

CONFLICT STYLE AND MARITAL SATISFACTION IN BLACK INTERCULTURAL
COUPLES

by

Tiffanie James Parker

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Fred Volk, Committee Chair

Dr. Eva Starner, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

Current literature suggests that culture-specific relationships exist between conflict styles and marital satisfaction; however, researchers have only focused on marriages between non-Westerners and Westerners. Very little research exists on how these variables function uniquely in marriages involving African American and African Caribbean individuals. This quantitative study examined the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction with and between African Caribbean and African American couples living in the United States. The research focused on three questions: (1) Will cultural differences between spouses influence the relationship between conflict styles and marital satisfaction? (2) Will there be any observable differences in conflict styles between African American, African Caribbean, and culturally mixed couples? (3) Will rates of spousal conflict differ between African American couples, culturally mixed couples, and African Caribbean couples? It was hypothesized that (1) Cultural differences within the marriage will moderate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction; (2) African Americans would use more assertive conflict styles and African Caribbeans would use more cooperative conflict styles and; (3) Given the differences in cultural and relationship expectations, rates of conflict will be lower among African Caribbean couples. Multiple regression analysis was used investigate the first research question and hypothesis. A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the second research question and hypothesis, and an independent samples t-test analyzed the third research question and hypothesis. Findings from this study suggested that African Caribbean, African American, and culturally mixed couples share more similarities in terms of conflict style and marital satisfaction than differences.

Keywords: African Americans, African Caribbean, conflict style, marital satisfaction, culture, intercultural.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving mother, Goldeen James, who is no longer on this earth yet her beautiful spirit still lives on in me. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my fellow flight attendants who are climbing to new educational heights. Fly high!

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I would like to thank my Heavenly Father for equipping me with everything necessary to complete this dissertation. I am thankful for all who supported, encouraged and prayed for me throughout this process. I am and forever will be grateful. To my husband, Willie Parker, your understanding, support and constant faith in my ability to successfully complete this program were worth more than I can put into words. To my daughters, Saige and Zuri, thank you for not confusing determination with neglect. Your understanding and sacrifice have meant the world to me, and I love you both. To my son, Devonte, keep believing in yourself and continue to press on toward achieving your own goals. I love you! To my dad and stepmom, thank you for your love and support. I love you both!

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List of Abbreviations

ROCI-II	Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory
KMSS	Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale
ICIAI	Individualism-Collectivism Interpersonal Assessment Inventory

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Being in a satisfying intimate marriage offers specific benefits, such as better mental health (Uecker, 2012), greater longevity (Lillard & Waite, 1995), and better adjustment among children (Fishman & Meyers, 2000). In many cultures, marriage is recognized as the central relationship in the family (Stinson et al., 2017). Quek and Fitzpatrick (2013) state that “marriage is valued in personal, familial, and religious contexts as a union that fosters closeness between adult partners and exemplifies community values” (p. 208). Additionally, researchers contend that unique factors, such as resources, values, and communication practices, can have an effect on marital satisfaction in different cultures (Quek & Fitzpatrick, 2013).

Tili and Barker (2014) report that an estimated two million people cross international borders daily and over 190 million people live outside their country of birth or citizenship. For instance, over the past two decades migration from the Caribbean and Africa has contributed to changing the face of Black America. Out of the 36 million Americans counted as black in the 2000 U. S. Census, 1.5 million self-identified as Caribbean immigrants (Shaw-Taylor, 2009). Overall, this represents an increase in migration of 67 percent for Caribbean groups. The increased interaction with people from different countries has resulted in a rise in marriages between people from different cultures. In comparison to the 1980s, the share of intermarriages has more than doubled. For example, in the United States, the number of intercultural marriages has increased from 310,000 in 1970 to 651,000 in 1980 to 1,610,000 in 1990 (Skowronski et al., 2014). Wiggins Frame (2004) predicts that for the next fifty years, intermarriages will substantially increase across cultures.

Studies have shown that intercultural marriages have a higher risk of stressful obstacles, show lower rates of marital satisfaction, and have higher overall divorce rates than monocultural couples (Skowronski et al., 2014). While cultural differences may be a significant source of conflict for these couples, couples are often faced with additional challenges that stem from differences in values, perspectives, and communication styles. According to Tili and Barker (2014), communication between culturally different individuals requires intercultural communication competence, which is defined as the knowledge, motivation, and skills necessary to interact and communicate effectively with people of different cultural backgrounds. In general, competence in intercultural communication is gained through factors such as personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adaptation, and cultural awareness. Personal attributes involve peoples' ability to understand themselves, self-disclose, and maintain a positive and relaxed attitude toward interactions. Communication skills include the ability to both verbally and nonverbally express themselves. Psychological adaptation includes how capable people are at handling stress and frustration, as well as how they behave in a foreign environment; and cultural awareness involves knowledge of the other's cultural values, customs, norms, and social systems (Tili & Barker, 2014). Although African American and African Caribbean individuals both have common ancestral origins, there are distinct differences in culture.

Background

This study examined the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction in marriages involving African Caribbean and African American individuals, and attempted to determine whether cultural differences between spouses moderate the relationship. Database

searches yielded no studies that have explored conflict style and marital satisfaction in African Caribbean and African American individuals living in the United States or other countries.

Problem Statement

African Caribbeans and African Americans in the United States have similar experiences, including social pressures, classism, and glass-ceiling issues (Shaw-Taylor, 2009). In addition, these two groups share a common history of enslavement and racism. African Americans experienced enslavement from the 1600s to the late 1800s (Edwards, 2009) and the British Caribbean experienced enslavement between 1662 and 1807. Although the British slave trade officially ended in 1807, slavery itself did not end until 1834 in the Caribbean (Petley, 2011). Slavery has had a strong influence on the lives of Blacks, including their marriages and families. Patterson (1998) refers to slavery as one protracted, externally imposed familial crisis that has had a devastating effect on the roles of a father, mother, and husband. Other researchers agree that the lack of power in enslaved men has an effect on male family roles in the Caribbean that is still obvious today (Blank, 2013). Although families existed under slavery, slave owners ultimately had power over the household. Slaves were not permitted to marry, and their conjugal relationships were frequently ended when partners were sold to different plantation owners. Moreover, mothers were the only recognized parent, and paternity became relevant only when the slave master was the father of the child. In general, slaves were not encouraged to engage in exclusive sexual relations with one person. Instead, they were expected to have children with different partners (Gmelch & Gmelch, 2012). As a result, male slaves were rarely able to develop loyal relationships with their women or children.

Towards the end of the 18th century, slaves in the Caribbean were permitted to marry and they were encouraged to have children. However, no drastic changes in marriage patterns were

observed. Instead, they continued having children and sexual unions outside of marriage (Blank, 2013). The significance and principles of marriage were never clearly defined or modeled to slaves. Frequently, slave owners in legal marriages did not embrace fidelity in their marriages and they had extramarital affairs with domestic servants (concubinage) and other women. These actions may have fueled the misconception that masculinity includes sex with multiple partners and having multiple children, and womanhood involves the use of sexual relationships for survival. Unfortunately, elements of this mentality are still dominant in both African American and African Caribbean societies. While both of these groups share a common history of severe oppression over many years, very little research exists on how this shared history may have impacted conflict styles, marital stability, and marital satisfaction.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate and examine the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction between African Caribbean, African American, and culturally mixed couples living in the United States. Cultural differences were investigated to determine if they play a role in both conflict resolution and marital satisfaction in these two groups. Previous studies have found relationships between conflict styles, marital satisfaction and culture. An important factor that significantly impacts marital satisfaction is the way in which couples approach conflict. Greeff and De Bruyne (2000) claim that most couples use physical and verbal aggression, and withdrawal when dealing with conflict. However, it has been using constructive conflict management strategies such as the collaborating style, yield the highest levels of marital satisfaction (Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000).

In comparison to couples from the same cultural background, couples in intercultural marriages have reported higher rates of marital dissolution (Skowronski et al., 2014). Previous

studies have found an association between differences in culture and marital dissatisfaction with some of the observed differences being language and communication, stereotypes, childrearing, financial issues, social support, and religious beliefs (Skowronski et al., 2014). Members from individualistic cultures and those from collectivistic cultures differ in quite a few ways.

However, researchers have found that these individuals experience greater levels of satisfaction, and more success in their marriages when a solid plan is established to deal with culture-related stressors as they arise (Mui-Teng Quek & Fitzpatrick, 2013). Moreover, the growing popularity of intermarriages has resulted in spouses exhibiting signs of varying degrees of both collectivistic and individualistic traits. Mui-Teng Quek and Fitzpatrick (2013) contend that this form of acculturation may lead to enhanced marital satisfaction.

African American males have been shown to use less forcing and problem-solving conflict strategies in comparison to European Americans. In turn, African American females use more confrontational strategies (Holt & DeVore, 2005). This study examines how these styles function in terms of marital satisfaction. Research suggested that African Americans generally face unique external stressors that influence the quality of their marriages (Lincoln & Chae, 2010). For instance, ethnic and racial minorities often deal with racial discrimination and unfair treatment. According to Lincoln and Chae (2010) “these experiences may structure one’s economic and life circumstances via discriminatory employment and educational practices that limit resources that would otherwise facilitate a high quality of life” (p. 1084). The negative impact of economic hardship and the resulting financial stress are likely contributors to decreased marital quality and stability in African Americans. The literature on intercultural couples mainly focuses on cultural differences between Westerners and non-Westerners. Only a few studies have been conducted on conflict styles and marital satisfaction in Black couples.

Those that have been conducted have focused their attention on the African American population and have paid very little attention to this dynamic in people from Black Caribbean countries, with differences in socio-political histories, values, norms, and social arrangements. These critical factors may be instrumental in the interpretation and management of interpersonal conflict (Lacey et al., 2017). Additionally, these factors may help identify clinical interventions and strategies for improvements in marital functioning within these groups.

Significance of the Study

McNulty, Olson, Meltzer, and Shaffer (2013) argue that getting married is generally associated with high levels of satisfaction and optimism regarding the future. Vaterlaus, Skogrand, Chaney, and Gahagan (2017) report that “African American marriage serves as a protective factor for individual psychological well-being, evidenced by married African Americans experiencing higher levels of well-being than unmarried African Americans” (p. 884). To date, the only study that has addressed marital satisfaction in Black Caribbean and African American couples found that both groups reported high levels of satisfaction, with Black Caribbean women reporting slightly higher levels of marital satisfaction than African American women (Bryant et al., 2008). Previous studies on African Americans have taken a deficit approach that emphasizes problems and pathology, instead of the strengths of this group (Connor & White, 2011). While African Americans are faced with many unique challenges, their marriages also boast many observable strengths. For example, African American marriages tend to be egalitarian in role sharing and division of household labor, have strong kinship bonds, and have a strong religious orientation (Vaterlaus et al., 2017). Examining these two cultures for conflict style and marital satisfaction will lead to an awareness of the similarities and uniqueness of each group. Furthermore, the findings could provide insight into marriage and family

counselors, as well as other mental health professionals into the similarities and differences between these two cultural groups. Additionally, members of these two groups and those from other cultures may improve cultural awareness into any similarities and differences.

Research Questions

The study will answer these questions:

RQ1: Will cultural differences between spouses influence the relationship between conflict styles and marital satisfaction?

RQ2: Will there be any observable differences in conflict styles between African American, African Caribbean, and culturally mixed couples?

RQ3: Will rates of spousal conflict differ between African American couples, culturally mixed couples, and African Caribbean couples?

Definitions

- *African American* - Individuals born in the United States who have origins in any of the Black populations of Africa.
- *African Caribbean* - Individuals who have origins in any of the Black populations of Africa with West Indian or Caribbean descent, or those with parents or grandparents that were born in the Caribbean.
- *Black* - Individuals with a history and heritage from any of the Black populations of Africa.
- *Conflict style* - Style used to manage incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (Rahim & Magner, 1995)

- *Culture* - A group-level construct that embodies a distinctive system of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, rituals, symbols, and meanings that is shared by a majority of interacting individuals in a community (Lulofs & Cahn, 2000).
- *Culturally mixed couples* – African American person in an intercultural marriage with an African Caribbean person.
- *Intercultural couples* – Spouses who come from two different cultural backgrounds.
- *Marital satisfaction* – An attitude of greater or lesser favorability toward one's own marital relationship (Roach, Frazier & Bowden, 1981).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate and examine the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction with and between African Caribbean and African American individuals living in the United States. The variables examined included conflict style, cultural differences, and marital satisfaction. In order to establish a framework for these questions, this chapter includes a review of the literature and introduces the reader to conflict styles and marital satisfaction. A synopsis of African Caribbean and African American cultures, and how these cultural factors relate to their marital experiences is also discussed.

Conflict Styles

Conflict is defined as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (Rahim & Magner, 1995). Conflict management styles have been classified into two basic dimensions: assertiveness (the extent that individuals try to meet their own concern) and cooperativeness (the degree to which individuals aim to satisfy others' concerns). Researchers have identified the five conflict styles: collaborating, accommodating, competing, avoiding, and compromising (Cerni et al., 2012; Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000; Kozan, 2002). Collaborating style is characterized by great concern for both one's own and the other party's goals. It involves addressing issues pertaining to a solution that serves both points of view. In essence, the problem is solved by sorting out differences and maximizing joint gains in order to reach a solution that is acceptable by the parties involved (Canaan Messarra, Karkouljian & El-Kassar, 2016). Some researchers have considered the collaborating conflict style to be the most constructive conflict management style. However, some others believe that it is time and energy consuming and not a suitable fit for resolving low-priority

conflicts. Moreover, Canaan Messarra et al. (2016) purport that in situations that require immediate decisions or those where concerned parties lack problem-solving skills, the use of this style may not be appropriate.

The accommodating style is characterized by low concern for one's own goals and deep concern for others, and involves a sacrifice to maintain the relationship. The competing style is characterized by high concern for one's own goals and low concern for others, and involves using power at the other's expense in order to win one's own concerns (Canaan Messarra et al., 2016). The avoiding style is characterized by low concern for both self and others. One party chooses not to discuss the issue and instead suppresses or withdraws from the conflict. As a result, both the needs of the individual and the other party involved, remain unaddressed and unsatisfied.

Cerni et al. (2012) contend that in order to effectively prevent, manage and resolve conflict, appropriate reactions to the conflict situation should be chosen, and participants should make a conscious decision to use the most effective conflict style. Since conflict is a factor in dissatisfaction and instability in marriages, Dillon et al. (2015) believe that studying marital conflict is important. In general, marriages tend to occasionally experience some form of conflict. Both males and females desire kindness, dependability, and understanding when choosing a potential mate (Dillon et al., 2015). When these attributes are lacking, the likelihood of conflict developing in the relationship increases significantly.

African American and African Caribbean Marriages

Marriage is linked to improved physical and psychological health, longevity and material wealth in both men and women, and has been associated with better outcomes for children's wellbeing (Lillard & Waite, 1995; Fishman & Meyers, 2000). Strong, stable marriages and

families provide a solid foundation for children to become well-adjusted, responsible adults (Wolcott, 1999). Asoodeh, Khalili, Daneshpour, and Lavasani (2010) contend that a successful marriage happens when both individuals wholeheartedly respect their own values and principles, have mutual interests, and are committed to each other. Moreover, when couples cooperate with one another and make the decision to be together under any circumstances, marriages have a greater chance at success. Achieving satisfaction in marriage may be quite challenging for couples. In fact, studies have shown that present-day couples are more dissatisfied with their marriages compared to in the past (Hall, 2006). African American marriages have an increased likelihood of ending in divorce (Kreider & Ellis, 2011) and in comparison to other ethnic groups have lower marital quality (Bulanda & Brown, 2007). Marital dissatisfaction is linked to high expectations of spousal roles and likely occurs when spouses are expected to take on multiple roles such as friend, confidant, fulfilling sexual partner, parent, and counselor. Essentially, people enter into a marital union with expectations that are based on personal experiences, interaction in their family, and their respective beliefs about marriage (Juvva & Bhatti, 2006). Expectations that are unrealistic contribute to marital distress (Vaterlaus et al., 2017)

Roots in slavery may be one reason that African American couples encounter unique stressors (Pindehughes, 2002). Lincoln and Chae (2010) also agree that racial discrimination is a major stressor for Blacks in the United States. Blacks endure the stress that results from unfair treatment involving social pressures, classism, and glass-ceiling issues (Shaw-Taylor, 2009), which are obvious contributors to financial strain. According to Bryant et al. (2008), chronic economic disadvantage, severe income loss, and heavy demands on resources are major stressors that have a detrimental effect on marital quality and psychological well-being. These issues combined, appear to have a deleterious impact on marital satisfaction in Black American

couples, which is evidenced by the high divorce rates (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). Although the experiences faced by African American and African Caribbean individuals in the United States are quite similar, African Caribbeans experience greater economic success than African Americans (Bryant et al., 2008). Vickerman (2007) assumes that the differences in economic achievement could be due to the fact that Black Caribbeans tend to possess valued skills, abilities, and attitudes that lead to greater financial success. Additionally, Bryant et al. (2008) report that “Caribbean Blacks have been able to establish a social identity that gives prominence to their distinctive ethnic affiliation and presumed cultural and social differences from African Americans” (p. 242).

Although, African Caribbean marriages and families are underrepresented in literature, Innerarity (2001) provides necessary details about the African Caribbean family structure, noting that the upper and middle classes in the Caribbean tend to adopt the Western nuclear type family structure based on legal marriage whereas, those with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to engage in common-law unions and visiting unions which are relationships where the male lives separately from the mother and children and visits on occasion. Historically, in this culture, socioeconomic status has shaped family life considerably (Innerarity, 2001). Furthermore, men have been ridiculed when they lacked the financial means to get married or were unable to sufficiently provide for their women (Clarke, 1970). As a result, many men postpone marriage until after a preliminary period of cohabitation (Innerarity, 2001). According to Blank (2013), African Caribbean families are characterized by “low rates of legal marriage, high rates of illegitimate children, and the centrality of the mother-child bond rather than the husband-wife bond” (p. 2). Moreover, in the Eastern Caribbean, almost seventy percent of children are born into female-headed non-nuclear families.

Marital Satisfaction

During the past fifty years, the institution of marriage has dramatically changed. Americans have been shown to marry later and less often than in the past one hundred years (Ruggles, 2015; Schneider, Harknett & Stimpson, 2018). Approximately, half of all first marriages of females, and more than half of all first marriages of males have occurred at age twenty-five or older (U. S. Census Bureau, 2009), which makes late marriage more normal and typical (Glenn, Uecker & Love, 2010). On one hand, late marriages may have a greater chance of survival since spouses may have reached a high level of psychological maturity at the time of marriage, assuming the delay allowed for the development of better ways of functioning relationally and the establishing of stable expectations of a spouse and marriage (Glenn, Uecker & Love, 2010). On the other hand, individuals that choose to marry later may be accustomed to living their adult lives alone; thus, making it difficult to adjust to marriage.

According to Bramlett and Mosher (2002), most marriages end in divorce or permanent separation. When couples decide to marry, they are faced with the challenges of merging aspects of their lives, which for many couples can be a source of distress. In developing the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS), Roach, Frazier, and Bowden (1981) define marital satisfaction as “an attitude of greater or lesser favorability toward one's own marital relationship” (p. 537). Marital quality is positively associated with subjective well-being, with the association being typically stronger among women than men (Bookwala, 2012; Jackson, Miller, Oka, & Henry, 2014). Moreover, men derive more health benefits than women from being married and also benefit more than women from marriage (Bernard, 1972). This may be due to the fact that women are disproportionately responsible for household tasks and childcare. In addition to having primary childcare responsibility, wives also provide an inequitable amount of emotion work by

supporting their husbands and managing the emotional climate of the relationship (Jackson, Miller, Oka & Henry, 2014). Generally, wives have a greater awareness of the emotional climate of the relationship and are more likely to monitor the emotional quality of the relationship (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). As a result, this imbalance in emotion work has been found to be associated with lower marital satisfaction in women (Croyle & Waltz, 2002). Marital quality is characterized by both negative and positive dimensions where the presence of positive dimensions does not exclude the possibility of perceived negative dimensions as well (Bertoni & Bodenmann, 2010). Among the positive dimensions that substantially distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied couples, the quality of marital communication, which includes openness, emotional self-disclosure, and empathic understanding, along with dyadic coping or social support provided by the partner, play a crucial role (Bertoni & Bodenmann, 2010).

Another important factor in assessing marital satisfaction is religion. Historically, religious institutions have played a central role in marriage and families. In Black marriages, it has been found to be especially important. For example, in comparison to European Americans, African American couples, married for more than seven years were found to be more likely to report religion as an important factor in their marriage (Chaney, Shirisia, & Skogrand, 2016). Marks, Hopkins, Chaney, Monroe, Nesteruk, and Sasser (2008) discuss that religion can even be viewed as a survival system in the daily lives of African Americans, and has been instrumental in unifying Black married couples who regularly attend church together. Additionally, Mullins (2016) found that couples who regularly attend church together tend to remain together over time. African Americans are also among the most likely to belong to a religious group (Pew Research Center, 2009). Religion has been found to be instrumental in the establishment of romantic relationships for African American men who reported its importance in dating and mate

selection (Hurt, 2013). Moreover, Lichter and Carmalt (2009) state that a strong religious tradition may also instill or reinforce certain positive attitudes or values (eg., commitment, kindness, selflessness, and fidelity) that strengthen the marriage bond, increase levels of marital quality (Stafford, David & McPherson, 2014).

Lastly, conflict is a significant factor in a couple's experience of marital satisfaction. In fact, the actual conflict has been found not to be as important; rather, it is the way in which it is managed (Scott, Rhoades, Stanley, Allen & Markman, 2013). Cooperative conflict resolution style, characterized by negotiation, compromise, and constructive problem solving has been found to be associated with higher marital satisfaction and intimacy, while a competitive style (eg., offense, violence, and coercion) has been found to be associated with lower marital satisfaction (Bertoni & Bodenmann, 2010).

The Caribbean

The main islands of the Caribbean comprise the Greater and Lesser Antilles. The Greater Antilles include Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. The Lesser Antilles include Saint Lucia, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Saint Vincent, Saint Kitts, and Nevis, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Dominica, and Martinique (Greenidge, 2007). Due to the region's history of European colonization, the four main languages in the Caribbean are English, Dutch, French, and Spanish (Higman, 2012), with most islands speaking only English and their native Creole. The region historically has witnessed some of the harshest systems of exploitation put in place by imperialism but has also witnessed great examples of human resilience. The Caribbean is quite diverse and hosts a variety of ethnic groups. While the islands share many commonalities, they each have a unique culture that distinguishes one from the other (McAdoo, Younge, & Getahun, 2007). The Caribbean has a total population of 42 million compared with

the 900 million in the United States (Higman, 2012). Caribbean people enjoy togetherness and sharing, and strongly value religion and spirituality, community, family bonds, and education. According to Waters (2004), all Caribbean islands share three commonalities: 1) legacies of European colonialism; 2) legacies of enslavement; and 3) the domination of the island's economy and culture by international communities.

Both African Caribbeans and African Americans have ancestral origins in Africa. When Africans were brought to the Caribbean and the Americas during the period of enslavement, they also brought century-old practices and marriage and family patterns with them (Dixon, 2007). Enslaved individuals had no rights to their spouse or anything else and thus marriage was not viewed as a lifetime commitment. Presently, the impact of this former existence on Black people is present in their marital experiences today, where the commitment to marriage is neither maintained nor sustained (Dixon, 2007). Most research on marital satisfaction typically focuses on non-Black couples, and those that focus on couples with African ancestry have chosen a deficit perspective rather than a strengths-based framework. Moreover, this research is generally done on African American couples and rarely focuses on other Black cultural groups such as African Caribbeans. Therefore, the research on the significance of marital satisfaction does not culturally reflect African Caribbean or African American individuals. This study adds greater depth to the area of marital satisfaction among these two groups that are underrepresented in literature.

African Caribbeans and African Americans

Shaw-Taylor (2009) reports that over the past two decades, migration from the Caribbean and Africa has been changing the face of Black America. Many view African Caribbeans in the United States, and African American individuals as closely related ethnic groups (McAdoo,

Younge & Getahun, 2007). While there may be more similarities than differences between these two groups, there are many differences in socio-political histories, values, norms and social arrangements, which can all affect marriage quality. Often, these two groups are lumped together as one group. Immigrants from the Caribbean face unique and diverse challenges in finding their place in American society. In the past, immigrants have taken ten to fifteen years to receive pay equal to their American-born peers (Shaw-Taylor, 2009). However, recent analyses have shown that it may take twenty years or more for immigrants from the Caribbean to achieve parity in earnings (Shaw-Taylor, 2009). More than likely, these disparities are primarily due to racial discrimination. As a result, African Caribbean individuals have concluded that while they may succeed as ethnic immigrants, they fail as Blacks in America when compared to Whites.

Both African Caribbeans and African Americans have reported relatively high levels of marital satisfaction (Bryant et al., 2008). Black individuals reported raising children, companionship, having a sustained love life, safety, help with housework, and financial security as reasons they consider marriage to be of value (Jackson, 1987). Although marriage has undergone a process of deinstitutionalization, evolving from an ideal and appropriate societal arrangement to supply material, physical, and financial resources into what Kefalas, Furstenberg, Carr, and Napolitano (2011) refer to as individualized marriage, where people garner satisfaction from their personal development more than through building a family, marriage survives due to its symbolic significance. Moreover, marriage represents status and social prestige, especially among middle-class Black women who are reportedly less likely to be married than their white counterparts (Banks, 2011). One reason for the lower rates of marriage highlighted by Banks (2011) is Black women typically date and marry Black men and rarely marry across racial lines. Conversely, Black men are up to three times more likely than Black women to marry a person of

a different race (Vaterlaus et al., 2017). African American individuals generally agree that remaining unmarried is better than being unhappily married (Muraco & Curran, 2012).

Furthermore, Black men, both African Caribbean and African American may choose to marry at a later age in order to enjoy the benefits of single life, such as sex with multiple partners, and limited responsibility and obligations. This mentality may have roots in slavery since slaves typically did not have exclusive sexual relations with only one person (Blank, 2013). In essence, the social and economic conditions of slavery precluded the development of stable nuclear families among Blacks in the new world (Frazier, 1966).

Theoretical Framework

Most people of African descent in the United States originated from sub-Saharan Africa and were brought to the Americas as slaves between the 17th and 19th centuries, quite similar to those who arrived from Africa to the Caribbean islands (Agyemang, Bhopal & Bruijnzeels, 2014). Unique differences exist between those brought to the United States during earlier ancestry and those who arrived from other parts of Africa and the Caribbean in the 20th and 21st centuries. These African groups have distinct beliefs and behaviors, and the differences are often ignored by researchers. The differences between these two groups are often ignored.

McAdoo, Younge, and Getahun (2007) argue that researchers' lack of awareness of cultural norms and differences with native and foreign-born Black populations in the United States has made studying marriage, parenting, and family socialization very challenging, and the under-recognition of the unique cultural differences leads to foreign-born Blacks being lumped under the African American category. Shaw-Taylor (2009) agrees that foreign-born Black (Caribbean and African) immigrants encounter a rigid racial classification scheme that lumps them all into the same category as African Americans. This has led many first-generation

immigrants to choose to identify as “other” in an effort to distinguish themselves (Shaw-Taylor, 2009). Despite cultural factors and differences, African Caribbeans are still regarded as Black even though social class differences may provide them with opportunities to transcend racial classification (Nunnally, 2010). For example, African Caribbeans generally come to the United States with substantial social capital (Taylor, Zhang, & Jackson, 2012), which gives them an advantage over African Americans in terms of material resources. Greer (2013) asserts that due to their superior economic circumstances and elevated minority status, African Caribbeans are depicted as a model minority group, and are assimilated differently.

The Individualism–Collectivism framework developed by Geert Hofstede is a well-developed construct in cross-cultural studies (Xu, 2018) that has been used extensively to study social behaviors in order to predict behavioral patterns (LeFebvre & Franke, 2013). It is a useful construct that systematically describes ways in which cultures differ, and promotes understanding of how culture influences thought patterns. Individualism values independence and uniqueness, whereas collectivism emphasizes duty to the group and maintaining harmony. In collectivistic cultures, the families often work together as a unit in order to fulfill common goals. Generally, each family member has specific roles, and status is determined by the individual’s position within the group. It is not uncommon for family members to have strong emotional life-long bonds (Triandis, 1993). In individualistic cultures, people tend to place greater value on the goals, needs, and rights of individuals and seek to maintain independence from others by attending to the self (Xi, 2018). The differences in the individualism-collectivism dimension between the African Caribbeans and African Americans make a case for a cross-cultural study on conflict style and marital satisfaction.

The History of Marriage in America

Throughout the history of America, three major eras of marriage (Finkel et al., 2015) have changed marriage from “a formal institution that meets the needs of the larger society to a companionate relationship that meets the needs of the couple and their children and then to a private pact that meets the psychological needs of individual spouses” (Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2009, p. 70). In essence, as America has evolved, so has the institution of marriage. The three major eras included in this evolution are: the institutional era, the companionate era, and the self-expressive era.

Institutional Era (1776 – 1850)

During this era, most Americans lived in agrarian communities, characterized by the household being the unit of economic production. Marriage facilitated the sharing of resources and was essential to the welfare of family members and the larger community. Moreover, marriage allowed the formation of bonds between families. Realizing its importance, the institution of marriage was strictly regulated by law, social norms, and religion (Amato, 2012). During this time, the needs of the family were more important than individual needs, and family members typically relied on one another to meet basic needs such as economic production, child and elder care, and education (Finkel et al., 2014). The primary function of marriage was to help spouses fulfill physiological needs including food production, warmth during the winter, shelter, and safety needs.

Companionate Era (1850 – 1965)

During this time period, Americans transitioned from being in predominantly rural areas to urban settings, increasing from around 10% in 1850 to roughly 80% by 2000 in urban areas (Greenfield, 2013). Many Americans worked outside of the home and were easily able to meet

the basic physiological and safety needs of their families. This shift had a profound effect on marriage, allowing those entering into marriages to emphasize love as an important factor in marriage decisions (Finkel et al., 2014). Furthermore, marriage became increasingly sentimental and based on ties of affection and companionship between spouses.

Self-Expressive Era (1965 – present)

During this era, the civil rights and feminist movements, the Vietnam War, and the rise of humanistic psychology converged to generate the countercultural revolution (Finkel et al., 2014). As a result, Americans looked to marriage as a means to fulfill needs such as self-esteem, self-expression, and personal growth. More women pursued higher education and intensive careers and started to interact more like partners to their husbands. In turn, they expected the husbands to acknowledge the partnership and treat them with respect. Scholars believe that these changing expectations in marriage have caused average marriages to become less satisfying, and the best marriages to become more satisfying (de Botton, 2012).

The State of Marriage

The age at which men and women have started to marry increased to high levels. Between 1965 and 2018, the median age at first marriage increased from 22.8 to 29.8 for men and from 20.6 to 27.8 for women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2018). In 2010, only 52% of adults 18 years and older were married compared with 72% in 1960. The decline can be explicitly observed in young adults between the ages of 18 to 29, with 20% being married in 2010, compared with 59% in 1960 (Cohn, 2011). Alternatives to marriage, such as living alone and cohabitation have significantly increased. For example, non-marital cohabitation increased from approximately 500,000 couples in 1970 to about 7.6 million couples in 2011 (Marquardt, Blankenhorn, Lerman, Malone-Col'on, & Wilcox, 2012) which corresponds to the reported rise

in the percentage of births to unwed mothers from 5% in 1960 to 37% in 2005 (Taylor, Funk & Clark, 2007).

Divorce

In 1860, the annual divorce rate in the United States was 1 for every 1,000 married couples. By 1979, that number had risen to 22.5 per 1,000. Divorce rates doubled in the 1960s and 1970s before plateauing at under 50% since 1980 (Finkel et al., 2014). Campbell, Wright, and Flores (2012) believe Americans have become less disapproving of divorce, and would readily abandon their marriages if they no longer feel happy or fulfilled. Nonetheless, virtually all Americans hope to marry (Finkel et al., 2014) and about 90% will marry at least once (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001).

According to Balswick and Balswick (2014) since 1980, there have been approximately 1.2 million divorces each year, slightly less than half the number of new marriages. It is estimated that approximately four to five out of every ten current marriages will end in divorce, with the likelihood of divorce being lowest among those who have been married the longest (Balswick & Balswick, 2014). Another factor that has been shown to contribute to the declining divorce rate is an individual's age at the time of first marriage. Women who get married at 26 years of age and men who get married at 28 years of age tend to experience greater marital success in comparison to others (Balswick & Balswick, 2014).

According to Breivik and Olweus (2006) divorce has an impact on mental health and well-being. In comparison to married individuals, those who have divorced have reported lower levels of self-esteem and happiness, and reported elevated levels of psychological distress. Additionally, children affected by divorce have been shown to struggle in certain areas of adjustment. Those affected most by these struggles are those who experienced divorce in

preschool. Children living with a divorced single mother are assumed to be at an increased risk for displaying a variety of adjustment problems compared to children living in nuclear families. Boys, especially, have been shown to exhibit more negative conduct-related behaviors than girls (Breivik & Olweus, 2006).

Remarriage

As a result of an overall increase in divorce rates, remarriage has become a common occurrence. McGoldrick et al. (2016) contend that men are more likely to remarry and usually remarry sooner than women. In addition, the likelihood of remarriage has been linked to higher education and economic stability. However, women with more income and education are less likely to remarry (Abela, Casha, Debono & Lauri, 2015). Age has also been shown to influence one's decision to remarry. Those who commonly remarry are among those who are younger at the time of separation. Some of those who have remarried reported favoring the committed companionship, which helps them to overcome loneliness and preferring marriage over single life as primary reasons for remarrying (Abela et al., 2015). Additionally, some women reported children, desire to have a complete family with a father figure for their children, and love as their main reasons. Common reasons against remarriage stated by participants include distrust of men, fear of repeating past mistakes, and doubts about the chances of success for second marriage (Abela et al., 2015).

Related Literature

The Effects of Slavery

Slavery in the Americas was justified by racist ideology, and many scholars believe that Africans were enslaved because they were viewed as inferiors (Hall, 2005). During the four centuries of the Atlantic slave trade, Africans were degraded and used for cheap labor.

Cohabitation was permitted, but the union between two slaves only lasted as long as the plantation owner allowed. Additionally, if enslaved women did not bear children, the plantation owner decided whether to give them to other men on the plantation or sell them to another plantation. Often, families were divided, and it was illegal for slaves to marry. Even still, Black families realized the importance of social support and maintained their connection to family (Hall, 2005).

Throughout the period of enslavement, the marriage system in place included legal marriage and concubinage (Stevenson, 2013). Plantation owners married White women, but typically entered into non-legal unions with enslaved Black women. Stevenson (2013) reports that most enslaved women and girls experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault from a male authority figure where, oftentimes, being White was the only badge of authority necessary. In some cases, concubinage involved permanent unions that were different from marriage only in terms of the legal status of spouses and children (Ono-George, 2017). The effects of enslavement as the foundation for Blacks are still experienced today (Bryant, 2008, Lincoln et al., 2010).

During slavery, the institution of marriage was never clearly defined for African Caribbeans and African Americans (Hall, 2005). Since slaves had no rights and were not regarded as humans, slave masters had free access to the women even if they were in romantic unions with male slaves. As a result, Black men often felt emasculated and disempowered (Hall, 2005). Further, enslaved men, who were originally providers and protectors of their families, could be sold at any time and had no control over the treatment of their family members, including their wives (Edwards, 2009). This led to a detached sense of self and the diminishing of emotional ties to wives and family members as a form of self-preservation (Sudarkasa, 1980).

The lasting effects on these groups are translated today in the expression of high divorce and low marriage rates as well as unwed childbearing of Black people living in the United States.

Understanding the history of Black people who reside in the United States and the effect of enslavement on their lives is necessary for the study and for an understanding of the marriages of these groups.

African-Caribbean Culture

Family Structure. Evans and Davies (1996) identify the four basic types of family structures that exist in Black Caribbean culture as (1) the marital union; (2) the common-law union; (3) the visiting union; and (4) the single-parent family. In most cases, relationships start as a visiting union, then evolve into a common-law union that eventually leads to marriage. The matrifocal family is common throughout the Caribbean, and Massiah (1982) reports that approximately 30 to 50 percent of African-Caribbean families are female-headed. In matrifocal families, mothers and children form the basis of the family unit, and women are the primary income earners and are responsible for decision making in the household. Additionally, the women usually rely on the help of other family members, typically their siblings or mothers to assist in caring for the family. Some researchers believe that the prevalence of matrifocal households may be linked to cultural traits retained from Africa, and are the lingering effects of slavery, while others argue that it is due to the high rates of male migration and male unemployment or underemployment in the region (Cole, 1997).

Family Roles. In Caribbean families, the father's principal role is the economic provider and protector of the family (Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, Metindogan & Evans, 1996). Although Caribbean men love and care for their children, they have not necessarily been known to be actively involved in the day-to-day caring of them. This stems from the traditional cultural belief

that the mother's primary role is to nurture and take care of children. But recently, Caribbean men have become more involved in their children's lives both physically and emotionally (Roopnarine et al., 1996). Furthermore, children are reared to be obedient, respectful, and submissive to their parents. Girls are expected to help with domestic chores around the house, whereas boys are expected to do activities outside the house, such as taking care of the yard and running errands (Evans & Davies, 1996).

Childrearing. The African-Caribbean family has unique mating and childrearing patterns. Some of these patterns include absent fathers, grandmother-dominated households, frequently terminated common-law unions, and child-shifting which involves children being sent to live with relatives because a parent may have migrated or may have begun a union with another spouse (Seegobin, 2003). Although Caribbean men care for their family and provide for them economically, Sharpe (1996) suggests that they may lack in terms of emotional availability. Further, it is assumed that young boys witnessing these structures may view them as norms and continue them as adults (Sharpe, 1996).

African-American Culture

Culture gives meaning to reality and has the power to reinforce ideas and beliefs about human functioning, educational achievement, motivation, and development (Goodard, Haggins, Nobles, Rhett-Mariscal & Williams-Flournoy, 2014). African American people are culturally complex yet most share elements of a common culture (Goodard et al., 2014). For instance, African Americans generally have in a strong religious belief system, a collective social orientation, strong family/ kinship bonds, communalism, cognitive flexibility, and affective expressiveness (Utsey, Hook, Fischer & Belvet, 2008). Moreover, their cultural values consist of “respect for elders, race pride, collective responsibility, restraint, devotion, reciprocity, patience,

cognitive flexibility, courage, resilience, defiance, integrity, self-mastery, persistence, and productivity” (Goodard et al., 2014, p. 8). These characteristics are grounded both in African culture and in the experiences that African Americans have had in North America.

Relationship between Conflict Style and Culture

Cultural differences can be captured by the dimensions of individualism and collectivism, where individualism emphasizes individual goals, and collectivism emphasizes cohesiveness and making sacrifices that will benefit the group (Tili & Barker, 2014). In intercultural relationships, culture has an impact on how conflict is perceived and managed. According to Kim-Jo, Benet-Martinez, and Ozer (2010), members of individualistic cultures prefer to use the competing style, characterized by high assertiveness and low cooperativeness when resolving conflict. Those from collectivistic cultures prefer the avoiding style, which is low in assertiveness and cooperativeness, and the accommodating style, which is low in assertiveness and high in cooperativeness when resolving conflict. At times, those from collectivist cultures may use withdrawing in an effort to save face and avoid embarrassing others. Individuals learn how to perceive conflict from interacting with their family and social networks, and they learn how to argue as part of their socialization process. A study by Cionea, Johnson, Bruscella and Van Gilder (2015) found that Anglo-Americans, African-Americans, and Mexican Americans defined conflict in friendships, and what constituted competent behavior during those conflicts in different ways. It is believed that “Westerners give primacy to individuals and place at the forefront freedoms, independence, and rights. In collectivistic cultures, where primacy is presumably given to the group and interdependence, people accept their designated roles and positions” (Turiel & Perkins, 2004, p. 159).

Lacey et al. (2017) believe that the unique cultural context of Caribbean life may be important in shaping the way in which African Caribbean individuals manage tension and conflict. Caribbean cultures tend to have a collectivist orientation. In general, they emphasize family values and group harmony, and work together to solve problems. Cultures that value strong communal bonds may not allow conflict that often leads to relationship dissatisfaction to sever ties. Conversely, in individualistic societies, like in the United States, factors such as self-reliance, independence, and detachment which lead to relationship dissatisfaction, make it easy for conflict to disrupt emotional ties. Couples with multiple cultural orientations, where one or both members have been influenced by foreign cultural ideals, may have increased experiences of tension and conflict due to a misunderstanding of each other's values, beliefs, and ideologies (Lacey et al. 2017). Conversely, Mui-Teng Quek and Fitzpatrick (2013) contend that couples who show signs of varying degrees of both collectivistic and individualistic traits may experience enhanced marital satisfaction.

Relationship between Conflict Style and Marital Satisfaction

Kulik, Walfisch, and Liberman (2016) found that men and women differ in regard to conflict styles. Concerning these differences, Greeff and De Bruyne (2000) believe that the constructive management of conflict will promote growth and enrichment whereas, the use of destructive conflict management approaches will inevitably result in a relatively unsatisfactory relationship. Destructive conflict management involves “escalating spirals of manipulation, threat and coercion, avoidance spirals, retaliation, inflexibility and rigidity, a competitive pattern of dominance and subordination, and demeaning and degrading verbal and nonverbal communication” (p. 322). Unresolved conflict not only impacts relationship satisfaction, but it can also cause mental health issues for at least one of the partners. Constructive conflict, on the

other hand “is characterized by flexibility, interaction with the intent to learn instead of an intent to protect, enhancement of self-esteem, a relationship focus instead of an individual focus, and cooperation” (p. 322).

A study by Kulik et al. (2016) found that couples tend to use physical aggression, verbal aggression, and/or withdrawal when dealing with conflict. Those who used physical aggression were found to lack proper problem-solving skills. Furthermore, satisfaction was found to be lowest when spouses escalated or avoided their conflicts (Kulik et al., 2016). In some cases, Greeff and De Bruyne (2000) observed that the problem-solving or collaborating style yielded the highest level of marital satisfaction for both males and females (Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000). In addition, husbands and wives who agree on how conflicts should be managed experience more happiness, especially those who agree that conflict should not be avoided. Spouses who used the compromising style to resolve conflicts also were shown to have high levels of marital satisfaction. In contrast, those who used the competitive conflict management style reported the lowest marital satisfaction.

Gender and roles. Men and women respond differently to conflict situations (Kulik et al., 2016). Men are known to be adventurous, dominant, forceful and strong-willed, while women are generally emotional, passive, dependent, nurturing, assertive and co-operative (Gbadamosi, Al-Mabrouk & Ghanbari Baghestan, 2014). Traditionally, women have been taught to define themselves within the context of a relationship, and have been socialized to abandon personal goals for the benefit of other people. Conversely, men are taught to define themselves based on domination and control and are socialized with aggression, assertion, and independence (Gbadamosi et al., 2014). Across many cultures, it is the norm for women to preserve social relationships, provide support to others, and contain the emotion of others. While

men approach life from a goal-oriented perspective, women tend to emphasize the interpersonal processes involved in attaining the goals (Kulik et al., 2016). Therefore, it is not surprising that that in conflict men would want to focus on achieving the actual goal while women want to focus more on the process of achieving the goal. Greeff and De Bruyne (2000) contend that women tend to adopt concessional conflict resolution strategies in contrast to men who use more confrontational, competitive and avoidant strategies. Gbadamosi et al. (2014) found that women strongly prefer accommodation and compromise, and tend to use less domination and competition when compared to men. Additionally, men and women tend to endorse conflict management strategies that complement gender role expectations, which portray men as less able to manage relationships and naturally have a calm demeanor (Gbadamosi et al., 2014). Interestingly, Esin and Ayhan (2001) discovered additional differences in conflict resolution styles used by men and women. Men were found to use more competing behavior toward other men, and avoiding behavior toward women, while women reported using more accommodating behavior toward both same-sex and opposite-sex peers. The conflict style that individuals use is influenced by their thoughts relating to the conflict and may vary depending on the type of conflict, or the type of relationship they have with the other person involved in the conflict.

Lacey et al. (2017) suggested that tension in relationships may be partly due to the differing views of individual roles in the home. For instance, disputes may develop from issues surrounding women's work and the decision-making process in relationships. When couples are unable to adequately address specific responsibilities, and expectations within the relationship conflict develops (West, 2004). Relationships, where decision-making is based on traditional role expectations, experience increased tension throughout the course of the relationship (Rabin &

Shapira-Berman, 1997). Yet, most often have been found to be responsible for generating the tension (Figuerora, 2004). In these instances, the men are more strongly invested in traditional perspective, asserting that they should be exempt from household tasks and that the women should be responsible for all of the domestic duties (Lacey et al., 2017). In Caribbean societies, there is a strong belief that women should be passive, dutiful, and subservient in their dealings with the dominant male (Roopnarine, 2013). When women fail to defer to men's authority, it is often unwelcomed and creates tension in the relationship, which in some cases, results in an escalation to physical, emotional, and/or financial abuse (Lacey et al., 2017).

Relationship between Culture and Marital Satisfaction

Yum and Li (2007) believe that cultural influence provides an explanation into one's values and beliefs regarding intimate relationships and patterns of communication in intimate relationship settings. They further believe that individuals' behaviors and expectations vary strikingly as a result of unique worldviews and socialization processes in their respective cultures. According to Skowronski et al. (2014), "cultural differences in language and communication, stereotypes, child-rearing, and financial issues, as well as social support, family, and religious beliefs are likely to affect the marital satisfaction of a couple" (p. 347). Additionally, Sharaievska, Junguen, and Stodolska (2013) discuss further challenges individuals in intercultural marriages may face. When one spouse is foreign-born, the immigrant spouse may have to deal with "the negative effects of poor language skills and limited knowledge of the law, fear of deportation, social isolation, and post-arrival cultural shock" (p. 448), "all of which could negatively impact marital satisfaction" (p. 448). Moreover, the immigrant spouse may also have to cope with the financial, legal, and psychological dependency on their partners as well as with

differences in marital expectations. These additional stressors could significantly affect marital quality, which would likely result in decreased marital satisfaction.

Members of collectivistic cultures emphasize group cohesiveness and group privilege and it is likely that such values would be enacted in marital dynamics. A study on couple satisfaction in Japan indicated that the living arrangement with in-laws influenced couple satisfaction (Mui-Teng Quek & Fitzpatrick, 2013). Another study found that equity in household tasks was considered pertinent in couples from the United States (Skowronski et al., 2014). Since members from individualistic cultures emphasize independence, personal autonomy, and self-actualization, when a problem in the marriage arises, an individualistic partner might confront the problem directly in order to solve it. However, a collectivistic partner may engage in conflict avoidance, and work to promote peace within the relationship by using more indirect negotiation, which may result in problems with communication (Skowronski et al., 2014).

Tili and Baker (2014) contend that communication in intercultural marriages is influenced by the spouses' investment in creating a mutually satisfying, intimate relationship by merging their two lives and creating a new culture. Conflict is normal in intimate relationships, and those in intercultural marriages often encounter conflict (Oduro-Frimpong, 2007), which can affect marital satisfaction. It is important for these couples to engage in effective marriage communication, which requires each spouse to understand how the other's relationship needs are met. Additionally, each spouse maintain awareness of their conflict style and be able to resolve conflict without regularly forfeiting his or her goals and desires (Tallman & Hsiao, 2004). Furthermore, Bradford, Feeney, and Campbell (2002) emphasize self-disclosure, which involves the verbal communication of personal information to others and note it as the core of interpersonal communication important to relationship outcomes. Self-disclosure can also be

used by couples to develop intimacy, reduce emotional distance, and promote marital satisfaction; however, members of different cultures differ in patterns of self-disclosure (Bradford et al., 2002). Since members of collective cultures are socialized to be more restrained or reserved self-disclosure may be less important to them, and more difficult for them to engage in.

Conflict Style and Marital Satisfaction in African Americans

Holt and DeVore (2005) state that African Americans are individualistic in conflict style. Holt and DeVore (2005) further state that due to the fear of being negatively stereotyped, African Americans are not comfortable using conflict styles, such as forcing/competing. In fact, African American males were found to use less forcing and problem-solving conflict strategies than European American males. Ting-Toomey et al., (2000) report that African Americans tend to prefer emotionally expressive modes of conflict management while European Americans tend to engage in emotionally-restrained, factual conflict discussions. They believe this is due to the importance of oral artistry of traditional African practices and the ethnic socialization experiences of African Americans in the larger United States society (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000).

Economic circumstances such as family income and community-level poverty may have an effect on overall marital satisfaction, and the likelihood to consider divorce. Living as a minority where remnants of oppression still exist, not only can affect one's marriage, but also its overall satisfaction (Bryant et al., 2008). Data collected by Bryant et al. (2008) indicate that higher levels of community poverty are associated with lower levels of marital happiness. Additional studies on African Americans have also found a positive association between income and marital satisfaction. Recent studies have shown that those facing stressful events and financial strain have been found to exhibit greater observed levels of negativity and criticism

(Williamson, Karney, & Bradbury, 2013). Studies have also demonstrated that the unique stressors faced by lower-income couples limit their capacity to communicate effectively, which adversely affects marital quality (Jackson, Krull, Bradbury & Karney, 2017). Trail, Goff, Bradbury, and Karney (2011) state that couples who face racial discrimination tend to exhibit more verbal aggression, and individuals who live in low-income neighborhoods have a tendency to display less warmth to their partners. Higher warmth and lower hostility between spouses were factors shown to be associated with higher marital quality in African Americans (Bryan et al., 2008; Cutrona et al., 2003).

Conflict Style and Marital Satisfaction in African-Caribbeans

African Caribbeans tend to have a collectivist orientation (Lacey et al., 2017). For this reason, African Caribbeans may have similar conflict management styles to those from other collectivistic cultures. Holt and Devore (2005) report that People from individualistic cultures prefer to use direct, assertive methods like problem-solving (collaborating), compromising and forcing when resolving conflict compared to those from collectivistic cultures (Hold & Devore, 2005). In collective cultures, individuals prefer to use styles which are higher in relationship preservation such as smoothing (accommodating) and compromising conflict styles, and sometimes withdrawing in an effort to save face.

In the Caribbean, the institution of marriage is defined as a fully legal and indissoluble union in which the couple lives under the same roof faithfully, occupy separate spheres, and exercise distinct roles (Altink, 2004). Marriages tend to follow a patriarchal pattern where husbands are the head of the household, and wives are expected to be submissive to their husbands (Roopnarine, 2013). Recently, accomplishments in higher education and careers have given women more authority in the home (Lincoln, Taylor & Jackson, 2010). Bryant et al.

(2008) report that African Caribbeans are relatively happy within their marriages. In general, marriage is often taken seriously, resulting in lower rates of divorce. Furthermore, the few other available studies on African Caribbeans have indicated that marriage rates within this group have been consistently low over the past few decades, and visiting and common-law unions have remained persistent (Lincoln et al., 2010).

Summary

Over the past two decades, migration from the Caribbean has contributed to the changing face of Blacks (African descent groups) in America, where it has been reported that 1.5 million of the 36 million Americans counted as Black in the 2000 U.S. Census self-identified as Caribbean immigrants. The increased interaction with people from different countries has resulted in an overall increase in intercultural marriages. Skowronski et al. (2014) report that intercultural marriages have a higher risk of stressful obstacles, lower rates of marital satisfaction, and higher overall divorce rates than mono-cultural couples.

Holt and DeVore (2005) put forth that African Americans are individualistic in conflict style. Since they tend to have a collectivistic cultural orientation, it is assumed that they may react similarly to conflict as those from other collectivistic cultures. According to Lulofs and Cahn (2000) culture is a group-level construct that embodies a distinctive system of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, rituals, symbols, and meanings shared by many in a community. Furthermore, it has the power to reinforce ideas and beliefs about human functioning, educational achievement, motivation, and development (Goodard et al., 2014). Both African Americans and African Caribbeans share certain cultural elements such as a strong belief system, and collective social orientation. African Caribbeans differ from African Americans in terms of language, diet, customs, beliefs, and migration history (Elam et al., 2001). However, these

individuals, share a common history of enslavement where most were brought to the Americas as slaves between the 17th and 19th centuries. As slaves, they were not allowed to marry, and families were often brutally torn apart. The lasting effects of those experiences are evident in today's society and have been translated into the expression of high divorce, low marriage rates, and unwed childbearing (Elan et al., 2001). Nevertheless, Black individuals still desire marriage since it represents status and social prestige (Lincoln et al., 2008). African Americans and African Caribbeans have relatively happy marriages (Bryant et al., 2008). Surprisingly, this was the only study that focused on levels of marital satisfaction in these two cultural groups. Most marital satisfaction studies have been conducted on non-Black groups, resulting in an incomplete picture of overall marriage and marital satisfaction (Bryant et al., 2008; Lincoln & Chae, 2010).

Furthermore, no study to date has specifically examined conflict style, culture, and marital satisfaction in these two groups; thus, a gap exists, and it is necessary for these to be examined. Ultimately, this research will provide a step toward understanding cross-cultural marital satisfaction between these two cultural groups. This contribution to research also aims to explore the effect of culture and may help to identify interventions and strategies that can be used to increase marital satisfaction between African Americans and African Caribbeans.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The review of the literature demonstrates the need for additional research on these two cultural groups. Very little research exists on marital satisfaction in African Caribbean marriages. It was necessary to gain an understanding of how these individuals function in marriages since they are increasingly becoming more integrated into American society. The purpose of this study was to investigate and examine how cultural factors and conflict styles (competing, accommodating, collaborating, avoiding, comprising) might affect marital satisfaction with and between African Caribbean individuals and African Americans living in the United States, and to identify similarities and differences within these two groups. This section presents details on the design, research questions, hypotheses, participants and settings, and instrumentation.

Design

A quantitative research study collects numerical data that must be analyzed to help draw conclusions from the study. The goal of data analysis is to reveal the underlying patterns, trends, and relationships of a study's contextual situation. Three major pedagogical goals are: (a) determining what questions to ask during all phases of data analysis, (b) recognizing how to judge the relevance of potential questions, and (c) deciding how to understand the deep-level relationships within the data (Albers, 2017). I conducted a quantitative study to examine how conflict style and culture might affect marital satisfaction with and between African Caribbean individuals and African Americans.

Research Questions

The researcher assumed that differences in culture will influence the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction. The researcher also assumed that African Americans will have an individualist cultural orientation, and African Caribbean individuals will have more collectivist tendencies. As a result, the variables were examined to assess the accuracy of these assumptions. The research questions and hypotheses were as follows:

RQ1: Will cultural differences between spouses influence the relationship between conflict styles and marital satisfaction?

RQ2: Will there be any observable differences in conflict styles between African American, African Caribbean, and culturally mixed couples?

RQ3: Will rates of spousal conflict differ between African American, culturally mixed, and African Caribbean couples?

Hypotheses

H1: Cultural differences within the marriage will moderate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction.

H2: African Americans would use more assertive conflict styles, and African Caribbeans would use more cooperative conflict styles.

H3: Given the differences in culture and relationship expectations, African Caribbean couples will have lower rates of conflict.

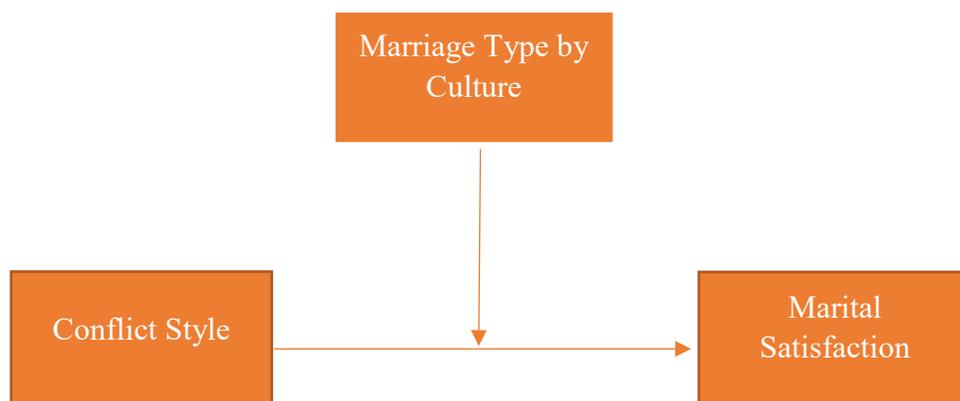


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Participants and Setting

Participants

The study was comprised of 65 Black married adults, 21 years and above. Twenty-seven (41.5%) participants reported being African American married to another African American, 14 (21.5%) participants reported being in a mixed marriage, and 24 (36.9%) participants reported being African Caribbean married to another African Caribbean individual. Thirty-seven participants identified as African Caribbean and twenty-eight identified as African American. Participants were obtained using snowball sampling methods. The researcher identified key participants to complete the questionnaire, then asked those participants to locate appropriate individuals who would be interested in completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire had an average completion time of 13 minutes. The survey was developed and administered through Survey Monkey, which uses a secure server to distribute surveys and protect participant data. The data was downloaded and imported from Survey Monkey into SPSS for analysis.

Table 1

Conflict Style and Marital Satisfaction
Participant Demographics

	N	Percent
Length of Marriage	65	100
0 - 5 years	20	30.8
6 - 10 years	9	13.8
11- 15 years	12	18.5
16 - 20 years	15	23.1
20+ years	9	13.8
Culture	65	100
African Caribbean	37	56.9
African American	28	43.1
Were you born in the United States?	39	100
Yes	6	15.4
No	33	84.6
Length of time in the United States	34	100
0 - 5 years	3	8.8
6 - 10 years	0	0
11- 15 years	1	2.9
16 - 20 years	6	17.6
20+ years	24	70.6
Gender	65	100
Male	21	32.3
Female	44	67.7
Age	65	100
21 to 29	1	1.5
30 to 39	13	20.0
40 to 49	41	63.1
50 to 59	6	9.2
60 or older	4	6.2

Table 1 *continued*

	N	Percent
Highest level of education completed	65	100
Graduated from high school	5	7.7
Some college	10	15.4
Graduated from college	21	32.3
Some graduate school	4	6.2
Completed graduate school	25	38.5
Employment Status	65	100
Employed	59	90.8
Unemployed	6	9.2
Annual Income	63	100
Under \$15,000	1	1.6
Between \$15,000 and \$29,999	4	6.3
Between \$30,000 and \$49,999	9	14.3
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	16	25.4
Between \$75,000 and \$99,000	13	20.6
Between \$100,000 and \$150,000	14	22.2
Over \$150,000	6	9.5
Religious Attendance	65	100
Always	18	27.7
Usually	20	30.8
Sometimes	13	20.0
Rarely	11	16.9
Never	3	4.6

Table 1 *continued*

	N	Percent
Marriage Type	65	100
African American with African American Mixed Marriage Couple	27	41.5
African Caribbean with African Caribbean	14	21.5
	24	36.9
Valid N (listwise)	30	100

Instrumentation

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI-II)

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI-II) is a 28 item measure of interpersonal conflict. The instrument was originally developed by Rahim (1983) in an effort to examine conflict resolution strategies in the workplace. It was later found to be an effective measure to evaluate conflict in spousal relationships (Kulik et al., 2016). The ROCI-II measures five conflict styles: integrating (e.g., *I try to discuss the issue with my spouse in order to find an idea that will be acceptable to both of us*); avoiding (e.g., *I try to avoid confrontations with my spouse, and keep my problems to myself*); accommodating (e.g., *I usually accept my spouse's suggestions*); dominating (e.g., *Sometimes I try to use force to win my spouse over in a situation of conflict*); and compromising (e.g., *I usually try to find an alternative way to break the impasse*). Responses are based on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*to a very great extent*). A higher score indicates a participant's likelihood to adopt the conflict resolution strategy reflected in the statement (Kulik et al., 2016).

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS)

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) is a well-established measurement of marital satisfaction and has been found to be valid in discriminating between distressed and non-distressed couples (Schumm, Scanlon, Crow, Green & Buckler, 1983). It has previously been validated for studies involving non-Western samples. The scale contains 3 questions: “*How satisfied are you with your marriage?*”; “*How satisfied are you with your wife/husband as a spouse?*”; “*How satisfied are you with your relationship with your wife/husband?*” Participants answer these questions on a 7-point scale, which ranges from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 7 (*very satisfied*). A higher number will indicate higher marital satisfaction.

Individualism-Collectivism Interpersonal Assessment Inventory (ICIAI)

The Individualism-Collectivism Interpersonal Assessment Inventory (ICIAI) is a questionnaire that consists of two 19-item scales that examine an individual’s values and behaviors when interacting with people in four different types of relationships: family, close friends, colleagues, and strangers (Matsumoto, Weissman, Preston, Brown & Kupperbusch, 1997). Part one considers how much the respondent values certain behaviors (e.g., *share credit for their accomplishments, be loyal to them*), and part two considers how often the respondent actually engages in the described behaviors when interacting with members from the four target groups. In part one, values are rated on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*not at all important*) to 6 (*very important*), and in part two, behaviors are rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*all the time*). This study will use an abbreviated version of this assessment and will focus only on a participant’s values when interacting with family and colleagues. Higher scores on the ICIAI indicate a greater sense of collectivism, while lower scores indicate a greater sense of individualism.

Procedures

Participants were recruited through convenience/snowball sampling procedures, then were instructed to complete an online survey. The online survey was developed through SurveyMonkey.com, which required payment for services due to the length of the survey. Survey Monkey also provided a shareable link to include in the recruitment flyer (Appendix G) that was posted on my personal Facebook page in order to recruit additional qualified participants. In the beginning, participants were required to give consent in order to participate in the study. The survey was approximately 13 minutes in length. The instruments used in the survey were a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C), the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI-II), the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), and the Individualism-Collectivism Interpersonal Assessment Inventory (ICIAI). Questions from the three instruments were entered into the survey following the demographic questions. The survey was comprised of fourteen demographic questions followed by twenty-eight items from ROCI-II, three items from KMSS, and nineteen items from ICIAI. The survey was anonymous, with no identifying information. The optimal sample size population for this study was a minimum of 40 participants, with a maximum of 180 participants. Responses to the survey were accessed through SurveyMonkey.com. Data were downloaded to SPSS 25.0 data analysis software for further evaluation.

Data Analysis

This section will provide information pertaining to the methodology used in the data analysis process for this study. Included are aspects pertaining to the variables within the study related to the research questions and hypotheses presented for exploration of this research. The initial analysis of data, such as demographic questionnaire responses and instrument questions,

was done through Survey Monkey. The data was downloaded from Survey Monkey into an Excel file, then was transferred into an SPSS file for further evaluation and analysis.

Variables

This study examined one dependent variable (marital satisfaction) and independent variables (conflict style and culture), which further produced an additional seven independent variables.

Dependent variable. Marital satisfaction was the dependent variable for this study. Three unique questions from the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale were used to determine each participant's overall marital satisfaction. These questions were: "*How satisfied are you with your marriage?*"; "*How satisfied are you with your wife/husband as a spouse?*"; "*How satisfied are you with your relationship with your wife/husband?*" Participants answered these questions on a 7-point scale, which ranged from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 7 (*very satisfied*). Reliability proved strong evidence by a Cronbach's Alpha of .964 and Split half reliability of .889.

Independent variables. The independent variables for this study included: cultural orientation (individualism, collectivism), type of marriage, and conflict style (collaborating, accommodating, competing, avoiding, and compromising). Nineteen questions were initially used to assess each participant's cultural orientation. These questions examined the participant's values when interacting with family and colleagues (e.g., *share credit for their accomplishments, be loyal to them*). Values were rated on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*not at all important*) to 6 (*very important*). The number representing their responses was summed by this researcher. Reliability proved strong evidence by a Cronbach's Alpha of .929 and Split half reliability of .887.

Twenty-eight questions were used to measure the five conflict styles: integrating (e.g., *I try to discuss the issue with my spouse in order to find an idea that will be acceptable to both of us*); avoiding (e.g., *I try to avoid confrontations with my spouse, and keep my problems to myself*); accommodating (e.g., *I usually accept my spouse's suggestions*); dominating (e.g., *Sometimes I try to use force to win my spouse over in a situation of conflict*); and compromising (e.g., *I usually try to find an alternative way to break the impasse*). Responses were based on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*to a very great extent*). A higher score indicated a participant's likelihood to adopt the conflict resolution strategy reflected in the statement (Kulik et al., 2016). The Conflict Style variables boasted respectable reliability coefficients with .787 for Cronbach's Alpha and .800 for split half. Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the first research question and hypothesis. An independent samples t-test investigated the second research question, and a one-way ANOVA was used to examine the third research question and associated hypothesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate and examine the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction between African Caribbean, African American, and culturally mixed couples living in the United States and identify similarities and differences. Cultural differences were investigated to determine if they play a role in both conflict resolution and marital satisfaction in these groups. A survey that utilized questions from ROCI-II, KMSS, and the ICIAI was administered to participants. Provided responses were used to evaluate the research questions and hypotheses for this study. Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the first research question and hypothesis. A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the second research question and hypothesis, and an independent samples t-test analyzed the third research question and associated hypotheses. This chapter presents the findings for each research question and hypothesis and will discuss the results, descriptive statistics, and hypotheses of the study.

Research Questions

Research Question One

The first research question sought to determine if cultural differences between spouses will influence the relationship between conflict styles and marital satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis was used to answer this question. Hayes's (2017) Process macro, model one, was used to assess the degree to which cultural differences between spouses moderate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction. Prior to regression analysis, a Pearson r correlation was computed to examine the relationship between conflict styles and marital satisfaction. The results showed that a significant relationship existed between the

collaborating style and marital satisfaction ($r = .391, N = 65, p = .001$), and the accommodating style and marital satisfaction ($r = .314, N = 65, p = .011$). Moderation analyses were conducted on each of the five conflict styles for $N = 65$ participants who were classified as either African American or African Caribbean. The association between the collaborating conflict style and type of marriage yielded ($R^2 = .162, F(3, 61) = 3.924, p = .013$). The overall model was significant; however, the interaction term was not significant ($p = .671$), which indicated that the relationship between the collaborating style and marital satisfaction was not moderated by the type of marriage the couple was involved in. Similarly, the relationship between the accommodating conflict style and type of marriage was examined ($R^2 = .127, F(3, 61) = 2.960, p = .039$). The overall model showed significance; however, the interaction term was also not significant ($p = .234$), indicating no evidence of moderation. The competing ($R^2 = .049, F(3, 61) = 2.960, p = .376$), avoiding ($R^2 = .057, F(3, 61) = 1.234, p = .305$), and compromising ($R^2 = .073, F(3, 61) = 1.599, p = .199$) styles yielded no significance, hence hypothesis one was not supported.

Table 2

Bivariate Correlation

		Collaborating Style	Accommodating Style	Competing Style	Avoiding Style	Compromising Style	Marital Satisfaction
Marital	Pearson	.391*	.314*	-.172	-.169	.176	1
Satisfaction	Correlation						
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.001	.011	.171	.179	.161	
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65

Table 3

Process Analysis Results for Moderation Model

<i>Source</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Collaborating Style: $R = .402$, $R^2 = .162$, $MSE = 13.631$, $F(3, 61) = 3.924$, $p = .013$						
constant	16.5312	.4665	35.4350	.0000	15.5984	17.4641
ROCI_IIC	2.1153	.6690	3.1621	.0024	.7776	3.4530
RelType	-.4324	.6074	-.7119	.4792	-1.6470	.7821
Collab*RelType	-.4068	.9538	-.4265	.6712	-2.3142	1.5005
Accommodating Style: $R = .357$, $R^2 = .127$, $MSE = 14.195$, $F(3, 61) = 2.960$, $p = .039$						
constant	16.6711	.4749	35.1021	.0000	15.7214	17.6208
ROCI_IIA	2.0308	.7814	2.5991	.0117	.4684	3.5932
RelType	-.3832	.6225	-.6155	.5405	-1.6279	.8615
Accom*RelType	1.1493	.9557	1.2025	.2338	-.7618	3.0603
Competing Style: $R = .222$, $R^2 = .049$, $MSE = 15.461$, $F(3, 61) = 1.052$, $p = .376$						
constant	16.5552	.4897	33.8085	.0000	15.5760	17.5344
ROCI_IIC	-.6804	.6588	-1.0328	.3058	-1.9977	.6369
RelType	-.7050	.6389	-1.1035	.2742	-1.9824	.5725
Comp*RelType	.3118	.9753	.3197	.7503	-1.6384	2.2621
Avoiding Style: $R = .239$, $R^2 = .057$, $MSE = 15.331$, $F(3, 61) = 1.234$, $p = .305$						
constant	16.5554	.4863	34.0420	.0000	15.5829	17.5278
ROCI_IIA	-.8885	.5864	-1.5151	.1349	-2.0611	.2842
RelType	-.8231	.6355	-1.2953	.2001	-2.0938	.4476
Avoid*RelType	-.4079	.7509	-.5432	.5890	-1.9094	1.0936
Compromising Style: $R = .270$, $R^2 = .073$, $MSE = 15.076$, $F(3, 61) = 1.599$, $p = .199$						
constant	16.5427	.4821	34.3140	.0000	15.5787	17.5067
ROCI_IIC	.6628	.7171	.9243	.3590	-.7711	2.0966
RelType	-.6592	.6285	-1.0489	.2984	-1.9161	.5976
Compr*RelType	-1.2772	1.0536	-1.2123	.2301	-3.3840	.8295

Research Question Two

The second research question sought to investigate whether there will be any observable differences in conflict styles between African Americans and African Caribbean individuals? Specifically, the hypothesis sought to determine whether African American participants would use more assertive conflict styles than African Caribbeans and if African Caribbeans would use more cooperative conflict styles. To answer the question, the second hypothesis was examined

by conducting an independent samples t-test analysis. No statistically significant differences in mean scores were detected. These findings suggested that there are no differences in conflict styles used by African Americans and African Caribbean individuals.

Table 4

Group Statistics

Do you consider yourself to be African Caribbean?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Collaborating Style	African Caribbean	37	4.0573	.72198	.11869
	African American	28	4.1371	.68194	.12887
Accommodating Style	African Caribbean	37	3.4458	.56147	.09231
	African American	28	3.5961	.69497	.13134
Competing Style	African Caribbean	37	2.8757	.74140	.12188
	African American	28	2.8643	.94446	.17849
Avoiding Style	African Caribbean	37	3.0627	.78316	.12875
	African American	28	2.9636	.98254	.18568
Compromising Style	African Caribbean	37	3.7568	.66271	.10895
	African American	28	3.9018	.78274	.14792

Table 5

Independent Samples Test Results

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	Sig. (2- tailed)	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Collaborating Style	Equal variances assumed	.002	.963	.653	.17661	-.43274	.27313
	Equal variances not assumed			.650	.17520	-.43028	.27067
Accommodating Style	Equal variances assumed	3.252	.076	.339	.15585	-.46175	.16114
	Equal variances not assumed			.354	.16053	-.47259	.17198
Competing Style	Equal variances assumed	3.354	.072	.957	.20903	-.40632	.42910
	Equal variances not assumed			.958	.21613	-.42274	.44552
Avoiding Style	Equal variances assumed	1.453	.233	.652	.21897	-.33845	.53671
	Equal variances not assumed			.663	.22595	-.35461	.55287
Compromising Style	Equal variances assumed	1.103	.298	.422	.17950	-.50373	.21367
	Equal variances not assumed			.433	.18372	-.51358	.22352

Research Question Three

This research question sought to investigate whether rates of spousal conflict differ between African-American couples, African-Caribbean couples, and culturally mixed couples? To answer this question, the third hypothesis was tested using a one-way ANOVA to determine

if rates of conflict will be lower among African Caribbean couples. There was not a significant difference in rates of conflict for these groups ($F(2, 62) = .053, p = 0.948$). The mean scores for African American couples were ($M = 4.52, SD = 1.553, N = 27$) and the mean scores for African Caribbean couples were ($M = 4.46, SD = 1.503, N = 24$). The scores for those individuals who are in a mixed marriage were ($M = 4.36, SD = 1.393, N = 14$). These results suggested that there are no major differences in rates of conflict between African American couples, African Caribbean couples, and mixed couples.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations and Frequencies

How often do you experience conflict with your spouse?

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
African American Couples	27	4.52	1.553	.299	3.90	5.13	1	6
Culturally Mixed Couples	14	4.36	1.393	.372	3.55	5.16	2	6
African Caribbean Couples	24	4.46	1.503	.307	3.82	5.09	1	6
Total	65	4.46	1.480	.184	4.09	4.83	1	6

Table 7

ANOVA Results

How often do you experience conflict with your spouse?

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.240	2	.120	.053	.948
Within Groups	139.913	62	2.257		
Total	140.154	64			

Hypotheses

H1: Cultural differences within the marriage will moderate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction.

H2: African Americans would use more assertive conflict styles, and African Caribbeans would use more cooperative conflict styles.

H3: Given the differences in cultural and relationship expectations, African Caribbean couples will have lower rates of conflict.

Descriptive Statistics

The following section will provide an overview of the descriptive statistic findings from this study. Frequency tables and descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, and standard deviation will be discussed. Prior to data analysis, all answer choices were numerically coded.

Participants

The participants in this sample consisted of 65 married individuals aged 21 years and above. The sample was nonclinical, and participation was anonymous and voluntary. The sampling criteria were that all participants were African American or African Caribbean, and married to another African American or African Caribbean person. The majority of the participants, 41 (63.1%) were between 40 to 49 years of age. Of the total participants, 21 (32.3%) were males, and 44 (67.7%) were females. Educational attainment levels for all participants ranged from some high school to completed graduated school. Five participants (7.7%) graduated from high school, 10 (15.4%) completed some college, 20 (32.3%) graduated from college, 4 (6.2%) completed some graduate school, and 25 (38.5%) completed graduate school. Annual income for all participants ranged from under \$15,000 to over \$150,000. One participant reported an annual income of under \$15,000; 4 (6.3%) reported between \$15,000 and \$29,999; 9

(14.3%) reported between \$30,000 and \$49,999; 16 (25.4%) reported between \$50,000 and \$74,999; 13 (20.6%) reported between \$75,000 and \$99,999; 14 (22.2%) reported between \$100,000 and \$150,000; and 6 (9.5%) reported over \$150,000. There were 28 participants (43.1%) who identified as African American and 37 (56.9%) who identified as African Caribbean. Of the 37 participants who reported being African Caribbean, 3 were U.S. born, and 34 were born outside of the United States. Out of those 34 who reported being born outside of the United States, 30 (87.6%) have lived in the United States for over 16 years, while the other 4 (12.4 %) have lived in the United States for under 16 years. Twenty-seven (41.5%) participants reported being African American married to another African American, 14 (21.5%) participants reported being in a mixed marriage, and 24 (36.9%) participants reported being African Caribbean married to another African Caribbean individual.

Marital Satisfaction

The scores on the KMSS range from 3 to 21, where a higher score relates to higher satisfaction. This scale was recoded into a binary variable, where scores ranging from 14 -21 represent satisfaction, and scores 13 and below represent dissatisfaction. The study revealed that African Americans and African Caribbean individuals experienced relatively similar levels of marital satisfaction. An observed 21.4% of African Americans reported being unsatisfied in their marriages compared to 16.2% of African Caribbeans, $N=12$, and 78.6% of African American participants reported being satisfied in their marriages compared to 83.8% of African Caribbeans, $N = 53$. Overall, African Caribbean individuals showed slightly higher levels of marital satisfaction.

Results

This study focused on three research questions and three hypotheses. The following section will discuss the findings of each hypothesis. For each hypothesis, both descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to discuss the results. Tables will also be used to aid in the results section.

Table 8

Means, standard deviations and frequencies among variables of interest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
What is your gender?	65	1	2	1.68	.471
Do you consider yourself to be African Caribbean?	65	1	2	1.43	.499
How often do you experience conflict with your spouse?	65	1	6	4.46	1.480
Marital Satisfaction	65	.00	1.00	.81	.391
Collaborating Style	65	2.57	5.00	4.09	.700
Accommodating Style	65	2.30	5.00	3.51	.621
Competing Style	65	1.00	5.00	2.87	.827
Avoiding Style	65	1.00	5.00	3.02	.868
Compromising Style	65	2.25	5.00	3.81	.714
Type of Marriage	65	1.00	3.00	1.95	.891
Valid N (listwise)	65				

A bivariate correlation with the variables of interest describes the existence of any relationship between any two sets. A significant relationship between gender and the collaborating conflict style was present. An independent samples t-test revealed that the female participants used the collaborative conflict style more often than the male participants ($t(63) = -2.028, p = 0.47$). The mean scores for females were ($M = 4.2106, SD = .700, N = 44$) and males ($M = 3.8426, SD = .649, N = 21$). This study was based on the assumption that African

Americans have an individualist cultural orientation, and African Caribbean individuals have a collectivist orientation. The ICIAI was used to test this assumption, and no differences in individualism and collectivism between these groups were detected. Further analyses of cultural differences were instead conducted using the dichotomous variable, “Do you consider yourself to be African Caribbean?”

Table 9

Correlation between variables of interest

		How often do you experience conflict with your spouse?	Marital Satisfaction	Collaborating Style	Accommodating Style	Competing Style	Avoiding Style	Compromising Style
How often do you experience conflict with your spouse?	Pearson	1	.150	.104	-.063	-.221	-.094	.032
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.234	.408	.620	.077	.454	.800
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson	.150	1	.299*	.257*	-.094	-.142	.060
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.234		.015	.039	.456	.259	.633
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
Collaborating Style	Pearson	.104	.299*	1	.310*	-.316*	-.226	.621**
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.408	.015		.012	.010	.071	.000
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
Accommodating Style	Pearson	-.063	.257*	.310*	1	.111	.318**	.393**
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.620	.039	.012		.379	.010	.001
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
Competing Style	Pearson	-.221	-.094	-.316*	.111	1	.218	-.031
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.077	.456	.010	.379		.082	.807
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
Avoiding Style	Pearson	-.094	-.142	-.226	.318**	.218	1	.005
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.454	.259	.071	.010	.082		.966
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
Compromising Style	Pearson	.032	.060	.621**	.393**	-.031	.005	1
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.800	.633	.000	.001	.807	.966	
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65

Hypotheses

H1: Cultural differences within the marriage will moderate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction. No evidence of moderation was detected.

H2: African Americans would use more assertive conflict styles, and African Caribbeans would use more cooperative conflict styles. These findings suggested that there are no differences in conflict styles used by African Americans and African Caribbean individuals.

H3: Given the differences in cultural and relationship expectations, African Caribbean couples will have lower rates of conflict. These results suggested that there is no difference in rates of conflict between African American couples, African Caribbean couples, and mixed couples.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether cultural differences within the marriage moderate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction among African Americans and African Caribbean individuals living in the United States. Additionally, this study aimed to identify any similarities and differences within and between these two groups regarding conflict styles and marital satisfaction. This study utilized a sample obtained through social media recruiting to examine variables including cultural orientation, marital satisfaction, and conflict styles. These two groups have been historically underrepresented in literature. Few studies have been conducted on marital satisfaction within these groups, and also how these individuals handle conflict in general.

Discussion

Findings for the first research question and hypothesis indicated that cultural differences between spouses did not moderate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction. In this study, there were no observable differences in conflict styles within the three groups and there was no significant difference in rates of conflict within the groups. Overall, these results suggested that there are more similarities between African Americans and African Caribbean individuals than there are differences.

Culture and Marital Satisfaction

The findings of this study indicated that a significant relationship did not exist between culture and marital satisfaction. These findings are inconsistent with past research (Triandis, 1995). Previous research suggested that African Caribbean individuals tend to have a collectivist cultural orientation (Lacey et al., 2017), and African Americans are individualistic in handling

conflict (Holt & DeVore, 2005). Furthermore, cross-cultural literature using the Individualism-Collectivism framework has indicated that cultural differences exist in the dynamics of paths of development of mating relationships (Triandis, 1995). When compared to those from individualist cultures, those from collectivist cultures have more frequent interactions with their families and neighbors (Wendorf, Lucas, Imamoğlu, Weisfeld, & Weisfeld, 2011). Further, those from collectivist cultures who are married often live close to the in-laws or extended families in order to benefit from their material and psychological support. This collectivist trait has historically been observed in Black Caribbean families, where 30% to 50% are classified as matrifocal (Massiah, 1982). Within this family structure, the women usually rely on the help of other family members, typically their siblings or mothers, to assist in caring for the family (Massiah, 1982). Evidence has repeatedly supported the fact that African Caribbeans have a collectivist cultural orientation (Lacey et al., 2017) whereas, research on the cultural orientation of African Americans has not been easily identifiable in research. However, Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, and Weisz (2000) suggested that people in the United States in general, desire relatedness, individuation, separation, and exploration of the environment. Since this study did not detect any significant differences in culture between African Caribbeans and African Americans, it can be assumed that African Americans also are collectivist in cultural orientation.

Conflict Style and Marital Satisfaction

The findings of this study indicated that African Americans and African Caribbean individuals use similar strategies when resolving spousal conflict. The study did find that the collaborating and the accommodating styles of handling conflict were positively associated with marital satisfaction. These findings share some consistency with previous research by Greeff and De Bruyne (2000), who found that the collaborating style yielded the highest level of marital

satisfaction for both males and females, and Hania and Amjad (2016) who concluded that the accommodating style was positively associated with marital satisfaction. As noted, I expected African Americans to be more individualistic, and African Caribbean individuals to be more collectivistic on the whole. Cultural differences in handling conflict have been emphasized in previous work. For instance, Rothbaum et al. (2000) reported that in the United States can be characterized by a conflict between both the desire for relatedness and the desire for individuation, separation, and exploration of the environment, including new relationships. The researchers also believed that romantic concerns may be more emphasized in individualistic cultures and more likely to be diluted by other concerns such as assurance, loyalty, and commitment that are present in collectivistic cultures. In essence, when focus is placed on satisfying one's own desires and needs rather than those of other members of the family, individuals may require more in terms of passion and romance in order to be satisfied in their marriages. Wendorf et al. (2011) believe these expectations may increase the potential for conflict. In collectivist cultures, where the expectations may be lower for refueling passion and emotional intimacy, it may be easier to satisfy each other's expectations and feel content with one's marital relationship (Iwao, 1993).

Gender and Marital Satisfaction

The findings of this marital satisfaction study indicated that gender was not a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for males. As noted, research shows that men have benefitted more from marriage than women. Specifically, Dupre and Meadows (2007) reported that fathers who married the mothers of their children in the year following the birth were healthier than their single counterparts. Additionally, previous research has demonstrated that men derive more health benefits than women from being married and also benefit more than women from

marriage (Bernard, 1972). This may be due to the fact that women have been disproportionately responsible for household tasks and childcare. As a result, husbands lead healthier lives and experience greater satisfaction in their marriages. In addition to having primary childcare responsibility, wives generally bear the responsibility of emotionally supporting their husbands and managing the relationship's emotional climate (Jackson, Miller, Oka & Henry, 2014). In general, wives have a greater awareness of the emotional climate of the relationship and are more likely to monitor the emotional quality of the relationship (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). As a result, this imbalance in emotion work has been found to be associated with lower marital satisfaction in women (Croyle & Waltz, 2002). I expected to observe a similar effect in this sample; however, no significant difference was detected. The study did conclude that a significant relationship between gender and the collaborating conflict style was present. The female participants were shown to use the collaborative conflict style more often than the male participants.

Education

This study, similar to another conducted by Creighton-Zollar and Williams (1992), found no association between education and marital satisfaction in Blacks. Research has shown that wives who had more education than their husbands had a greater likelihood of having a marriage that ended in divorce (Dillaway & Broman, 2001). This may be due to the fact that as women become more educated, they are exposed to more options in their lives and gain power in the relationship (Heaton, 2002). I expected an association between education and marital satisfaction however, a significant relationship was not detected.

Religion

It was interesting to find that a significant relationship did not exist between religion and marital satisfaction for either African American or African Caribbean participants. Previous studies have found there to be a significant relationship between religion and marital satisfaction (Chaney et al., 2016). Historically, religious institutions have played a central role in marriage and families, and in Black marriages are especially important. Marks et al. (2008) discussed that religion can even be viewed as a survival system in the daily lives of African Americans, and further report that it has been instrumental in unifying Black married couples who regularly attend church together. Mullins (2016) found that couples who regularly attend church together tend to remain together over time. Furthermore, studies have found that in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups, African Americans are among the most likely to belong to a religious group (Pew Research Center, 2009). Since religion has played such a significant role in the lives of both African Caribbean individuals and African Americans, a lack of significance with the religious attendance variable in this study is concerning.

Implications

The present study was an initial exploration of conflict style and marital satisfaction in African Caribbean and African American couples. The study provided an opportunity for members of the severely underrepresented African Caribbean community to document their levels of marital satisfaction, and styles of conflicts used to resolve spousal conflict. The current study also provided an opportunity to take a closer look at their levels of marital satisfaction and conflict resolution styles.

Since this study found that both the collaborating and accommodating styles are positively associated with marital satisfaction, it may be necessary for clinicians to assess for conflict styles within each couple, and determine the styles that would be more beneficial to the

couple. Gottman (1999) indicates that while no conflict resolution style is superior to the other, spouses in some cases use mismatched conflict styles. In fact, roughly one-third of couples had a mismatch between themselves and their partner's conflict style (Busby & Holman, 2009). For example, if one spouse uses the avoiding style, while the other prefers to use the competing style, distress in the relationship will likely occur, which ultimately results in decreased marital satisfaction. This study should prompt clinicians working with couples to determine if a mismatch is present and to guide the couples into choosing compatible strategies that would adequately resolve their conflict. Additionally, in order for clinicians to effectively treat couples from different cultural backgrounds, it is important for them to have an in-depth understanding of couples' relationships within their cultural contexts. It is also necessary for clinicians to continue to learn about the relationship processes of couples in various countries in order to avoid limiting treatment progress (Quek & Fitzpatrick, 2013).

Limitations

One of the major limitations of this study is the convenience/snowball selection method of recruiting participants. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling procedure used to identify cases in a specific network (Neuman, 2003). This method was the least expensive and most favorable option. Participants from the researcher's Facebook page who fit the eligibility criteria for the study were identified, and then shared the recruitment flyer with them asking to share the survey link with others who met the criteria. The target sample size for this study was 180 individuals however, only 65 individuals completed the survey through Survey Monkey. From a statistical standpoint, the sample size can be identified as a limitation of this study. Smaller sample sizes hinder generalizability to the larger population. For instance, the majority (39.1%) of participants reported having completed graduate school, which is not a representative

characteristic of the larger population of either African Americans or African Caribbean individuals. According to the United States Census Bureau (2016), 87% of Blacks aged 25 and older had graduated high school or more, 52.9% had some college or more, 32.4% had an Associate's degree or more, 22.5% had a Bachelor's degree or more, and only 8.2% had an Advanced degree ("Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015," 2016). Also, 32.3% of participants reported income above \$100,000 annually, which is also not representative of the larger population on a whole. The United States Census Bureau (2018) reported that the median household income in 2016 for Blacks was \$40,340 and remained steady at a reported \$40,258 in 2017 ("Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017," 2018).

Due to the selection method used for this study, participants may have assumed that the researcher would have access to their personal responses, and be able to identify them based on those responses. It is possible that some participants may have misrepresented themselves through their self-reported responses. Additionally, the reporting of marital satisfaction may be biased since it is cross-sectional and based on self-report. According to Levenson, Carstensen and Gottman (1993) marital satisfaction is relative and not absolute. Individual perception of satisfaction and the level of satisfaction tend to vary based on feelings, circumstances, and situations. For example, those who reported being unsatisfied in their marriages at the time of participation quite possibly could retake the survey today, and be able to report higher levels of satisfaction. Another factor worth considering is those who are more satisfied with their marriages may have been more likely to be willing to participate in this study than those who were not satisfied. As a result, a quite skewed view of marriage was presented. This might have restricted the range of both the conflict styles, especially the use of those that are nonproductive, and marital satisfaction.

Due to a glitch in the survey design, some of the first survey respondents only responded to the questions in the ICIAI that addressed values pertaining to family members. As a result, valuable information on how these values could have been compared with how those participants' value colleagues was lost. In the end, the researcher made the determination that the dichotomous variable, "Do you consider yourself to be African Caribbean?" was sufficient to capture any cultural differences, and excluded the ICIAI from any further analyses.

One final limitation is the acculturation of African Caribbean participants. Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, and Szapocznik (2010) describe acculturation as a unidimensional process in which retention of the heritage culture and acquisition of the receiving culture are cast at opposing ends of a single continuum. This model suggests that as migrants acquire the values, practices, and beliefs of the host country, they are expected to discard those from their heritage culture. However, cultural psychologists have found that the adaptation of those beliefs, values, and practices is not synonymous with immigrants discarding their own cultural beliefs, values, and practices (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). Schwartz et al. (2010) also report that those who migrate at a younger age are more likely to adapt to the host country's cultural practices, values, and identifications than those who migrate when they are older. The majority of African Caribbean participants were aged 40 to 49 and reported living in the United States for over 20 years. Some of these individuals may be behaviorally acculturated. Some may even be classified as the 1.5 generation, which essentially is comprised of migrants who arrive in the host country as young children (Rumbaut and Portes, 2001). This generation tends to share more similarities with second-generation migrants, whereas, those who migrate as adolescents or as adults have more memories of their lives prior to migration.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study was able to highlight that individuals from these two cultures with ancestral origins in Africa have more similarities than differences. It would be beneficial for future research to survey African Caribbean individuals living in the Caribbean for a comparative look. The majority of participants (30.8%) in this study reported being married 0 to 5 years. Studies have shown that marital satisfaction starts high and declines as the marriage matures (Justin & Thomas, 2010). It is possible that these newlyweds are still experiencing those high levels of marital satisfaction. It is also possible that these couples could have adjusted to each other's conflict style during extensive courtships. It would be useful for future studies to include an assessment and examination of the length of courtship, frequency of premarital conflict, and their association with marital satisfaction between these groups.

In this study, conflict was assessed in terms of frequency, without respect to specific areas of disagreement. Moreover, findings suggested that women use the collaborating conflict style more often than men. Studies have shown that certain contexts and situations require more competitive gender role behavior if the context is perceived as more masculine in nature (Gayle, Preiss & Allen, 1998). It would be necessary for future studies to appraise spouses' conflict styles in specific areas such as childrearing, finances, and work/family strain that are important to marital functioning, in order to determine whether conflict styles would predict marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate and examine the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction between the African Caribbean, African American, and culturally mixed couples living in the United States. No previous study has compared these

cultural groups. This study utilized a Survey Monkey survey that was shared with participants who met the eligibility criteria for inclusion. The factors investigated included the influence of cultural differences and conflict styles on the marital satisfaction of these groups. Multiple regression analyses investigated the first research question's hypothesis that cultural differences will moderate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction. Findings indicated that a predictive relationship did not exist. An independent samples t-test investigated the second research question and hypothesis that African Americans would use more assertive conflict styles and African Caribbeans would use more cooperative conflict styles. Findings indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the conflict styles used by these two groups. A one-way ANOVA investigated the third research question and hypothesis that rates of conflict will be lower among African Caribbean couples. Findings indicated that rates of conflict did not differ significantly between African American couples, African Caribbean couples, or mixed couples. Overall, the results suggested that African Americans and African Caribbeans share more similarities than differences in relation to conflict styles and marital satisfaction. The intention of this investigation of these two cultures was to enhance awareness of the uniqueness of each group and possibly provide insight to service providers who can tailor their treatment services accordingly. Repeating this study with a more random sample may meet this goal. The findings of this study suggest that despite historical challenges, both African Americans and African Caribbeans exemplify resilience, evidenced by the high degree of satisfaction experienced in their marriages. Overall, this study provided an opportunity to explore conflict styles and the nature of marital satisfaction in these two cultural groups.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 5, 2019

Tiffanie James Parker

IRB Approval 3900.090519: Conflict Style and Marital Satisfaction in Black Intercultural Couples

Dear Tiffanie James Parker,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

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Appendix B: Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
9/5/2019 to 9/4/2020
Protocol # 3900.090519

CONSENT FORM

Conflict Style and Marital Satisfaction in Black Intercultural Couples

Tiffanie James Parker

Liberty University

Department of Community Care and Counseling

You are invited to be in a research study on conflict style and marital satisfaction in Black intercultural studies. I would like to find out if cultural differences will mediate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a married African American or African Caribbean person over 21 years of age, and you also are married to an African American or African Caribbean individual. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Tiffanie James Parker, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Community Care and Counseling at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to identify similarities and differences in African Caribbean and African American individuals with regard to conflict styles and marital satisfaction. The extent to which cultural differences mediate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction will be measured.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an anonymous online survey that asks about your demographic information, cultural orientation, conflict style and level of marital satisfaction. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study however, other researchers might benefit from the findings of this study as the data collected can be useful for studying the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction in African American and African Caribbean individuals. Furthermore, findings could provide insight to marriage and family counselors, as well as other mental health professionals into the similarities and differences between African American and African Caribbean individuals.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher and the researcher's faculty chair will have access to the records. Participant responses will be anonymous.

- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
9/5/2019 to 9/4/2020
Protocol # 3900.090519

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time, prior to submitting the survey, without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Tiffanie James Parker. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Tiffanie James Parker at tljames2@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Frederick Volk, at fvolk@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Yes, I agree to participate in the study, and I understand my participation is completely voluntary.

No, I do not want to participate in this study.

Appendix C: Demographic Questions

1. Are you married?

Yes

No

2. How long have you been married?

0 - 5 years

6 - 10 years

11 - 15 years

16 - 20 years

20+ years

3. Do you consider yourself to be African Caribbean? (of West Indian or Caribbean descent or have parents or grandparents that were born in the Caribbean)

Yes

No

4. Do you consider yourself to be African American?

Yes

No

5. I am:

African American with an African American spouse.

African American with an African Caribbean spouse.

African Caribbean with an African American spouse.

African Caribbean with an African Caribbean spouse.

6. For those with African Caribbean cultural backgrounds ONLY: Were you born in the United States?

Yes

No

7. If no, how long have you lived in the United States?

0 - 5 years

6 - 10 years

11 - 15 years

16 - 20 years

20+ years

8. What is your gender?

9. What is your age?

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 to 74

75 or older

10. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

11. Are you currently employed or self-employed?

Yes

No

12. Select your annual income.

Under \$15,000

Between \$15,000 and \$29,999

Between \$30,000 and \$49,999

Between \$50,000 and \$74,999

Between \$75,000 and \$99,999

Between \$100,000 and \$150,000

Over \$150,000

13. How often do you attend religious services?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

14. How often do you experience conflict with your spouse?

Every day

A few times a week

About once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Research Participants Needed

Conflict Style and Marital Satisfaction in Black Intercultural Couples

- ❖ Are you 21 years of age or older?
- ❖ Are you married to an African American or African Caribbean individual?
 - ❖ Do you identify as African American OR African Caribbean?

If you answered **YES** to these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a marital satisfaction research study.

THE PURPOSE of this marital satisfaction study is to determine if cultural differences mediate the relationship between conflict style and marital satisfaction, and to identify similarities and differences in African Caribbean and African American individuals. Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire in order to determine cultural orientation, conflict style and current level of marital satisfaction.

The link to the survey is www.surveymonkey.com/r/TZQHC2D. Please share the survey link with others you may know who fit the eligibility criteria.

Tiffanie James Parker, a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Tiffanie James Parker at (678) 571-XXXX or tljames2@liberty.edu for more information.