

AFRICAN AMERICAN SEX RATIO DILEMMA: HOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
INDIVIDUAL ROMANTIC CAPITAL AND AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN'S DATING
STATUS AND QUALITY IS MODERATED BY SEX RATIO COMPOSITION

by

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(Under the Direction of Ronald Simons)

ABSTRACT

Studies show that African Americans may experience less monogamy in dating relationships than the majority population. Dating as a young adult has serious consequences for the quality of future romantic relationship formation and is of importance to study. The shortage of men in the Black community has long been cited as a probable cause of the low marriage rates in the Black community, but few studies have linked sex ratio with African American men's dating status and quality. This study employs multinomial logit and ordinary least squares multiple regressions to examine how individual romantic capital influences Black men's dating status and quality and how this relationship is moderated by sex ratio composition. Social exchange, identity, and social bond theories are the theoretical framework. Data from the 2006 US Census and the Family and Community Health Study is used. Results show mixed support for the various theories, and future research directions are suggested.

INDEX WORDS: African American, Low Sex Ratio, Dating Status, Dating Quality, Romantic Capital

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B.S., The Georgia Institute of Technology, 2006

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2009

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my amazing parents, Jack Ward Bond and Pamela Kay Bond. You both have sacrificed so much so that your children could follow their hearts' desires. Because of your selflessness, support, and love, I have been able to pursue my education. I thank you both with my whole heart. And, Dad, I promise to study Groggs one day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you so much to everyone on my committee, Dr. Simons, Dr. McNulty, and Dr. Bell. I appreciate your input, advice, and time so very much. A special thanks to Karlo Lei for all of your patience and help with the various aspects of the FACHS data as well as the regression techniques I used in this thesis. Without your help, I don't know if I would have been able to make it through. Finally, I would like to thank T.J. Edmond for all of his love and support these past few months. You are amazing, and I am so blessed to have you as my life partner.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

African Americans marry less than other groups (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan 1995). This demographic phenomenon has very serious consequences for inequality in America. Married people fair better in health, finance, sexual satisfaction, family formation, and social desirability than single individuals (Etaugh & Malstrom 1981; Hirschil, Altobelli, & Rank 2003; Nock 2005; Waite 1995). Because African Americans do not marry as often as other groups, they do not have as much access to these benefits, thus inequality is exacerbated and perpetuated. While the decline in African American marriage rates has received much academic attention, patterns of lessened monogamy is also evident in African American dating patterns (Crissey 2005; Regan, Durvasula, Howell, Ureno, and Rea 2004). The dating patterns of young African American adults is important to study because research shows that the quality of one's dating experiences influences the quality of future, more mature dating relationships (Grover, Russell, Schumm, and Paff-Bergen 1985; Kelly, Huston, and Cate 1985; Watson 1983).

Studies that have investigated the romantic pairings of African Americans have cited the low numbers of Black men to Black women, or the low sex ratio, as a cause of lessened monogamy. Black women have outnumbered Black men since 1850, and this trend has continued into the present day (Dickson 1993; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan 1995).

This demographic situation has been largely caused and intensified by racism and discrimination in America (Bell, Zimmerman, Almgren, Mayer, and Huebner 2006; Damico and Maxwell 1995; Dressler 1993; Feagin 2000; Guttentag & Secord 1983). Because there are fewer Black men employed and uninstitutionalized, Black women have fewer opportunities for a stable, monogamous relationship within their race.

While studies show that the low sex ratio (fewer Black men to Black women) may influence lower marriage rates among Blacks on aggregate, little direct effect is shown (Cready, Fossett, and Kiecolt 1997; Chrissey 2005; Lichter, LeClere & McLaughlin 1991; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, & Landry 1992). However, past studies have used large labor market areas or county areas, have directed unbalanced attention to African American women, have employed simplistic sex ratio measures, and have often failed to take into account individual level moderators (Cready, Fossett & Kiecolt 1997; Lichter, LeClere, & McLaughlin 1991; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart & Landry 1992; South & Lloyd 1995). Furthermore, I am unaware of a study that investigates the relationship between sex ratio composition, moderated by individual level romantic capital, and African American men's dating status and quality.

I hope to add to the existing literature in this current study. Using The Family and Community Health Study (FACHS) and 2006 United States Census information, I use nuanced sex ratios compiled with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology from census tracts based on the target's residence.

Theoretically, I wish to examine how social structures influence patterns of intimate relationships, and social exchange theory provides the main frame work of my study. To explain the moderating influences of sex ratio on the relationship between romantic capital and dating status and quality, I employ both social exchange theory assumptions and an alternative approach

informed by social bond and identity theories. After delving into the expansive literature about African American intimate relationship patterns and sex ratio, I empirically test how the romantic capital, moderated by African American sex ratio, influences African American men's dating status and quality.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Intimate Relationships in the African American Community

Marriage rates have significantly declined in recent years for the aggregate American population. More American people divorce and fewer choose to marry now than in years before (Goldstein & Kenny 2001). However, African Americans marry less often than other groups. Since the 1960s, the decline in African American marriage rates has become even more prevalent as only one-quarter of Black women and less than one out of eight Black men have married by their early twenties, and the proportion of Black women and men who ever marry has plummeted (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan 1995). According to the 2004 United States census, 31.2% of men have never married. For White men, this is 27.5%, while 44.5% of Black men have never married. Even more striking, at the time of the census interview, 79.6% of White men reported being married as compared to 12.2% of Black men (United States Census 2004).

Many researchers have become concerned that this trend signals a crisis or deterioration of Black families (Staples 1985; Wilson 1978). While married heterosexual unions are not the only way to achieve familial satisfaction, sociologists have shown that in the United States marriage is associated with better financial, physical and mental health as well as providing a strong base for family formation. Furthermore, society and employers view married people as more capable and trustworthy than their single counterparts (Etaugh & Malstrom 1981; Hirsch,

Altobelli, & Rank 2003; Nock 2005; Waite 1995). The contrast between marriage rates among African Americans and other groups means that fewer African Americans have access to the social and personal benefits of marriage.

Marriage has long been recognized as an important element of social existence to study, but closely related and very important to eventual marriage is the social process of dating. Dating processes and consequences have begun to attract more academic attention in recent years. People may engage in dating for a variety of reasons. One's choice to engage in dating could be motivated by anything from recreation, sexual fulfillment, or social advancement (Skipper & Nass 1966). However, perhaps the most recognizable purpose of dating is to develop some sort of romantic partnership, the most notable being marriage. Regardless of an individual's reasoning to engage in dating, one's dating experiences have been shown to powerfully influence how one engages in romantic relationships in the future. Perhaps most importantly is the association of who and how one dates as an adolescent influencing one's future romantic partner and the quality of that relationship. How one handles conflict, one's expectation of monogamy, and one's perception of satisfaction in dating relationships can all later influence how these relationship factors are negotiated in more permanent and mature romantic relationships (Grover, Russell, Schumm, and Paff-Bergen 1985; Kelly, Huston, and Cate 1985; Watson 1983).

Just as African American marriage rates have been important to study, African American dating habits and quality are important to better understand because just as the formation of marital relationships is unequal between Black Americans and the majority population, research suggests that similar patterns may be evident in dating relationships of Black young adults as well (Crissey 2005; Regan, Durvasula, Howell, Ureno, and Rea 2004). Because of the link

between young adults' dating pattern, eventual marriage, and social inequality, African American romantic relationship formation is of serious consequence to better understand.

As committed and lasting marriages are less common in the African American community, committed dating relationships may also be difficult to create and maintain. African American men may be more likely to have more sexual partners and to be less likely to maintain monogamous relationships (Sonenstein & Pleck 1993; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan 1995). Thus, casual dating relationships with more than one woman may be more likely than serious dating relationships for many African American men. This is of importance because people engaging in casual dating are more at risk for many sexually transmitted diseases than those in committed relationships (Sonenstein & Pleck 1993). Furthermore, casual dating is less likely to result in long-term committed relationships, such as marriage, than more serious forms of dating.

Low African American Sex Ratios and Racism in America

Some of the most compelling studies of this decline in committed relationships address the unequal sex ratio of the African American community compounded with the marriageability of Black men. Since 1850, Black women have outnumbered Black men (Dickson 1993). Furthermore, this trend has continued into the present day (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan 1995). Obviously, if the unequal sex ratio affects marriage formation, it most certainly is affecting dating habits as well. The reasons for this fascinating demographic phenomenon are diverse and telling of other trends in inequality in the United States.

This inequality is not simply a demographic anomaly and should not be unaddressed when discussing the distorted outcomes that the skewed sex ratio causes in the African American community. The lack of African American men points to the larger racist structure that has

pervaded American culture. Many researchers have ignored this unsavory reality and have chosen to leave the racist structural component omitted from discussion.

Joe R. Feagin, in his work *Racist America*, discusses the powerful influence that the racist structure in America has had for Black individuals who live under and contend with its influence. Interestingly, and in contrast to Feagin, a great deal of research in the area of marriage and dating markets has been informed through the research of William Julius Wilson, who first conceived of the idea of marriageability, and is most famous for his arguments in the race/class debates. Wilson asserts in *The Declining Significance of Race* that racist structures in American society are not as influential as one's class affiliation in determining life chances and success. While Wilson's development of the marriageability hypothesis is a useful tool in conceptualizing sex ratios in African American communities, his conceptualization of the declining significance of race is problematic in light of empirical evidence that suggests that race is important. Other scholars such as Feagin, David T. Wellman, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva all assert that racism and discrimination based on that racism is not only alive in modern day America but is also very influential in the actual experiences of minority people in the United States.

Feagin argues that the foundations of racism were laid in America during the construction of the American Constitution and have continued until today. Because of slavery and the history of white supremacy in the US, systemic racism has taken hold and frames every life experience. Feagin writes, "systemic racism is about everyday experience. People are born, live, and die within the racist system" (4). People cannot live outside of this system which is comprised of blatant discrimination, covert prejudice, and involuntary inequality. Everything from where one is born, what schools one attends, which jobs are available, and who one dates and marries is

informed by this system and creates a tangled net of inequality. Everything from birth, infant mortality, disparities in education, disproportional placement of Black men in the criminal justice system, and discrimination in employment are informed by the American racist structure which in turn directly influences the sex ratios of African American communities.

Marcia Guttentag and Paul F. Secord (1983) report that African Americans have lower sex ratios at birth due to a much higher mortality rate among Black male infants, children, and adolescents. The causes of these lower sex ratios are closely tied with the lower socioeconomic status of Blacks, which is “associated with poor nutrition and lack of medical care, which results in more fetal deaths *in utero*. Because male fetuses are less robust, more females than males survive to parturition. A much higher illegitimacy ratio among Blacks accentuates this problem; pregnancies among single Black women probably receive less medical care” (Guttentag & Secord 1983: 207-208). Also, mortality after birth is also much more likely for Black male children. From 1959 to 1961, the infant mortality rate for Non-White children was 86% above the rate for White children (Guttentag & Secord 1983). This disparity in health care is strongly tied to the system of racism and not just classism that exists in America and affects every aspect of health care for African Americans. Researchers show that Black Americans die at higher rates for all causes of mortality than do White Americans and that this disparity is best explained through a social structural model rather than a genetic, lifestyle, or even socioeconomic model. This social structural model illustrates that these health disparities are linked to the racist structure of American society. (Dressler 1993). Others find that related to prenatal care and infant mortality, African American mothers are negatively affected by residential segregation displaying higher rates of isolation. In these cases, isolation reflects factors associated with segregation that are deleterious to health including poor neighborhood quality, persistent

discrimination and the intra-group diffusion of harmful health behaviors (Bell, Zimmerman, Almgren, Mayer, and Huebner 2006). These disparities in health care greatly influence the number of Black men available for committed relationships in the African American community.

Causes of the unequal sex ratio go beyond the high birth and child mortality rates of Black men. Employment opportunities are also greatly affected by the racist structure in America. Black men have some of the highest rates of unemployment in the nation, and employment is associated with a man's attractiveness as a romantic partner (Wilson 1990; Western & Pettit 2000). African Americans are twice as likely to be unemployed as Whites (Pager and Shepherd 2008). Researchers find that even after taking into account class and residential factors, race still plays an important role in job attainment (Damico and Maxwell 1995). While the causes of this prejudice and discrimination are not always overt, many researchers have found great evidence for very explicit articulation of employers' preference for White employees. "Experimental audit studies focusing on hiring decisions have consistently found strong evidence of racial discrimination, with estimates of White preference ranging from 50% to 240%" (Pager and Shepherd 2008). This discrimination in the work place has a detrimental effect on the number of Black men deemed marriageable or dateable based on their ability to provide for a family (Wilson 1990).

Finally, the racist structure of the American legal system has caused disproportionately high numbers of African American men in the prison system, and thus, outside of the dateable pool. In fact, studies show that having been incarcerated negatively influences one's odds of obtaining employment after release, and this unhappy predicament is exacerbated for Black men (Western 2002; Western and Pettit 2005). This link between incarceration and joblessness is especially important in measuring the marriageable or dateable pool because the romantic

attractiveness of a man is especially tied to that man's ability to provide financially (Wilson 1990; Western & Pettit 2000). Like birth, mortality rates, and employment rates, strong socioeconomic or discriminatory influences encourage the high number of Black men in these institutions (Guttentag & Secord 1983). In fact, many researchers find that being a young Black man or a young Hispanic man greatly increases one's odds of incarceration (Spohn and Holleran 2000; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, and Kramer 1998). In fact, African American men, making up less than 7 percent of the U.S. population, comprise 50 percent of incarcerated persons (Donziger 1996).

This is not just a demographic glitch but a reflection of a larger system of racial discrimination and prejudice. Donziger (1996) states, "there are so many more African Americans than Whites in our prisons that the difference cannot be explained by higher crime among African Americans – discrimination is also at work, and it penalizes African Americans at almost every juncture in the criminal justice system." Donziger and others have proposed that the reason for this overrepresentation of Black men in the prison population is because of the economic gains of the American criminal justice system and the need for disenfranchised individuals to populate that system (Donziger 1998). "Unemployed Black men, along with increasing numbers of Black women, constitute an unending supply of raw material for the prison industrial complex" (Davis 2000). This system of disenfranchisement and big business result in a system of racial discrimination that have harsh and lasting consequences on the African American community, including the formation of long lasting committed relationships.

Sex Ratio and Less Committed Relationships

If fewer Black men are available for committed relationships because of the harsh system of racial discrimination and low sex ratio found in America, Black women have less opportunity to find monogamy within their racial group. However, while this would seem a strong reason for fewer marriages and committed relationships, and some evidence supports this on aggregate (Cready, Fossett, and Kiecolt 1997), it is surprisingly shown to have little direct influence (Chrissey 2005; Lichter, LeClere & McLaughlin 1991; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, & Landry 1992). This absence of statistical significance may be due to the inadequacy of past sex ratio measures. Most of these measures only consider residential county areas or large labor market areas without taking into account nuanced sex ratio structures providing only a limited view of sex ratio structure. (Cready, Fossett & Kiecolt 1997; Lichter, LeClere, & McLaughlin 1991; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart & Landry 1992; South & Lloyd 1995).

Beyond looking at actual marriage rates as affected by the unequal sex ratio, few researchers have tackled how sex ratio structure influences young adults dating relationships, concerning both the type of dating relationship participated in as well as the quality of that relationship. Researchers have shown that the quality and presence of dating relationships can predict the presence and quality of marriage relationships in the future (Grover, Russell, Schumm, and Paff-Bergen 1985; Kelly, Huston, and Cate 1985; Watson 1983). The unequal African American sex ratio may adversely affect the dating patterns of African American youth and thus may have lasting influence on marital relations in the future and should be better understood.

While dating status is most likely affected by the local sex ratio, local dating markets can greatly affect the existence of hostility within relationships as well. Past studies have found that

marriage and romantic relationship dissolution and dissatisfaction is higher in areas where partners have greater opportunity for relationships beyond their current involvement (Bontempi, Eng, and Quinn 2008; Harknett 2008; South and Lloyd 1995; Trent and South 2003). Thus, partners who have many other options for relational fulfillment may act more hostilely toward their romantic partner with lessened threat of desertion because of the unbalanced sex ratio.

The Unique Place of African American Men

In this dire predicament of a shortage of Black men, the African American man himself is of great importance to study. Many researchers addressing the lack of committed relationships in African American communities place disproportionate attention on African American women and their experiences. Little literature exists that focuses exclusively on African American men and how low sex ratios may influence their formation and quality of committed relationships. Much of this may be because of the traditional assumption that women have a higher desire for commitment than men. Without accounting for racial differences, researchers have found that women do tend to have a higher drive to marry than men (Blakemore, Lawton, & Vartanian 2005). However, when looking at racial differences, interesting changes begin to occur. Some of these differences may be due to the fact that Black women tend to be more skeptical of realizing a stable marriage than are White women (Crissey 2005; Schoen & Kluegel 1988). Another reason why women tend to be the main focus in the decline of monogamy may be that women tend to bare the brunt of the burden of illegitimate children. Familial responsibility seems to often fall on women more harshly than it does on men, increasing women's risk for poverty. In fact, "racial difference in poverty among women and children are attributable in large measures to differences in family structure, especially the inordinate prevalence of female-headed households among African Americans" (South 1993: 357). Because the consequences

for Black women are harsher in the diminished pool of men, the man's role has been largely ignored. However, by past research focusing almost exclusively on women, much of the story of how the low sex ratio affects dating relationships is lost.

Black men are of unique interest to study because it is their low numbers that drive the distinctive dating patterns of many African American communities. The racist structure that has been discussed previously has greatly affected the way in which many African American men negotiate their space in American society. Particularly interesting to this study is how the low sex ratio structure has affected the African American man's view and experiences of intimate relationships. Some researchers have theorized that many Black men who are barred from definitions of manhood that are categorized by gainful employment may actively define masculinity in terms of sexual promiscuity and multiple intimate relationships (Majors & Billson 1992; Anderson 1999). In other words, the structure that has been created by the historic low sex ratio has helped to redefine cultural expectations in African American communities in that Black men are expected to exert masculine characteristics through multiple, casual sexual relationships (Guttentag & Secord 1983). In many ways, while African American women may pay the high price of the unequal sex ratio and are of dramatic interest to study, the shortage of African American men is the driving force behind this dating predicament and deserves more focused attention.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framing of this study focuses on the work of Marcia Guttentag and Paul F. Secord (1983) in their book, *Too Many Women?*. This work relies heavily on social exchange theory. Social exchange theory states that relationships are based on a continuing series of encounters in which the outcomes are either satisfactory or unsatisfactory for one or both of the parties involved. This satisfaction is greatly influenced by expected satisfaction, dependency, and power. For instance, in populations with unequal sex ratios, the member of the sex that is in short supply will have an influential amount of dyadic power, which is the opportunity to leave the existing relationship to find greater satisfaction elsewhere. That person will be able to assert their power over the other party because they have the greater opportunity for alternative relationships. Depending on the sex ratio, either men or women are capable of dyadic power. When the sex ratio is low or when there are fewer men than women, men hold dyadic power, resulting in a society where men hold the most influence in sexual relationships.

Guttentag and Secord reflect many of the same ideas that evolutionary psychologists hold concerning procreating advantages of men and women, namely, that men have a procreating advantage in casual liaisons and women have a procreating advantage in long-term committed relationships (Buss, Larsen, Westen & Semmelrohl 2001). While Guttentag and Secord are quick to distance themselves from ideas of biological determinism, they clearly assume that given the opportunity men will prefer multiple sexual partners and limited sexual responsibility to situations of monogamy. However, Guttentag and Secord (1983) balance these assumptions with the power of cultural evolution. Using the process of cultural evolution, they propose that

structural influences have profound influence on cultural ideals and individual roles. Thus, while gender differences are not rooted in biology, culturally, they are of importance.

Guttentag and Secord (1983) predict that a low sex ratio scenario results in men being less inclined to commit themselves to long term relationships of a monogamous nature. Furthermore, they anticipate that intimate relationships in a low sex ratio climate would often involve hostility because the dyadic power of men would allow them to act in aggressive ways toward romantic partners without fear of abandonment.

The African American community offers a prime opportunity to put social exchange theory to the test. Based on the historic low sex ratio, certain masculine attitudes concerning gender and romantic relationships would be expected (Guttentag & Secord 1983). In African American populations, Guttentag and Secord (1983) anticipate that Black men would be reluctant to make a long-term marital commitment to one woman throughout her childbearing years, be reluctant to marry and to invest in parenthood, and have a number of women sequentially or simultaneously. Furthermore, Black men would be expected to act hostilely toward their romantic partners because of Black's women's low alternatives.

Guttentag and Secord (1983) do not discuss individual characteristics to any great degree. Furthermore, past research has not heavily focused on how sex ratio composition interacts with individual level characteristics to influence dating quality. However, individual level factors are no doubt influential when one is discussing larger structural pressures. The structure of the ecological environment in which people exist shapes the kinds of experiences and reactions that humans have, but individuals help shape the larger environment as well (Stryker 1980). Guttentag and Secord are greatly concerned

with the influence of dyadic power. When a sex is in low supply, they have dyadic power in romantic relationships. However, other variables are also important when discussing dyadic power. For instance, when one is gainfully employed, then one's structural power is increased which serves to enhance one's position in dyadic relationships; this can be thought of as romantic capital. Thus, one would expect for sex ratio composition, to moderate the relationship that exists between the individual levels of romantic capital, such as employment, and dating status and relationship quality.

Adding these more individual level concerns to a structural analysis calls for an investigation of how individuals are influenced by and, in turn, influence the larger social structure. Guided by Guttentag and Secord's social exchange theory, I contend that as one becomes more powerful structurally, one would be able to exert more control in a dyadic relationship. Thus, in the case of an employed African American man who is part of a low sex ratio structure, he will be able to have even more dyadic power within his romantic pairings. Conversely, an employed African American man who is part of a high sex ratio (in which there are more men to women) would be less influenced by his reduced dyadic power and may still be able to act in ways that might be more expected in a low sex ratio environment.

Alternative perspectives which are highly concerned with how individual characteristics are in communion with larger structural forces are identity and social bond theories. Social bond theory is largely used in studies of crime and deviance while identity theory has been implemented in the symbolic interactionist tradition of describing how roles, identities, and behaviors interact with the larger social structure. I will be borrowing from Sheldon Stryker's social structural interactionism. While identity

and social bond theories have developed out of different branches of sociology, their assumptions about how individual characteristics interact with larger social structures are particularly important to the present study. Guttentag and Secord's (1983) social exchange theory's description of the likely influence of the larger sex ratio structure on interpersonal dating relationship and quality is highly intuitive. However, their theory seems to place too much emphasis on how different identities, which produce romantic capital (such as employment and higher education), affect dyadic power while not taking into consideration other salient characteristics that these types of identities possess. For instance, while employment or the pursuit of higher education does afford individuals a greater degree of structural power, this romantic capital may reflect other important elements such as how embedded an individual is in conventional expectations of mainstream American values of success and individual responsibility.

A broad theory of the interplay between the self and larger social structure is identity theory. Theorists in this perspective strive to disentangle the complex relationships that exist between identity, social structure, and behavior. Sheldon Stryker (2000) is one of the foremost thinkers in structural symbolic interactionism, in which identity theory is a part. Stryker (2000) states that "social roles are expectations attached to positions occupied in networks of relationships; identities are internalized role expectations" (286). From identities, people act out behaviors based on "cognitive schemas – internally stored information and meanings serving as frameworks for interpreting experience. As such, they are cognitive bases for defining situations, and they increase sensitivity and receptivity to certain cues for behavior" (286). To add complexity to this notion that individuals moving in social networks develop expectations

of social positions that are internalized as identities which are perceptive and reactive to prompts for behavior is the reality that an individual can have several different identities that may or may not conflict, and that these identities exist in a hierarchy of salience.

The more salient identities are the ones most likely to be acted out (Stryker 2000). Burke and Reitzes (1981) expanded on this idea that identities are self-meanings to propose that behaviors are meaningful as well, and that the link between identity and behaviors is the meanings that they share (in Stryker 2000). Burke and Reitzes (1981) purpose and found empirical evidence for the notion that identities only predict behavior when the meaning of the identity complements the meaning of the behavior. Thus, an individual who is strongly tied to an identity can be expected to act in ways that reflect that identity.

Someone who strongly identifies with the tenets of American values of hard work and success will most likely not act in ways contrary to the achievement of the goals of that identity.

While developed in another branch of sociology, Travis Hirschi's social bond theory can be linked to identity and structural symbolic interactionism in that his assumptions are that individuals who are invested in conformity, this could be thought of as identities of conventionality, are less likely to break the norms of acceptable behavior because of their investments in convention. Thus, Hirschi's ideas can expound upon Stryker's identity theory to create not just single identities that are arranged in hierarchies of salience, but clusters of identities that can be identified by their placement in conformity. Thus, an individual's placement in that space of conformity could influence the type of actions that he/she makes.

Hirschi (1969) first developed his social bond theory to better understand juvenile delinquency. He contended that there are four elements of social bonds that help create a relationship between delinquency and these bonds that is inversely related. Social bonds consist of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. An adolescent is less likely to be involved in criminal or delinquent activity if he/she is attached to conventional others, if he/she is committed to conventional goals such as education, if he/she is involved in conventional activities such as employment, and finally, if he/she believes that he/she should obey the rules that society has established. One of Hirschi's most important contributions to the study of delinquency is his emphasis on individual stakes in conformity. An individual is most likely to act in more "conventional" ways when he/she has a stronger incentive to act in those ways because of his/her place in society's more conventional activities such as higher education, employment, and an emphasis on familial responsibility. In this sense, people who are strongly tied to the norms of society are more likely to uphold them in their everyday life (Cullen & Agnew 2006).

How tied an individual is to society through investments in conventionality influences the actions that individual chooses to make. While Hirschi's focus was on delinquency and crime, it seems reasonable that the same assumptions can be extended to other areas such as intimate relationships. The notion that how tied an individual is to conventional values can be influential in their actions within their social structure is a broad idea that can easily be applied to the current study of how individual characteristics, moderated by sex ratio structure, influences dating patterns and quality.

It is important to note that while identity theories and social bond theories provide insight into how identity shapes behavior, the presence of the larger social structure is of

grave importance and is in constant communion with individual identities and behaviors. Thus, while I am using these theories to alter the romantic capital effects that would be expected in Guttentag and Secord's (1983) social exchange theory, I am primarily using the assumption of Guttentag and Secord (1983) to develop my hypotheses of the sex ratio's main effect on my dependent variables.

Social exchange theory would propose that a low sex ratio composition increases men's dyadic power, which enables them to pursue casual relationships instead of monogamy. When a man is gainfully employed or pursuing higher education, he increases his structural power, which in turn, increases his dyadic power. In areas where there are more men to women (high sex ratio), employed men who have higher romantic capital, would be insulated from the more competitive sex ratio structure and be able to use their romantic capital to enjoy casual relationships instead of settling down in monogamy. This romantic capital of employment or education would have a similar effect on men's hostility toward their partners and number of sexual partners. An employed man would be able to have more sexual partners and act more hostility towards his romantic partner even though his dyadic power is lessened by the sex ratio environment.

On the other hand, using the tenets of social bond and identity theory, I would propose that employment or pursuit of higher education would be an indicator of stakes in conformity and would have a different effect than one would expect from the social exchange perspective. From social bond/identity theory perspective, one would expect for a man to pursue monogamy instead of informal liaisons because monogamy is considered the more conventional or mainstream path for sexual/romantic fulfillment in

American society. Of importance to this argument is the empirical evidence that suggests that men and women are not held to a sexual double standard, and involvement in committed relationships is more socially valued than casual affairs for both men and women (Gentry 1998; Marks and Fraley 2005). Furthermore, the same influence would be expected for masculine hostility towards his partner and the number of sexual partners in that the more committed and involved a man is in conventional activities, the less likely he would be hostile to his romantic partner or be promiscuous.

Chapter 4

Goal of Study

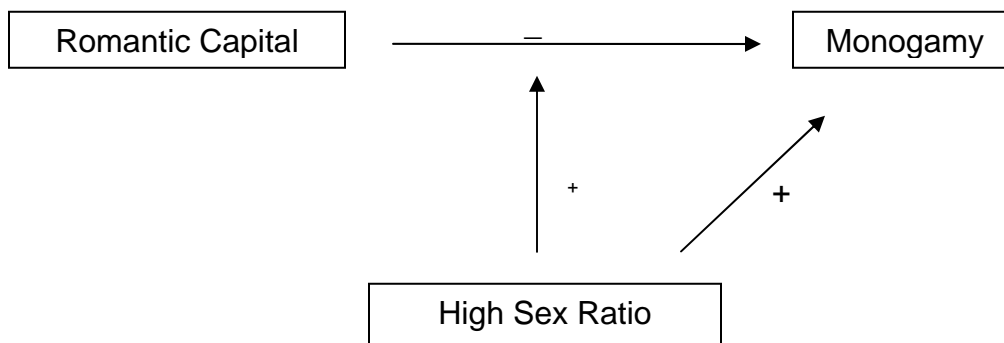
The goal of this study is to use social exchange theory and the alternative assumptions of social bond and identity theories to examine the relationship between various sex ratio compositions, individual romantic capital, and men's propensity to be in different forms of dating relationships, the number of sexual partners, and the level of hostility that they express towards their partners when there are involved in a relationship.

Chapter 5

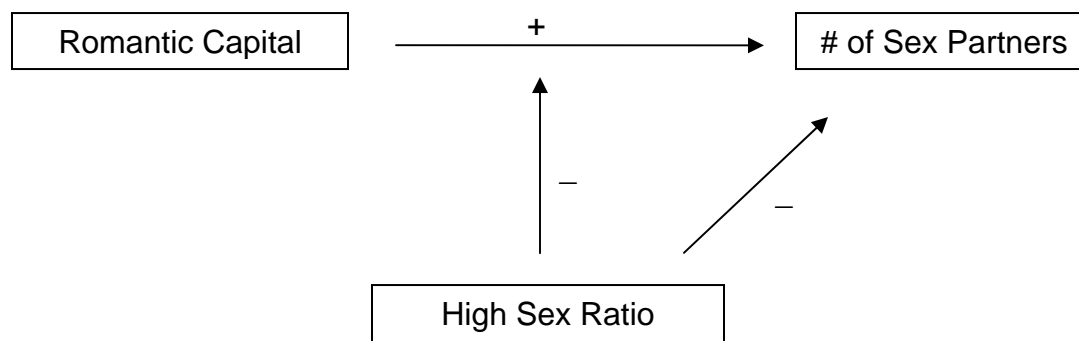
Hypotheses

Utilizing social exchange theory's ideology, I have developed the following hypotheses:

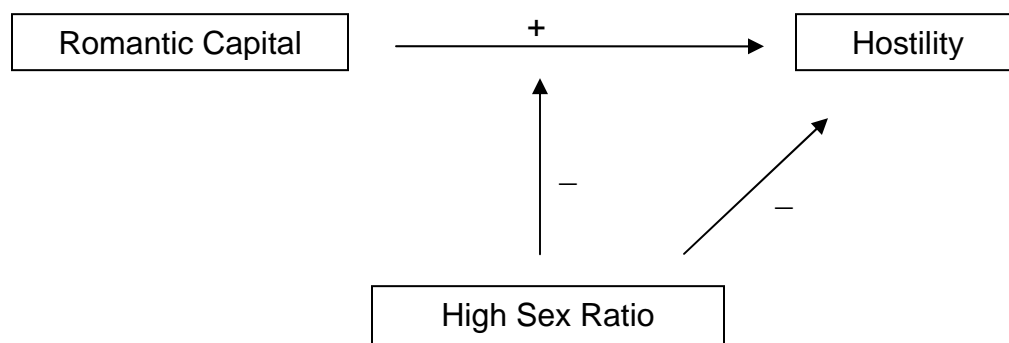
H1: Men with romantic capital will be less likely to be monogamous. This relationship will be moderated by sex ratio composition in that a high sex ratio composition of men with romantic capital will weaken the relationship between romantic capital and lessened monogamy. High sex ratio composition will also have a direct, positive effect on monogamy.



H2: Men with romantic capital will have more sexual partners. This relationship will be moderated by sex ratio composition in that a high sex ratio composition of men with romantic capital will weaken the relationship between romantic capital and more sexual partners. High sex ratio will also have a direct negative effect on number of sexual partners.

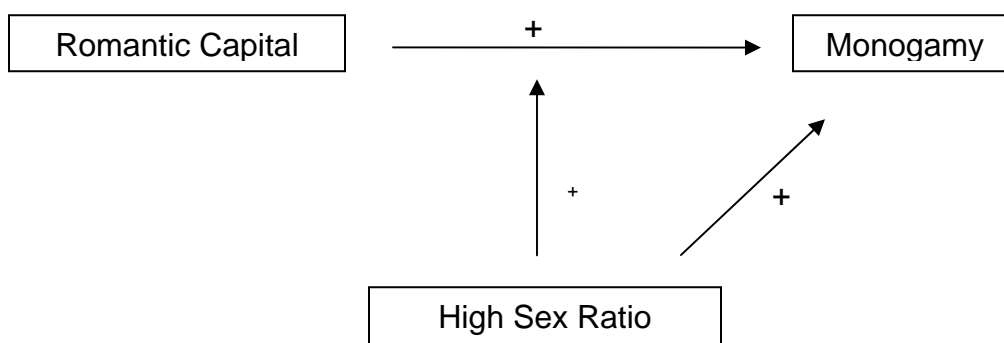


H3: Men with romantic capital will be more likely to act hostilely towards their romantic partner. This relationship will be moderated by sex ratio composition in that a high sex ratio composition of men with romantic capital will weaken the relationship between romantic capital and greater hostility. High sex ratio will also have a direct negative effect on hostility.

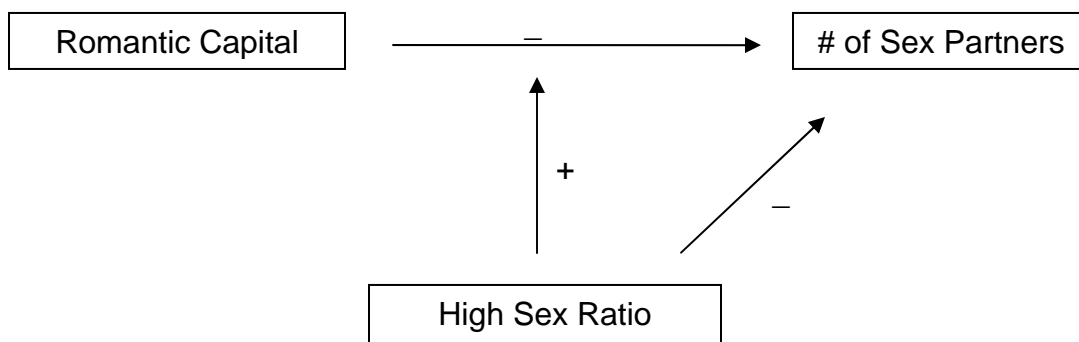


Using my alternative approach, I would expect to see different results concerning the moderating influences of having high romantic capital. The following are my hypotheses after taking a Social Control theorists' perspective.

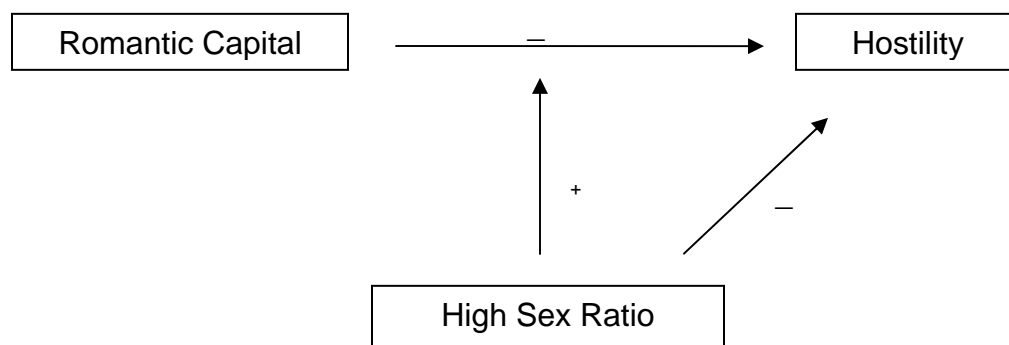
H4: Men with romantic capital will be more likely to be monogamous. This relationship will be moderated by sex ratio composition in that a high sex ratio composition of men with romantic capital will strengthen the relationship between romantic capital and greater monogamy. High sex ratio composition will also have a direct, positive effect on monogamy.



H5: Men with romantic capital will have fewer sexual partners. This relationship will be moderated by sex ratio composition in that a high sex ratio composition of men with romantic capital will strengthen the relationship between romantic capital and fewer sexual partners. High sex ratio will also have a direct negative effect on number of sexual partners.



H6: Men with romantic capital will be less likely to act hostilely towards their romantic partner. This relationship will be moderated by sex ratio composition in that a high sex ratio composition of men with romantic capital will strengthen the relationship between romantic capital and lessened hostility. High sex ratio will also have a direct negative effect on hostility.



Not included in the above hypotheses, yet relevant to this study, is the relationship between sex ratio composition and not dating compared to being in a monogamous relationship or casually dating. The conceptual category of not dating is vague in its theoretical meanings. Not dating

could be conceptualized as a prudent choice to wait for an appropriate, serious romantic partner with many of the associated stakes in conformity that monogamy implies, or it could be seen as a way to engage in even more informal liaisons than casually dating allows. In this sense, not dating would be more like casually dating than monogamy. Finally, not dating could be a result of some inability to compete in the dating market at all. Because of this conceptual ambiguity, I have included not dating in my analysis but am not able to make any solid predictions based on social exchange theory or my alternative approach.

Chapter 6

Methods

Sample

Data concerning individual characteristics were gleaned from The Family and Community Health Study (FACHS), which was begun in the mid 1990s in Georgia and Iowa. Some stated goals of the study are to examine the influence of neighborhood characteristics on the psychological well being and diagnostic status of African American parents over time, to investigate the roles of parents, personality and peers on the development of high-risk behavior, and to analyze the trajectories of marital and romantic relationships over time and their impact on mental health. The data has been collected throughout four waves. Wave 1 was conducted in 1997, Wave 2 in 1999, and Wave 3 in 2002. For this study, I have obtained data from Wave 4 in 2006. At recruitment in 1997, the target children were in middle schools. By Wave 4, these individuals were adults between the ages of 16 and 21.

I used Wave 4 for this particular study because the early years of adulthood is when individuals most typically have their first serious experiences with romantic dating relationships (Reagan, Durvasula, Howell, & Rea 2004). The dating experiences that individuals have during this period help shape the person's view of romantic relationships that develop in latter stages of life and are, thus, not just of immediate importance but of lasting significance as well (Grover, Russell, Schumm, and Paff-Bergen 1985; Kelly, Huston, and Cate 1985; Watson 1983). Furthermore, Wave 4 introduced survey questions about dating, relationships, and sexual experiences that were not asked in earlier years. The sample consists of almost 900 African

American families, who live in small or rural towns of Iowa and Georgia, ranging from poor to affluent.

Wave 4 data contains responses from a target individual an older sibling, a primary caregiver, a secondary caregiver, a same-sex best friend, and a romantic partner of the target. I will be restricting the sample in my study to just target men between the ages of 16-21. The initial Wave 4 sample had an N of 313 men.

For Wave 1, the recruitment process was initiated by African American community leaders, acting as liaisons between the FACHS specialists and the communities. The community leaders constructed rosters from the school districts with the neighborhoods of children that met the criteria of being African American and in 6th and 8th grade. Randomly, children and families were chosen from this list and contacted. This is not a random sample of all African Americans, but it is a random sample of these specific rural areas in Iowa and Georgia with children in the public school system. 72% of the eligible families were interviewed in Iowa and 60% of the families in Georgia. Wave 4 consists of these same individuals who have been tracked since Wave 1. For Wave 4 as for the other waves, all interviewers were African American in order to promote empathy. During one in-home visit, two interviewers administered a series of questionnaires at each visit using laptop computers to interview the Target, Primary Caregiver, and/or Secondary Caregiver. The interview was conducted privately in the family home (or occasionally, an alternate location that provided privacy) between one participant and one interviewer, with no other family members present. Questions appeared in sequence on the computer screen. The interviewer read each question aloud and entered the participant's response.

Chapter 7

Measures

Dependent Variables

Relationship Status is a three part nominal variable, composed of Not Dating, Casually Dating, and Monogamous Relationship. It assesses the dating and/or monogamous relationship status of the target men. It is constructed with a single question from the FACHS data. The question asks, “What best describes your current relationship status?” The respondent can answer (1) I am not dating or seeing anyone right now; (2) I date, but do not have a steady, romantic relationship with one person; (3) I date one person on a regular basis but can still see other people; (4) I am in a steady, committed relationship but not engaged. (5) I am engaged to be married (and don't live with my fiancé); (6) I live with my romantic partner but we do not currently have plans to marry; (7) I live with my romantic partner and we are engaged to marry; (8) I am married. Answer (1) was kept intact as the Not Dating section of Relationship Status. Answers (2) and (3) were combined into the Casually Dating variable. Finally, Answers (4), (5), (6), (7), and (8) were combined and conceptualized as the variable, Monogamous Relationship. 113 men in the sample are not dating, 96 are casually dating, and 104 are in a monogamous relationship.

Number of Partners is a single continuous variable that measures how many different sexual partners the target has had in his life time. Higher numbers indicate experience with more sexual partners. The question asks, “With how many people have you had sex?” The target can answer (1) None; (2) One; (3) Two; (4) 3 or 4; (5) 5 or 6; (6) 7 or more. 3 men had not had any sexual partners, 20 men had had one partner, 31 had had two partners, 85 reported 3 or 4 partners,

44 reported 5 or 6, and 90 reported that they had 7 or more sexual partners. 40 men had either failed or refused to answer the question, and they were dropped from the analysis.

Target Hostility is a self report measure of the amount of aggression that the target man has displayed towards his dating/romantic partner. It is a scale constructed of 5 questions measuring everything from displays of anger to bouts of physical violence. The 5 questions include: “During the past month, when you and [ROMANTIC PARTNER NAME] have spent time talking or doing things together, how often did you get angry at her?” “During the past month, how often did you criticize [ROMANTIC PARTNER NAME] or her ideas?” “During the past month, how often did you shout or yell at [ROMANTIC PARTNER NAME] because you were mad at her?” “During the past month, how often did you argue with [ROMANTIC PARTNER NAME] whenever you disagreed about something?” “During the past month, how often did you push, grab, shove, slap or hit [ROMANTIC PARTNER NAME]?” The respondent could answer (1) always, (2) often, (3) sometimes, (4) never. The answers have been reversed coded in order to interpret higher scores as greater degrees of hostility. The alpha for this scale is highly acceptable at .736. The skew is .905. ¹

Independent Variables

Data measuring the sex ratio structure of the FACHS community was compiled using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology and information from the 2006 United State Census. Census tracts based on the target respondent’s current residence were the unit of choice for this study. According to the United States Government, “Census tracts are small, relatively permanent geographic subdivisions of a county or equivalent entity. The primary purpose of census tracts is to provide a nationwide set of geographic units that have stable boundaries.” Populations in census tracts most generally range from 1,500 to 8,000 people (www.census.gov).

¹ Distributions and frequencies for Target Hostility are available upon request.

The target's present residential location is used because social exchange theory is mostly concerned with current opportunities affecting current emotions and actions. Furthermore, a respondent's present dating market is traditionally considered the most appropriate one to use (Wilson 1990).

To my knowledge, past studies of this type have used mostly aggregate data found most commonly in large labor market areas (LMAS) or county areas. These types of data sources provide broad pictures of the community structure without allowing for the nuanced picture that smaller residential census tracts can afford. Furthermore, past studies do not delve deeply into how sex ratio composition moderates the relationship between individual characteristics and dating engagement as well as quality (Cready, Fossett & Kiecolt 1997; Lichter, LeClere, & McLaughlin 1991; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart & Landry 1992; South & Lloyd 1995). I am able to be detailed in my analysis of a more precise dating pool encountered by the FACHS data men through sex ratios that take into consideration race, poverty level, education, and employment.

In this study, I use four measures of sex ratio. Importantly, the sex ratios reflect the race and age of the FACHS sample. Homogeneity is well known to operate when individuals choose romantic partners. People are most likely to search for partners who are more like themselves than different from themselves (Burgess & Wallin 1943; Hahn & Blass 1997; Epstein and Guttman, 1984). Thus, the sex ratios are constructed to include young African American men in some state of being to young African American women in the same state of being. Thus, within each sex ratio a picture of a FACHS man's competition and/or options is shown.

The first sex ratio I use is *Black men to Black women, 18-24 years old* (African American Ratio). This provides a broad measure of the potential dating/relationship market for the FACHS

sample. The range of this ratio is between 0 and 3.8 with a mean of .93. The skew of the African American Ratio is 1.3. The second sex ratio becomes a bit more complex. It is *Black men at or above the poverty line to Black women at or above the poverty line, 18-24 years of age* (Above Poverty Ratio). This provides an illustration of the level of poverty that a FACHS target is encountering as he assesses his dating opportunities and competition. The Above Poverty Ratio ranges from 0 to 2 with a mean of .827 and a skew of .045. The third is *noninstitutionalized Black men in the labor force to noninstitutionalized Black women in the labor force, 16 years and older* (Labor Force Ratio). I use this measure because of the importance of being within the labor market to attracting and keeping a romantic partner (Wilson 1990). Labor Force Ratio ranges from 0 to 2.4. Its mean is .937 with a skew of 1.3. The final sex ratio relates to the need for employment in being a viable dating option. It is *Black men with a high school diploma to Black women with a high school diploma, 25 years and older* (High School Grad Ratio). Without a high school diploma a person greatly reduces his/her chances of finding viable employment. Thus, more men in an area who have completed a high school education mean that men residing in that area have greater competition for potential dating partners. While a college diploma or some other form of higher education would impact more lucrative employment opportunities than a high school diploma would, the young ages of the men in my sample make them more likely to be influenced by the demarcation between those who have completed a high school education compared to those who have not completed this goal. The High School Grad Ratio ranges from 0 to 2.9. The mean of this ratio is .91, and its skew is .823.

Romantic Capital

On an individual level, I have created dichotomous dummy variables to control for being employed (and/or pursuing higher education) and being a high school drop out. One's employment and education status is very important in determining how attractive one is as a dating partner (Wilson 1990). The variable, Employed, separates those targets who are employed and/or pursuing higher education from those who are not. This was determined with the question: "What is your present work situation?" Those who self-identified as temporarily laid off, unemployed, permanently disabled, retired, or full time homemakers were coded as unemployed. Those who self-identified as employed by others part-time or full-time, self-employed farm operator, self-employed owner of business service, or professional practice, part-time student, full-time student, part-time student working, full-time student working, or participating in vocational training, apprenticeship or on the job training program were coded as Employed. 65% of men were employed or pursuing a higher education. High School Drop Out was constructed from the question that asks, "What is the highest grade you have completed?" Respondents who answered 11th grade or less were coded as being a high school drop out. 39% of men have not completed a high school education.

Interaction Terms

The variables that measure the interactions between the community variables and the individual level variables are multiplicative interactions between the continuous sex ratio variables and the dichotomous dummy variables, employed and high school drop out. Interaction terms were created for High School Grad Ratio*Employed, Above Poverty Ratio*High School Drop Out, and Labor Force Ratio*Employed.² The continuous variables were mean centered prior to forming the product terms. This allows for ease of interpretation

² All possible Interactions were tested. Those included were the only ones that were significant.

and reduces collinearity between the product term and the lower order terms. Employed and High School Drop Out were evaluated at the mean of the sex ratio, one standard deviation above the mean, and one standard deviation below the mean (Aken & West 1991). One standard deviation above the mean of the sex ratio indicates a high sex ratio composition, or an environment that has more men to women. Conversely, one standard deviation below the mean represents a low sex ratio environment in which there are fewer men to women.

Chapter 8

Analytic Strategy

The unit of analysis for my study is African American men. The target population is African American men in rural areas of Iowa and Georgia. I will be restricting the sample in my study to just African American men between the ages of 16-21. Thus, the population I can generalize to is 16-21 year old, African American men who live in rural areas of Georgia and Iowa. (N = 313)

However, because of the inclusive nature of the data, the fact that it incorporates a wide range of income levels and family structures, and is uniquely suburban, the information gleaned here is useful in the study of African American communities.

Analyzing Relationship Status

My analytic strategy for assessing how romantic capital influences dating status and how this relationship is moderated by sex ratio composition is multinomial logit regression. I used this regression technique because my dependent variable, Relationship Status, is nominal. It is composed of three categories, Not Dating, Casually Dating, and Monogamous. These categories are unordered. I used SPSS 16 to conduct all of my analysis. For each analysis, all three categories were independently assessed as the reference group. I present only the models that contained significant results ($p < .1$).

For each reference category, I adhered to the following steps. The first set of models regressed relationship status on each measure of the sex ratio in the multinomial logit regression. Next, I included the romantic capital variables, Employed and High School Drop Out, to the model. The third step included adding the interaction terms. Here, the main effect of individual

romantic capital, such as being employed or being a high school drop out, indicates its slope at the mean sex ratio. Finally, the interaction term was assessed one standard deviation above and below the mean of the sex ratio in order to interpret the effect of the moderator in question in a high (one standard deviation above) or low (one standard deviation below) sex ratio environment (Aken & West 1991).

Analyzing Hostility and Number of Sexual Partners

In order to assess how sex ratio composition and romantic capital influence target hostility and number of sexual partners, I employed ordinary least squares multiple regression. Target Hostility and Number of Sexual Partners were individually assessed. I employed OLS multiple regression because the dependent variable in this case, hostility and number of sexual partners respectively, is continuous. Again, SPSS 16 was used for all the analysis.

For the first model, hostility was regressed on the sex ratio measures. The second model added the romantic capital variables, employed and high school drop out to the model. The third model added the interaction term. Finally, the moderator was analyzed above and below one standard deviation from the mean of the sex ratio measure (Aken & West 1991). The same steps were employed for assessing the influence of sex ratio on number of sexual partners.

Chapter 9

Results

Table 1 shows the results for Relationship Status for Monogamous Relationship when Casual Dating is the reference category. When only the sex ratio measures are included in the model, the Labor Force Ratio (*noninstitutionalized Black men in the labor force to noninstitutionalized Black women in the labor force, 16 years and older*) is significant ($p < .05$) indicating that as there are more men to women in the Labor Force Ratio, FACHS men have a 85.1% decrease in the log odds of being in a monogamous relationship compared to casually dating. This is the opposite of what would be expected according to social exchange theory. As there are more men in the labor force to women in the labor force, men should have lessened dyadic power and thus be more likely to be monogamous than casually dating. After adding the individual level controls, this effect becomes nearly insignificant ($p = .098$) and is lessened to a 78.6% decrease in the log odds of being monogamous compared to casually dating. The final model shows that the High School Grad Ratio is significant ($p = .062$). As there are more men to women in the High School Grad Ratio, the log odds indicate that men are 5.9 times more likely to be in a monogamous relationship compared to casually dating. This follows the tenets proposed by social exchange theory nicely. As there are more men with romantic capital, men face greater competition, a lessening of dyadic power, and more monogamy than casual liaisons. However, the Labor Force Ratio indicates that as there are more men to women in this sex ratio, there is an 83.5% decrease in the log odds of FACHS men being in a monogamous relationship compared to casually dating. Furthermore, the interaction term, High School Grad Ratio*employed is statistically significant indicating that there is a moderating effect present

($p < .05$). The log odds indicate that the unemployed compared to the employed experience an 88% decrease in the log odds of being in a monogamous relationship compared to casually dating when the High School Grad Ratio is at its mean.

To further examine how the effect of Employed on relationship status varies across levels of the High School Grad Ratio, an analysis of the slope of Employed was conducted one standard deviation above and below the mean of the High School Grad Ratio. The slope of employed at high High School Grad Ratio (more men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas) is statistically significant ($p < .01$), but the slope of employed at low High School Grad Ratio (fewer men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas) is not significant, indicating that the influence of employment diminishes when the High School Grad Ratio is low. The results show that the employed are 4.8 times more likely to be monogamous than casually date than those who are unemployed when there are more men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas. This seems to go along with the hypotheses of social bond and identity theories rather than social exchange theory. Here, it could be assumed that as men have greater stakes in conformity, based on employment, they are more likely to act in more socially acceptable ways such as settling into monogamy rather than choosing to casually date.

To substantively understand what the moderating effect of employed is when there are more men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas see Figure 1. This figure shows the slopes for employment when it equals 1 (indicating employment or pursuit of higher education) and when employment equals 0 (indicating unemployment) for increasing values of High School Grad Ratio. From this figure, it is clear that the employed and those pursuing higher education experience a log odds increase in monogamy compared to casually

dating when there are more men to women in the High School Grad Ratio (High High School Grad Ratio) while the unemployed experience a decrease in monogamy compared to casually dating.

Table 2 shows the results for Not Dating when Casual Dating is the reference category. When only the sex ratio measures are included, the African American Ratio (*Black men to Black women, 18-24 years old*) is statistically significant ($p < .01$). This demonstrates that as there are more men to women in the African American Ratio, men have an 82.6% decrease in the log odds of Not Dating compared to Casual Dating. This relationship survives when Employed and High School Drop Out are included in the model, maintaining significance but indicating that men experience an 84.3% decrease in the log odds of not dating. This seems to be contrary to assumptions of sex ratio theory because as there are more African American men to women one would expect for men to be less able to casually date than not date because of the increase in competition and the lessening of dyadic power. The final model shows that while FACHS data men have an 84% decrease in the log odds of not dating when there more men to women in the African American Ratio, they are 8.4 times more likely to not date than casually date when there are more men to women in the High School Grad Ratio. The results for the High School Grad Ratio go along with the social exchange hypothesis nicely as a lessening of dyadic power leads to less casually dating. Finally, the interaction for High School Grad*employed is significant at the .05 level. The log odds indicate that the unemployed, compared to the employed, have a 92% decrease in the log odds of not dating compared to casually dating when the High School Grad Ratio is at its mean.

As in the previous table, the effect of employed is explored one standard deviation below (fewer men to women in the High School Grad Ratio) and one standard deviation above (more

men to women in the High School Grad Ratio) the mean of the High School Grad Ratio. Employed is not statistically significant when there are fewer men to women with high school diplomas. When there are more men to women with high school diplomas, employed is highly significant ($p < .01$), indicating that the employed are 5.4 times more likely to not date than casually date compared to the unemployed when there are more men to women with high school diplomas. As in the previous model, this interaction term seems to support the hypotheses constructed from identity and social bond theories as it reflects greater stakes in conformity leading to less casual dating.

Figure 2 shows substantially how employment affects the direction and magnitude of the log odds of not dating compared to casually dating at different levels of the sex ratio. As there are more men to women with high school diplomas, the unemployed are less likely to be not dating than casually dating compared to the employed who have a steady increase in the log odds of not dating.

Table 3 shows the results for Not Dating compared to Monogamy. When relationship status is regressed on the sex ratio measures without the control variables or any interaction terms, one can see that as there are more men to women in the African American Ratio, men have a 76.9% decrease in the log odds of not dating compared to being monogamous ($p < .05$). This continues to be statistically significant when the control variables are included and changes from a 76.9% decrease to an 80.3% decrease in the log odds of not dating compared to monogamy. No interaction terms were significant in this model.³

Table 4 shows the results for number of sexual partners regressed on the various sex ratios included in this study. The Above Poverty Ratio (*Black men at or above the poverty line to Black women at or above the poverty line, 18-24 years of age*) is significant and positive (p

³ See the discussion section for an argument about the theoretical significance of this model.

< .05). As there are more men to women in the Above Poverty Ratio, men have more sexual partners, which is shown with the positive standardized coefficient of .206. This survives when the control variables are included, though the standardized coefficient is slightly reduced to .191. This seems to go against the ideas proposed by social exchange theory in that more masculine competition should lead to fewer sexual partners, but this is not what is seen. The interaction term for the Above Poverty Ratio*High School Drop Out is significant and negative ($P < .05$; Beta = -.204). The interaction term indicates that high school graduates experience a decrease in the number of sexual partners compared to high school drop outs when the Above Poverty Ratio is at its mean.

To further analyze the moderating variable, the high school drop out effect is evaluated one standard deviation above and below the mean of the Above Poverty Ratio. High School Drop Out only becomes marginally significant when the Above Poverty Ratio is one standard deviation above its mean (or when there are more men at or above poverty to women at or above poverty). This indicates when there are men to women in the Above Poverty Ratio, high school drop outs have more sexual partners than high school graduates. However, the significance for the High School Drop Out is quite marginal and may not be statistically pertinent ($p = .096$).

Figure 3 visually represents the two slopes for high school drop outs and high school graduates at increasing levels of the Above Poverty Ratio. From the figure, one can easily see that the number of sexual partners goes down for high school graduates compared to high school drop outs as there are more men to women in the Above Poverty Ratio.

Finally, table 5 shows the results for Target Hostility towards romantic partner. Without any controls, the Labor Force Ratio (*noninstitutionalized Black men in the labor force to noninstitutionalized Black women in the labor force, 16 years and older*) is significant ($p = .084$)

and negative indicating that as there more men to women in the Labor Force Ratio, men are less hostile toward their romantic partner with a standardized coefficient of $-.173$. When the control variables of employed and high school drop out are added, the influence of the Labor Force Ratio on target hostility becomes slightly more significant ($p = .043$) with a standardized coefficient of $-.203$. This agrees with the hypotheses of social exchange theory in that as there are more men with high romantic capital (men in the labor force), men must act less hostilely in order to maintain their relationship in response to their lessened dyadic power. The final model also shows main effects for the High School Ratio and the Labor Force Ratio. As there are more men with high school diplomas, men show more hostility to their partners ($p < .05$; Beta = $.205$). This is opposing to the tenets of social exchange theory. As there are more men in the Labor force, men show less hostility towards their partners ($p < .01$; Beta = $-.634$). Again, this agrees with social exchange theory. The interaction term for Labor Force Ratio*employed is also significant ($p = .03$). The interaction term shows that the unemployed display more hostility towards their partner compared to the employed when the Labor Force Ratio is at its mean ($p < .05$; Beta = $.500$).

The effect of Employed was investigated one standard deviation above and below the mean of the Labor Force Ratio. While Employed is not significant at one standard deviation below the mean of the Labor Force Ratio, it is significant one standard deviation above the mean of the Labor Force Ratio (or when there are more men in the labor force to women in the labor force). This indicates that the employed show less hostility to their romantic partner than the unemployed when there are more men in the labor force ($p < .01$; Beta = $-.545$). This would seem to reflect a social bond and identity theories' argument. As men have greater stakes in

conformity, indicated by employment, they are less likely to act in hostile ways to their partner in concordance with their stakes in convention.

Figure 4 shows the slopes of the employed and the unemployed in areas of increasing levels of the Labor Force Ratio. The figure shows that the unemployed become more hostile than the employed as there are greater numbers of men in the labor force to women in the labor force.

Chapter 10

Discussion of Results

Relationship Status

The results indicate partial support for Guttentag and Secord's (1983) social exchange theory and for the alternative approach informed by social bond and identity theories. The final model analyzing the log odds of being in a monogamous relationship versus casually dating shows that as there are more men with the romantic capital of having a high school education, men are more likely to be in monogamous relationships than casually dating. This follows the social exchange theory assumption that as there are more potential mates who are in competition for women's attraction, men will be more likely to settle down into monogamy rather than pursuing multiple romantic partners. In this case, men's dyadic power is lessened by the large supply of men with high school diplomas and women's dyadic power is increased because they have greater ability to leave an existing relationship to find romantic satisfaction with another desirable mate, thus more monogamy is seen.

However, the interaction effect of High School Grad Ratio*employed seems to reflect the assumptions of the alternative suppositions of social bond and identity theories. When there are more men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas, employed men are the ones more likely to be monogamous, and unemployed men are the ones engaging in casual relationships. Guided by social exchange theory's principles, this would seem odd because unemployed men would not have the needed structural power to counteract their reduced dyadic power caused by more men to women in the sex ratio. However, if one were to take into consideration the principles proposed by social bond and identity theories, the state of

employment may result in stakes in conformity that would lead men to act in the more socially acceptable manner of monogamy instead of engaging in multiple casual relationships that may be deemed inappropriate by society. Unemployed men may be less likely to share in this association with social convention, and they may engage in more casual unions despite the constraints of more competitive men in the dating pool.

On the other hand, another sex ratio, the Labor Force Ratio, has opposing results to the High School Grad Ratio. As there are more men in the labor force to women in the labor force, men are less likely to be monogamous and more likely to engage in casual relationships. This seems to be directly against the assumptions of Guttentag & Secord's social exchange theory. As there are more men with the romantic capital of being in the labor force, one would expect greater levels of monogamy in response to the highly competitive dating market, but this is not demonstrated. Furthermore, Labor Force Ratio did not interact with any of the individual level variables, so further conclusions about the nature of the individual's communion with the area's sex ratio is difficult to make. It may be that the ratio of men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas is a different measure of the romantic capital in the dating market than the ratio of men in the labor force to women in the labor force. Perhaps the Labor Force Ratio has influence on other unknown variables that have not been included in the model. This significant result needs more scrutiny to truly understand what is happening.

In the model demonstrating the likelihood of not dating compared to casually dating, we once again see mixed results. Based on Guttentag and Secord's (1983) social exchange theory, we would expect that greater numbers of men to women would result in fewer men casually dating because of the strain on their dyadic power. Thus, in this model, more men to women in the sex ratio should result in the greater likelihood of not dating compared to casually dating.

However, it should be noted that the conceptualization of not dating is not firmly established. Not dating can be thought of as a prudent choice of restraint as an individual waits for the right time to choose a serious romantic partner, or not dating could be seen as a way to have even less committed sexual encounters than are afforded in casual dating. Also, not dating could reflect an inability to compete in the dating market at all.

When there are greater numbers of men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas, social exchange theory's assumptions are supported in that men are more likely to not date than casually date. However, when the interaction between the High School Grad Ratio and employed is taken into consideration, social bond and identity theories' claims seem to be supported. When there are more men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas, the employed are more likely to not date while the unemployed are more likely to casually date. Being employed may afford ties to conventionality that make not dating more likely than engaging in informal liaisons. However, this conclusion is largely based on the conceptualization of not dating as a prudent choice of waiting to engage in romantic pairings. In this notion, not dating could be thought of as having similar characteristics to monogamy as they both have comparable stakes in conformity.

However, the ratio of African American men to women shows a different part of the story. When there are more Black men to women, men are more likely to casually date than not date. This seems to go against the hypotheses of social exchange theory, and this ratio does not interact with any individual variables, so interpretations based on social bond or identity theories are difficult to make. It may be that this ratio is not adequate in describing the dating competition environment because it is not really measuring the romantic capital of the people in the dating market. It may be that computing the number of African American men to women

without attention to romantic capital does not show a robust enough picture of the type of competition truly present.

Finally, the model that addresses the likelihood of not dating compared to being in a monogamous relationship is the least telling of the three models. Guttentag and Secord (1983) would predict that as the sex ratio increased, and men had less dyadic power, they would be more likely to be monogamous than engage in casual pairings. However, not dating is a category that has conceptual leeway as previously discussed. Thus, the conclusions drawn from the following results could be debatable. The only sex ratio that predicted dating status was the ratio of African American men to women. As there are more African American men to women, men are more likely to be monogamous than not date. If one were to conceptualize not dating as a way to engage in more promiscuous behavior than in casually dating, than the results in this model support Guttentag and Secord's social exchange theory. However, if one were to conceptualize not dating as a prudent choice to wait for a serious relationship, than not dating and monogamous relationships are really very similar in their stakes in conformity and cannot be evaluated in this model. Because the measure of not dating used here cannot measure motive in not dating, any conclusions based on these results are subjective. There were no interactions that were significant, so social bond and identity theories' assumptions about the moderating effect of sex ratio composition on the relationship between romantic capital and relationship status cannot be addressed.

Quality of Relationship

The model measuring sex ratio composition's influence on the number of sexual partners of the target shows mixed and unclear results. Guided by social exchange theory, one would expect for men's number of sexual partners to decrease when the sex ratio rises in response to

men's lessened dyadic power; furthermore, if individual romantic capital is high (such as being employed or pursuing higher education), one would expect for men to be not as affected by the high sex ratio and be able to have more sexual partners. On the other hand, social bond and identity theories' ideas about stakes in conformity would predict that if men have conventional ties than they would be less likely to have multiple sexual partners.

The only sex ratio that was significant in the model is men at or above poverty to women at or above poverty. This ratio indicates that as there are more men above poverty, men have more sexual partners. This goes contrary to the assumptions of social exchange theory because men seem to be able to have more sexual partners despite their lessened dyadic power.

The interaction effect between the sex ratio and high school drop out indicates that those men with a high school diploma have a steeper decline in number of sexual partners than high school drop outs as the number of men at or above poverty increases. This would seem to complement the hypothesis formulated with social bond and identity theories in that having a high school diploma may indicate stakes in conformity that may lead men to have less diverse sexual encounters.

The final model measuring the influence of sex ratio on target hostility towards his romantic partner shows mixed results supporting social exchange theory and the alternative approach. Social exchange theory would predict that as there are more men to women (high sex ratio), men would display less hostility towards their partner because of their lessened dyadic power. One would expect that as men had greater romantic capital in this dating market environment, this increase in structural power may result in more hostility as men would be less influenced by the greater competition around them. A man with romantic capital would be able to act hostilely towards his romantic partner without fear of abandonment. Conversely, the

alternative approach informed by social bond and identity theories would predict that as men's romantic capital increased, men would be likely to display less hostility towards their romantic partner in concordance with their greater stakes in conformity.

As there are more men in the labor force to women in the labor force, men show less hostility to their partners which reflects the expected results of social exchange theory. This sex ratio interacts with individual employment to indicate that the unemployed show greater degrees of hostility in their romantic relationships than the employed when there are more men in the labor force to women in the labor force. This reflects the expected results of the alternative approach. The unemployed may have fewer stakes in conformity which may result in a greater likelihood to act in hostile ways towards their romantic partner even though their dyadic and structure power is lessened.

Conversely, the sex ratio measuring the number of men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas shows results that are contrary to social exchange theory, and because the High School Grad Ratio does not interact with either of the individual level variables, assumptions based on the alternative approach are not easily made. This measure shows that as there are more men with high school diplomas to women with high school diplomas, men show greater degrees of hostility towards their partner even though their dyadic power is lessened by the presence of more competitive men in the dating pool. Like the model measuring the log odds of being in a monogamous relationship compared to casually dating, the sex ratios of high school grads and persons in the labor force seem to be acting in opposite directions. It would seem that these sex ratios may be getting at different aspects of the dating competition pool. Further research is needed to untangle these peculiar differences in results.

All in all, there are interesting mixed results supporting both social exchange theory and the alternative approach. One interesting possibility that the results may be pointing to is the possibility of distinct dating spheres in which individuals with certain complementing levels of romantic capital interact. All of the models contain sex ratios that measure the ratio of men with a certain degree of romantic capital to women with equal romantic capital, whether that is employment, being above poverty, or having a high school diploma. It seems that the interaction terms may suggest that men who have high romantic capital (are employed, pursuing higher education, or have a high school diploma) act in ways that are consistent with Guttentag and Secord's (1983) assumptions. They are the ones who are more likely to be monogamous, have fewer sexual partners, and display less hostility towards their partners when there are more competitive men in the dating pool and their dyadic power is lessened. Conversely, the men who have lower structural power (those who are unemployed and lacking a high school education), are the ones who are going against the expected norms of social exchange theory. Perhaps this result is seen not because social exchange theory is wrong in its assumptions but because these men with lower structural power are acting in a different dating sphere that my models fail to measure. More research is needed to test this idea.

Chapter 11

Conclusion

My study provides some interesting insight into African American men's dating relationship status and quality. This group is of importance to study because of the historic sex ratio imbalance that many researchers cite for declining marriage rates, single parenthood, and other adverse effects (Dickson 1993; Lichter, LeClere, and McLaughlin 1991; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, and Landry 1992; Wilson 1978). My study expands on others' work in that very little research exists detailing how individual characteristics are moderated by sex ratio composition to influence dating status and quality for African American men. Furthermore, most research examining sex ratio imbalances in the African American population usually comes from large Labor Market Areas or county census data and does not take into account how individual level characteristics interact with the larger community variables (Cready, Fossett & Kiecolt 1997; Lichter, LeClere, & McLaughlin 1991; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart & Landry 1992; South & Lloyd 1995). My study's sex ratios are created from census tract data which provide a more localized measure of sex ratio while including important nuance by taking into account sex ratios of poverty, labor force participation, and education. Furthermore, I was able to investigate the moderating effect that sex ratio composition has on the relationship between romantic capital and dating status and quality. By focusing my attention on African American men, I am able to contribute to the literature which has largely focused its attention on African American women.

While I show mixed results for my hypotheses developed through social exchange, bond, and identity theories, my study sheds light on new directions and considerations that future

research should take. A more detailed measure of not dating would have benefited this study because of not dating's conceptual vagueness. It is not clear from this measure if individuals are not dating because they are prudently waiting for the right partner, unable to date because of some sort of inadequacy, or not dating as a means to even greater sexual freedom than casual dating would afford. A dating measure that would take into consideration motive for dating choices would be helpful in untangling the relationship between sex ratio composition and likelihood of not dating.

The differing effects that the Labor Force Ratio and the High School Grad Ratio had in my models suggest that these two measures may be measuring different aspects of the sex ratio composition and not just romantic capital as they were intended to do. A more detailed analysis of the differences between these two measures is needed to make future theory based assumptions as to how they should influence dating status and relationship quality.

Finally, my results indicate that the dating market may be more complex than previously thought. More research is needed to see if individuals with similar levels of romantic capital operate in separate dating spheres from individuals with differing levels of romantic capital. If this is the case, more nuanced measures of sex ratio and individual characteristics should be taken into account.

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Tables**Table 1**

<u>Monogamous vs. Casual Dating</u>	1	2	3
Intercept	(B) 1.677† (SE) .868 Exp(B) ____	(B) 1.062 (SE) .927 Exp(B) ____	(B) -.411 (SE).362 Exp(B)____
<i><u>Sex Ratios</u></i>			
Above Poverty Ratio	(B) .086 (SE) .481 Exp(B) 1.09	(B) .034 (SE).486 Exp(B)1.034	(B) .059 (SE) .491 Exp(B) 1.06
African American Ratio	(B) -.279 (SE) .437 Exp(B) .757	(B) -.231 (SE).442 Exp(B).794	(B) -.194 (SE) .452 Exp(B) .823
High School Ratio	(B) .187 (SE) .452 Exp(B) 1.206	(B) .190 (SE).459 Exp(B) 1.21	(B) 1.79† (SE) .958 Exp(B) 5.990†
Labor Force Ratio	(B) -1.906* (SE) .926 Exp(B) .149*	(B) -1.544† (SE).933 Exp(B) .214†	(B) -1.801† (SE) .952 Exp(B) .165†
<i><u>Control Variables</u></i>			
Employed		(B) .592 (SE) .365 Exp(B) 1.807	(B) .607 (SE) .373 Exp(B) 1.835
High School Drop Out		(B) -.205 (SE) .350 Exp(B) .815	(B) -.157 (SE) .355 Exp(B) .855
<i><u>Interactions</u></i>			
High School Grad Ratio*Employed			(B) -2.175* (SE) 1.07 Exp(B) .114*
Valid N	211	203	203
Chi-Square	17.88*	57.652**	7.452*
† P<.10. *P<.05. **P<.01.			

Table 2

Not Dating vs. Casual Dating	1	2	3
Intercept	(B) 1.276 (SE) .873 Exp(B) ____	(B) .874 (SE) .979 Exp(B) ____	(B) -.693† (SE) .388 Exp(B) ____
<i>Sex Ratios</i>			
Above Poverty Ratio	(B) .356 (SE) .501 Exp(B) 1.427	(B) .345 (SE) .524 Exp(B) 1.412	(B) .395 (SE) .534 Exp(B) 1.484
African American Ratio	(B) -1.746** (SE) .612 Exp(B) .174**	(B) -1.853** (SE) .647 Exp(B) .157**	(B) -1.836** (SE) .665 Exp(B) .160**
High School Ratio	(B) .229 (SE) .459 Exp(B) 1.257	(B) .305 (SE) .471 Exp(B) 1.357	(B) 2.137* (SE) .939 Exp(B) 8.473*
Labor Force Ratio	(B) -.440 (SE) .854 Exp(B) .644	(B) -.386 (SE) .888 Exp(B) .680	(B) -.794 (SE) .930 Exp(B) .452
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Employed		(B) .496 (SE) .379 Exp(B) 1.642	(B) .532 (SE) .392 Exp(B) 1.702
High School Drop Out		(B) -.002 (SE) .366 Exp(B) .998	(B) .045 (SE) .372 Exp(B) 1.046
<i>Interactions</i>			
High School Grad Ratio*Employed			(B) -2.596* (SE) 1.079 Exp(B) .075*
Valid N	211	203	203
Chi-Square	17.88*	57.652**	7.452*
† P<.10. *P<.05. **P<.01.			

Table 3

<u>Not Dating vs. Monogamy</u>	1	2
Intercept	(B) -.400 (SE) .899 Exp(B) ____	(B) -.189 (SE) .998 Exp(B) ____
<i><u>Sex Ratios</u></i>		
Above Poverty Ratio	(B) .270 (SE) .525 Exp(B) 1.31	(B) .311 (SE) .543 Exp(B) 1.365
African American Ratio	(B) -1.467* (SE) .622 Exp(B) .231*	(B) -1.623* (SE) .653 Exp(B) .197*
High School Ratio	(B) .042 (SE) .437 Exp(B) 1.043	(B) .115 (SE) .443 Exp(B) 1.122
Labor Force Ratio	(B) 1.466 (SE) .926 Exp(B) 2.504	(B) 1.157 (SE) .931 Exp(B) 3.181
<i><u>Control Variables</u></i>		
Employed		(B) -.096 (SE) .396 Exp(B) .909
High School Drop Out		(B) .203 (SE) .366 Exp(B) 1.225
<i><u>Interactions</u></i>		
None Significant		
Valid N	211	203
Chi-Square	17.88*	57.652**
† P<.10. *P<.05. **P<.01.		

Table 4

Interaction Results for Relationship Status	Monogamy vs. Casual Dating	Not Dating vs. Casual Dating
	<u>Effect of Employment</u>	<u>Effect of Employment</u>
Low High School Grad	.699	.538
Mean High School Grad	1.835	1.702
High High School Grad	4.816**	5.385**

† P<.10. *P<.05. **P<.01.

Table 5

<u>Number of Sexual Partners</u>	1	2	3
Intercept	(B) 4.377** (SE) .463 <i>Beta</i> ____	(B) 4.522** (SE) .523 <i>Beta</i> ____	(B) 4.667** (SE) .197 <i>Beta</i> ____
<i>Sex Ratios</i>			
Above Poverty Ratio	(B) .585* (SE) .261 <i>Beta</i> .206*	(B) .547* (SE) .271 <i>Beta</i> .191*	(B) .935** (SE) .329 <i>Beta</i> .326**
African American Ratio	(B) -.364 (SE) .247 <i>Beta</i> -.135	(B) -.330 (SE) .255 <i>Beta</i> -.122	(B) -.335 (SE) .253 <i>Beta</i> -.124
High School Ratio	(B) .372 (SE) .250 <i>Beta</i> .118	(B) .393 (SE) .257 <i>Beta</i> .124	(B) .408 (SE) .254 <i>Beta</i> .128
Labor Force Ratio	(B) -.342 (SE) .476 <i>Beta</i> -.056	(B) -.366 (SE) .495 <i>Beta</i> -.059	(B) -.332 (SE) .491 <i>Beta</i> -.054
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Employed		(B) -.260 (SE) .206 <i>Beta</i> -.097	(B) -.252 (SE) .205 <i>Beta</i> -.094
High School Drop Out		(B) .048 (SE) .198 <i>Beta</i> .019	(B) .081 (SE) .197 <i>Beta</i> .032
<i>Interactions</i>			
Above Poverty Ratio*High School Grad Ratio			(B) -.883* (SE) .432 <i>Beta</i> -.204*
Valid N	183	176	176
R – Squared	.032	.044	.061
† P<.10. *P<.05. **P<.01.			

Table 6

Interaction Results for Number of Sexual Partners	
	<u>Effect of High School Drop Out</u>
Low Above Poverty Ratio	-.127
Mean Above Poverty Ratio	.032
High Above Poverty Ratio	.190†
† P<.10. *P<.05. **P<.01.	

Table 7

Target Hostility	1	2	3
Intercept	(B) 14.533** (SE) 1.219 <i>Beta</i> ____	(B) 15.487** (SE) 1.297 <i>Beta</i> ____	(B) 13.046** (SE) .449 <i>Beta</i> ____
<i>Sex Ratios</i>			
Above Poverty Ratio	(B) .125 (SE) .613 <i>Beta</i> .024	(B) .170 (SE) .599 <i>Beta</i> .033	(B) -.020 (SE) .593 <i>Beta</i> -.004
African American Ratio	(B) -.857 (SE) .611 <i>Beta</i> -.159	(B) -.909 (SE) .602 <i>Beta</i> -.171	(B) -.794 (SE) .592 <i>Beta</i> -.149
High School Ratio	(B) .842 (SE) .582 <i>Beta</i> .144	(B) .912 (SE) .571 <i>Beta</i> .158	(B) 1.186* (SE) .573 <i>Beta</i> .205*
Labor Force Ratio	(B) -2.027 † (SE) 1.163 <i>Beta</i> -.173 †	(B) -2.378* (SE) 1.156 <i>Beta</i> -.203*	(B) -7.429** (SE) 2.551 <i>Beta</i> -.634**
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Employed		(B) -.662 (SE) .452 <i>Beta</i> -.143	(B) -.276 (SE) .476 <i>Beta</i> -.060
High School Drop Out		(B) -.734 (SE) .434 <i>Beta</i> -.165	(B) -.574 (SE) .431 <i>Beta</i> -.129
<i>Interactions</i>			
Labor Force Ratio*Employed			(B) 6.423* (SE) 2.907 <i>Beta</i> .500*
Valid N	103	100	100
R – Squared	.071	.130	.174
† P<.10. *P<.05. **P<.01.			

Table 8

Interaction Results for Target Hostility	
	<u>Effect of Employed</u>
Low Labor Force Ratio	.425
Mean Labor Force Ratio	-.060
High Labor Force Ratio	-.545**

† P<.10. *P<.05. **P<.01.

Figures

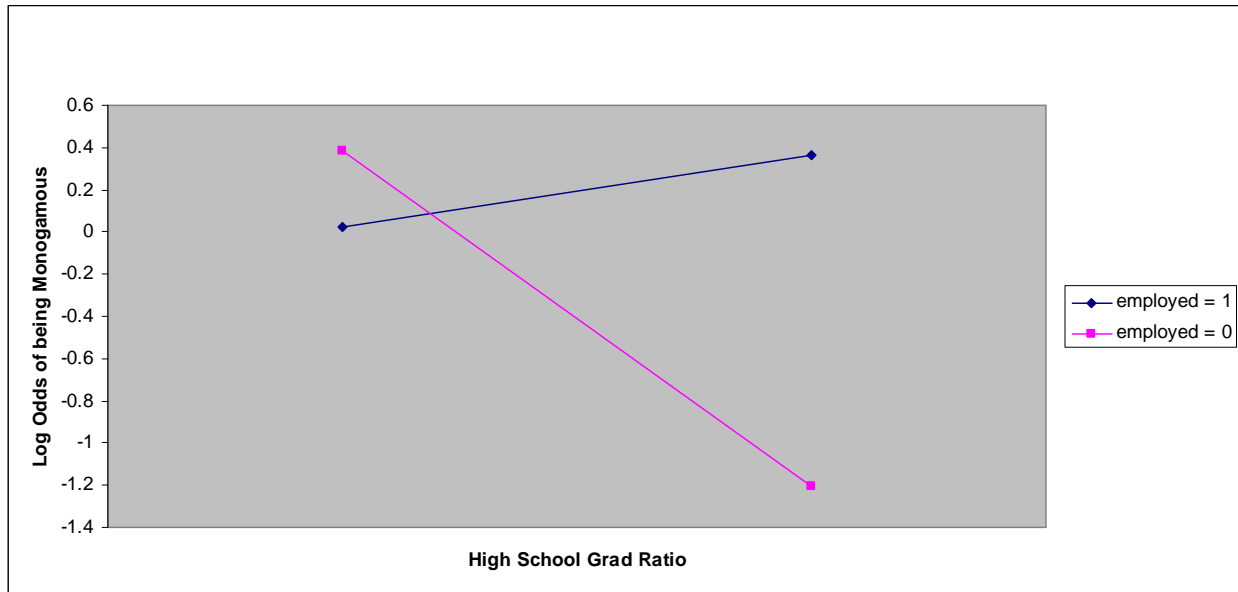


Figure 1: Log Odds of Being in a Monogamous Relationship Compared to Casually Dating

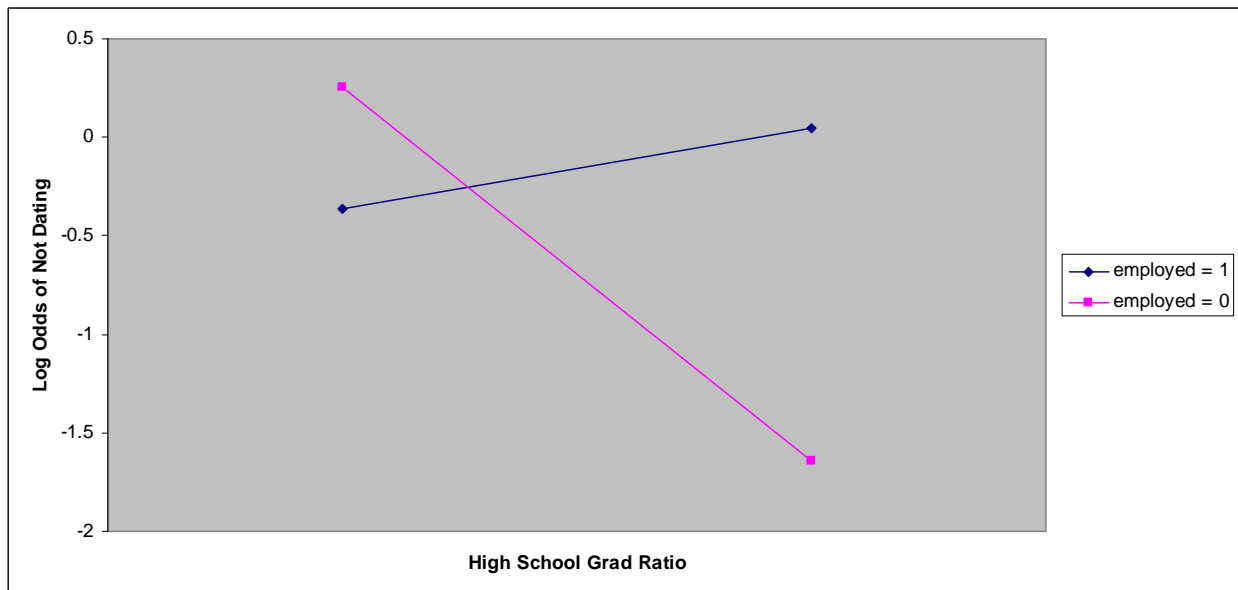


Figure 2: Log Odds of Not Dating Compared to Casually Dating

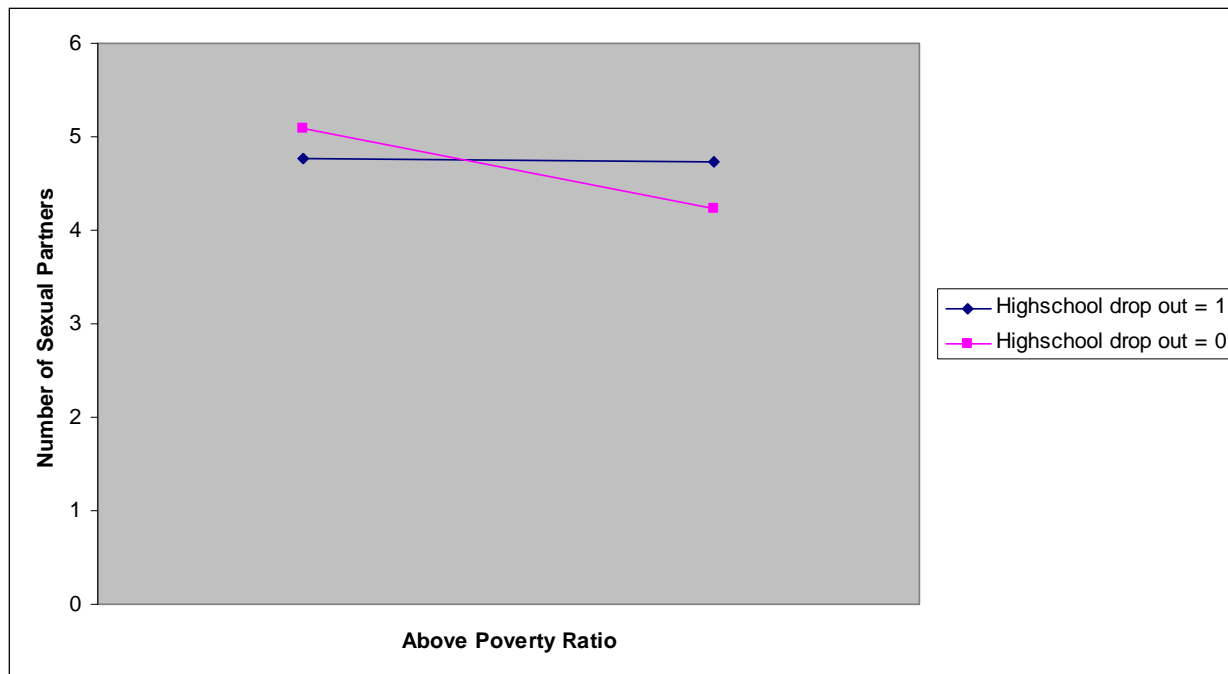


Figure 3: Number of Sexual Partners

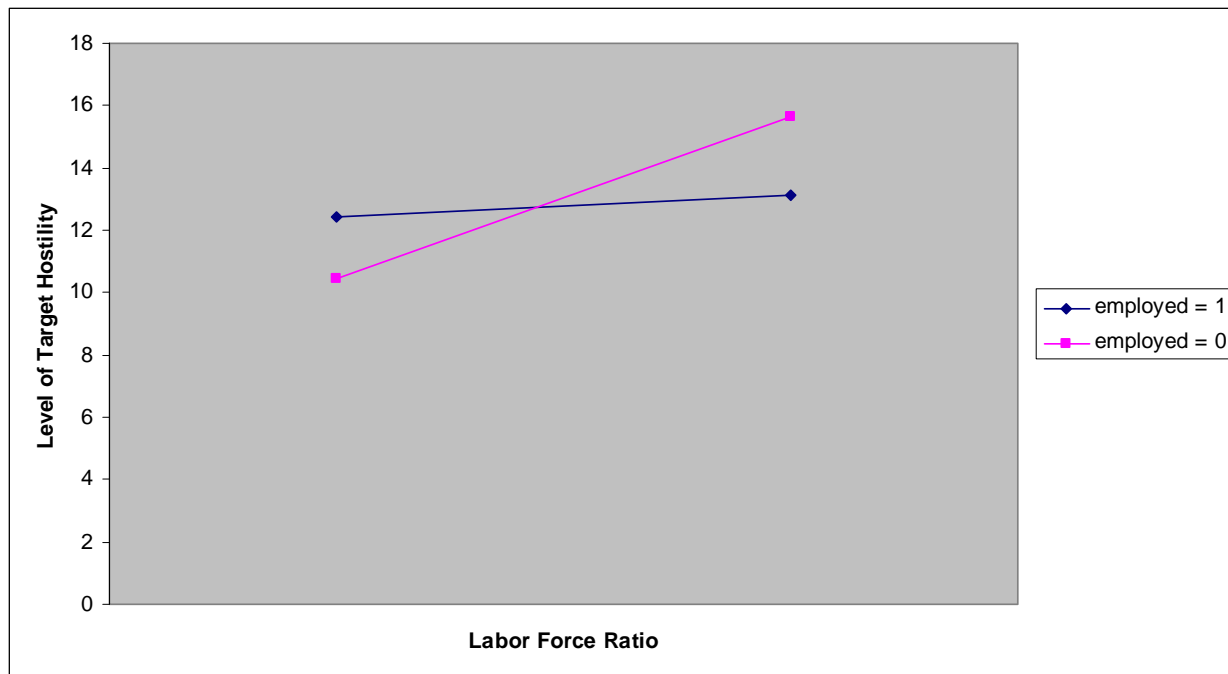


Figure 4: Target Hostility to Partner