

THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF  
THE WHITLOW  
MEASURE OF AFROCENTRIC RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDES

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of Missouri- Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF  
THE WHITLOW  
MEASURE OF AFROCENTRIC RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDES

Presented by Natalie M. Whitlow

A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

And hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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## MY DEDICATIONS...

I feel so blessed to have had the opportunity to develop a scale such as this one! I realize that I would not have had this opportunity without the hard work and struggles of the African Psychologists who came before me- so I thank you all for creating an existence for me, one in which I could “do it my way.”

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## The Development and Validation of the Whitlow- Measure of Afrocentric Relationship Attitudes

As many as 50% of marriages end in divorce and an additional 14% of marriages separate indefinitely (Census Bureau, 2000). This information alone makes the innocent dreams that little girls have about marriage and those manly ambitions that little boys have about being a great husband seem so unrealistic, out of reach, and heart breaking! Now, consider that the little girls and little boys are African American children. According to the Census Bureau (2000), 78% of Black families are single parent headed, meaning that only 22% of Black people have either made the choice to marry or stay married through challenges. Not only are the marriages in their community facing more devastating statistics, with Black people divorcing at twice the rate as White's, but it seems as if professionals do not understand enough about their culture and functioning to truly help them in overcoming this problem. There are an increasing number of Black women pursuing graduate education and professional careers (census bureau, 2000). Given the disproportionate sex ratio within the Black community, the low numbers of graduate educated and professional Black men, and the high number of incarcerated Black males it is likely that these Black women may marry at lower rates (Darity & Myers, 1995). This is an example of one unique phenomenon within the Black community and this, and other unique factors, need to be considered in relationship work. Because of this lack of understanding and attention to the Black experience, it is time that the Black relationship be examined and approached from an Afrocentric perspective.

Afrocentric/Afrocentricity is defined as placing African ideals and values at the center of any analysis of any aspect of Black functioning, which in this case specifically refers to African American relationship functioning (Asante, 1998). On the contrary,



Eurocentric/Eurocentricity refers to placing standards, ideals, and values of the white culture at the center of any analysis of any aspect of human functioning. With this worldview, it is assumed that white standards, ideals, and values are the optimal behavior criteria for any group of people to achieve, regardless of their culture. In addition, it is important to mention that the focus of this study is based within the African American or Black community and that these words will be used interchangeably to describe this group of people, their community, and/or their culture.

The alarming number of divorces in this country have yielded some very serious societal impacts. Specifically, the effects on children of these un-sustained unions, and on the individuals who are involved in these struggling marriages are enormous. Children of these unions often experience a number of emotional and psychological effects that are a result of their parents' divorce, which include struggling with depression, low self-esteem, and anger management issues (Amato & Keith, 1991). The effects of their parents' divorce often have additional long lasting effects, such as being negatively stereotyped by society, having difficulty in their own intimate relationships, and having an increased risk of having behavioral problems (Amato & Keith, 1991; Byron, et al., 1986; Santrock, 1975).

In addition, those who divorce often suffer some severe consequences as well. Most alarming is the prevalence of depression among these individuals. This experience with depression leads to an increased chance that they will attempt or actually commit suicide, as compared to individuals who are married, separated, or widowed (Fuse, 1980; Singhe & Tepperman, 1994; Stack, 1989; Smith, et al., 1988; Stack, 1980).

Few studies have examined the psychological effects of divorce within the Black community. The limited number of studies that have examined this issue found conflicting results. For example, a strong link between parental divorce and psychological distress has been found with studies utilizing white samples, however, with Black and Latino racial and ethnic minority samples, children seem to have lower levels of psychological distress (Amato & Keith, 1991). Conversely, Barrett (2003) found that the emotional and psychological effects of parental divorce are not weaker for African American children but rather, the extent of occurrence of these emotional and psychological effects varies by race. In addition, the relationship between divorce and children's depression and suicide attempts has not been examined with African American samples and thus, this information is not available.

Within the relationship literature, there has been a historical reliance on examining relationships from a Eurocentric perspective, assuming that the standards, ideals, and values of white culture are optimal for relationship functioning in all cultures. More specifically, in comparing Black relationship functioning to white relationship functioning, there is a tendency to assume that Black relationships are deficient because the individuals do not adhere to Eurocentric values in their relationship functioning and relational interactions (Bell, Bouie, & Baldwin, 1990). Unfortunately, examining, understanding, and/or approaching the African American relationship from an Afrocentric perspective has been virtually ignored throughout the years.

Afrocentric scholars, such as Asante (1998) have repeatedly commented on the absurdity of believing that the application of Eurocentric values to the Black experience would be effective in examining any aspect of African American functioning.

Specifically related to Black intimate relationships, Asante (1987) and Bell et al. (1990) have stated the importance of Black male-female relationships being based within Afrocentricity, or adherence to Afrocentric values. In essence, they stress the importance of examining a phenomenon from the frame of reference wherein that phenomenon was rooted and naturally functions; which in this case, they are referring to the Black relationship and Afrocentricity.

Within the field of African psychology, some theoretical frameworks have been developed to assist in the understanding of the crucial values that constitute Afrocentricity. Scholars such as Kambon (1998) and Asante (1987) have played an influential role in the development of theory in this area. Asante (1981) developed an Afrocentrically based model of heterosexual relationships that depicted healthy Black relationship functioning. Unfortunately, researchers have not utilized Kambon (1998) and Asante's (1987) theoretical contributions or Asante's (1981) relationship model in attempting to examine, understand, and promote African American male-female relationships. One possible explanation for this could be that these ideologies and theoretical frameworks are divergent from the mainstream approach to understanding relationship functioning, and thus, has not become popular among many researchers.

In addition, it is important that African cultural foundations, beliefs, customs, values, rituals, etc., that were stolen from us in the Maafa (African enslavement process) begin to be realized, valued, and adhered to again (Kambon, 1998). It is also vital that Black men regain their value and visibility within Black relationship, familial, and cultural structures in order for relationship success to occur (Patterson, 1998; Pinderhughes, 1999).

At present, relationship measures have not been developed with the Afrocentric perspective at its core or even in mind. For example, popular and widely used relationship assessments, such as The Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988), The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), and The Index of Marital Satisfaction (Hudson, 1997) have no significant influence from the Afrocentric perspective. There are, however, very specific values, traditions, customs, and beliefs that are deeply embedded within the African American culture that are important to include in relationship with the Black population. Very important aspects of Black relationship functioning are missing because of restricted worldviews of theoretical and developmental models of Black relationships.

In short, there is a dearth of information about Black relationship functioning. From the body of research that attempts to understand the dissolution of Black relationships and marriages from a pathology-centered approach, to relationship literature that examines Black relationship functioning from a strictly Eurocentric perspective, it is clear that an African-centered approach is missing. In addition, relationship satisfaction measures do not incorporate the Afrocentric perspective into the development of these scales and are lacking applicability to the Black community. Thus, it is clear that Black relationship functioning is an area that deserves closer attention within the literature. Subsequently, the purpose of this study was to examine and understand the African American relationship from an Afrocentric perspective, and most importantly, to develop a long overdue Afrocentrically based relationship attitudes assessment. In developing any type of professional assessment, it is very important that its development is scientifically and theoretically sound. The same is true, and probably to a greater extent,

when developing a pioneering scale in an unexamined area, such as this one. Thus, it is important that this scale have sound reliability and validity estimates in order to increase the likelihood that this instrument will actually be used and relied upon in African American relationship work.

It is hoped that the development of the Whitlow-Measure of Afrocentric Relationship Attitudes (MARA) will be beneficial across many realms of counseling psychology. For instance, such areas as research, practice, and social activism may be positively impacted by the development of this scale. Specifically, from a research perspective, such an instrument may be helpful in assisting with theory development around African American behavior, relationship functioning, cognitive and emotional preferences, attitudes, beliefs, values, etc. In a practice context, this instrument could also be a very useful and effective assessment tool in couples and individual therapy. Finally, the social activism aspect of counseling psychology is very important to this field, as we strive to develop the goals of our field toward addressing societal needs of diverse populations. In this instance, such an inventory could help to educate Black people, helping professionals, and society as a whole as to the essential factors related to African American relationships and subsequently, the psychological well-being of African American individuals.

### *Methods*

#### Instrument Construction

*Item Development.* Sixty items were initially written for this instrument, with 15 items for each of the four factors. More specifically, the development of these items was guided by Afrocentric psychology theory. Specifically, Asante's (1981) model of Black

heterosexual relationships, as well as Kambon (1998) and Asante's (1987) list of values that encompass the Afrocentric worldview were used as a guide in developing these items. In particular, Asante's (1981) model provided the four hypothesized factors under which the items were developed. The four factors of Asante's model are: (a) Sacrifice, (b) Inspirations, (c) Visionary, and (d) Victory. Sacrifice is defined as a value component within Black relationships that gives precedence to the spiritual-communal aspect of life, as opposed to the physical-material qualities and possessions. In practical terms, the foundation of the African American couple lies in their sense of collective responsibility and interdependence, as well as their current sense of responsibility for their families and community. In short, it is asserted that Black couples should make sacrifices and give of themselves in order to ensure the continued survival and well-being of their families and the Black community (Bell, et al., 1990).

Inspiration is defined as the way in which Black couples relate to one another, which should be in a mutually affirming, holistic manner (Asante, 1980). The holistic relationship is one in which each partner gives and receives physical, intellectual, emotional, and social stimulation through encouraging, inspiring, and supporting one another in their life missions. Thus, inspiration identifies mutuality and reciprocity as important components contributing to healthy Black relationships (Bell, et al., 1990).

Visionary is defined as the portion of the relationship that involves future planning of family-community based initiatives. This is where the Black couple is devoted to setting goals, accomplishing tasks, and aspiring toward dreams that benefit and promote the survival and development of the Black family and community. This

hypothesized factor suggests that the revitalization and preservation of African American culture is extremely important (Bell, et al., 1990).

Lastly, Asante (1980) defined victory as the state in which the couple celebrates the achievements, aspirations, and developments of themselves and the Black community as a whole. Also, this is where the couple renews their belief in the African American community to be triumphant and victorious in their plight (Bell, et al., 1990).

There are also 10 values that encompass the Afrocentric worldview, which were asserted by Kambon (1998) and Asante (1987), that were utilized in the construction of items for this project. They consist of: (a) *Spirituality*, which can be defined as a subjective personal experience where an individual is involved in the internalization and expression of positive values, has a sense of intimacy, has a relationship with a higher being, and has a willingness to live according to their own religious beliefs (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Mattis, 2000); (b) *Survival of the group*, which includes but is not limited to one's investment to behaving in a manner that will be beneficial to the entire Black community, not just single individuals; (c) *Inclusiveness/Synthesis*, which includes but is not limited to one never being exclusionary to any of the members of their community, regardless of their beliefs, actions, etc.; (d) *Collective responsibility*, which includes but is not limited to one understanding that the repercussions of a single person's actions have inevitable effects and are the fault of the entire community; (e) *Interdependence*, which includes but is not limited to one's understanding that the life of every person in the community relies on every other person in the community; (f) *Empathetic understanding*, which includes but is not limited to one having the goodness of heart to try and understand, in the most positive view, the situation of another, even if the person has

never experience the situation themselves; (g) *Group-ness*, which deals but is not limited to ones understanding that they are, first and foremost, a member of their community; (h) *Sameness-commonality*, which includes but is not limited to ones understanding that, as Africans, they all share a common culture, perception, attitude, and predisposition that cause their experiences and desires to share a similarity; (i) *The value of rhythm*, which includes but is not limited to the understanding that rhythm, such as the beat of a drum, represents the beating of African hearts, which all beat on the same tune and keep all people of African descent aligned with one another; and (j) *Emotionality*, which includes but is not limited to ones awareness of, understanding of, proper use of, and fearlessness of the wide range of emotional responses that Africans encompass.

To assist with the development of the items for the Whitlow-MARA, informal, qualitative interviews (Appendix I) were conducted with a diverse set of Black couples who ranged in age and longevity of relationship status. Four couples were interviewed, who include: (a) a 51 year old woman and a 50 year old man who have been married for 33 years, (b) a 53 year old woman and 57 year old man who have been married for 30 years, (c) a 76 year old woman and an 80 year old man who have been married for 51 years, and (d) a 29 year old woman and 28 year old man who have been married for 7 years. These interviews provided useful information for item development that helped to increase the validity of the items and this assessment.

The integration of the two aforementioned theoretical viewpoints, along with informal interviews that were conducted with Black couples served as the major influences for the development of these items. Items were written to assess how important each item was to participants within their intimate relationships. Item



development was guided by the four factors of Asante's (1981) Black relationship model; the 10 Afrocentric values were encompassed within their respective factor. For instance, the Afrocentric value "empathetic understanding" fits into the "Inspiration" factor. Items were initially developed by the author and were checked for their alignment with Afrocentric theory and specifically, the guiding theory. Six judges assessed face validity of item content, as well as provided feedback on item clarity and structure. Judges included three experienced psychology faculty, two of which identify as Afrocentric, and three graduate students, two of whom identify as Afrocentric. It was determined that no reverse scored items would be included in this scale, due to the phonetic structure and wording of the items.

*Scaling Method.* For this project, a six-point likert scaling method was used, as it is subject centered, and focuses on understanding individual differences among responses (Dawis, 1987). The likert scales were: 1= strongly disagree, 2= moderately disagree, 3= slightly disagree, 4= slightly agree, 5= moderately agree, and 6= strongly agree. A 6-point scale has been chosen for two main reasons: (a) providing six options helps to more accurately differentiate between individual responses because a significant amount of variation within disagreement and agreement is provided and (b) having a six-point scaling method forces the participant to decide at what level they disagree or agree because no neutral or mid-point item is provided. The latter is important to this study because the author is attempting to find out Black people's views of what values are important to them in a partner, thus a "neutral" option is less functional for this research.

### *Participants.*

Participants were 312 African Americans and varied from college students to retired individuals. For the purposes of this study, the criteria that was used to determine if a participant was eligible to be utilized in this study were: (a) having African, Caribbean, and/or African American heritage in their bloodline; (b) self-identifying as African American; and (c) meeting one and/or two of the aforementioned criteria *and* either having been born in the United States or having been born a United States citizen. The majority of the participants in this study were women (n= 220; 70%). The age of the participants ranged from 18-89 years of age ( $M= 36.89$ ,  $SD= 14.60$ ). The majority of the participants were high school graduates (n= 297; 95 %). Approximately half of the participants reported a household income between \$20,000 and \$60,000 and the remaining participants had household incomes that varied tremendously from \$0 to above \$100,000. Nearly two-thirds of the participants reported having a Christian religious affiliation (n= 200; 65%), with the majority of those participants reporting Baptist as their religion (n= 87; 28%). A significant portion of the participants did not report any religious affiliation (n= 108; 34%). Nearly two-thirds of the participants reported being involved in a romantic relationship during the time that they participated in the study (n= 202; 64%), while a significant portion reported not currently being involved in a romantic relationship (n=110; 35%).

### *Instruments.*

The Africentrism Scale (Grills & Longshore, 1996) consists of 15 items and 3 factors and is designed to measure Africentrism, which is defined as the degree to which a person adheres to the Nguzo Saba (7 principles) in African and African American

culture. The items are in likert scaling format, ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 4= Strongly Agree. The scoring for the items range from 15 to 60, with a higher score reflecting greater adherence with Africentrism. The alpha coefficients for the AS were adequate, ranging from .62 to .82, averaging .74 (Grills & Longshore, 1996). In this study the alpha coefficient was .73. The AS also has sufficient construct validity, positively relating to three subscales of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992). The Africentrism Scale was used to provide construct validity. It is believed that the Whitlow-MARA will significantly correlate with this scale because it is attempting to measure relationships from an Afrocentric perspective and the AS measures Africentrism. The Africentrism Scale was selected because of its ideal length, item simplicity, and its grounding in Kawaida theory (“the minimum set of values [that] African Americans need to build and sustain an Afrocentric family, community, and culture”, Karenga, 1998, p. 43).

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS) (Schumm, W.R., et al., 1986) consists of three items and is designed to provide a brief assessment of marital satisfaction. The items are in likert scaling format, ranging from 1= Extremely Dissatisfied to 7= Extremely Satisfied. The KMS is viewed as a useful measure of the relationship satisfaction dimension of marital quality. The scoring for the items range from 3-21, with a higher score reflecting greater levels of satisfaction. The KMS has excellent internal consistency reliability for such a short scale, with an alpha of .93 (Schumm, W.R., et al., 1986). The alpha coefficient for this study was .94. No test-retest data were available. The KMS has excellent concurrent validity, significantly correlating with the Quality of Marriage Index (Schumm, W.R., et al., 1986). The KMS was also

used to provide construct validity. It was hypothesized that the Whitlow-MARA will significantly correlate with this scale because it is attempting to measure relationship satisfaction and the KMS assesses global marital/relationship satisfaction. The KMS was chosen because it is a general measure of marital/relationship satisfaction and because of its global focus, seems to be less culturally bound than other such instruments. In other words, it seems as if the KMS has the ability to apply across cultures because individuals are allowed to put their own cultural meanings on the global constructs that are being examined.

The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) (Paulhus, 1984; 1991) is designed to measure two constructs: (a) Self-Deception (SDE), the tendency to give self-reports that are honest but positively biased (items 1-20) and (b) Impression Management (IM), deliberate self presentation to an audience (items 21-40). This instrument consists of 40 items, with 10 reverse scored items, and utilized a 7-point likert scaling system (1= not true; 4= somewhat true; 7= very true). High scores indicate exaggerated desirable responses. Internal consistency (coefficient alphas) for the BIDR is .83) and ranged from .75 to .86 on each factor. Test-re-test coefficients are .69 (SDE) and .65 (IM) (Paulhus, 1984). For this study, the alpha coefficient for the BIDR was .72 and .69 for the IM factor. It is predicted that there will be a lack of statistically significant correlation between the Whitlow-MARA and the BIDR.

### *Procedures*

Data was collected from universities, churches, and workplaces in the mid-west, east coast, and southern regions of the United States. Data collection sites were selected based on personal contacts that were pre-existing between the collection site and the data

collectors. Participants were either solicited in person, through one-on-one or group invitation, or over email. Potential participants were informed that this study is looking to understand the values that Black people view as important in a partner and romantic relationship and that their participation will help in understanding this. They were invited to participate in the study and those who were interested in participation reviewed and signed the Informed Consent form. Potential participants were informed that they have the right to decline participation and to discontinue participation at any time. All participants were provided with addressed and stamped envelopes to secure their completed assessment packet in, to assure confidentiality was upheld during the process.

Data for this study was collected by the primary researcher and/or specially trained research assistants. The research assistants included 8 individuals, 3 of which are clinical psychology graduate students and the others are working professionals. All data collectors were involved in a 2 hour training, in which they gained details about the present study, were trained around research protocol such as confidentiality and the importance of informing participants' of their rights. In addition, the research assistants were given three scenarios at different stages of the data collection process, to provide data collectors with a better understanding of the data collection process and how to handle potential problems.

Participants were to complete an assessment packet, which included: (a) Informed Consent Form (Appendix B), (b) Demographics sheet (Appendix C), (c) The Whitlow Measure of Afrocentric Relationship Attitudes (Whitlow- MARA) (Appendix A), (d) Africentrism Scale: A Self Report Measure (Grills & Longshore, 1996) (Appendix D), (e) Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS) (Schumm, et al., 1986) (Appendix E), and (f)

Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) (Paulhus, 1984; 1991) (Appendix F), (d). Only individuals who were involved in a committed romantic relationship at the time of data collection were required to take the KMS. The assessment packet included a total of 131 items and took participants approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Following the return of the assessment packets, debriefing forms were made available for the participants.

## *Results*

### *Preliminary Analysis*

During data entry, data was checked for accuracy after every 5 participants were inputted; all entry errors were corrected. In addition, prior to main analyses, all of the variables of interest were examined through the SPSS 10.0 program for further data entry accuracy, missing values, normality of distributions, and multivariate outliers. Missing items were dealt with by using pairwise deletion. The values for skewness and kurtosis were within normal limits (less than 2). Based on a standard procedure of examining percentiles and standard deviations of total scores on the Whitlow-MARA, 2 outliers and 4 suspected outliers were identified and it was ultimately determined to delete the 2 outliers. Main analyses were conducted on 312 valid participants.

### *Estimates of Factor Structure*

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using principle axis factoring with a maximum likelihood estimation was conducted on the 60 items of the Whitlow-MARA, using EQS 6.1, P.M. (Bentler, 1997). It was hypothesized that 15 items of the Whitlow-MARA would load on only one factor, and each factor would be identified as uncorrelated from the other three. Comparisons between the hypothesized four factor

model and 60 item scale were made using the Chi-Square statistic ( $X^2=5359.01$ ), standardized root mean-square residual (standardized RMR= .279), and root mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA= .083). Additionally, the Bentler-Bonett normed fit index (= .604), the comparative fit index (CFI= .692), the Bollen Fit index (IFI= .693), the McDonald fit index (MFI= .004), the Lisrel GFI fit index (= .618), the LISrel AGFI fit index (= .591) and the root mean-square residual (RMR= .276) were examined. Results on all three primary goodness-of-fit indicators and the secondary indices used suggested that the hypothesized four-factor model was not a good fit for the 60 items of the Whitlow-MARA.

Subsequently, an exploratory factor analysis, using a varimax rotation method, was conducted to identify the most plausible model for the Whitlow-MARA. Visual discrimination was employed by using the scree test in combination with the Kaiser-guttman criterion eigenvalue greater than 1.00. These criteria suggested three factors. For further exploration, three, four, and five factor solutions with both orthogonal and oblimin rotations were conducted. The following criteria were used in retaining a preliminary factor structure: (a) retaining items with factor loadings that exceeded .40 (Floyd & Widaman, 1995) and did not load above .30 on any other factor and (b) retaining factors that contained at least 3 items (Comrey, 1988). The intent was to maintain theoretical, as well as conceptual meaningfulness. The orthogonal three-factor solution was the most statistically sound and reflected the desired conceptual framework and thus, was retained. The orthogonal four-factor and five-factor solutions, as well as the oblimin three, four, and five factor solutions did not meet the statistical criteria

utilized for retaining a factor structure, or seemed to compromise the theoretical and conceptual framework of the items.

After the orthogonal three-factor model was identified as the most ideal model, stricter criteria for item selection was developed (excluding items with loadings  $< .60$ ) in hopes of reducing the number of items from 47 to a smaller number. Thus, the orthogonal three-factor model was reduced to a 28 item assessment tool. Table 1 presents the three factors with their respective items, factor loadings, communality estimates ( $h^2$ ), means, and standard deviations.



Table 1: Items, Factor Loadings, Communality Estimates, Means, and Standard Deviations

Items	Factor Loadings			h <sup>2</sup>	M	SD
	F <sub>1</sub>	F <sub>2</sub>	F <sub>3</sub>			
<b>Factor 1: African American Community Focus; 16 items</b>						
My partner and I should support Black Civic organizations aimed at the future elevation of the African American community	<b>.78</b>	.17	.17	0.66	4.64	1.05
My partner should be dedicated to the future enhancement of the Black community	<b>.76</b>	.15	.21	0.64	4.63	1.03
My partner should be involved in activities that help to strengthen the African American community	<b>.75</b>	.17	.20	0.64	4.79	0.97
My partner should understand the importance of us being active in the advancement and future planning of the African American community	<b>.73</b>	.16	.15	0.58	4.74	1.03
My partner and I should develop long-term goals that will promote the survival and development of the African American community	<b>.71</b>	.17	.17	0.56	4.69	1.07
My partner and I should support Black Universities aimed at the future elevation of the African American community	<b>.69</b>	.14	.15	0.52	4.65	1.07

My partner and I should support Black non-profit organizations aimed at the future elevation of the African American community	<b>.69</b>	.18	.10	0.52	4.66	1.02
My partner and I should take the time to celebrate our accomplishments around the advancement of the African American community, with our families and the American community	<b>.68</b>	.26	-.04	0.54	4.33	1.13
My partner should contribute money toward the building up of Black institutions	<b>.68</b>	.11	.15	0.5	4.06	1.19
My partner should speak out against racial inequalities that will affect the future state of the African American community	<b>.67</b>	.16	.02	0.48	4.67	1.09
My partner and I should praise the accomplishments of other members of the African American community	<b>.66</b>	.26	.13	0.53	4.82	1
My partner and I should serve on influential boards of directors of Black institutions (not limited to schools) to contribute to setting goals for the future of the African American community	<b>.66</b>	.07	.13	0.46	4.15	1.21
My partner should participate in racial movements	<b>.64</b>	.09	.03	0.41	3.74	1.22
My partner should get support and advice from the African American community when s/he needs to	<b>.62</b>	.21	.09	0.43	4.04	1.16
My partner and I should support African Americans who are trying to succeed and celebrate with them when they meet their goals (e.g. Halle Berry, LeBron James, Serena Williams, Ruben Studdard)	<b>.61</b>	.15	-.03	0.39	4.14	1.21

My partner and I should support Black community based fraternities and sororities (e.g. Masons, Eastern Stars) aimed at the future elevation of the African American community	<b>.60</b>	-.03	-.06	0.37	3.65	1.45
<b>Factor 2: Family Advancement and Relationship Unity; 9 items</b>						
My partner and I should share our ideas with one another	.21	<b>.71</b>	.04	0.55	5.23	0.94
I should feel supported by my partner	.11	<b>.70</b>	.29	0.58	5.79	0.53
My partner should be a good caretaker of our family and provide our children with the best possible opportunities	.11	<b>.69</b>	.23	0.54	5.72	0.59
My partner and I should function as a "team"	.11	<b>.69</b>	.18	0.52	5.79	0.55
My partner should respect the emotional reactions that I have	.15	<b>.69</b>	.07	0.5	5.4	0.7
My partner should allow me to accomplish my dreams	.14	<b>.68</b>	.02	0.49	5.65	0.64
My partner and I should celebrate the personal, academic, and professional accomplishments of our children	.15	<b>.65</b>	.11	0.46	5.8	0.6
My partner should be sensitive to my feelings	.15	<b>.65</b>	.23	0.49	5.62	0.64
My partner should know how to comfort me with his/her touch	.16	<b>.61</b>	.15	0.42	5.55	0.6



Factor 1 was named *African American Community Focus* (AACF; 16 items, accounting for 20.9 % of the total variance,  $\alpha = .94$ ). The mean factor score for the AACF was 4.36 on a 6.0 scale, indicating strong endorsement by the sample. The items reflect the importance of the couples' African American community involvement, pride, and contributions that will ultimately lead to the elevation of the African American community. The highest loading item was *My partner and I should support Black Civic organizations aimed at the future elevation of the African American community.*

Factor 2 was named *Family Advancement and Relationship Unity* (FARU; 9 items, accounting for 16.23 % of the variance,  $\alpha = .89$ ). The mean score for this factor was 5.67, indicating very strong endorsement by the sample. The items on this factor are related to the importance of the couples' commitment to the advancement of their family and the unity and equality of their relationship. The highest loading items were *My partner and I should share our ideas with one another* and *My partner should be a good caretaker of our family and provide our children with the best possible opportunities.*

Factor 3 was named *Reliance on a Higher Power* (RHP; 3 items, accounting for 6.5 % of the variance,  $\alpha = .91$ ). The mean score for the RHP factor was 5.56, indicating very strong endorsement by the sample population. Items are reflective of the importance of the couple having reliance on and the presence of a higher power within their relationship. The highest loading item was *The "presence" of a higher power should be involved in my relationship/marriage.*

### *Intercorrelations Among Factors*

The inter-factor correlation coefficients among the three factors of the Whitlow-MARA ranged from .28 to .43. All correlations accounted for 18.5% or less of the shared variance. This suggests that the factors were measuring constructs that were somewhat related but that were also distinct and independent.

### *Estimates of Construct Validity*

Correlation analyses were performed between the Whitlow-MARA and subsequent scales (AS & KMS). Missing data on the AACF and FARU of the Whitlow-MARA, the AS, and the KMS were handled by using a mean imputation for one or two missing data points and deleting the case if it had 3 or more missing data points. On Factor 3 of the Whitlow-MARA, cases were deleted if there were any missing data points. On the BIDR, three missing data points were acceptable for mean imputation to be employed, not just two. Using these criteria, 3 cases from the Whitlow-MARA, 1 case from the AS, and 4 cases from the BIDR were eliminated from the analyses. The KMS was to be completed only by people currently involved in a romantic relationship and thus, there were 201 valid cases.

Pearson product moment correlations between the KMS and the Whitlow-MARA revealed the following: Whitlow-MARA total score ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ), the AACF ( $r = .14, p > .05$ ), FARU ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ), and RHP ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ). Overall, the correlations suggest that the greater the endorsement of and adherence to Afrocentric values within a romantic relationship, the greater the level of marital/relationship satisfaction. Specifically, the total score, as well as the FARU and RHP contribute to an individual's

marital/relationship satisfaction, but not the RHP factor. All of the correlations accounted for 3.4% to 3.6% of the variance on the KMS.

Correlations between the AS and the Whitlow-MARA total score suggested statistically significant relationships: ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ), the AACF ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ), FARU ( $r = .18, p < .04$ ), and RHP ( $r = .23, p < .001$ ). Thus, the higher Afrocentric scores, the more they endorse valuing Afrocentric components within a romantic relationship. All of the correlations accounted for 1.5% to 18.5% of the shared variance.

#### *Estimates of Discriminate Validity*

Pearson correlations were conducted between the BIDR and the Whitlow-MARA total score and the three factor scores (AACF, FARU, RHP); the correlations ranged from .02 to .09, with all  $ps > .05$ . This suggests participants' responses were not highly corresponded with social desirability.

#### *Discussion*

The purpose of this study was to develop an Afrocentrically based relationship inventory that can be used to understand to what extent an individual deems African/African American values vital in the success of a romantic relationship. One reason that this study is so important and necessary is because Black people are estranged from who they are, where they have come from, and what they believe in. The MAAFA and slavery served as the most brutal form of cultural rape. Africans lost connections with their families, culture, values, beliefs, customs, and ultimately, their own identities and values. The process of becoming African American included having our histories ripped from us, our last names taken and replaced with the last names of those who enslaved us, our marriages and families not being recognized or valued, our men

becoming invisible and absent members of our families, etc. (Kambon, 1998; Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 1999). It is my belief that the people that we truly are and the [Afrocentric] values that we truly hold dear dwell inside of us but have been overshadowed, beaten down, hidden out of sight, and in many cases forgotten. My study serves to awaken our awareness to those Afrocentric values, beliefs, customs, and traditions that still live within us, and to increase our understanding that we need to begin valuing and utilizing these values within our relationships in order to make them stronger and more fulfilling. By understand and valuing how both cultural values and other various factors, such as partner compatibility, racial identity, and communication patterns, impact African American relationship functioning, I believe that we will find greater levels of marital satisfaction among African American couples.

Sixty items were originally developed to depict four main areas of relationship functioning (Sacrifice, Inspiration, Visionary, and Victory), based on a Black, heterosexual relationship model developed by Asante (1981). All of the participants were either currently involved in a romantic relationship or had been involved in one in the past. Results of this study yielded a 28-item inventory consisting of three factors. African American Community Focus (AACF) is the largest factor consisting of 16 items. This factor measures the importance of the couples' African American community involvement, pride, and contributions that will ultimately lead to the elevation of the African American community. Participants in this study highly endorsed having an African American community focus as a necessary component to successful African American relationships ( $M= 4.36$ ). This is an important finding because other previously developed inventories have not included this aspect of relationship functioning and its



importance to the enhancement of Black relationships. Instead, studies around African American relationship functioning frequently assert that the success or lack of success of the Black relationship relies on status variables (e.g. socioeconomic status, education level, occupational status), stressors related to racism (e.g. inequalities to educational and job attainment, daily struggles that must be endured as a result of being Black, pressures to overcome the inferior label, and pressure to “keep up with the Jones’), and a disproportionate sex ratio (Darity & Myers, 1995; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995; Billingsley & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1998; McLloyd et al., 2000).

This finding suggests that African Americans continue to approach life from a collectivist perspective, meaning that they value interdependent relationships as opposed to self-serving behaviors and relationships (Kambon, 1998). Patterson (1998) maintained that strong ties within the Black community currently exist among blood and adopted kin and not among spouses or lovers. The results of this study suggest that the African American community involvement plays in the personal satisfaction of Black individuals. Thus, it makes sense that a portion of satisfaction and fulfillment within an African American relationship would include a community focus. As helping professionals, the results of this study suggest that it is important to consider and value the community components that may impact, either negatively or positively, the African American relationship.

The construct of AACF may also be related to ‘harmony control’, which has been related to African American relationship functioning. Harmony control is an approach to control that may be unique to African Americans because of the hostile and racist circumstances Blacks must endure and their strong communal and spiritual orientations

(Constantine, et al., 2003). Specifically, people with high harmony control are willing to adjust to and accept unexpected situations, ever changing roles, relationships with others, and other chance events that may occur, without taking their frustration out on the environment. As it relates to romantic relationships, harmony control has the potential to strengthen alliances and connections with others and to give the individual a support network through which they can meet the needs of others and get some of their own needs met (Asante, 1996; Marling & Fiske, 1999). This construct may partially explain why the African American community focus is endorsed so highly in this research. Future research might examine relationships between harmony control and the AACF factor of the Whitlow-MARA, in particular.

Family Advancement and Relationship Unity (FARU) is the second factor and consists of 9 items. This factor measures the importance of the couples' commitment to the advancement of their family and the unity and equality of their relationship. Some of the items on this factor also reflect the importance of the couple's having equality within their relationship. This idea is a direct contradiction to historical relationship research that upholds Eurocentric values that are supported in American culture, which state that healthy, successful relationships are male-dominated and thus, not egalitarian (Townshend, 1987; Buss, 1989; Weiderman & Allgeier, 1992; Kendrick & Keefe, 1992; Singh, 1993; Stewart, Stinnett, & Rosenfeld, 2000). In addition, Christianity is the dominant religion in the U.S. and its historical documentation (The Bible) and some religious leaders asserts that males/husbands are to be the dominant figures in the household and to make the final decisions. Other religious leaders, however, do not hold this worldview. In African culture, however, relationships are approached from an

equality and shared decision making approach (Kambon, 1998). These results suggest that this Afrocentric quality of equality is another important aspect of African American relationship functioning that has been overlooked and suggests is vital to successful Black relationships.

The third factor is Reliance on a Higher Power (RHP) and consists of three items. This factor measures the importance of the couple relying on a higher power and having the “presence” of a higher power within their relationship. Throughout the years, relationship research has recognized and valued the place that spirituality, and more specifically, religion holds within the healthy relationship. Many researchers, such as Bahr and Chadwick (1985), Hatch et al. (1986), Williams and Lawler, 1998), and Mackey and O’Brien (2005) have focused on the role of religion and religiosity in relationship and marital research, which is important; but few have focused on spirituality as an important component. Even when this approach has been taken, it is often unclear how spirituality is defined or measured (Mattis, 2000). Based on the results of this research, it seems that spirituality is an important construct that contributes to relationship/marital satisfaction when the two people involved in the relationship are “allowed” to define what spirituality means to them. It seems important, however, that the couple believe that the presence of a higher power dwells within their relationship and that there be some reliance on that higher power.

The Whitlow-MARA was correlated with a very global relationship satisfaction measure (Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; Schumm, W.R., et al., 1986); more specifically, the greater the endorsement of and adherence to Afrocentric values within a romantic relationship, the greater the level of satisfaction one experiences within their

relationship. These results seem to suggest that Black couples might benefit from instilling more Afrocentric values in their relationships. In the past century, it has been asserted that Blacks have had to assimilate (the adopting of customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture, the minority groups, for survival purposes, while still holding on to their own values) to the dominant culture (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). The adopting of European cultural norms had positive effects on the socioeconomic status and educational and professional opportunities afforded to Black people, but have seemingly had very damaging effects on the marital and familial structure within the Black community.

Some African Americans have begun to believe that we can attract a partner and sustain a marriage based solely on our economic earning (i.e. the size of our “spinners”, the karat quality of our “grillz”, etc.), our societal status (i.e. the successful doctor who has lost his/her connection with the African American community), our educational attainment (i.e. the Princeton graduate who does not take the time to show the younger members of their families how to achieve what they have), and our ability to be successful despite America’s constant efforts to keep us down (i.e. the Black woman who really believes she “made it” without the help of anyone, not even a higher power). However, this study suggests that Afrocentric values such as commitment to the advancement of the African American community, devotion to family, equality with the relationship, and inclusion of a higher power within the relationship are perceived as important components of a successful Black relationship.

It was also found that the more Afrocentric an individual is, the more likely they are to endorse the importance of Afrocentric values within a relationship. This highlights the idea of acculturation. Gordon (1964) and Wallendorf and Reilly (1983) defined

accommodation as a person altering their internal structure in order to adopt external perceptions and ultimately replace the internal structure with the external. Thus, some people in the African American culture have replaced historical and cultural values with Eurocentric values, in order to survive in America. Billingsley and Morrison-Rodriguez (1998) summarized that current societal norms include valuing individualism and materialism, devaluing social responsibility and accountability, tolerating single-mother homes, and endorsing decreased intimacy through the increase in technological communication. We, as African psychologists, must remember that African Americans do live and function within this society and are impacted by its norms. African Americans truly do have dual value systems (Afrocentric and Eurocentric) that are battling with one another. For instance, Lawson and Thompson (1994) remark that although research shows that Blacks value marriage, maintaining the unity of the family, and being interdependent (Afrocentric component), they are marrying and remarrying at lower rates (Eurocentric component). In the relationship work that we do with African Americans, it is important to consider what values are indeed important to them and if the Afrocentric value system has been “replaced” by a Eurocentric one through the cultural accommodation process.

In terms of the implications of this study, the Whitlow-MARA would seem to have a great deal of potential as an assessment tool. For example, the Whitlow-MARA can be used with couples to determine if like-valued people are partnered together. Just as with the idea of Afrocentrism and ethnic identity being a function of personality and manifesting itself at different levels in different individuals (Phinney, 1992; Grills & Longshore, 1996), people can endorse the importance of Afrocentric values within

relationships at different levels. Helping people to first understand the values that are important to them and then to display and seek out those values in other people is possible to increase the likelihood of a relationship sustaining and being successful. In a clinical setting, the Whitlow-MARA could be a useful tool in assisting with identification of presenting concerns and treatment planning.

The Whitlow-MARA could also be a useful tool in individual counseling. Specifically, this instrument can facilitate the self-exploration process of an individual. This inventory has the potential to stimulate the clients' thoughts around their own value system and get them to thinking about their values in ways that are divergent from what they have been taught to process and understand their value system in the past. In addition, it could be useful in helping them to identify characteristics about potential partners and romantic relationships that they value.

As with all studies, there were several limitations with this study. One limitation was the lack of research that has been conducted in this area and thus, the lack of theoretical foundation, knowledge, and guidance that accompany conducting a pioneering study, such as this one. Second, the sample population serves as a limitation in this study; additionally research is needed with other African American samples. Specifically, it may be difficult for this research to be generalized to certain populations, such as people without a high school education, people living in rural areas, and people residing on the west coast of the United States because these populations did not make up a significant percentage in this research. Third, additional research is needed to check the stability of the factor structure, as well as the stability of the scores, of the Whitlow-MARA. Fourth, the requirements around ethnic identity serve as another limitation of

this study. Specifically, people who self-identified as African American but were not born in the U.S. were excluded from this study. This population of people has very valuable experiences that could greatly inform an investigation such as this one. Additional research is needed to assess the generalizability to these populations. Finally, it is important to mention that, although the items on the Whitlow-MARA and the Africentrism scale were grammatically different items, they contained similar content. This overlap may have attributed to some portion of the correlation that was found between these scales.

In conclusion, this inventory has the potential to be very useful across many aspects of the helping profession. It is important that more research be done using this inventory in order to provide further estimates of validity, as well as provide further proof of its utility within Black relationships and within the Black community. This tool also has implications for the development of Black relationship theory. In researching further the constructs of African American Community Focus, Family Advancement and Relationship Unity, and Reliance on a Higher Power and examining their relationship with Black relationship functioning, additional data analysis may promote very useful and vital theory development. Moreover, further research around the applicability of the Whitlow-MARA to present day African American couples may serve as a helpful tool in conceptualizing the Black relationship experience and developing theory in this area. In addition, the inventory could be broadened to include functioning as an educational tool in helping African Americans, specifically those in the younger generation, to begin to examine and understand what values are important to them in a partner and a relationship.

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Appendix A

Measure of Relationship Attitudes

Directions: The purpose of this inventory is to understand people’s opinions about the qualities that they want in a romantic partner and in a relationship. There are no right or wrong answers; these items focus on people’s preferences and opinions relating to romantic partners and relationships.

You do not have to currently be in or ever have been in a relationship to respond to these statements. If you are currently in a relationship, think about the positive qualities of your partner and relationship, as well as those qualities that you would ideally want in your partner and relationship. If you are not currently in a relationship or have never been in a relationship, think about those qualities that you would ideally want in a partner and relationship.

Please respond to the following statements in terms of how important each item is to you in a romantic relationship. Use the following scale:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Absolutely Unimportant</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Extremely Important</b>

Thank you so much for your participation!

1. My partner should “give back” to the African American community in some way.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
2. My partner should be able to satisfy me, physically and sexually.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
3. My partner should participate in racial movements.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
4. My partner and I should educate our children about the past and present accomplishments of African Americans.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
5. My partner should allow me to support him/her.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
6. My partner should contribute money towards the building up of Black institutions.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
7. My partner and I should take the time to celebrate our personal and professional accomplishments.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
8. My partner and I should participate in the Black history month celebrations.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
9. My partner should include me in his/her decision making process.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
10. My partner should understand the importance of us being active in the advancement and future planning of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Absolutely Unimportant</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Extremely Important</b>

11. My partner and I should give recognition to our personal and professional accomplishments.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
12. My partner and I should celebrate the past accomplishments of African American people (e.g. Harriet Tubman, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.).  
1      2      3      4      5      6
13. My partner should view me as his/her equal in every aspect of life.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
14. My partner and I should support Black churches aimed at the future elevation of the African American community.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
15. My partner should help my family when they need it.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
16. My partner should get support and advice from the African American community when s/he needs to.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
17. My partner and I should instill a sense of responsibility to a higher power in our children.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
18. My partner should respect, embrace, and accept the differences among African American individuals.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
19. My partner and I should publicly give recognition to our personal and professional accomplishments, in order for them to serve as inspiration to the African American community and younger generations.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
20. My partner and I should participate in public celebrations of the accomplishments of African Americans (e.g. graduations, promotion parties).  
1      2      3      4      5      6
21. My partner and I should share our ideas with one another.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
22. My partner and I should support Black Civic organizations aimed at the future elevation of the African American community.  
1      2      3      4      5      6
23. My partner and I should organize celebrations for those people in the African American community, whose accomplishments we are proud of (e.g. graduations party).  
1      2      3      4      5      6

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Absolutely Unimportant</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Extremely Important</b>

24. My partner and I should take the time to celebrate our accomplishments around the advancement of the African American community, with our families and the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
25. My partner should support me by accepting any children that I may have with past partners.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
26. My partner and I should participate in private celebrations of the accomplishments of African Americans (e.g. BBQ's, house parties).  
1    2    3    4    5    6
27. My partner should set a positive example for younger African Americans.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
28. My partner should respect the elders within the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
29. The "presence" of a higher power should be involved in my relationship/marriage.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
30. My partner should strive to provide a "better" life for our family.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
31. My partner and I should support Black community based fraternities and sororities (e.g. Masons, Eastern Stars) aimed at the future elevation of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
32. My partner and I should celebrate the personal, academic, and professional accomplishments of our children.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
33. My partner and I should publicly give recognition to the accomplishments that we have made within the African American community, in order for them to serve as inspiration to younger generations.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
34. My partner and I should support Black businesses in order to promote the survival and development of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
35. My partner should try to understand, in a positive view, my experiences.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
36. My partner and I should function as a "team".  
1    2    3    4    5    6
37. My partner and I should give back to our community, to ensure its future growth.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
38. My partner and I should support Black Universities aimed at the future elevation of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Absolutely Unimportant</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Extremely Important</b>

39. My partner and I should support Black non-profit organizations aimed at the future elevation of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
40. My partner and I should serve on influential boards of directors of Black institutions (not limited to schools) to contribute to setting goals for the future of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
41. My partner and I should support African Americans who are trying to succeed and celebrate with them when they meet their goals (e.g. Halle Berry, LeBron James, Serena Williams, Ruben Studdard).  
1    2    3    4    5    6
42. My partner and I should develop long-term goals that will promote the survival and development of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
43. My partner and I should praise the accomplishments of other members of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
44. My partner should take action against racial injustices that will affect the future treatment of African American people.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
45. My partner should be involved in activities that help to strengthen the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
46. My partner should feel a sense of responsibility to a higher power.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
47. My partner and I should look to a higher power for support during our times of struggle.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
48. My partner and I should celebrate our personal and professional accomplishments among our family and other members of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
49. I should feel supported by my partner.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
50. My partner should be sensitive to my feelings.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
51. My partner and I should approach situations as “one unit”, as opposed to two individuals.  
1    2    3    4    5    6
52. My partner should be dedicated to the future enhancement of the African American community.  
1    2    3    4    5    6

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Absolutely Unimportant</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Unimportant</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Extremely Important</b>

53. My partner should be able to forgive my wrong-doings.

1    2    3    4    5    6

54. My partner should respect the emotional reactions that I have.

1    2    3    4    5    6

55. My partner should speak out against racial inequalities that will affect the future state of the African American community.

1    2    3    4    5    6

56. My partner should allow me to accomplish my dreams.

1    2    3    4    5    6

57. My partner should know how to comfort me with his/her touch.

1    2    3    4    5    6

58. My partner should be a good caretaker of our family and provides our children with the best possible opportunities.

1    2    3    4    5    6

59. My partner and I should strive to teach our children the importance of African American culture.

1    2    3    4    5    6

60. My partner should have a positive relationship with my family.

1    2    3    4    5    6



*Appendix B*

Informed Consent Form

I understand that the purpose of this research is to develop and validate the Whitlow-MARA, which is designed to examine, understand, and assess the African American relationship from an Afrocentric perspective. In other words, the researcher is trying to examine the African American relationship from a perspective that is more aligned with African American thinking, functioning, and emotional experiences. I have been informed that the assessment packet is estimated to take about 45 minutes to complete.

I understand that this instrument is being developed by Natalie M. Whitlow, M.A., for her doctoral dissertation and that she is under the advisement of P. Paul Heppner, Ph.D., and under the sponsorship of the Department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

I understand that confidentiality will be strictly upheld in this study and that the written and verbal reporting of any results from this study will be provided without the use of participant's name or identifying information.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to refuse or discontinue participation in this study, at any time, with no penalty or repercussions.

I understand that my participation in this study is not expected to involve any risk greater than those encountered in every day life.

I understand that I may contact the primary researcher, Natalie M. Whitlow, M.A., at (573) 424-5060 or nmw2b7@mizzou.edu, if I have questions about the study, would like updates about the study, or would like to request that she present her research to a group of people. I also understand that I may also contact her dissertation supervisor, Dr. P. Paul Heppner at (573) 882-3523 or HeppnerP@missouri.edu. If I have any questions regarding my rights as a research participant, I may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C

**Demographics Sheet**

1. Gender:     Female     Male
  
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Educational Level:  no H.S. diploma     G.E.D.     H.S. graduate  
# of years after high school \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Household Income:  \$0-\$10,000     \$10,000-\$20,000  
                           \$20,000-\$40,000     \$40,000-\$60,000     \$60,000-\$80,000  
                           \$80,000-\$100,000     above \$100,000
  
5. Religious Affiliation (optional): \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Race/Ethnicity:  African American/Black     Caribbean     African  
                           Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Do you currently live in the United States?  Yes     No
  
8. Were you born in the U.S.?  Yes     No
  
9. If no to #8, were you born a U.S. citizen?  Yes     No
  
10. If no to #9, how long have you lived in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_
  
11. Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship?  Yes     No
  
12. If yes to #11, how long have you been involved in this relationship? \_\_\_\_\_
  
13. If no to # 11, how long did your longest relationship last, if you had one? \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix D

Africentrism Scale: A Self Report Measure

*Instructions:* Please respond to the following statements as honestly as you can, using the following scale:

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in how you truly feel about these statements.

1. African Americans should make their community better than it was when they found it.

1                      2                      3                      4

2. The problems of other African Americans are their problems, not mine.

1                      2                      3                      4

3. The unity of the African race is very important to me.

1                      2                      3                      4

4. I am more concerned with reaching my own goals than with working for the African American community.

1                      2                      3                      4

5. I have very little faith in African American people.

1                      2                      3                      4

6. I owe something to African Americans who suffered before me.

1                      2                      3                      4

7. African Americans need to stop worrying so much about “the community” and take care of their own needs.

1                      2                      3                      4

8. I am doing a lot to improve my neighborhood.

1                      2                      3                      4

9. The success I have had is mainly because of me, not anyone else.

1                      2                      3                      4

10. I have more confidence in white professionals, like doctors and teachers, than in African American professionals.

1                      2                      3                      4

11. African Americans should build and maintain their own communities.  
1                      2                      3                      4
12. I must do all I can to restore African Americans to their position of respect in the world.  
1                      2                      3                      4
13. I make it a point to shop at African American businesses and use African American owned services.  
1                      2                      3                      4
14. It hurts me when I see another African American person discriminated against.  
1                      2                      3                      4
15. It is important that African American people decide for themselves what to be called and what their needs are.  
1                      2                      3                      4

*Appendix E*

**Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale**

**ONLY COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP!**

Instructions: Respond to the following questions about your relationship/marriage using the following scale:

<b>1</b> Extremely Dissatisfied	<b>2</b> Very Dissatisfied	<b>3</b> Somewhat Dissatisfied	<b>4</b> Mixed	<b>5</b> Somewhat Satisfied
	<b>6</b> Very Satisfied	<b>7</b> Extremely Satisfied		

1. How satisfied are you with your relationship/marriage?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

2. How satisfied are you with your partner?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your partner?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7









## *Appendix H*

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a marked increase in the divorce rate in this country (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993). This alarming statistical information also holds true within the Black community. As children, we learn of and are prepared for the two “most important” tasks in life: (a) finding [career] success and fulfillment and (b) finding a mate in life. As African Americans are being slighted in one area (career attainment and success) they are having difficulty succeeding in the other area (finding and retaining a life mate). What can be done to regain successful mate selection strategies within the Black community? In addition, how can we begin to accurately and appropriately understand and address the issues that the African American couple may be facing, in order to help their relationships to endure? It is this author’s assertion that, when examining and assessing the African American relationship, there is a dire need to consider Afrocentric qualities. Historically, there has been a dominant emphasis on Eurocentric ideals in relationship assessment strategies and therapeutic approaches, which at best, may only provide a partial understanding of African American relationships. It is this author’s belief that it may be helpful to utilize an Afrocentric perspective to more fully understand the important values in African American relationships.

This paper begins by providing a brief history of relationships in the United States. Specifically, the historical and current purposes of dating and mate selection are examined, from a white and Black perspective. The next section addresses the importance and necessity of relationship research and consequently, the present need to

develop new instruments to more fully assess and understand important dimensions of African American relationships. The focus is on societal effects of marital discord, separation, and divorce. In this section, close attention is given to the psychological effects of marital discord, separation, and divorce on those involved in the marriages, as well as the children of these unions.

In order to ascertain the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of Eurocentric based approaches to examining the African American relationship, three relationship assessment tools are examined, discussed and critiqued in the next section. Also, the analysis of commonly used relationship inventories indicates that none of the *most widely* used relationship satisfaction measures considers or incorporates the Afrocentric perspective. I then focus on the need for and importance of emphasizing Afrocentric qualities when assessing the Black relationship, utilizing Afrocentric perspectives from Black Psychology, and relate them to African American relationships.

Finally, this paper is concluded by discussing the benefits that the Whitlow-MARA could have for the field of counseling psychology, African American's, and society, as a whole.

### History of Relationships

Historically, mate selection was not based on personal selection of desired characteristics in a prospective mate. Rather, it was based on similar social and economic status, personal and familial needs, and well being. In centuries past, it was a social "rule" that people from similar backgrounds (i.e. social status, educational level, economic status, political affiliation, etc.) would marry one another. Even among those people of lower social and economic status, it was desired to marry a person whose

family had the highest or most promising status within that particular social and economic bracket (Hansen, 1977). Within the United States, this mate selection practice was conducted by white people and therefore, thought to be Eurocentric in nature.

Dating, as is currently referred to, did not occur in the United States until around the 1920's, about 80 years ago. At this time, dating became a function of recreation, socialization, status, and courtship and has replaced most other forms of mate selection in our society (Hansen, 1977; Whyte, 1990). With the occurrence of dating, as a form of mate selection, a number of scholars became interested in studying and discovering those characteristics that influence mate selection, as well as relationship satisfaction.

Waller (1937) conducted one of the earliest studies on mate selection with a college student sample of men and women. Waller hypothesized, and his research supported the notion, that mate selection is largely based on external characteristics (e.g. monetary possessions) rather than on internal characteristics (e.g. intelligence, dependability, consideration, etc.). However, as cited in Hansen (1977), later findings by Smith (1952), demonstrated that personality traits, or internal characteristics, were considered more important than possessions. One limitation of the Waller study, and other early studies in this area, however, is the absence of physical qualities as possible desired characteristics in a prospective mate.

More recently, researchers began including physical qualities in their studies. In the area of mate selection, many aspects of sexual selection (choosing a mate based on physical qualities and reproductive value) has been the most popular and extensively researched and written about explanation for mate selection. Sherman and Alcock (2001) and Crawford and Krebs (1998) are among more recent researchers who have taken

interest in this area. For example, Fischer (1995) conducted a study among college students at a southeastern university. He hypothesized that men would generally endorse sex-related qualities and would select sex-related partners. He defined “sex-related” as qualities that refer to a person’s physical attractiveness and implied sexual availability. The results of Fischer’s study supported his hypothesis, showing that men seem to look more at physical components, as opposed to external and internal characteristics (as defined on the previous page), when selecting a mate. Buss (1985; 1994) also found that men value physical attractiveness when choosing a partner for a short-term or long-term relationship.

Studies have found that men see “reproductive value” (e.g. physical attractiveness) as an important characteristic for prospective mates, while women value “resource acquisition ability” (e.g. monetary earning capacity) as important (Stewart, Stinnett, & Rosenfeld, 2000). Similarly, Kendrick, Gabrielidis, Keefe, and Cornelius (1996), Buss (1989), Townshend (1987), Weiderman and Allgeier (1992), Kendrick and Keefe (1992), and Singh (1993) discovered that women place more value on monetary earnings because of their need to be protected, while men place more value on physical attractiveness (e.g. attractiveness, sexuality, body features) because of their need to reproduce, which are both “needs” that seem to be a function of a Eurocentrically based society. In short, the prior findings indicate the importance of external characteristics in American society.

Among African Americans, the mate selection process has proven to be somewhat different than that of Europeans (Parmer, 1998). Historically, for African Americans in the United States, slavery limited the mate selection process. While European Americans

were choosing mates based on similar status and eliminating mates based on dissimilar status, African Americans were unable to rely on this method of mate selection. For slaves, there was really no variation in economic status, and social status was only differentiated by the “field nigger” and “house nigger” roles. Those slaves who worked in the house carried out more socially acceptable roles, had a different type of relationship with the “master” and other white people, and were provided better clothes to wear, which seemingly elevated their status in society and among other slaves. In addition, “house niggers” were most oftentimes mulattos, meaning they carried more European features (e.g. lighter skin, softer and straighter hair, smaller facial features, etc.), which came to be paired with higher social status (Ross, 1997). Therefore, it was more desirable to select a lighter-skinned mate because selecting them brought higher levels of status and respect to the darker-skinned mate, and more importantly, to the child of that union. Studies conducted during the 1940’s through the 1960’s confirmed the notion that lighter-skinned African Americans received more respect from and better opportunities in society. For example, Drake and Cayton (1962) found that white people do favor light-skinned Blacks because they most closely resemble white people. Therefore, lighter-skinned Blacks were provided with higher job positions and better [economic, educational, social, etc.] opportunities than were darker-skinned Blacks.

There have been a number of studies conducted to probe the preference level of African Americans for lighter-skinned mates. For example, a study done by Ross (1997) showed that, as compared to Black women, Black men were more likely to prefer a lighter-skinned mate. Conversely, in a study conducted by Bond and Cash (1992), it was discovered that 14% of Black men and 27% of Black women prefer lighter-skinned

mates. It could be hypothesized that Black people adopted this way of thinking after being indoctrinated into white culture through slavery. Thus, this form of mate selection (i.e. valuing external qualities) is one that is believed to be Eurocentric in nature, borrowed by the African American who was struggling to find her/his place in an unfamiliar culture.

Moreover, in the United States, where European culture is dominant, societal influences such as media and socialization continue to perpetuate the idea that lighter skin leads to higher social and economic status (Goode, 1982). It has been asserted, however, that Black awareness, which includes the awareness of the existence and importance of Afrocentric qualities, decreases the chance that Blacks will endorse the notion that lighter skin is better (Hughes & Hertzler, 1990; Keith & Herring, 1991). This seems to decrease the chance that Black people will endorse external characteristics (e.g. monetary possessions, physical attractiveness) as largely important in the mate selection process. The preference for a lighter-skinned mate appeared to be so because lighter skin equated to higher social and economic status. Thus, the rejection of preference for lighter-skinned mates seems to equate to the rejection of such external characteristics as higher social and economic status. Therefore, a lack of preference for lighter skin, and thus, higher social and economic status, means that these African Americans who are rejecting of these external characteristics are valuing more Afrocentric characteristics in a prospective mate. More empirical research is needed to investigate these relationships.

As an extension of the work with mate selection, researchers also became interested in uncovering levels of dating and marital satisfaction among couples. They attempt to accomplish this by using the external variables discovered from mate selection

studies (e.g. monetary possessions, social mobility, etc.), as well as variables centered around interpersonal interactions within the relationship, such as personality compatibility/incompatibility.

During the past three decades, numerous studies have been conducted to support the notion that Black couples are seemingly less satisfied with their romantic partners than their white counterparts. Several researchers have suggested that Blacks have greater exposure to stressors than white's, and this added stress places additional strain on the Black relationship (Broman, 1993; Farley & Allen, 1987; Clark-Nicolas & Gray-Little, 1991; South & Lloyd, 1992). Overwhelmingly, studies have focused most heavily on the idea that the lack of economic stability has the greatest effect on a Black couples' level of marital/relationship satisfaction and that there is a positive correlation between divorce, separation, and marital dissatisfaction among Black couples and lower levels of economic stability (Bernard, 1966; Cutright, 1971; Goode, 1956; Kephart, 1955; Monahan, 1955; Udry, 1966; Renne, 1970; Scanzoni, 1970; Williamson, 1954; Lawson and Thompson, 1995; Clark-Nicolas and Gray-Little, 1991; Broman, 1993; Farley & Allen, 1987). Conversely, it is important to mention, however, that there have been studies conducted that do not support the notion that there is an adverse relationship between economic stability and marital satisfaction (Brinkerhoff & White, 1978; Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Glick, 1988). Perhaps researchers in the past have been focusing on the wrong factors (i.e. external characteristics) in trying to understand Black relationship functioning and, on a more specific level, in trying to assess level of relationship satisfaction among the Black couple. Correcting this seemingly flawed approach to assessing African American relationship satisfaction is so

important because it gives society, the Black community, and Black couples and inaccurate message about satisfaction levels in Black relationships, the “prognosis” of Black relationships, and values that are important in Black relationships.

In sum, this section has identified the changing face of dating and relationships within our society. Just as the purposes and meanings of dating and relationships have changed in the last century, so have the roles and identities of the African American individual. Blacks are no longer restricted to adhering solely to the desires of whites and their cultural beliefs. However, assessment of African American relationship functioning is still greatly affected by Eurocentric perspective, its values, and commonly used relationship assessment inventories.

#### Effects of Separation and Divorce

Why is it necessary to understand and address issues related to marital quality? One possible answer could be because marital discord, separation, and divorce has been proved to have tremendous and long lasting effects on the well being of all individuals involved and inevitably has substantial effects on societal well being as a whole. The effects of marital discord, separation, and divorce have become obvious in such areas of American life as family life, and psychological and emotional health, among many other areas (Fagan & Rector, 2000). Also, these severe and long lasting effects seem to be suffered most by those two individuals involved in the marriage, as well as the children of these marriages. Therefore, the psychological and emotional impact that these issues may have on the aforementioned individuals will be explored and addressed.

Our society, projects the idea that the two-parent home is the best environment in which to raise children. Thus, being a child of divorce can influence negative images and



expectations about these children, by others in society, (Amato, 1991). In fact, a number of studies have found that family structure does indeed dictate peoples' perceptions and expectations of children (Bryan, Coleman, Ganong, & Bryan, 1986; Santrock, 1975). Another study showed that children of divorce are expected to have heightened behavioral problems, academic difficulties, and difficulty adjusting socially, personally, and interpersonally (Marotz-Baden, Adams, Bueche, Munro, & Munro, 1979). Because of such inadequate (and unfair) misconceptions, children of divorce may not be afforded the same academic, social, or leisure opportunities as children in a two-parent home. The lack of these opportunities may serve as a personal, professional, and social handicap as these children grow older, thereby restricting the lives of these individual and inflicting psychological and emotional damage.

Aside from how society views children of divorce, it is important to discuss the direct psychological effects that may occur for a child of divorce. Glenn and Kramer (1985) conducted a study assessing the psychological well being of white children of divorce. Specifically, they examined eight dimensions of psychological well-being, seven of which were found to be negatively affected by parental divorce. Amato and Keith (1991) conducted a similar study with 15 categories and found that all 15 categories were negatively affected by parental divorce. Other studies have also found that negative emotional and psychological effects result in children of divorced parents (Fagan & Rector, 2000). Unfortunately, few other researcher studies, if any, have examined the psychological effects of divorce within the Black community. Amato and Keith (1991) however, speculated that although parental marital discord, separation, and divorce appears to be strongly linked to psychological distress in children of these unions,

children of color may be less vulnerable than white children to the adverse psychological effects of these situations. One possible explanation for this phenomenon could be that children of color, especially Black children, are more resilient than white children due to the life experiences with racism and adversity that they and their family members have to endure. Results of a study by Barrett (2003) however, suggest that the emotional and psychological effects of marital dissolution are not weaker for African Americans; rather, the extent and occurrence of the effects vary by race.

Another popular line of research within the “effects of divorce” research area is on the link between marriage, happiness, and depression leading to suicide. Findings indicate that marital status has predicted similar effects on both suicide and happiness. Therefore, as previous studies have shown, married people are less suicide prone and happier than unmarried people are. Divorced people are the least happy of widowed, never-married, or married people (Tepperman, 1994; Michalos, 1991), which, according to Singhe and Tepperman (1994) suggests that divorced people are more prone to suicide and suicide attempts. In fact, studies have shown that suicide rates are the highest among the divorced and incidentally, that divorce shows a close association with the rate of suicide. In addition, numerous studies have found a link between marital status and suicide, showing that marriage serves as a buffer against suicide and that the divorced had the highest suicide rates (Fuse, 1980; Stack, 1980; Stack, 1989; Smith, Mercy, & Conn, 1988). This information provides evidence that marital status, particularly divorce and suicide, share a relationship.

Stack (1990) found that the disparity between the suicide rates among divorced versus married persons has decreased in recent years, since divorce has become

increasingly more common and acceptable. However, the rates of suicide among the divorced are still substantially higher than that of married people, especially considering the widening acceptance of divorce. Stack and Wasserman (1995) examined the effect of marriage on suicide ideology among African Americans. They found that being married lowers pro-suicide ideology among Blacks. It was hypothesized that the social kinship, social network, and social support, provided through marriage, is what makes marital status a determining factor of suicide ideology within the Black community (Henry & Short, 1954; Durkheim, 1966; as cited in Stack & Wasserman, 1995).

The research in this section identified an understanding of the possible psychological effects of marital discord, separation, and divorce. Specifically, the immediate and long-term psychological effects of marital discord, separation, and divorce on the children of these unions were discussed. Moreover, it was found that these children are haunted by [inappropriate] societal stereotypes, as well as emotional and psychological effects that can endure into their adulthood. In addition, the review identified the psychological effects of marital discord, separation, and divorce on those individuals involved in the marriage. It was found that overall married people seem to be the happiest, while divorced people tend to be the most depressed and have the highest suicide rates. This information provides a strong basis as to the importance of relationships, and consequently relationship research.

#### Analysis of Relationship Assessment Tools

In the years since the popularity and presence of relationship research has increased, researchers have developed a number of relationship/marital assessments. The focus of these assessments has varied over the decades (e.g. relationship/marital

satisfaction, adjustment, happiness, stability/instability, positive feelings, passion, etc.).

The following section will examine three of the most frequently used relationship/marital assessments (Relationship Assessment Scale, Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and Index of Marital Satisfaction) for the main purpose of assessing the instruments' consideration and inclusion of the Afrocentric perspective, and thus, the adequacy of assessing African American relationships.

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) was authored by Susan S. Hendrick and is a well known and widely used seven-item instrument developed to measure relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988; Corcoran & Fischer, 2000). This instrument is a brief, easy to administer and score measure, intended to assess satisfaction in all types of intimate relationships, not just marriages. In a clinical sense, this measure is thought to provide clinicians with a good estimate of relationship satisfaction. Norms for the RAS were developed using two college student samples: (a) 235 undergraduates enrolled in psychology courses at a southwestern university (118 males and 117 females) and (b) 57 dating couples at that same southwestern university. In reference to reliability, the RAS is reported to have very good internal consistency, with an alpha of .86. No data was reported on stability. In reference to validity, the RAS was reported to have good concurrent validity, demonstrating significant correlations with a number of scales on the Love Attitudes Scale and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). The RAS also reported good predictive validity, demonstrating an ability to significantly discriminate between couples who subsequently stayed together or broke up.

In examining the RAS, there seems to be an exclusion of Afrocentric qualities when developing the items for this instrument. Moreover, the RAS appears to have an

individualistic approach, as opposed to a collectivist one, as is the basis of the Afrocentric perspective. Specifically, this instrument is focused solely on assessing the individuals' thoughts about their partner or their immediate relationship, as opposed to also assessing the collectivist and communal aspects that may also effect and influence the relationship (i.e. spirituality, family relations, interest in the survival of their group, etc.). Articles discussing the development and introduction of this measure did not mention the consideration of the Afrocentric perspective (e.g. spirituality, harmony with nature, survival of the group, inclusion/synthesis, collective responsibility, interdependence, empathetic understanding, group-ness, sameness-commonality, the value of rhythm, and emotionality).

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was developed by Graham B. Spanier and is a widely used 32-item measure designed to assess the relationship quality of cohabitating or married couples (Spanier, 1976; Corcoran & Fischer, 2000). The DAS was designed to measure a number of areas: (a) General measure of relationship satisfaction, (b) Dyadic Satisfaction (DS), (c) Dyadic Cohesion (DCoh), (d) Dyadic Consensus (DCon), and (e) Affectional Expression (AE). Norms for the DAS were developed on a married sample (n=218) and divorced sample (n=94). The internal consistency for the general measure of relationship satisfaction was impressive, with an alpha of .96. The internal consistency for the subscales varied from "fair" to "excellent": (a) DS= .94, (b) DCoh= .81, (c) DCon= .90, and (d) AE= .73. The DAS shows known-group validity by distinguishing between married and divorced couples on each item. The DAS also has evidence of concurrent validity, correlating with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (Locke & Wallace, 1959).

The DAS appears to unintentionally incorporate some very basic Afrocentric concepts into its assessment, although they seem to include some general ideas around the Afrocentric perspective, they stay on the surface and do not probe for specific Afrocentric values. For example, the DAS probes for a couples' agreement/disagreement levels around: (a) Matters of Recreation, (b) Religious Matters, (c) Friends, (d) Philosophy of Life, (e) Ways of Dealing with In-Laws, (f) Aims, Goals, and Things Believed to be Important, and (g) Leisure Time Activities. Specifically, when questioning individuals on the level of agreement/disagreement in their relationships about Matters of Recreation and Leisure Time Activities, these could be interpreted by someone working from an Afrocentric perspective to have an undertone of the Afrocentric qualities Harmony with Nature and Survival of the Group. However, these items do not probe the couples' agreement/disagreement level on acting in ways to promote mother earth (Harmony with Nature/Matters of Recreation) or engaging in activities that are beneficial to their community (Survival of the Group/Leisure Time), for instance. When questioning individuals on the level of agreement/disagreement in their relationship around Philosophy of Life and Aims, Goals, and Things Believed Important, these are two specific items that appear to have an undertone of the overall stance of the Afrocentric perspective, which is collectivism. However, the DAS does not specifically probe for a couples' agreement/disagreement level on collectivism (Collectivism/Philosophy of Life) and behaviors born out of holding a collectivist view (Collectivism/Aims, Goals, and Things Believed Important). The instruments' assessment of a couple's level of agreement/disagreement around Religious Matters seems to have an undertone of the Afrocentric quality Spirituality. The DAS does not,

however, probe for couples' agreement/disagreement levels around spirituality (Spirituality/Religious Matters). Finally, the instruments' assessment of a couple's level of agreement/disagreement around Friends and Dealing with In-Laws seem to have an undertone of the Afrocentric quality Interdependence. Once again, however, the DAS neglects to specifically probe a couple's agreement/disagreement level around the importance and effect that communal and familial relationships have on individual and relationship development (Interdependence/Friends and Dealing with In-laws). Thus, the DAS, comparatively, appears to have a more collectivist focus in its items but does not specifically focus on the underlying values of an Afrocentric viewpoint.

The Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) was authored by Walter W. Hudson and is a widely used 25-item instrument designed to measure the magnitude of a problem that one spouse has in her/his marital relationship (Hudson, 1997; Corcoran & Fischer, 2000). The IMS is often used clinically to indicate two occurrences: (a) The presence of a clinically significant problem (indicated by a score of 30 or higher) and (b) The presence of severe stress with a clear possibility that some type of violence could be used to deal with this stress (indicated by a score of 70 or higher). This instrument was normed on single and married individuals, clinical and non-clinical populations, and high school and college students, as well as non-students. Although the author of the IMS reports the norming sample being primarily white with a small inclusion of Japanese and Chinese Americans, he informs us that actual norms are not available. In reference to reliability, the IMS has a mean alpha of .96, indicating excellent internal consistency. Also, with a reported score of 4.00, the Standard Error of Measurement appears to be extremely low. In addition, this instrument reported excellent short-term stability, with a two-hour test-

retest correlation of .96. In terms of validity, the IMS has excellent concurrent validity (correlating significantly with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test) (Locke & Wallace, 1959), very good known-groups validity (accurately discriminating between couples known to have marital problems and those known not to), and good construct validity (correlating poorly with measures with which it should not correlate and significantly correlating with measures with which it should, such as sexual satisfaction and marital problems).

Upon examination of the IMS's items, it is evident that there is no inclusion of an Afrocentric paradigm in these items. This instrument, too, seems to stay on the "surface" when assessing the issues affecting an individual's satisfaction level in their relationship. Specifically, this instrument does a fair job at probing the participant for indicators of emotional or situational factors that may cause an increase or decrease in the participant's level of satisfaction within their relationship. However, the items do not probe for the underlying actions that cause the individual to ultimately be satisfied or dissatisfied with their relationship. For instance, one item states "I feel that I cannot rely on my partner", from an Afrocentric approach it would be appropriate and perhaps more useful in many instances to probe for *why* the individual feels they cannot rely on their partner rather than simply having them state that they cannot rely on them. For example, considering the Afrocentric quality of Interdependence, the item may be reworded to say, "I feel that I cannot rely on my partner to help me deal with any issues that may be facing my immediate and extended family". Therefore, this individual is stating a level of dissatisfaction not only with the relationship but also with the absence of the quality of Interdependence, within their partner. Having items that specifically probe for such



qualities can also provide the participant with a greater understanding of what values are important for their mate to embody, as well as those that they value and want to “market” to prospective mates, within themselves.

This section was provided in order for us to examine a number of frequently used instruments for couples to determine their level of consideration and inclusion of the Afrocentric perspective. It was also identified how these instruments could possibly benefit from considering and including the Afrocentric paradigm when developing their items.

In short, of the three instruments examined, only one (Dyadic Adjustment Scale) appeared to have some similarity to an Afrocentric paradigm and this consideration appeared to only be to a small degree. The other two scales (Relationship Assessment Scale and the Index of Marital Satisfaction) do not seem to assess relationships by utilizing an Afrocentric way of understanding. It was from these two scales that it was possible to glean the perceived usefulness of including Afrocentric qualities and ideals. Specifically, three benefits of including Afrocentric ideology were identified: (a) to gain an understanding of *why* the relationship is in the state that it is in, whether that be “good” or “bad, (b) to provide the participant with a clearer understanding of the values that are important for a mate to have, and (c) to provide the participant with a better understanding of what qualities they embody themselves or wish to embody, in order to better represent themselves to prospective mates. In addition, it is important to mention that none of the relationship assessments listed in Corcoran & Fischer (2000) were relationship attitudes assessments, which is what the present scale development project is focused on.

## Need for Emphasizing Afrocentric Qualities

As is clear from this review, there has been a traditional reliance on the Eurocentric worldview in organizing, developing, and maintaining research and theoretical viewpoints. Even with the strong multicultural movement that has occurred within the field of counseling Psychology, the central focus of examining behavior continues to lie within the Eurocentric perspective. This approach to examining human behavior has not excluded the Black population, although they have been the most researched non-white group. Asante (1998) expressed his extreme fascination with the idea that researchers actually believe that the Eurocentric experience can be transferred to the Black experience, as a way of understanding Black functioning or any aspect of Black life.

This strategy of applying the Eurocentric perspective to the African American experience is one that is also used when examining the Black relationship. Focusing on intimate relationships within the Black community in psychological research is not a new phenomenon. However, the vast majority of this body of research is pathology-centered, claiming that Black romantic relationships are plagued by conflicts and problems, based on their differences from white culture (Frazier, 1957; Glazier & Moynihan, 1965; Farley & Hermalin, 1971; Thomas & Sillen, 1972). These references are so dated because more recent research does not state in such a clear way that Black relationships are plagued with problems, but it is the foundation that these studies laid that have present day researchers approaching Black relationship research from a pathology perspective. Thus, this type of pathology-centered research assumes that Black romantic relationships are

rooted in the same values, beliefs, and practices as white romantic relationships Bell, Bouie, & Baldwin, 1990).

Asante (1987) and Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin (1990) have asserted that all Black male-female relationships should be, and are naturally, based within Afrocentricity. That is, it is important to approach, examine, and understand the Black relationship from a “frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person (Asante, 1991). In other words, it is of utmost importance to place African ideals and values at the center of any analysis of the African American relationship (Asante, 1998). The aforementioned description deals with examining the African American experience from an African perspective, which includes values, culture, traditions, contributions, and so forth, that originated from the African continent. Asante (1987) maintained that Afrocentricity is “concerned with African people being subjects of historical and social experiences rather than objects in the margins in European experiences”. Moreover, the use of a Eurocentric perspective to gain an understanding of any African phenomenon is in and of itself contradictory. Historically, white culture within the United States has been invasive, denying African Americans of their true African culture and heritage, miseducating them as to what it means to be African and originate from Africa (Adeleke, 2001). Therefore, the use of the Afrocentric perspective to understand African phenomena is a logical means to understanding the African American because it recognizes, praises, and values those characteristics that are unique to and intrinsic within the African American.

Being aware of and utilizing these Afrocentric components may be important for Black people in search of a mate, Black couples, or researchers attempting to understand

and enhance African American relationships. This is so because they encompass the central value of the African continent and therefore, African American existence, which is a *collective* appreciation, approach to, and assertion toward life, as opposed to an individualistic one, which is central to many European cultures. Therefore, to fully understand the Black relationship, it is necessary for couples to approach them and researchers to examine them from an Afrocentric perspective. Moreover, examining the Black relationship from an Afrocentric worldview may help to identify critically important African ideals at the center of African American relationships. In essence, it is crucial to consider, value, and utilize the African context in order to understand present day African American relationships in the United States. Africans were forced to stop appreciating and valuing (but not innately desiring to function within an Afrocentric framework) their Afrocentric qualities and were forced to adopt Eurocentric ideals. However, it is now society's responsibility to displace Eurocentric ways of functioning within the African American and consciously replace them with Afrocentric values (Mazama, 2001).

Adeleke (2001) argued that African Americans African heritage and culture were ripped from them during the Maafa (the African Holocaust, when Africans were brought to America on slave ships). He maintains that African Americans are victims of a de-Africanization process, causing them to have forgotten how to be African, which began with the enslavement of Africans by Europeans and continues today. This process forces African Americans to forget and consequently be unaware of their African history and heritage. It is America's duty to restore the African heritage of all African Americans because America is what stole it from them in the first place and replaced it with

European ideals. As a result of this substitution, African Americans are now unconsciously functioning within the Eurocentric paradigm and need help in reverting back to functioning within their own, natural paradigm. Thus, African American male-female relationships may be functioning within a foreign worldview, which may increase stress and alienation within their relationships, making it more difficult to maintain the relationships. With this assertion, it seems as if the de-Africanization process may be taking its toll on all sectors of African American life, including, but not limited to, the male-female relationship. Quite simply, African Americans are valuing the wrong ideals, Eurocentric ideals, in relationships. Society needs to begin to make African Americans aware of Afrocentric qualities and they need to begin illuminating those characteristics within themselves, seeking out those qualities in prospective mates, valuing those qualities in romantic partners, and utilizing those characteristics when facing stressful times in their relationships.

Mazama (2001) stated that “Afrocentricity contends that our main problem as African people is our usually unconscious adoption of the Western worldview and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks”. Thus, as African American intimate relationships are concerned, Black couples may be unaware and not being made aware of the fact that there are intrinsically valued Afrocentric characteristics within all Black people that they should be seeking out and valuing in prospective mates, as well as displaying and functioning within their for prospective mates.

Among instruments developed to measure relationship satisfaction, relationship attitudes, etc., there has been little to no cultural consideration within item development (Staples, 1971; Nobles, 1974; Allen, 1978). Most, if not all, of these types of

assessments focus on issues that are central to the Eurocentric perspective (Nobles, 1974; Dixon, 1976; Akbar, 1981; Baldwin, 1985), such as the communication process, gender-role differences, status, and egalitarian relationship structure (Cazenave, 1983; McAdoo, 1983; Fairchild, 1985). (A critique of existing relationship assessments will be explored to a greater degree in a later section). Therefore, it is extremely important that the development of a relationship assessment that focuses on the Afrocentric values and the Afrocentric worldview occurs immediately. We will now gain a better understanding of the Afrocentric perspective and how its usefulness to understanding the African American relationship has been conceptualized, previously.

Previous researchers and scholars have articulated the usefulness of understanding the African American relationship from an Afrocentric perspective. From a global perspective, Kambon (1998) and Asante (1987) proposed that there are certain values that encompass the Afrocentric worldview. Specifically, ten Afrocentric values seem to be of critical importance, within the Black community, when seeking out, and preparing oneself to be, a prospective mate, will be examined. Those values include: (a) Spirituality, which can be defined as a subjective personal experience where an individual is involved in the internalization and expression of positive values, has a sense of intimacy, has a relationship with a higher being, and has a willingness to live according to their own religious beliefs (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Mattis, 2000), (b) Survival of the group, which includes but is not limited to one's investment to behave in a manner that will be beneficial to the entire Black community, not just single individuals, (c) Inclusiveness/Synthesis, which includes but is not limited to one never being exclusionary to any of the members of their community, regardless of their beliefs,

actions, etc., (d) Collective responsibility, which includes but is not limited to one understanding that the repercussions of a single persons actions inevitably effect and are the fault of the entire community, (e) Interdependence, which includes but is not limited to ones understanding that the life of every person in the community relies on every other person in the community, (f) Empathetic understanding, which includes but is not limited to one having the goodness of heart to try and understand, in the most positive view, the situation of another, even if the person has never experience the situation themselves, (g) Group-ness, which deals but is not limited to ones understanding that they are, first and foremost, a member of their community, (h) Sameness-commonality, which includes but is not limited to ones understanding that, as Africans, they all share a common culture, perception, attitude, and predisposition that cause their experiences and desires to share a similarity, (i) The value of rhythm, which includes but is not limited to the understanding that rhythm, such as the beat of a drum, represents the beating of African hearts, which all beat on the same tune and keep all people of African descent aligned with one another, and (j) Emotionality, which includes but is not limited to ones awareness of, understanding of, proper use of, and fearlessness of the wide range of emotional responses that Africans encompass.

More specific to this particular research, Asante (1980; 1981) developed an Afrocentrically based model of heterosexual relationships that defines healthy Black relationships as being governed within an Afrocentric foundation. This model emphasizes that the foundation of the Black relationship should lie within Afrocentric cultural values. Specifically, Asante believes that the spiritual and intellectual commitment of the Black couple should not only be focused on themselves and their

families, but on the entire African American community (Bell, Bouie, & Baldwin, 1990). According to this model, there are four major value components that the African American relationship should be functioning within, which include: (a) Sacrifice, (b) Inspiration, (c) Vision, and (d) Victory.

Asante (1981) conceptualized sacrifice as a value component, within Black relationships that gives precedence to the spiritual-communal aspect of life, as opposed to those physical-material qualities and possessions that can be obtained from life. In practical terms, the foundation of the African American couple lies in their sense of collective responsibility and interdependence for the Black community and its members, as well as their sense of responsibility for their own families and community. The couple is aware that every life effects and is responsible for every other life in the community. In short, the Black couple should make sacrifices and give of themselves, to the Black community, in order to ensure the continued survival and well-being of their families and the Black community (Bell, et al., 1990).

Inspiration focuses on the way in which Black couples related to one another, which should be in a mutually affirming, holistic manner (Asante, 1980). The holistic relationship is one in which each partner gives and receives physical, intellectual, emotional, and social stimulation through encouraging, inspiring, and supporting one another in their life missions. Thus, inspiration identifies mutuality and reciprocity as important components contributing to healthy Black relationships (Bell, et al., 1990). It is important to highlight that the focus of this value component is specifically on the couple and how they interact in their relationship. This value component does not include a community focus, as do the other three value components.



The aspect of the Black relationship that is visionary is the portion that involves future planning of family-community based initiatives. This is where the Black couple is devoted to setting goals, accomplishing tasks, and aspiring toward dreams that benefit and promote the survival and development of the Black family and community. This component suggests that the revitalization and preservation of African American culture is extremely important (Bell, et al., 1990).

Lastly, Asante (1980) defined victory as the state in which the couple celebrates the achievements, aspirations, and developments of themselves and the Black community, as a whole. Also, this is where the couple renews their belief in the African American community to be triumphant and victorious in their plight (Bell, et al., 1990).

Although the current research is not solely focused on the heterosexual relationship, Asante's model still seems important and applicable to a wide range of relationships. This model seems to be useful to this research for two reasons, the first being that this is the only Afrocentrically based relationship model for the African American couple of which to utilize in a study of this nature. Second, within African psychology research, there has been no evidence that the utilization of Afrocentric values is any different among people who are identified as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

There appears to be some overlap in Kambon (1998) and Asante's (1987) components of Afrocentricity and Asante's (1981) model of Afrocentric heterosexual relationships. Thus, this overlap will be examined and a discussion on how the infusion of these two ideologies will be utilized in this scale development process will occur.

Within each of the four categories of Asante's (1981) value components, it appears that there is some aspect of the Afrocentric worldview (as defined by Kambon (1998) and Asante (1987) that encompasses each. For instance, the sacrifice component seems to include the Afrocentric values of spirituality, collective responsibility, and interdependence. The component inspiration includes the Afrocentric values of Inclusiveness/synthesis, empathetic understanding, the value of rhythm, and emotionality. The component visionary includes the Afrocentric values of survival of the group and group-ness. Finally, victory encompasses sameness-commonality. Some of these Afrocentric values are not mutually exclusive to only one of the components of the relationship model, but for these purposes, they have been assigned to a specific component.

The item development portion of this research will, therefore, be theoretically guided by the four categories of value components of Asante's (1981) Afrocentric model for Black heterosexual relationships, which include the ten Afrocentric values by Kambon (1998) and Asante (1987).

In sum, this section highlighted critical information about the Afrocentric perspective, and its utility in assessing and understanding the African American relationship. In addition, some qualities within the Afrocentric worldview were highlighted that may be important factors to consider when seeking an African American mate, as well as for researchers to consider when assessing the African American relationship. Most importantly, an Afrocentric model of Black relationship functioning and its importance to the present research were presented and discussed. Some reasons were suggested for how African Americans came to stop valuing Afrocentric qualities,

and why it seems to be important to restore their importance within the African American community.

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## VITA

Natalie Michele Whitlow was born on March 29, 1978 in Boston, MA to Dr. Woodrow Whitlow, Jr. (Director of John Glenn NASA) and Mrs. Michele C. Whitlow (Senior Manager for the city of Cleveland, OH) . At the age of 1, Natalie's family relocated to Hampton, VA. Natalie attended the Hampton Institute/University Laboratory School during her elementary years and graduated from Tabb High School in Yorktown, VA in 1996. At the age of 13, after enduring her first taste of heartache, Natalie proclaimed that she was going to receive her Ph.D. in counseling psychology so that no one else would have to endure the pain of heartache.

Clark Atlanta University, in Atlanta, GA, is Natalie's undergraduate alma mater. This is where she really began to nurture her love of psychology, study Black relationships, and develop into a woman. At the age of 22, Natalie entered into a Ph.D. program in counseling psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia; P. Paul Heppner was her advisor and mentor.

Natalie is currently an intern at the University of Maryland-College Park's counseling center and is expected to receive her Ph.D. in August 2006! Natalie is the mother of an intelligent, sociable, funny, beautiful four year old daughter- Annessa Michele Whitlow. Natalie has an older sister, who is her intellectual inspiration- Mary

Annessa Whitlow (school psychologist), and a beautiful, strong, intelligent two year old niece- Chandler Jalea Michele Whitlow.