US/Caribbean Couples:

Perspectives from Caribbean Psychology and Mainstream Social Psychology[1]

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Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of research done in the Caribbean on interpersonal relationships, with specific emphasis on Jamaica. Comparisons between black Jamaicans, at home and abroad, and black and white Americans are made to demonstrate challenges for interpersonal relationships, and to suggest areas for further research. The roles of slavery and alterity are highlighted as significant factors in interpersonal relationships between blacks in Jamaica and white Americans, whereas the migrant experience of black Caribbeans in America may contribute to how they relate to white and black Americans. Social exchange theory is discussed as a framework for understanding relationships among blacks in Jamaica and relationships between Jamaicans and Americans. Drawing upon interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), we examine the concept of accommodation, particularly as influenced by individual differences in cultural values and address differences in cultural value-accommodation links as potential sources of conflict in US/Caribbean relationships. In addition, we consider possible interaction effects among socioeconomic status, race and nationality regarding relational dynamics among US/Caribbean couples. Finally, we conclude with an examination of one large-scale, quantitative study regarding black African, black American, and black Caribbean individuals' attitudes toward, and relationships with, blacks from nations other than their own (Jackson & Cothran, 2003) that is especially relevant to the issue of relationships between black American and black Caribbean persons.

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A disproportionately high percentage of relationship studies have focused on the experiences of couples in which both partners are from the United States (Goodwin, 1999) and are of European descent (Gaines, 1997). Persons from developing countries, such as those comprising the Caribbean, have been grossly underrepresented in the field of personal relationships. In this chapter, we first give an overview of some of the research related to interpersonal relationships that has been conducted in the Caribbean, especially in Jamaica. Despite the possibility of pancultural similarities in personal relationship processes, a cross-cultural perspective is important to show differences as well as similarities between Americans and persons of various ethnicities and races from the Caribbean. We also apply social exchange theory to the study of Caribbean relationships in particular, as this theory provides a useful framework for understanding both Black Americans and Caribbeans in relation to European descendants in the US. Finally, areas for future research are suggested.

The second part of the chapter focuses on research on accommodation in relationships with a Jamaican population. We shall draw largely upon interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), a social-psychological theory that has been tested widely in research on personal relationships. Using the impact of cultural values on accommodation (Gaines, Ramkissoon & Matthies, 2003; Gaines et al., in press) as a point of departure, we shall consider the extent to which American-Caribbean relationships might represent interpersonal challenges for the partners involved.

In the final part of the chapter, we consider the results of an initial study (Jackson & Cothran, 2003) regarding the overall quality of relationships between black American and black Caribbean persons. Examining the results of this study we conclude by critiquing

shortcomings of this fledgling line of research on US/Caribbean relationships.

Interpersonal Relationships in Caribbean Psychology

In the Caribbean, psychology itself is a burgeoning field, with the University of the West Indies (Mona Campus, Jamaica) first offering a Bachelors of Science in psychology in the 1990s. Fostered within a multidisciplinary department, the original focus in psychology was more sociological and social psychological. Interpersonal relationships among Black Jamaicans were investigated indirectly through studies on family and gender, fatherhood and masculinity, and the influence of historical events like slavery and colonialism on how people related to each other. More reference was made to conjugal or other union types, mating patterns or habits, visiting relationships, co-habitation, concubinage, parenting, and gender/sex roles, than to psychological issues and concepts. Sociological and economic factors such as race, ethnicity, skin color, and unemployment were emphasized.

Of particular note is the virtual absence of large scale research on personal relationships that is directly psychological in approach, involving either Caribbean people only (for an exception, see Gaines, Ramkissoon and Matthies, 2003), or comparisons between them and other demographic groups. In order to extend the study of interpersonal relationships to the Caribbean, it will be necessary to apply theoretical models developed abroad to an analysis of the region's specific cultural, social, demographic, historical and psychological dimensions.

The Caribbean has to be viewed as a racially and ethnically heterogeneous place, populated mostly by descendants of Africans, Europeans, Chinese, East Indians and Syrians. Some islands are more demographically unique than others, such as Trinidad where the population is almost 50% black and 50% East Indian. Each cultural group adheres, to some extent, to unique values and customs which influence the dynamics of interracial and inter-

ethnic relationships within the Caribbean. There are very few studies that investigate these dynamics. Because most of the islands are still heavily influenced by social stratification systems passed down from plantation society, racial and socioeconomic prejudice and discrimination continue to influence people's perceptions of interracial relationships and choice of partner.

The Caribbean is also very much a Diaspora, and consists of immigrants to many countries, including the United States. These migrant populations, although phenotypically similar to black Americans, sometimes maintain different value systems and customs which affect their attitudes towards interracial relationships (Waters, 2000). Given this diversity, US/Caribbean relationships are understandably complex. The current chapter focuses on black Jamaicans, at home and abroad, and their relationship with Americans.

Blacks in Jamaica and White Americans. Many black Jamaicans are still influenced by an 'inferiority complex' based on skin color, inherited from the plantation society (Fanon, 1967). The Eurocentric domination, enslavement and oppression of blacks by white planters created feelings of inferiority (Griffiths and Tiffin, 1995). Black identity (Alter) was only viewed in relation to white identity (Ego) and therefore blackness, by definition, was considered inferior by both blacks and whites. In Jamaica today, because the population is more than 90% black, gradations of hue rather than race are used to differentiate the population, and women who have a lighter shade of black are called 'browning.' Although socioeconomic class is very significant in Jamaican society, among blacks, many men and women consider lighter shades of skin more valuable and desirable.

Even the Caribbean gender socialization literature shows the ongoing importance of skin color (Leo-Rhynie, 1993). Jamaican children are brought up to believe that 'brown' and 'white' playmates are preferable to darker-skinned ones. Further, males and females seek

Caucasian features in a partner when considering child bearing outcomes (Fanon, 1967). Many inner city Jamaican women (and men) practice skin bleaching, where chemicals are used to lighten facial skin color, a procedure which has the perceived effect of improving self esteem and enhancing the person's image to onlookers (Charles, 2003).

Attention to skin color is seen in this excerpt from Fanon (1967) who described the life of Mayotte Capecia, a black woman from Martinique, who was married to a white man, and who found out that her grandmother was white:

> Mayotte: "I found that I was proud of it…I should have guessed it when I looked at her [grandmother] color. I found her prettier than ever, and cleverer and more refined…" (Fanon, 1967, p. 47).

When talking about her marriage, Mayotte highlights how important skin color and status were in forming and maintaining the relationship:

> Mayotte: "I should have liked to be married, but to a white man. But a woman of color is never altogether respectable in a [W]hite man's eyes" (Fanon, 1967, p. 42).

In contemporary Jamaica, similar attitudes are still present, demonstrated by discussions with black Jamaican males[2]:

> Interviewer: how did you react when you found out your cousin (black Jamaican male) married a white woman?
>
> Black Jamaican male: At first it didn't matter, but on seeing her I was turned off. Some Jamaican men cool with having a 'Whitee', because they look up to them. It gives them status. It's because they feel inferior to them so they try to make up for it. That's why they go for black girls with brown skin too. But money nowadays more

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[2] There are no known published Caribbean studies which focus on US/Caribbean couples specifically. Anecdotal evidence was gathered for the current book chapter from discussions with two Black Jamaican males, two White male tourists visiting Jamaica and a Black female Jamaican Clinical Psychologist whose clientele include American/Caribbean married professionals.

important than race. Once you have money you cris [okay]".

It can be inferred that for some black Jamaican men and women, the motivation for choosing a white American woman may be related to identity-enhancement through association with a more valuable social group. This is, however, complicated by the importance of economic status, in that being economically well off tends to make race less important (discussed further in the section on social exchange). Race-related conflicts between black Jamaicans and white Americans are, therefore, more likely when the American's socioeconomic status is low.

Race-related tensions may also emerge in situations in which racial identity and skin color are most salient. Couple interactions can be based on either or both partners' identification with their racial group, or on personal individual characteristics. Heightened awareness of racial group membership and skin color may create challenges to a couple's interpersonal connection. As an example, family and friends' attitudes towards skin color will impact how a couple's union is received, and consciousness about this may influence couple dynamics.

> Interviewer: Would you every get involved with someone from the Caribbean?
> Ed (white Canadian male visitor to Jamaica): I've been to Jamaica about ten times. I've never been with someone from here but I certainly would. When I was younger I used to feel conscious about what my parents would say. Would they disown me or something? But now I don't care.

Discussion with a white male American Roman Catholic Priest visiting Jamaica revealed that interracial couples may even make decisions about bearing children based on how they imagine people will receive the relationship:

Priest: They (interracial/intercultural couple) made a decision not to have any children. Too many problems.

Interviewer: What kind of problems?

Priest: Too hard to raise them.

Interviewer: Why?

Priest: Racial prejudice. It's too hard to cope.

Family life for many black Jamaicans and black Americans continues to be influenced by events from the past. While some have argued that black matrifocal families are still shaped by retentions from an African heritage (Herskovitz, 1941), others highlight the influence of slavery and the plantation society on family life for blacks (Frazier, 1966; Smith, 1957). Whereas many white Americans are accustomed to the nuclear family type, many black Jamaicans and black Americans grow up in female-headed households and single-parent families (Barrow, 1996). Although the nuclear family is also held as an ideal by many black families, there are a significant number of 'absent' fathers, who live in separate residences from their children and visit the household occasionally, especially in the lower socioeconomic classes. Additionally, many of these homes are characterized by fluid household boundaries, gaps in communication between parents and children and economic hardship (Le Franc, Bailey and Branche, 1998). It is not uncommon for a woman to have children by several men and to be supported by them economically while living in her mother's home. Marriage for blacks normally comes late in life (Brown, Anderson and Chevannes, 1993), and represents a movement towards increased responsibility for the man as provider and less infidelity for both partners. Nuclear families are more prevalent in the higher socioeconomic classes for blacks (Barrow, 1996).

Additionally, Jamaican men, in particular, hold on to traditional gender role

expectations in the family setting. Women are expected to be housewives and childcare givers, even if they are employed outside the home. Black Jamaican women hold the expectation that the man is the provider, even if she has an income[3]. She expects to be cared for and, contradictorily, to be treated as an equal in some spheres of life.

Family of origin differences between a white American partner and a black Jamaican partner may create conflicts for a couple when starting their own family. A white female American may expect that a black Jamaican man will marry her if she becomes pregnant, whereas his socialization might lead him to expect to continue a visiting relationship. White American men may also not fulfill the expectation of black Jamaican women to be 'kept,' if they are not economically well-off. Middle class white American women tend to be independent and not comply with strict gender expectations of housewife and childcare giver, which may be problematic for the traditional black Jamaican man.

Black Caribbean Immigrants and Black Americans. First generation Black Caribbean migrants to the United States are viewed as successful in their attempts at integration into the economic structure (Waters, 2000). Waters claims that, compared to black Americans, these immigrants were much more positive about race relations and were perceived to have better work attitudes, greater openness to interracial interaction, and more innocent beliefs about American race relations. These attitudes made them more favorable to white employers than black American workers, and contributed to antagonism with black Americans who viewed them as 'sell outs.' First generation immigrants resisted ethnic assimilation, keeping their racial identities but also maintaining positive relationships with whites.

Because of changes in accent and culture over time, second generation Caribbean immigrants, on the other hand, were forced into the category of black American. Like native

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[3] Evidence of these expectations comes from discussions with a Clinical Psychologist who provides therapy for American/Caribbean couples.

black Americans, they have more negative attitudes toward work and interaction with Whites, a factor which has contributed to their demise economically and socially (Waters, 2000). The realities of racism in America between blacks and whites have destroyed much of the optimism of cultural equality and acceptance held by the early immigrants.

Interpersonal relationships between black Americans and first generation black Caribbean migrants are therefore expected to be strained because of differences in attitudes towards work, racism and whites. Whereas the black migrant is less focused on racial inequality, black Americans' emphasis on it is likely to make them reject persons with seemingly pro-white attitudes. Black Americans may also be less tolerant of attempts at assimilation into the white economy and culture. The intermarriage rates in America for foreign born blacks with whites are actually higher than for native born black and white Americans (Smith and Edmonston, 1997). Foreign born blacks are likely to feel less pressure to assimilate to white norms while maintaining their ethnicity, until they begin to directly experience racial discrimination.

For black Caribbean migrants (second generation) who have been racialized into black Americans, and who have essentially lost their Caribbean ethnicity and traditions, interpersonal relationships with native black Americans are often characterized by 'love and trouble' (Patterson, 1998). Orlando Patterson (1998) makes many compelling arguments for the impact of slavery on contemporary black male-female relationships, both among black Americans and black Jamaicans, and between these groups. He characterizes them as experiencing a crisis and claims that black Americans especially, are characterized by single mother families, multiple partnering and relationships with high levels of mistrust, anger and jealousy.

A few Caribbean studies have documented similar conclusions (Brown, Anderson and

Chevannes, 1993; Chevannes, 1992; Henry and Wilson, 1975) showing that Jamaican women are perceived as untrustworthy by their male partners. Patterson's observations echo Edith Clarke's (1970, 1957) seminal work on black Jamaican families. She described casual concubinage, multiple partnering and an emphasis on male prowess, but also observed stable family unions, where cohabitation preceded legal marriages. Rodman's (1971) study of lower class blacks in Trinidad suggested economic instability as the main reason for loose conjugal relationships and noted the prevalence of 'friending' or less demanding non-cohabiting relationships.

Conflict between black Americans and second generation black Jamaican migrants who share similar experiences of racial discrimination might be less because of cultural and national differences, and more because of intergenerationally transmitted relationship patterns, some of which seem dysfunctional. Black males, Jamaican and American, are described as emotionally unavailable, and with a need to express 'manhood' as demonstrated by early initiation into sexual activity, multiple partnering and child-bearing from an early age (Patterson, 1998) . For a white male or female socialized through more stable and trusting families and relationships, the differences in practices and values may cause conflict between him or her and a black Jamaican. For instance, breaches of middle class white American parenting role expectations, such as those described below, would likely cause conflict between a white American man and a black lower class Jamaican female:

Child: "My mother works day and night, but it doesn't look like she is using the money she earns to help support me…" (Le Franc, Bailey and Branche, 1998: 6)

Child: "Some women, when they get money they don't put food for their children. Dem buy clothes for demselves, dress up and gone leave you alone

hungry…meanwhile the pickney (i.e., children) are there hungry and nothing is

there…". (Le Franc, Bailey and Branche, 1998: 6).

In summary, the literature discussed above demonstrates that the dynamics of

interpersonal relationships between Americans and Jamaicans are varied and complex,

depending on the groups involved. Firstly, self and identity enhancement may be key factors

when considering the effects of lingering 'inferiority complexes' of Black Jamaicans (in

Jamaica) and their preference for a 'brown' or white partner. Although no data were available,

it is likely that many black Americans also experience this inferiority complex, but may

manifest it in different ways. Secondly, black Jamaican immigrants to the US, may or may not

suffer from such complexes, but appear to be more open to cultural interchanges and

relationships with whites, until they regularly face racial discrimination. It should also be

noted that most persons do not marry outside their social class and that black Caribbeans in

America who marry whites are generally not from the lower classes. Thirdly, when it comes

to conflicts between second generation Black Caribbean migrants and Black Americans (and

within the groups themselves), explanations are drawn from slavery and plantation society in

terms of inherited patterns of dysfunctionality in relationships (Patterson, 1998). Patterns of

distrust, jealousy, and multiple partnering, as well as black men's strong desire to express

manhood and dominance, are linked to their historical lack of power in both the private and

public spheres. It can be argued that this dysfunctionality lives on today despite improvements

in the socioeconomic status of blacks as a whole[4]. Whereas all the explanations put forward

above are very plausible, there is a great need for further evidence and theorizing about

intercultural and interracial relationships.

Social Exchange in Relationships. As mentioned in earlier sections, although skin

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[4] The current paper uses evidence provided by Patterson and others on dysfunctionality in black relationships
and families to demonstrate trends among groups rather than to contribute to stereotyping of blacks.

color is a significant factor in determining partner choice and the maintenance of relationships, for many Black Jamaicans today, economic stability is just as or even more important. Romance appears to be secondary to more practical and utilitarian considerations for forming and maintaining relationships among Black Caribbeans at home and abroad. The visiting relationships discussed above, where Jamaican women are financed by several partners and/or baby-fathers, is an example of this utilitarianism. Visiting relationships involve male partners visiting the woman who normally lives in her mother's home, and who may or may not have children with the male partner. The male generally expects to be able to have sexual intercourse with the woman in exchange for material goods and money, either for her or for her children. Some women may be in several visitor relationships simultaneously or sequentially depending on her economic needs. Many of these relationships do not end up in legal marriage until the couple is much older (40s) or financially secure. In a study on black Caribbean families, one black man gave his opinion on female multiple partnering:

> Jamaican male: "The girls nowadays no want one man you know; dem want all twenty man…because if you see a man can't give them everything, dem a go know that a next man can give them something. And if him don't have it to give them, a next man have to give them" (Le Franc, Bailey and Branche, 1998: 7).

Along with economic dependence on men comes vulnerability to domestic violence and strict gender role expectations. Although these patterns are more prevalent in the lower socioeconomic classes, they are also quite common for the higher classes and persons with post-high school level education.

Dirks and Kern's (1976) analysis of mating pattern data in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) from Methodist baptismal records (1823-1965) and Methodist marriage registry information (1880-1970) supports theories of social exchange, and reflects the impact of

socioeconomic hardships. They show that mating patterns varied for specified economic periods. Extra-legal mating generally followed rules of exchange that allowed for maximization of short-term benefits. Marriage and long term relationships were not valued if they did not provide immediate benefits or if they would divert funds away from personal needs to items for the home, partner or offspring. Marriages were reserved as options for maximizing benefits in the long term such as commanding respect in the community and old age security. House building in the BVI also appeared to be a major turning point in one's mating status, as only then was it deemed appropriate for a couple to be legally bound.

Le Franc, Bailey and Branche (1998) discuss the relevance of social exchange theory to interpersonal relationships among lower class Jamaicans. "…the principle of exchange is a very dominant one: thus, loyalty, status, fidelity, the supply of sexual and other domestic 'services,' and the provision of financial support are all placed in the same equation and traded against each other in a quasi-market relationship. The absence of balance and equilibrium often and easily leads to stress, the exercise of the 'exit' option, and therefore alterations to the household boundaries" (Le Franc, Bailey and Branche, 1998, p. 9).

Hence satisfaction for women comes from finding economic security for herself and her children from one or more men. Men receive sexual satisfaction from multiple partnering as well as bolstered 'macho' reputations. Exchanges of emotional support and notions of romance therefore feature less in these relationships. Persons who are not faced with economic hardship on a daily basis can afford to form relationships based more on romance and emotional desires. Furthermore, differences in economic status many affect Caribbean couples as well as US/Caribbean couples. However, notions of romance and emotional support may not be held as strongly by black Jamaican women compared to white American women. Additionally, Jamaican males are believed to be emotionally unavailable as a whole.

For white American women, who, given their socialization, may have stronger expectations for romance, there may be significant discrepancies in relationship expectations if they are involved with black Jamaican men. Black Jamaican women, who traditionally have the notion of being 'kept' and who often are solely dependent on men for income, are likely to get involved with richer white American males to fulfill these needs rather than based on romantic expectations. Further research is needed to substantiate these expected relationship patterns and to tease out the effects of nationality and socioeconomic class on relationship dynamics among blacks and between blacks and whites.

Summary. Although there is little psychological data available on interpersonal relationships in the Caribbean region, the literature does provide fertile cultural and social information for future research. Theories of self and identity that discuss how persons enhance self esteem and negotiate ethnic and racial identity in the face of discrimination are relevant to the Caribbean experience. Social exchange frameworks are also relevant to understanding the utilitarianism often observed in black interpersonal relationships. Further, gender socialization and family forms play a part in expectations of partners. Applications of these and other theoretical frameworks however, must first specify the group of Caribbean persons under study, given their diversity and complexity.

Accommodation in Personal Relationships

Within the field of personal relationships, one of the most influential theories is *interdependence theory* (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; for reviews, see Berscheid, 1985; Berscheid & Reis, 1998). According to interdependence theory, human beings possess the capacity to weigh the short-term and long-term benefits and costs of behaving in ways that promote individual and relational goals. When individuals are confronted with the choice between

behaving in ways that promote individual goals over the short term and behaving in ways that promote relational goals over the long term, individuals often opt to act in ways that promote relational goals over the long term. The concept of interdependence includes, but is not limited to, individuals' willingness to forgo achieving short-term individual goals for the sake of achieving long-term relational goals.

One of the most intensively studied aspects of interdependence in personal relationships is *accommodation*, or individuals' willingness to forgo reciprocating partners' anger or criticism, for the sake of maintaining their personal relationships (Rusbult et al., 1991; for a review, see Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Four distinct yet interrelated behaviors comprise accommodation: (1) *Exit*, or an overt, destructive response to partners' anger or criticism; (2) *voice*, or an overt, constructive response to partners' anger or criticism; (3) *loyalty*, or a covert, constructive response to partners' anger or criticism; and (4) *neglect*, or a covert, destructive response to partners' anger or criticism. To the extent that individuals respond to partners' anger or criticism with voice and loyalty, and to the extent that individuals refrain from responding to partners' anger or criticism with exit and neglect, individuals engage in accommodation toward their partners.

Within mainstream journals in the fields of social psychology and personal relationships, a variety of individual differences in accommodation have been documented. For example, individual differences in attachment styles (e.g., Gaines et al., 1997; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995) and gender-related personality traits (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991) have been identified as significant predictors of accommodation in romantic relationships. With the exception of attachment styles (e.g., Gaines, Granrose, et al., 1999; Gaines & Henderson, 2002), specific individual-difference influences on accommodation rarely have been examined in mainstream or non-mainstream journals.

Cultural Values as Individual-Difference Influences on Accommodation. One set of

individual-difference variables whose influences on accommodation have been confined to

studies published outside mainstream social psychology and personal relationship journals is

cultural values, or organized sets of beliefs that are communicated from societal agents to

individuals (Gaines, 1997). Since the early 1980s, cultural psychologists' conceptualizations

of cultural values have progressed from unidimensional and bipolar (e.g., Hofstede, 1980) to

bidimensional (e.g., Triandis, 1990) to multidimensional (e.g., Schwartz, 1994). Cultural

psychologists generally have devoted greater attention to developing taxonomies of cultural

values than to documenting the effects of cultural values on social behavior (for a review, see

Triandis, 1995).

For the purposes of this chapter, we will adopt the taxonomy of cultural values that

Gaines (1997) proposed as having special relevance to the study of personal relationship

processes: (1) *individualism*, or an orientation toward the welfare of oneself; (2) *collectivism*,

or an orientation toward the welfare of one's larger community; (3) *familism*, or an orientation

toward the welfare of one's family, both immediate and extended; (4) *romanticism*, or an

orientation toward the welfare of one's romantic relationship dyad or pair; and (5)

spiritualism, or an orientation toward the welfare of all living entities, both natural and

supernatural. Gaines (1997) was interested primarily in cultural values as predictors of

interpersonal resource exchange (i.e., the reciprocity of affectionate and respectful behaviors)

in personal relationships. However, just as one might expect cultural values to be reflected in

the reciprocity that characterizes interpersonal resource exchange, so too might one expect

cultural values to be reflected in the *lack* of reciprocity that characterizes accommodation.

In Figure 1, we present a model of hypothetical effects of cultural values on

accommodation, following Gaines et al. (in press). In the model, individuals' *personal*

orientation is measured positively by the "me-orientation" of individualism; individuals'

social orientation is measured positively by the "we-orientations" of collectivism, familism,

romanticism, and spiritualism; and individuals' *accommodation* is measured positively by

voice and loyalty, and negatively by exit and neglect. According to the model, individuals'

social orientation will be a significant positive predictor of accommodation, whereas

individuals' personal orientation will be a significant negative predictor of accommodation.

The predictions within the model are based on two assumptions: individuals' orientation

toward persons in addition to themselves promotes individuals' striving to fulfill long-term

relational goals; and individuals' orientation toward themselves (without necessarily

considering the social and emotional needs of persons in addition to themselves) promotes

individuals' striving to fulfill short-term individual goals.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Within-Couple Differences in the Impact of Cultural Values on Accommodation

among US/Caribbean Couples. So far, we have focused on potential problems in interracial

relationships in which one partner is Black (whether American or Caribbean) and the other

partner is White (specifically White American). Next, we shall consider potential problems in

international relationships in which one partner is Black American and the other partner is

Black Caribbean. The model presented in Figure 1 does not identify individuals' nationality

as a moderator of links between cultural values and accommodation in personal relationships.

Nevertheless, results of published studies using American heterosexuals (Gaines et al., in

press) and Jamaican heterosexuals (Gaines, Ramkissoon, & Matthies, 2003) suggest that

nationality may indeed moderate the effects of cultural values on accommodation. As

predicted, in the United States (Gaines et al., in press), individuals' social orientation was a

significant positive predictor of accommodation; but contrary to predictions, individuals'

personal orientation was unrelated to accommodation. In Jamaica (Gaines, Ramkissoon, & Matthies, 2003), as predicted, individuals' personal orientation was a significant negative predictor of accommodation; but contrary to predictions, individuals' social orientation was unrelated to accommodation.

Taking the results of Gaines, Ramkissoon, and Matthies (2003) and of Gaines et al. (in press) at face value, we would anticipate that among heterosexual couples with one American partner and one Caribbean partner, considerable potential exists regarding partners' misinterpretation of the agendas that underlie each other's attempts at accommodation (see Snyder & Cantor, 1998). In anticipating the potential for partners' misinterpretation of each other's agendas, we are assuming that regardless of race or nationality, individuals generally seek to understand why their relationship partners have chosen to act in a particular manner (consistent with attribution theories in social psychology; for a review, see S. Fiske & Taylor, 1991). However, we are also assuming that the specific conclusions that individuals reach regarding their relationship partners' reasons for behaving in a particular manner are influenced by their cultural background (see A. Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998). We acknowledge that, like interracial relationships, international relationships are not randomly distributed throughout the partners' respective populations; any findings about general tendencies in those populations may not apply to international couples, who may represent the extreme ends of the continuum. For example, even if Americans in general differ from Caribbeans in the cultural value of romanticism, persons in US/Caribbean relationships may not differ from each other regarding romanticism; shared romanticism might be a prerequisite for relationship development in general, and for international relationship development in particular (for a similar argument regarding shared romanticism

among partners in US interracial relationships, see Gaines, Rios, et al., 1999).[5]

Among US/Caribbean couples, partners might draw on societal stereotypes and misattribute each other's accommodation.[6] We are assuming that, even though accommodation in itself is desirable in personal relationships, partners' correct interpretation of the reasons for each other's behavior is desirable, whereas partners' incorrect interpretation of the reasons for each other's behavior is undesirable, in personal relationships (see S. Fiske & Taylor, 1991, for a discussion of the negative consequences that can result from errors in attribution processes). An American partner may, for example, misattribute a Caribbean partner's accommodation to Jamaicans' emphasis on group-level success and thus assume that the Caribbean partner is pursuing the agenda of maintaining the relationship when in fact the Caribbean partner is pursuing the agenda of protecting self-esteem (see Gaines, Ramkissoon, & Matthies, 2003).Likewise, a Caribbean partner may misattribute an American partner's accommodation to Americans' emphasis on individual-level success, and thus assume that the American partner is pursuing the agenda of protecting self-esteem when in fact the American partner is pursuing the agenda of maintaining the relationship. These attributions might not accurately reflect the relative importance of personal and social orientations in partners' accommodation. Psychotherapy might be required in order for partners to attain genuine understanding of the agendas that are reflected in each other's attempts at accommodation (see Baptiste, 1984).

It is possible that 'me-oriented' Americans are less likely to realize that other persons do not share a particular world view than are 'we-oriented' Caribbeans. Perhaps more than persons of any other nationality, Americans have a tendency to project their cultural values –

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[5]We are indebted to the editors of this volume for raising the issue of random distribution across populations.
[6]We do not know of any research directly bearing upon the effects of societal stereotypes, as distinct from information that is more specific to their unique relationships and particular partners, on misattributions.

especially individualism -- onto others. In contrast, Caribbeans may be well aware that Americans do not share Caribbeans' cultural values. Such a tendency would be consistent with the view that the United States promotes cultural hegemony throughout the world (Sardar & Davies, 2003). [7]

Before we prematurely conclude that conflict is inevitable in US/Caribbean relationships, let us consider the results of unpublished research on cultural values and accommodation in the United Kingdom (Gaines et al., 2004). Consistent with hypotheses, among British heterosexuals, individuals' social orientation was a significant positive predictor of accommodation; *and* individuals' personal orientation was a significant negative predictor of accommodation. In fact, as Figure 2 indicates, results of a multi-group structural equation analysis (see Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996) reveal that, after controlling statistically for differences in measurement error across the three nations, both of the original predictions concerning cultural values and accommodation are supported empirically in the US, Jamaica, and the UK. Perhaps American and Caribbean partners are not inherently prone to misattributing the agendas behind each other's accommodation efforts after all.

Finally, even when conflict does occur in US/Caribbean relationships, regardless of the specific cultural value(s) that partners manifest, it is possible that when one partner is angry or critical toward the other partner, the other person has the capacity to defuse the conflict by deciding *not* to seek retribution. As Rusbult and her colleagues (1991) have noted, *all* relationships are marked by some expressions of anger and criticism by one partner toward the other partner. We do not wish to pathologize US/Caribbean relationships per se. Rather, we ask whether American and Caribbean relationship partners view each other's underlying

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However, we note the results of a study (Johnson & Cothman, 2003) that found substantial stereotyping among Black Americans, Black Africans, and Black Caribbean persons toward each other.
[7] We are indebted to the editors for raising the issue of Americans' individualism as possibly promoting an awareness that other persons may not share their viewpoint.

values accurately.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Potential Influences of Socioeconomic Status, Race, and Nationality on the Impact of Cultural Values on Accommodation among US/Caribbean Couples. So far, apart from nationality, we have not considered the role of demographic variables in moderating the impact of cultural values on accommodation. However, certain demographic variables are so confounded with the aforementioned US/Jamaica dichotomy that it is worth disentangling those variables and exploring their possible impact on links between cultural values and accommodation. For example, the reliance on data from university-educated participants in the studies by Gaines, Ramkissoon, and Matthies (2003) and by Gaines et al. (in press) obscures the fact that, on average, Jamaicans are dramatically different from Americans in terms of socioeconomic status (i.e., Jamaicans are much more likely to be classified as lower-SES, and much less likely to be classified as middle-SES, than are Americans; see Jones & Zoppel, 1979). It is possible that the impact of cultural values on accommodation as reported by Gaines, Ramkissoon, and Matthies (2003) and by Gaines et al. (in press) is more characteristic of middle-SES individuals than of lower-SES individuals. If a middle-SES American is paired with a lower-SES Jamaican in a romantic relationship, then the potential for SES to moderate the impact of cultural values on accommodation and to foster conflict should not be discounted.

Another possible moderator of links between cultural values and accommodation is individuals' racial group membership. Persons of European descent comprise approximately 70% of all Americans, whereas persons of African descent comprise more than 90% of all Jamaicans. In the study of American heterosexuals by Gaines et al. (in press), race was not examined as a moderator of links between cultural values and accommodation. Even in the

study of Jamaican heterosexuals by Gaines, Ramkissoon, and Matthies (2003), racial distinctions (which did not moderate the impact of cultural values on accommodation) were limited to distinctions between (a) persons for whom both parents were of African descent and (b) persons for whom at least one parent was not of African descent. If a White American is paired with a Black Jamaican, then the potential of race to moderate links between cultural values and accommodation and to foster conflict should not be underestimated.

Returning to nationality as a possible moderator of links between cultural values and accommodation, we cannot assume that Jamaican participants represent Caribbean persons as a whole. Among Caribbean nations, one finds considerable diversity regarding predominant languages, religions, and other products of culture (Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1997). Even if US/Jamaican differences are not sufficient to moderate the impact of cultural values on accommodation, it is not clear whether US/Haitian or US/Cuban differences are similarly weak in relational terms. If an American is paired with a person from any Caribbean nation other than Jamaica, then the potential of nationality to moderate links between cultural values and accommodation and to foster conflict should not be ignored.

Finally, a variety of interaction effects may occur among SES, race, and nationality as moderators of links between cultural values and accommodation. For example, among Caribbean nations, the islands of Trinidad and Tobago are unique in terms of SES (e.g., Trinidad and Tobago are among the wealthiest islands in the West Indies) and in terms of racial composition (Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1997). How, if at all, would a pairing between a middle-SES American of African descent and a middle-SES Trinidadian of Asian descent differ from a pairing between a middle-SES American of European descent and a lower-SES Haitian of African descent regarding the impact of cultural values on accommodation, or on the potential for conflict? Researchers in the field of personal relationships have not begun to

address such questions.

Summary. Initial studies by Gaines and his colleagues suggested that, using an interdependence perspective, American and Jamaican persons might act upon different cultural values when responding to partners' anger or criticism (i.e., among American persons, collectivism is a significant positive influence on accommodation; among Caribbean persons, individualism is a significant negative influence on accommodation). Subsequent research by Gaines and colleagues indicates that, when data from British persons are included and results are compared across American, Jamaican, and British persons, individualism generally is a significant negative influence on accommodation in all three nations, and collectivism generally is a significant positive influence on accommodation. Nevertheless, it is possible that socioeconomic status, race, and/or nationality mediate the impact of cultural values on accommodation, depending upon the nation in question.

Beyond Exchange and Interdependence Theories: Results of Initial Research on US/Caribbean Relationships

Moving beyond the boundaries of exchange and interdependence theories, at least one study (Jackson & Cothran, 2003) has examined relationships between Black American and Black Caribbean (specifically Black West Indian) persons.[8] Jackson and Cothran (2003) did not provide results regarding personal relationship processes involving Black American and Black Caribbean persons. However, they did offer results regarding Black American and Black Caribbean persons' general attitudes toward US/Caribbean relationships.

On the one hand, a clear majority of Black American and Black Caribbean persons reported that they had contact with each other at some time in the past. On the other hand, a majority of Black American and Black Caribbean persons reported that the quality of their

relationships with each other was low; and just under half of Black American and Black Caribbean persons reported that communication with each other was negative. Moreover, Black American and Black Caribbean persons held a variety of negative stereotypes toward each other.

Although the results of the Jackson and Cothran (2003) study concerning Black American/Black Caribbean relationships were disappointing, Black American/Black African relationships fared even worse. Black African/Black Caribbean relationships fared somewhat better than Black American/Black Caribbean or Black American/Black African relationships with regard to positivity versus negativity of intergroup opinions. The poor relationships observed by Jackson and Cothran (2003) support the work on migrant experiences discussed above (Waters, 2000) where Black Caribbeans appear to be more open-minded towards Whites until they experience racism openly, and are therefore spurned by Black Americans. Jackson and Cothran (2003) contend that this negativity is the result of Western enslavement and corresponding miseducation of Blacks throughout the African Diaspora; even when Blacks do not accept racial stereotypes when directed toward them personally, they may nonetheless internalize and apply those same racial stereotypes to fellow Blacks, especially when the other Blacks belong to national outgroups. This explanation is similar to the self negation arguments of Fanon (1967). It remains to be seen whether corrective education will suffice to improve Blacks' attitudes and relationships with fellow Blacks across national lines.

Despite the insight that Jackson and Cothran (2003) offer with regard to relationships among Black Africans, Black Americans, and Black Caribbeans, the aforementioned lack of data from both members of the relationships in question cannot be overlooked. As we pointed out earlier in this chapter, the assumption of random distribution of international relationships

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[8]Jackson and Cothran (2003) indicated that by "West Indians," they were referring primarily to persons from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana. Jackson and Cothran did not make further distinctions among these

across partners' respective national groups has not been tested. Also, the Jackson and

Cothran (2003) study was atheoretical and no hypotheses or research questions were stated.

Clearly, more research on Black American/Black Caribbean relationships is needed,

especially research that not only is theory-based but also is concerned with the cognitive,

affective, and behavioral dynamics that drive Black American/Black Caribbean relationships

in particular, and US/Caribbean relationships more generally.

Conclusion

We noted that the field of personal relationships rarely has dealt with relationships

involving persons from Caribbean nations. Based on the limited evidence at hand, we do not

have reason to believe that US/Caribbean relationships are inherently problematic. Possible

interaction effects among SES, race, and nationality make it difficult for us to conclude

definitively that US/Caribbean relationships are indistinguishable cognitively, affectively, or

behaviorally from other relationships. The one study that we were able to find regarding

US/Caribbean relationships provides a sobering assessment of the quality of Black

American/Black Caribbean relationships. We urge researchers in the field of personal

relationships to greatly accelerate efforts to study the social and psychological experiences of

couples among whom at least one partner is from a Caribbean nation. Theoretical frameworks

and concepts worth considering for the future work include social and personal identities, self

esteem enhancement strategies, social exchange and social perception processes.   Finally, as

Gaines (1997) pointed out, scholars in the field of personal relationships need to begin taking

ethnicity into account more explicitly and more consistently than they have done so far.

West Indian groups.

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Figure 1:
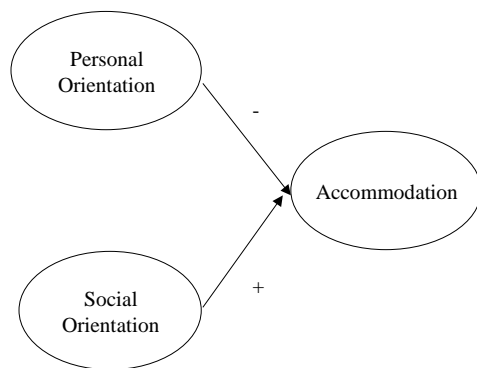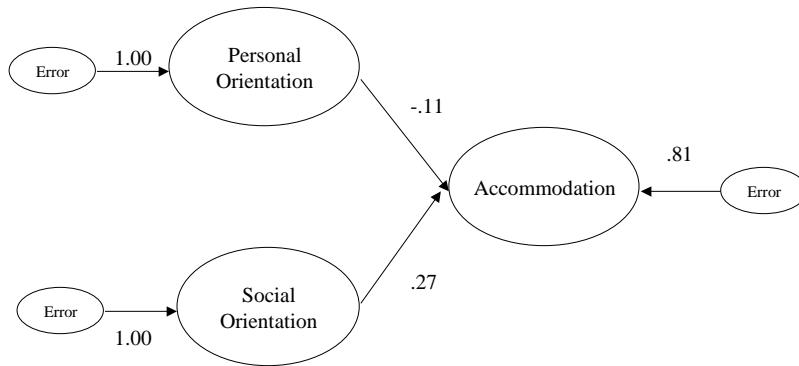*Hypothesized Impact of Cultural Values on Accommodation in Personal Relationships across*
All Nations

Figure 2:
Actual Impact of Cultural Values on Accommodation in Personal Relationships across the
U.S., Jamaica, and the U.K[9].

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[9] NOTE: All path coefficients are significant (p's < .01). Results are based on a multiple-group structural equation analysis of data from n's of 242 in the United States (Gaines et al., in press), 231 in Jamaica (Gaines, Ramkissoon, & Matthies, 2003), and 220 in the United Kingdom (Gaines et al., 2004).