, were validated in a non-White sample, and addressed the research questions best when compared to other measures.

An additional explanation for why parental conflict did not predict marriage attitudes may lay in the fact that participants may have underreported the level of parental discord

experienced within their family units. The African American community has experienced oppression at the hands of the health profession for centuries (Brandt, 1978; Cartwright, 1851). As a result, African Americans may be cautious of sharing personal information that highlights their families' deficits versus strengths.

### **Stereotypic Roles and Marriage Attitudes**

The second major objective of this study was to examine the four stereotypic roles of Black women (*Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel*, and *Superwoman*) as predictors of marriage attitudes of African American women and men and to determine if gender serves as a moderator of this relationship. Support for the four stereotypic roles as predictors of marriage attitudes was not found. Findings did not provide evidence for gender as a moderator. The current study contained an undersized sample of men which may have prevented the revealing of moderator effects. Although the results did not provide support for the hypotheses, age was a significant predictor of African Americans' marriage attitudes. The findings imply that older African American participants held more negative marriage attitudes when compared to younger participants. The results also suggest that identifying an individual's age may help to understand their beliefs about marriage.

Perhaps evidence that the stereotypic roles serve as predictors of marriage attitudes was not found because this study yielded low reliability coefficients for the *Jezebel* ( $\alpha = .52$ ) and *Mammy* ( $\alpha = .59$ ) stereotypes. It is possible that the low reliability coefficients prevented this relationship from being observed. The last possible explanation for why the stereotypic roles of Black women (*Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel*, and *Superwoman*) failed to predict marriage attitudes

may be because these subscales were not validated for an African American male-identified sample.

### **Parental Conflict and Stereotypic Roles**

The post-hoc analyses failed to provide evidence of parental conflict as a predictor for the *Mammy*, *Sapphire*, and *Jezebel* stereotypes. Support for gender as a moderator of the relationships between parental conflict and these stereotypic roles was not found. Although parental conflict failed to predict *Mammy*, *Sapphire*, and *Jezebel* stereotypic role endorsement, evidence for parental conflict as a predictor of the *Superwoman* stereotype was supported.

Gender and parental conflict combined were responsible for 11.1% of the variability within the *Superwoman* stereotypic role. Results suggest that participants who reported greater parental conflict, also reported higher endorsement of the *Superwoman* stereotype. Previous researchers suggest that the *Superwoman* stereotype was born out of a desire for African American women to distance themselves from the other aforementioned stereotypes. These scholars insist that African American women are socialized to appear self-sufficient and strong where they never require the help of others (Shorter-Gooden & Jackson, 2000). It is probable that participants endorsed this stereotype because they saw characteristics of this persona in their maternal figures. Applying Bandura's (1971) Social Learning theory, children who observed the modeling of characteristics indicative of the *Superwoman* stereotype would integrate these aspects into their schema about African American women. Regarding maternal figures, it is conceivable that the internalization of these characteristics can lead to contention within a marriage for several possible reasons. For instance, a Black woman may desire help from her partner but feels that she is a failure if she asks for help, which could lead to possible discord.

Also, if a Black woman's partner was in the practice of not offering her help because she continuously declines his help, her needs in the relationship may go unnoticed and unmet. Lastly, a Black woman may not ask for help within her marriage due to the expectations that she is required to meet due to traditional gender roles. Therefore, it is conceivable that either of these situations can lead to increased conflict. Thus, if participants observed the characteristics of *Superwoman* in their maternal figures and experienced a greater amount of parental conflict, it is probable that they would endorse this stereotype for African American women.

Finally, the post-hoc analyses also identified age as statistically significant predictor of the *Jezebel* stereotype. Age was found to predict *Jezebel* stereotypic role endorsement and was responsible for 3.4% of the variance within the *Jezebel* stereotype. The results indicated that younger participants reported greater endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotypic role when compared to older participants. Thus, an individual's age informs their endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotype. As mentioned previously, it is conceivable that present-day mainstream culture's depiction of Black women as sexually promiscuous may lead young adults to view African American women through the *Jezebel* lens. Support for gender as a moderator was not found for either of the stereotypic roles as the current sample contained a dearth of African American male-identified participants.

### **Gender Differences**

Gender differences also presented as a significant finding in the current study. The results of a Cohen's D (1988) procedure indicated that African American women endorsed higher scores on the *Mammy* and *Superwoman* subscales when compared to African American men. These two variables were highly correlated,  $r = .67, p < .001$  among the bivariate correlates. Regarding the

*Mammy* stereotype. It is likely that African American women scored higher on this subscale because of socialization. In the African American family unit, women are encouraged to engage in nurturing roles and are responsible for the majority of the work within the home including the care for children and the elderly. As a result of this familial socialization, African American women internalize and endorse this stereotypic role. Related to the *Superwoman* stereotype, African American women presently living in the U.S. are forced to confront acts of oppression, violence, racism, and sexism that specifically and intentionally target their intersectional identity. Although African American women have shouldered these burdens for centuries, the new sociopolitical climate has deemed overt acts of oppression acceptable. Therefore, in order to cope with systemic and historical oppression in the present day, African American women enact the *Superwoman* stereotype which is a protective mechanism that shields African American women from the other stereotypic roles (i.e., *Mammy*, *Sapphire*, and *Jezebel*). The *Superwoman* stereotypic image serves as a defense mechanism that allows African American women to center and hold on to core aspects of their identities as they navigate systems that minimize their strengths, accomplishments and contributions to society.

### **Implications for Practice and Future Research**

The current study has implications for clinical practice and future research. This study sought to identify within group differences of African American women and men's marriage attitudes. It was originally hypothesized that parental conflict and stereotypic role endorsement would account for these unique within group differences. However, evidence in support of parental discord and stereotype endorsement as predictors of marriage attitudes was not found. Age emerged as a statistically significant predictor of marriage attitudes indicating that younger

participants possessed more favorable marital beliefs compared to older participants. The results of the post-hoc analyses suggest that parental conflict predicts African Americans' endorsement of the *Superwoman* stereotypic role of African American women where participants who reported greater experiences of parental discord, also reported higher scores on the *Superwoman* stereotypic role subscale. The current section will explore implications for clinical practice and suggestions for future research related to the findings of the main and post-hoc analyses.

### **Implications for Practice**

**Parental conflict and marriage attitudes.** Although parental conflict and stereotypic role endorsement did not operate as predictors of marriage attitudes, these findings inform clinical practice. Previous literature that explored White and Asian samples, have found that marriage attitudes can be predicted from level of parental conflict (Cunningham & Thornton, 2006; Huang & Lin, 2014; Riggio & Weiser, 2008; VanNess-Knolls et al., 1997). These preceding studies have found an inverse relationship between parental discord and marriage attitudes. Findings from the current study inform clinical practice by suggesting that the experiences of African Americans are different in that parental conflict does not predict marriage attitudes. As such, when African Americans seek individual or couples counseling for concerns related to marriage or romantic relationship conflict, clinicians must be mindful to not apply previous findings from non-Black studies. When mental health providers are developing their case conceptualizations, they should refrain from primarily focusing on the client's parental relationship as the main influence of attitudes towards marriage and romantic relationships. They must be cautious to not assume that their client's experience of parental discord is a significant factor of their marital or romantic relationship attitudes. More specifically, mental health



professionals should be aware that if African American clients report higher levels of parental conflict that this does not imply that they endorse negative beliefs about marriage. Moreover, if African American clients report fewer experiences of parental conflict, this does not imply that they will endorse positive marriage attitudes. Instead therapists should utilize the therapeutic alliance to explore with clients other possible experiences that have contributed to their marriage beliefs and presenting concerns. Furthermore, clinicians providing therapeutic services to African Americans should be aware that younger clients may have more favorable marriage attitudes compared to older African American clients. Clinicians should actively explore with clients how their age and life experiences impact their marital beliefs.

The finding that parental conflict does not predict marriage attitudes leads to further implications. It can be argued that previous theories (Bandura, 1971; Bowlby, 1988; Winnicott, 1991) that suggest that the parental relationship is one of the most salient influences of children's outcomes are best understood in the context of non-Black communities. It is reasonable to consider that African Americans have unique experiences when compared to other ethnic groups. According to Joseph White (2004), the father of Black Psychology, "It is very difficult, if not impossible, to understand the lifestyles of Black people using the traditional theories developed by White psychologists to explain White people" (p. 5). One interpretation of the results is that parental conflict did not predict marriage attitudes because African Americans have unique experiences that are not accounted for by traditional theories. Clinicians should be mindful when utilizing traditional Western and European theoretical orientations to conceptualize the experiences of African Americans. Therapists should incorporate a multicultural framework into

their case conceptualizations and treatment planning and utilize other theories that address cultural humility such as Relational-Cultural theory (Jordan, 2018).

Another interpretation of these results is that marriage may be a less significant value among present-day African American women and men compared to previous generations. Previous literature indicates that marriage rates are declining and that individuals are broadening their definitions of intimate partnerships. Many individuals are choosing to cohabit and co-parent without entering into legal marriages (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, & Waite, 1995; Goodwin, Mosher, & Chandra, 2010); Raley et al., 2015). The CDC reported that in 2002 approximately 51% of African American women aged 15-44 had cohabitated in their lifetime compared to 39% of women who had ever been married in their lifetime. Results of the National Survey of Family Growth indicated that approximately 53% of men reported engaging in cohabitating relationships compared to only 42% of men who had ever married in the lifetime (Goodwin et al., 2002). As such, it is probable that clinicians have encountered African American clients or will interact with African American clients who are single and/or single parents. Therapists should be aware of their own biases related to marriage versus cohabitation and the influence of these biases on the therapeutic relationship. Therapists should actively seek to understand how current-day African Americans define and engage in romantic relationships. Clinicians should also assist African Americans in exploring their values related to marriage and romantic relationships and empower clients to choose romantic relationship options that work best for them.

**Stereotypic roles and marriage attitudes.** The research study also hypothesized that stereotype endorsement would serve as a predictor of marriage attitudes. However, support was not found for this relationship. While clinicians treating African American clients should seek to

understand the historical and present-day impacts of slavery on their clients, they should be aware that clients' endorsement of stereotypes of African American women does not predict how African American women and men view marriage. Instead clinicians should assist clients in examining other contributing factors that have influenced their marriage attitudes including age and generational effects.

**Parental conflict and stereotypic roles.** The post-hoc analyses revealed parental conflict as a predictor of *Superwoman* stereotypic role endorsement. Findings also illustrated that women have greater endorsement of the *Mammy* and *Superwoman* stereotypes in comparison to men. West (1995) states that agreement with the *Mammy* stereotype may lead to eating disorders, elevated stress levels, and depression among African women. Stephens and Philips (2003) suggest that internalization of the *Superwoman* stereotypic role can lead to experiences of depression and anxiety. Women who internalize this stereotype may have difficulty expressing their need for help from others, despite possibly desiring help. These combined results suggest that clinicians should actively empower African American women to define their identities for themselves and that the therapeutic space should subsequently affirm these identities. Clinicians should actively engage in self-awareness regarding their own privileges and their impact on the therapeutic alliance. Mental health professionals must engage in active self-reflection outside of therapy in order to explore their biases so that they can prevent oppression of African American women during therapy sessions. Clinicians should also address the role of stereotypes in their clients' lived experiences. When African American women clients present for treatment, discussions on cultural considerations related to their experiences of gendered racism should be initiated by the clinician. Additionally, therapists and educators should normalize clients'

experiences and strive to deconstruct stereotypic narratives in Western culture by providing psychoeducation about stereotypic roles. In addition, clinicians should assist clients in processing experiences of oppression through a trauma-informed care lens. Subsequently, mental health service providers should collaborate with clients on a plan that assists them in maneuvering future experiences of oppression, while collaborating on self-care routines.

### **Future Research**

The current study explored within group differences of marriage attitudes of African American women and men. Evidence for parental conflict and stereotypic role endorsement as predictors of marriage attitudes was not supported in the study. However, age emerged as a statistically significant predictor of participants' marriage attitudes. As such, future research on African Americans should continue to explore within group differences to gain greater awareness of additional factors that influence present day African Americans' marriage beliefs. Future research on the marriage attitudes of African Americans may benefit from examining cohabitation attitudes, religiosity, the African American kinship network, media, and identity factors and self-efficacy as determinants of marriage attitudes. While previous studies have examined cohabitation attitudes in predominantly White samples (Clarkberg et al., 1995; Jamison, 2018), there is a dearth of literature that has explored the cohabitation attitudes of African Americans and the impact on their marriage attitudes. Regarding religiosity, Perry (2013), found that a higher endorsement of religiosity ( $\beta = .342, p = .00$ ), predicted positive marriage attitudes of African American men. Moreover, in a qualitative dissertation study conducted by Barrie (2012), the African American kinship network, media, and identity and self-efficacy were found to be significant influences of African American men's marital beliefs.

Perhaps the current study's focus on the parental relationship did not account for the influence of the kinship network which includes parental figures in addition to extended family members, adults, and older children within the community. Related to the influence of the media, Barrie found that African American male participants cited the media as a significant influence of their perceptions on marriage. Participants indicated that they were taught about marriage through television programming. Lastly, Barrie cites identity factors and self-efficacy as potential within group differences among African American males. The author postulates that manhood is the core of African American men's self-efficacy and the key to building and nurturing strong marriages.

The literature should also be furthered as it relates to stereotypes of African American women. Although the theoretical constructs of the *Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel*, and *Superwoman* have been well defined in the literature, the measure has only been validated for African American women. It is not enough to singularly address African American women's endorsement of stereotypical roles. Future research must attend to the biases held by other groups with differing social identities. Stephens and Phillips (2003) inform that stereotypes of African American women influence the interactions others have with African American women on a daily basis. Therefore, by measuring the endorsement of others who interact with African American women and addressing these oppressive messages, occurrences of oppression may reduce which in turn could lead to the reduction of internalized stereotypes for African American women. Future research should explore prevention programming for African American women to address the internalization of these stereotypes. Prevention programming for other groups should also be developed to address their endorsement of the stereotypic images and to prevent

further oppression of African American women. Lastly, future research studies should examine the relationship of the four stereotypic roles (*Mammy*, *Sapphire*, *Jezebel*, and *Superwoman*) with depression, anxiety, and implicit self-esteem among African American women.

### **Limitations**

This study sought to explore parental conflict and stereotypic role endorsement as predictors of marriage attitudes. The limitations within this study included sample size and instrumentation. Although the sample size of 140 participants was adequate for most of the analyses, it was not sufficient to detect moderator effects. Moreover, the sample included 86 % women and 14% men. This dearth of male-identified participants may have prevented the detection of moderator effects. The instruments utilized in this study were another limitation. Although both the *Parental Marital Conflict Scale* (Wang, 2004) and the *Marital Attitudes Scale* (Shi, 2009) received high reliability coefficients within the sample, neither measure was previously validated on an African American sample. Additionally, two out of four subscales of the SRBWS (*Sapphire* and *Superwoman*) had sufficient reliability coefficients (Thomas et al., 2004); however, were not validated within an African American male-identified sample. An additional limitation to the current study pertains to participant recruitment. Participants were recruited online; therefore, it is difficult to verify participants' claims that they meet the study's qualifications. Moreover, participants were self-selected for the study resulting in selection-bias which precludes the findings from being generalized to a broader sample of African American women and men. Regarding self-selection bias, African Americans who chose to participate in the study, may have had more neutral marriage attitudes; therefore, preventing the parental conflict from predicting marriage attitudes. Although a randomized sampling method would have

reduced the chances of external validity threat, data collection challenges prevented participation randomization and a more convenient participation recruitment method was utilized. Finally, participants' age was also a limitation of this study. The majority of the sample was younger, where the mean age was approximately 26 years old. It is possible that an older participant sample may have led to the relationship between the predictors and outcome variable being detected.

### **Conclusion**

As a final summary, this study sought to explore within group differences of African Americans' marriage attitudes. The current study yielded important findings that have implications for clinical practice and future research. Firstly, the emergence of age as statistically significant predictor of marriage attitudes is an important finding that expands the current scholarship on African Americans. The finding that parental conflict does not predict marriage attitudes of African American women and men also adds to the dearth of current literature on the experiences of African Americans and marriage. Although previous literature which explored parental conflict in non-African American samples found that this variable predicted marriage attitudes, this finding suggests that the experiences of African Americans are unique and differ from other ethnic groups. Moreover, the finding that stereotypic role endorsement did not predict marriage attitudes furthers research on African American women and men as well.

Future research should investigate other possible within group differences to gain insight into the dynamics that influence present day African American women and men's marital beliefs. The current study also yielded post-hoc findings that have implications for clinical practice and future research. As such, parental discord predicted the endorsement of the *Superwoman*

stereotypic role and age predicted the endorsement of the *Jezebel* stereotype. Participants with higher levels of parental conflict provided higher endorsement of the *Superwoman* stereotype. Younger participants reported higher scores on the *Jezebel* stereotypic image compared to older participants. These results suggest that individual and family therapists treating clients with a history of parental discord should explore the historical legacy of stereotypes and their impact on their clients, as internalization of these stereotypes may lead to psychological disorders. Finally, future research should explore the four stereotypic roles in relation to African American women's experiences of depression, anxiety, and implicit self-esteem.



APPENDIX A

FREQUENCY SUBSCALE OF THE PARENTAL MARITAL CONFLICT

Please answer the questions below based on your experiences when you were growing up and lived with your parents. There are no right or wrong answers. Rate each question on a scale from "Never" to "Always". 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Very often, 5 = Always

1. My parents often complained about each other or nagged each other.
2. My parents often argued.
3. My parents often disagreed with each other.
4. My parents often had very bad attitudes toward each other.
5. Even though my parents did not say, I know they often argued.

APPENDIX B

STRENGTH SUBSCALE OF THE PARENTAL MARITAL CONFLICT SCALE

Please answer the questions below based on your experiences when you were growing up and lived with your parents. There are no right or wrong answers. Rate each question on a scale from "Never" to "Always". 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Very often, 5 = Always

1. During arguments, my parents often hit each other.
2. During arguments, my parents often threw things.
3. During arguments, my parents often slammed doors and left the room.
4. During arguments, my parents often said unpleasant words.

APPENDIX C

EMOTIONS FOR MARRIAGE SUBSCALE OF THE MARITAL ATTITUDE SCALE

Please answer the questions below based on your personal beliefs and experiences. There are no right or wrong answers. Rate each question on a scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I think marriage is beautiful.
2. I think marriage provides a positive emotional well-being.
3. I think marriage is a happy thing.
4. I do not believe that marriage will stop me from doing the things that are important to me.
5. I do not believe that marriage will bring trouble into my life.
6. I do not believe marriage comes with a lot of stress.
7. I do not believe that marriage will limit my freedom.
8. Marriage is attractive to me.

APPENDIX D

INTENTIONS TO MARRY SUBSCALE OF THE MARITAL ATTITUDE SCALE

Please answer the questions below based on your personal beliefs and experiences. There are no right or wrong answers. Rate each question on a scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I will try married life in the future.
2. Married life attracts me more than single life.
3. I would like to experience married life in the future.
4. I believe I will get married in the future.
5. I do not want to be single in the future.
6. I believe being married is better than being single.
7. I will get married at an age that I feel is appropriate.
8. I will want to start a family with my partner.



APPENDIX E  
STEREOTYPIC ROLES OF BLACK WOMEN SCALE

Please answer the questions based on how much you believe that they are true. There are no right or wrong answers. The term "Black women" refers to women of African descent (African, African American, Black American, and Caribbean American women). Please rate each question on a scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
1. Black women are often loud and obnoxious.				1 2 3 4 5
2. Black women are all about sex.				1 2 3 4 5
3. Black women have to be strong to survive.				1 2 3 4 5
4. Black women need to nag others to get a response.				1 2 3 4 5
5. Black women will use sex to get what they want.				1 2 3 4 5
6. Black women control men with sex.				1 2 3 4 5
7. If given a chance, Black women will put down Black men.				1 2 3 4 5
8. Black women are often treated as sex objects.				1 2 3 4 5
9. Black women are often expected to take care of family members.				1 2 3 4 5
10. If Black women fall apart, they will be failures.				1 2 3 4 5
11. Black women are usually angry with others.				1 2 3 4 5
12. Black women often put aside their own needs to help others.				1 2 3 4 5
13. Black women often feel ignored by others.				1 2 3 4 5
14. Black women find it difficult to ask others for help.				1 2 3 4 5
15. Black women feel guilty when they put their own needs before others.				1 2 3 4 5
16. Black women do not want others to know if they experience a problem.				1 2 3 4 5
17. People often expect Black women to take care of them.				1 2 3 4 5
18. People respond to Black women more if they are loud and angry.				1 2 3 4 5
19. Black women tell others that they are fine when they are depressed or down.				1 2 3 4 5
20. People treat Black women as if they are sex objects.				1 2 3 4 5
21. It is difficult for Black women to share problems with others.				1 2 3 4 5
22. Black women should not expect nurturing from others.				1 2 3 4 5
23. Black women are hardly ever satisfied.				1 2 3 4 5
24. Black women are out to get another woman's man.				1 2 3 4 5
25. Black women often have to put someone in their place, read them or check them.				1 2 3 4 5
26. Young Black women are gold-diggers.				1 2 3 4 5

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Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

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- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27. Black women often threaten to cuss someone out.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Sex is a weapon.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Black women are overworked, overwhelmed, and/or underappreciated.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Black women are demanding.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Black women are always helping someone else.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Black women will let people down if they take time out for themselves. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. It is easy for Black women to tell other people their problems.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. Black women feel guilty if they cannot help someone.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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## VITA

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