

**THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER VIEWS, BEHAVIORS AND THEIR CONSISTENCY
ON AFRICAN AMERICAN MARITAL QUALITY**

by

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ABSTRACT

Prior research findings have repeatedly supported the link between egalitarianism and high marital quality among married Americans overall. However, findings linking egalitarianism to marital quality for African American spouses have been contradictory, despite the prevalence of egalitarianism within the African American community. The current study examines the association between marital quality and egalitarian gender role views and behaviors at home for a diverse sample of African American spouses (N=634). Consistency between gender role views and behaviors is hypothesized to be associated with high marital quality for African American spouses. Results provide support of this association for wife, and egalitarian views were found to be associated with high marital quality for husband. Findings suggest the importance of exploring both views and behaviors separately and collectively when assessing the association between egalitarianism and marital quality. The inclusion of data on gender role views and behaviors regarding paid work outside of the home is suggested in future research of egalitarianism and marital quality among African American spouses. The need for use of contextually appropriate lenses when interpreting findings is discussed.

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“He did not promise us a flowery bed of ease, but that he would be there with us to the very end”

~Ida Mae David (10/03/1933 - 02/17/2011)

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INTRODUCTION

Socio-demographic information from the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (2003) suggests that African American couples may perhaps be most vulnerable, or at risk, for suffering poorer marital quality and experiencing divorce than couples from other racial/ethnic groups. Fewer African Americans are staying married in comparison to European Americans or Latinos (Bryant, 2010; Cherlin, 1998; Fields, 2004; Oropesa, Lichter & Anderson, 1994; Raley, Durden & Wildsmith, 2004; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004; Trent & South, 2003). Among married couples, existing research comparing African American and European American spouses suggests that African American spouses often report lower levels of marital satisfaction and quality than their European American counterparts (Broman, 1993, 2005; Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Faulkner, Davey & Davey, 2005; Timmer & Veroff, 2000; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004; Trent & South, 2003). Although, Latinos endure many of the same economic hardships as African Americans (Bryant et al., 2010; Casper & Bianchi, 2002; Oropesa et. al., 1994) and report lower educational attainment (Stoops, 2004) than African Americans on average, they still report higher levels of marital satisfaction and quality than African Americans on average, with rates similar to European Americans (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Oropesa, 1996; Oropesa et. al., 1994; Pinto & Coltrane, 2009; Raley et al., 2004). This anomaly is consistent with the phenomenon that has been labeled the Hispanic/Latino paradox (Franzini, Ribble & Keddie, 2001). Why are some known risk factors more impactful on marital quality within one ethnic/racial group over another? Because “racial disadvantages in society are not completely confounded by socioeconomic factors, such as income, education, and employment” (Bryant,

Wickrama, Bolland, Bryant, Cutrona, & Stank, 2010, p. 163), there is a need to explore unique sociohistorical and culturally linked marital functioning such as gender roles that influence marital quality for African American spouses.

Views on gender role behaviors and the actual household division of labor that exists within the home are perhaps the most salient constructs used by researchers in the past to explore cognitive and behavioral aspects of marriage. Spouses' views on gender role behaviors give insight into the preferences they hold regarding gender role behaviors. Spouses' reports of actual household division of labor allows for comparison between desired gender role behaviors and the gender role behaviors actually implemented within the home.

In American society, biological males learn to be masculine and biological females learn to be feminine (Wood, 1997). Women have been encouraged to show feminine traits such as expressiveness and communality regardless of their status in society. They are also encouraged to be more positive in their friendships as well as familial and romantic relationships. Men have been encouraged to show masculine traits such as aggressiveness, self-sufficiency and task-orientation (Steiner-Pappalardo & Gurlung, 2002). This view of gender appropriate behaviors is identified in American society as traditional, and it started to be endorsed more rigorously during the industrial era as society “moved predominantly towards a market economy, [and] money became the main currency” (Trask, 2006, p. 3). Men became more involved in paid work outside of the home, while women took control of the unpaid work within the household (Trask, 2006; Penha-Lopes, 2006). Based on the social reality of the times, society began to endorse the

socialization of biological males toward becoming the primary economic provider and protector within the family unit. Biological females began to be socialized to take primary, if not full, control over domestic affairs. This societal endorsement of specialized gender role views and behaviors reflecting the changes brought about by the industrial era suggests gender role fluidity. This fluidity, however slow the process, gained theoretical recognition within the literature on gender development.

Modern theoretical approaches to gender development suggest that a person's gender identity is not as stable as earlier thought. Early frameworks proposed that once an individual was socialized to identify with a specific gender, their gender identity becomes "a stable individual characteristic" (Meier, Hull & Ortyl, 2009, p. 513). Recently theoretical approaches to gender development, such as those approaches that view gender behaviors as a performance (Butler, 1990, 1993, 1994; Weston, 1993), take into account the influences of social structures and power distribution on gender roles. West & Zimmerman (1987) labeled this flexible view of gender development as "doing gender" (p.137), because through this lens, gender identity emerges as a product of a combination of socialization, situated interaction and institutional pressures (Connell, 1987; Martin, 2004; Meier et al., 2009). For this reason, it is important to use contextually appropriate lenses to explore gender role views and behaviors. For African American spouses, the unique history of slavery in the United States and its residual effects on the African American community is a historical and socio-cultural context that must be taken into account when studying gender roles among married African Americans. The social reality reflected in gender socialization within the African American community is different from that

of mainstream society. As contemporary mainstream American society continues to move toward egalitarian gender relations, the historical origin of egalitarian gender roles within the African American community should be highlighted when interpreting research results.

Prior research, using multiracial, mainstream American samples, found associations between egalitarianism and higher marital quality among spouses in comparison to those who reported traditional gender role relations. In relation to gender roles and marital satisfaction, it has been found that couples are unhappy in 82% of the marriages where both couples reported adherence to traditional gender roles (Olson & Olson, 2000). It has also been found that 81% of married couples who identified themselves as being egalitarian were happy in their marriages (Olson & Olson, 2000). Coltrane (2000)'s comprehensive review of past literature, including over 200 scholarly books and articles published on the subject of household labor between 1989 and 1999, supports these findings. In this review, it was found that more balanced or egalitarian divisions of housework were consistently associated with reports of higher marital satisfaction within the overall American population. However, would this link between egalitarianism and high marital quality hold true for a representative, all African American sample of spouses?

To help in answering this question, Allen and Olson (2001) conducted a study of marriage typologies using a representative sample of African American spouses. They found that two opposing groups, one characterized by the happiest and the other by some of the most unhappy African American spouses, were both reported to be most egalitarian (Allen & Olson, 2001). At first glance, this finding appears to be contradictory to prior research findings using multi-ethnic samples of spouses (e.g. Coltrane, 2000; Olson & Olson, 2000). However, it is

important to note the scale used to assess egalitarianism in Allen and Olson (2001)'s study only included questions targeted toward measuring egalitarianism in actual gender behaviors. Perhaps, simply being in an egalitarian marriage may not yield marital happiness for a spouse who views a more traditional marriage as being desirable or socially appropriate. To get a more complete picture of egalitarianism for married African Americans, it would be just as important to assess spouses' gender views regarding appropriate behaviors within the marriage as it is to assess the actual behaviors carried out. Mismatches or lack of consistency between gender role views and the actual behaviors engaged in within the home may have the potential to undermine marital satisfaction and happiness. This type of mismatch may account for Allen and Olson (2001)'s contradictory finding. The current study will use the contextual backdrop of the unique history of slavery and its long lasting effects on the African American community to assess consistencies or discrepancies between gender role views and actual behaviors for married African Americans and how views-behaviors pairing are associated with reports of marital quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effects of Slavery on African American Gender Role Behaviors

Members of the African American community experienced the most overt forms of racial discrimination in American history. African American slaves were routinely sold off and separated from their families, placing African American families in threatening and unbearable conditions (Johnson & Staples, 2005). The horrors of slavery stripped African American men and women of their dignity and power, making it impossible for them to protect, provide, and nurture their families (Johnson & Staples, 2005). Post-Civil War, the role of African American women as providers for their family was reinforced as discrimination presented barriers for African American men's employment (Trask, 2006). Such institutional and cultural forms of racism persisted in diminishing the ability of African American men to take on and/or continue in the role of primary provider within the African American family unit. The gender roles adopted among African American men and women under these circumstances went against views of what general American society thought was appropriate. Even today, these roles have continued to be subtly reinforced as necessary for the survival of the family unit in the presence of continued societal discrimination. In contemporary African American communities issues of race and the fight for survival still take precedence over issues of gender, as they relate to specific views and behaviors (e.g. masculine and feminine) endorsed by society (Cowerdy et al., 2009; Penha-Lopes, 2006; McGhee, Johnson & Liverpool, 2002).

For African Americans, the unique history of slavery in the United States has had a long lasting effect on many aspects of their family life, especially gender role relations. Patterson (1998) suggests that one of the most ravaging effects of slavery is the damage it did to African American gender roles. Adherence to gender behaviors traditionally endorsed by general American society is not feasible for many African Americans. The roles of father and husband were particularly diminished by the perils of slavery and its aftermath, as the familial presence of African American men was forced into almost complete inconspicuousness through Jim Crow customs. For example, the refusal of slave masters to allow African American men to be named on their child's birth record denied them the right to be recognized legitimately as fathers (Stevenson, 1995). The designated father's slot on a slave child's birth record was instead occupied by their mother's owner. Only the mother was afforded the right to be recognized on her child(ren)'s birth record, placing her by default at the head of the family. As structural discrimination blocked many African American men from gaining access to the finances needed to fulfill the traditional masculine gender roles socially prescribed by mainstream American society, discriminatory views simultaneously blocked many of them from fulfilling egalitarian gender role as prescribed by African American culture. The hindrances created a situation which compelled African American women to take on both traditional masculine and feminine roles (Cowerdy et al., 2009).

Boyd-Franklin and Franklin (1998) suggested that African American women were granted more opportunities to gain paid employment outside of the home, as many African American men were stereotypically viewed as "lazy or angry and dangerous" (Cowerdy et al.,

2009, p. 27). The need for African American wives to seek paid employment outside of the home in order to contribute to the family's financial stability may have some influence on findings that African American husbands are more likely to help with household tasks than European American and Latin American husbands (Coltrane, 2000; Cowerdy et al., 2009; Penha-Lopes, 2006; McGhee et al., 2002). The time constraints placed on African American wives' due to workforce participation presented the need for African American husbands to also contribute to completing household tasks. With African Americans being socialized to contribute to the overall survival of the family (Penha-Lopes, 2006), husbands' gender role views would have been flexible enough to include men performing household tasks in order to meet familial needs.

Inconsistencies between the gender role views and actual behaviors of African American husbands may arise in response to societal experiences. Some husbands may also engage in demonstrations of power and control within the home to compensate for that lack (Cowerdy et al., 2009). This compensation may partially account for research findings that indicate “although [African American spouses] said they want egalitarian marriages, their ideas reflect neo-patriarchal gender ideas, that is, women want provider husbands and fathers, although they work themselves, and men want wives to be the primary nurturers” (Dixon, 2009, p.36). These neo-patriarchal gender role views appear to have come about as a result of a mixture of influences from mainstream American society and Afrocentric customs unique to the African American community. Existing research findings support that although African American husbands do report higher participation in household activities than husbands from other ethnicities, African American wives still do the majority of household work (Coltrane, 2000; Cowerdy et al., 2009;

Penha-Lopes, 2006). African American wives' "sympathy for [African American husbands'] experience of powerlessness may limit her willingness to address issues important to her" (Cowerdy et al., 2009, p. 28). Thus, the presence of inconsistencies between gender role views and behaviors that can have adverse effects on marital quality may go unaddressed within many African American marriages.

Gender Role Views among African Americans

The reference to views and behaviors identified as traditional in the existing literature is distinctly conceptualized as traditional European American in the current study. This perspective is taken only to emphasize the idea that uniquely African American social realities and Afrocentric perspectives on socially appropriate views and behaviors were not taken into account when those view and behaviors became widely recognized as being normative. Recent research findings support the "Afrocentric perspective" (Penha-Lopes, 2006) that the egalitarian gender roles views and behaviors implemented by many contemporary African American spouses (Coltrane, 2000; Davenport & Yurich, 1990; Harris, 1996; McGhee et al., 2002) are reflections of cultural African beliefs and practices that resiliently survived slavery (Cowerdy et al., 2009). Two particularly important Afrocentric traits, which are also central themes in contemporary egalitarianism, are role reciprocity and role flexibility (Billingsley, 1992). These two traits are essential in exercising the African doctrine of harambee, which means pulling together (Cowerdy et al., 2009).

The belief that all family members must pull together for the greater good of the entire family unit is prevalent in many African American families as they engage in egalitarian forms of gender socialization, which Penha-Lopes (2006) called “socialization for competence” (p. 265). This type of socialization is a tool used by parents and other caregivers within the African American communality to prepare boys and girls to be competent adults in a harsh world. From this perspective, African American boys and girls are socialized to participate in all familial tasks whether or not they are considered to be feminine or masculine, because all family members, even children, must contribute to overall family functioning (Penha-Lopes, 2006). This type of socialization prepares them to be able to meet the demands of the harsh social reality that many members of the African Americans face.

Egalitarian gender role behaviors and views reported by African American participants in existing research may exist as a reflection of Afrocentric customs that are a part of their heritage. The flexibility afforded through egalitarianism allows many African Americans to meet the demands of their social realities more efficiently. However, this egalitarianism is often identified only as being atypical in comparison to the socially endorsed masculine and feminine traditional European American gender role views and behaviors. The exclusive endorsement of traditional European American perspectives on appropriate gender role views and behaviors sets the stage for Afrocentric views and behaviors to be labeled as non-normative. This practice indirectly implicates Afrocentric perspectives as being undesirable and is consistent with the idea that African Americans, living in a European American dominated society, often face conflicting messages regarding appropriate gender roles (Penha-Lopes, 2006).

Although, it is likely that many African American men and women will have acquired many of their gender role views as adults from being socialized for competence (egalitarian), the pressure to embrace traditional European American gender role views endorsed by society may place many African American's at risk for experiencing a great deal of gender role conflict (see O'Neil, 2008). Discriminatory actions inflicted by mainstream society can present barriers for those individuals with egalitarian gender role preferences to efficiently express those preferences behaviorally. It is likely that reports of marital satisfaction and overall quality are associated with a spouse's ability to operationalize their gender role preferences so that the actual gender behaviors at home reflect those preferences (McHale & Crouter, 1992). I expect that within a representative sample of African American husbands and wives reports of gender role preferences, views or attitudes will fall somewhere along a continuum ranging from (Afrocentric) egalitarian to traditional European American. I expect that a large majority of African American spouses will report some mixture of both (Afrocentric) egalitarian and traditional European American gender preferences, however reports of (Afrocentric) egalitarian preferences will outweigh reports of traditional European American gender preferences in volume. I expect that few African American spouses will report having only (Afrocentric) egalitarian or only traditional European American gender role preferences, with fewer reports of only traditional European American in comparison to reports of only (Afrocentric) egalitarian gender role preferences.

Gender Role Behaviors among African Americans

In a study of the division of household work among low-income African Americans, Kelley (1997) found that in every area, women were slightly more likely to have performed tasks than their partners. However, husbands were involved, at some level, in every aspects of family work. Child-related tasks, such as dropping off and picking up children and buying clothing, were more likely to be done by husbands, but they were significantly more likely to engage in general cleaning and maintenance related activities over primary caregiving, child-related, or food-related activities (Kelley, 1997). Maternal employment (1 for employed, 2 for not employed) outside of the home was found to be correlated with men's involvement in household labor (Kelley, 1997). There were reports of greater involvement in maintenance type work for men whose wives did not work outside of the home (Kelley, 1997). In contrast to this finding, findings from research using European American populations suggests that husbands' involvement in housework is lessened all together if wives did not work outside of the home (see, Erikson & Gecas, 1991, as cited in Kelley 1997).

In Hossain and Roopnarine (1993)'s study of the division of household labor and child care, it was found that mothers were far more likely to receive institutional support (social service department, early childhood intervention programs, health department, day care/school) support as caregivers than fathers. This finding could be related to societal views on socially appropriate gender roles, specifically, the socially endorsed idea that women should take on the primary caregiver role in a family. Although, African American men tend to express more

egalitarian views and engage in more household activities than their European American and Latino counterparts on average, the amount of household chores being performed by African American men in comparison to African American women is far from equal (Hossain & Rooparine, 1993, Kelley, 1997). It also appears that there is some gender typing to the kinds of household activities engaged in by African American men and women on average (Hossain & Rooparine, 1993, Kelley, 1997). While this pseudo-egalitarian division of household labor may help in reconciling some conflicting Afrocentric and traditional gender role views, it may also undermine the achievement of marital happiness and better marital quality among married African Americans. I expect that within a representative sample of African American husbands and wives reports of gender role behaviors or the division of household labor will fall somewhere along a continuum ranging from (Afrocentric) egalitarian to traditional European American, much like reports of gender role views. I expect that a large majority of African American spouses will report some mixture of both (Afrocentric) egalitarian and traditional European American gender behaviors; however reports of (Afrocentric) egalitarian preferences will far outweigh reports of traditional European American gender behaviors in volume.

Gender Role Views and Behaviors and Marital Satisfaction among African Americans

In the literature there is an overarching theme that more egalitarian gender roles are associated with reports of greater marital satisfaction (Coltrane, 2000; Vega, 1990). The tendency to use African American samples of convenience, which are often comprised of low-income couples seeking help through social service agencies and other government funded

programs are not generalizable. In their study, Allen & Olson (2001) used a nationally representative sample of African American couples to develop a five category typology of African American marriages using the ENRICH marital assessment inventory. As was previously done with predominantly European American samples (Olson & Fowers, 1993; Olson & Olson, 2000), Allen and Olson (2001) found that a representative sample of married African American couples could be placed into five categories: Vitalized (6.7%); Harmonious (12%); Traditional (14.9%); Conflicted (26.7%); and Devitalized (39.5%). In Olson and Fowers (1993)'s sample of 6,508 predominantly European American couples, Vitalized couples expressed a strong orientation toward egalitarian roles and were the least likely to divorce, expressing the highest level of marital satisfaction. For Allen and Olson (2001)'s all African American sample, "Conflicted" couples, which were those who were the least satisfied with their marriage and the second most likely to consider divorce, had the highest average scores on the Egalitarian Roles scale. "Vitalized" couples had the second highest average Egalitarian Roles scores (Allen & Olson, 2001). As previously mentioned, this scale included questions targeted toward measuring egalitarianism in the actual behaviors that couples engaged in but did not assess whether or not spouses viewed those behaviors as appropriate. The influence of mainstream America's endorsement of traditional European American gender roles may undermine marital satisfaction for some African American spouses' who practice egalitarianism within the home. Allen and Olson (2001)'s finding that the most happy/ least likely to divorce couples (Vitalized) and the least happy/ second most likely to divorce couples (Conflicted) are the two most egalitarian groups of couples illuminates the irregularities that exists in gender role relations and its

association to marital satisfaction and quality for married African Americans. These types of irregularities in empirical findings for married African Americans allude to the presence of multidimensional links between subjective-attitudinal and objective-behavioral aspects of gender role relations and the effects of those links on marital outcomes for African American couples.

Family life satisfaction has been found to be significantly lower for African American spouses who feel that they do more housework than they should, compared to African American spouses who feel that they are doing exactly as they should (Broman, 1988). Broman (1988) found no interaction between sex or employment status and a spouse's feeling that they were doing more household chores than they should, but being employed and doing most of the household chores was negatively associated with reports of family life satisfaction regardless of sex. Two-thirds of the women interviewed reported that they performed most of the household chores in comparison to only 4.5% of the men interviewed that reported the same, and not surprisingly, women reported less family life satisfaction than men on average (Broman, 1988). The finding that more women than men reported performing most of the household chores is consistent with findings from subsequent studies conducted using all African American samples (e.g. Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993; Kelley, 1997). Discrepancies in gender role views- role behaviors pairing is likely to contribute to spouses' subjective feeling that they are doing an unfair share of the housework. These discrepancies may lead to them feeling unhappy about the arrangement, consequently lowering overall marital quality.

Discrepancies between Gender Role Views and Gender Role Behaviors

Objective, behavioral aspects of gender role patterns in marriage have been studied extensively throughout the literature. The equally important subjective dimension of gender role attitudes in marriage has also received much attention in the literature. However, it is apparent that not as much attention has been given to the extent to which discrepancy between the subjective attitudinal and the objective behavioral dimensions of gender role patterns in marriage has an effect on spousal relationship quality. The study of discrepancies as they relate to gender roles among African Americans has been limited to the relationship between gender role conflict and psychological distress for African American men (i.e. Wester, Vogel, Wei & McLain, 2006). In an examination of the effects of incongruence between sex-role attitudes and role behaviors on husbands' and wives' psychological well-being, specifically depression, in a predominately European American national sample of 680 married couples, Ross, Mirowsky, and Huber (1983) found that reports of depression were highest among husbands who held traditional views of the provider role but whose wives were employed against their wishes and wives who shared the provider role but still continued to complete the majority of the household tasks. Although, there have been studies linking depression to low marital quality (eg. Choi & Marks, 2008), such studies on the effects of gender role view-role behavior mismatches on marital quality are limited in the current literature, while it is non-existent with all African American populations.

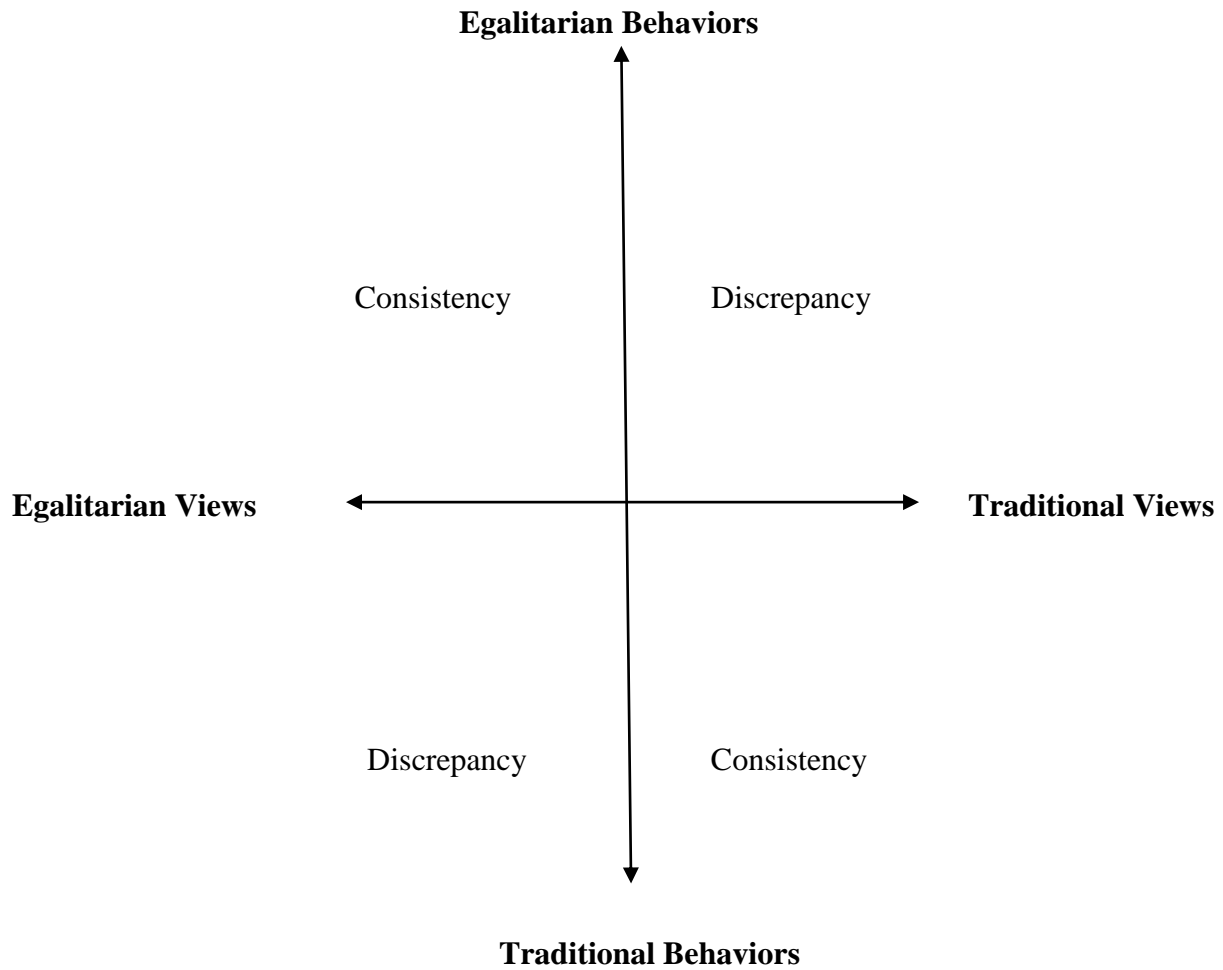
For example, in a study of the effects of incongruence between sex-role attitudes and family work roles on marriage, McHale and Crouter (1992) came up with two risk groups

(egalitarian attitudes and traditional roles for husbands; traditional attitudes and egalitarian roles for wives) and two comparison groups (traditional attitudes and traditional roles for husbands; egalitarian attitudes and egalitarian roles for wives). It was found that husbands with egalitarian attitudes but more traditional family work roles reported significantly lower overall marital quality than husbands from the comparison group (McHale & Crouter, 1992). Wives with more traditional family work roles but relatively nontraditional attitudes also reported lower overall marital quality and higher marital conflict than wives in the comparison group (McHale & Crouter, 1992). Both husbands and wives in the risk groups reported performing more parenting activities, household chores, and overall family work than those in the comparison groups (McHale & Crouter, 1992). Husbands in the at risk group reported lower levels of role satisfaction and overall marital quality than their wives, and husbands from the comparison group reported higher levels of role satisfaction and marital satisfaction than their own wives. McHale and Crouter (1992) also found that wives in the risk group were less satisfied in their marriage than their own husbands. It is important to examine whether these findings for the effects of gender role view-role behavior mismatches on marital quality are the same for an all African American sample of spouses.

In the current study, consistency or discrepancy between gender role views and gender behaviors at home was conceptualized drawing insight from Lui, Rochlen, and Mohr (2005)'s study of the effects of real and ideal gender role conflict on psychological distress in men. Possible ways for expressing gender view-behavior mismatches are conceptualized using a two-dimensional grid in which one axis represents gender role views regarding appropriate behaviors

at home, and the second axis represents actual gender role behaviors at home. These two axes create four quadrants which show different combinations of gender role views and actual division of labor pairs. Spouses whose scores fall in the upper left quadrant represents those who report a preference for an egalitarian division of labor within the home, and their reports of the actual behaviors engaged in within the home are egalitarian also. Spouses placed in this quadrant exhibit egalitarian gender role view-role behavior consistency. Spouses whose scores fall in the upper right quadrant represents those who report a preference for a traditional division of labor within the home, but their reports of the actual division of labor that exist in their home reflex an egalitarian division of labor. Spouses placed in this quadrant exhibit traditional gender role view-role behavior discrepancy. Spouses whose scores fall in the lower left quadrant represents those who report a preference for a traditional division of labor within the home, and their reports of the actual behaviors engaged in within the home are traditional also. These spouses exhibit traditional gender role view-role behavior consistency. Spouses whose scores fall in the lower right quadrant represents those who report a preference for an egalitarian division of labor within the home, but their reports of the actual division of labor that exist in their home reflex a traditional division of labor. Spouses placed in this quadrant exhibit egalitarian gender role view-role behavior discrepancy. This method of conceptualization allows for spouses' gender role view-role behavior pairs to be viewed as falling along a continuum ranging from consistent to discrepant in either the egalitarian or traditional gender role category. This approach places visual emphasis on the complex nature of gender role matching for spouses and makes it is easier to grasp how this possible mismatches may be associated with low marital quality.

Figure 1: Heuristic model for conceptualizing types of mismatches between gender role view and behavior (Lui, Rochlen & Mohr, 2005)



Significance of the Study

Previous Limitations

There is a need to replicate studies done with predominately European American samples using representative samples of African Americans to study results within socio-historical and cultural experiences (McGhee et al., 2002; Trask 2006). Moreover, this type of replication would allow us to “gain more insight into the ideology in individual's lives and why gender relationships in families remain a terrain characterized by contradictions” (Trask, 2006, p. 6), especially for African Americans. The current study would allow for the testing of the generalizability of past findings that exist in the literature based on predominately European American samples and using predominately European American conceptualizations of family functioning and socio-historical and cultural experiences which do not adequately describe African American family and marital processes (Mandara & Murray, 2002; Smith, Prinz, Dumas & Laughlin, 2001).

The current study will address such limitations in the existing literature by using data from a socioeconomically diverse sample of married, adult African Americans, which is more representative of the overall national adult African American population. The current study's exploration of the effects of gender role view/role behavior pairing on marital satisfaction and overall quality among African American spouses will shed some light on the combinations of attitudes and behaviors most conducive to African American marriages, in order to increase marital satisfaction and overall quality.

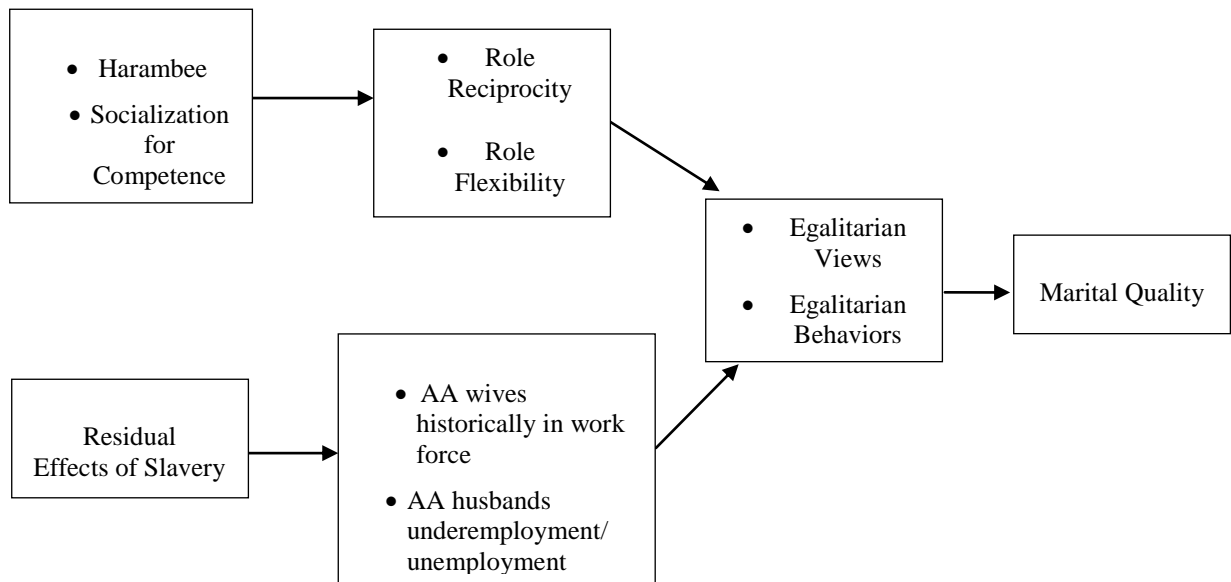
Implications for Marriage and Family

The focus of the current study will permit an examination of mismatches in gender role view and role behavior pairing that may partially account for reports of marital dissatisfaction and low marital quality among African American spouses (Broman, 1993, 2005; Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Faulkner et al., 2005; Timmer & Veroff, 2000; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004; Trent & South, 2003). The existence of discrepancies between gender role views and behaviors may be particularly problematic for the survival of African American marriages. The ethnically sensitive perspective through which the results of this study will be viewed and the representative sample will prove particularly helpful in identifying and better understanding subjective and objective resources that may help in providing an environment and interactions conducive of healthy, stable African American marriages (Bryant et al., 2010; Cutrona et al., 2003; Johnson, Cohan, Davila, Lawrence, Rogge, Karney, Sullivan & Bradbury, in press; Miller, 2002; Segrin, Taylor & Altman, 2005).

Gender role view-role behavior mismatches are identified in the current study as the factor that may “partially explain apparent contradictions between expressions of preferences for egalitarianism, and the prevalence of the consideration of divorce among many of the African American couples experiencing low marital satisfaction” (Allen & Olson, 2001, p.316). By gaining empirical support for the link between congruent gender role view-role behavior pairings and higher marital quality among married African American, findings from this study can show social policy makers and family therapists the importance of fostering this attitudinal-behavioral

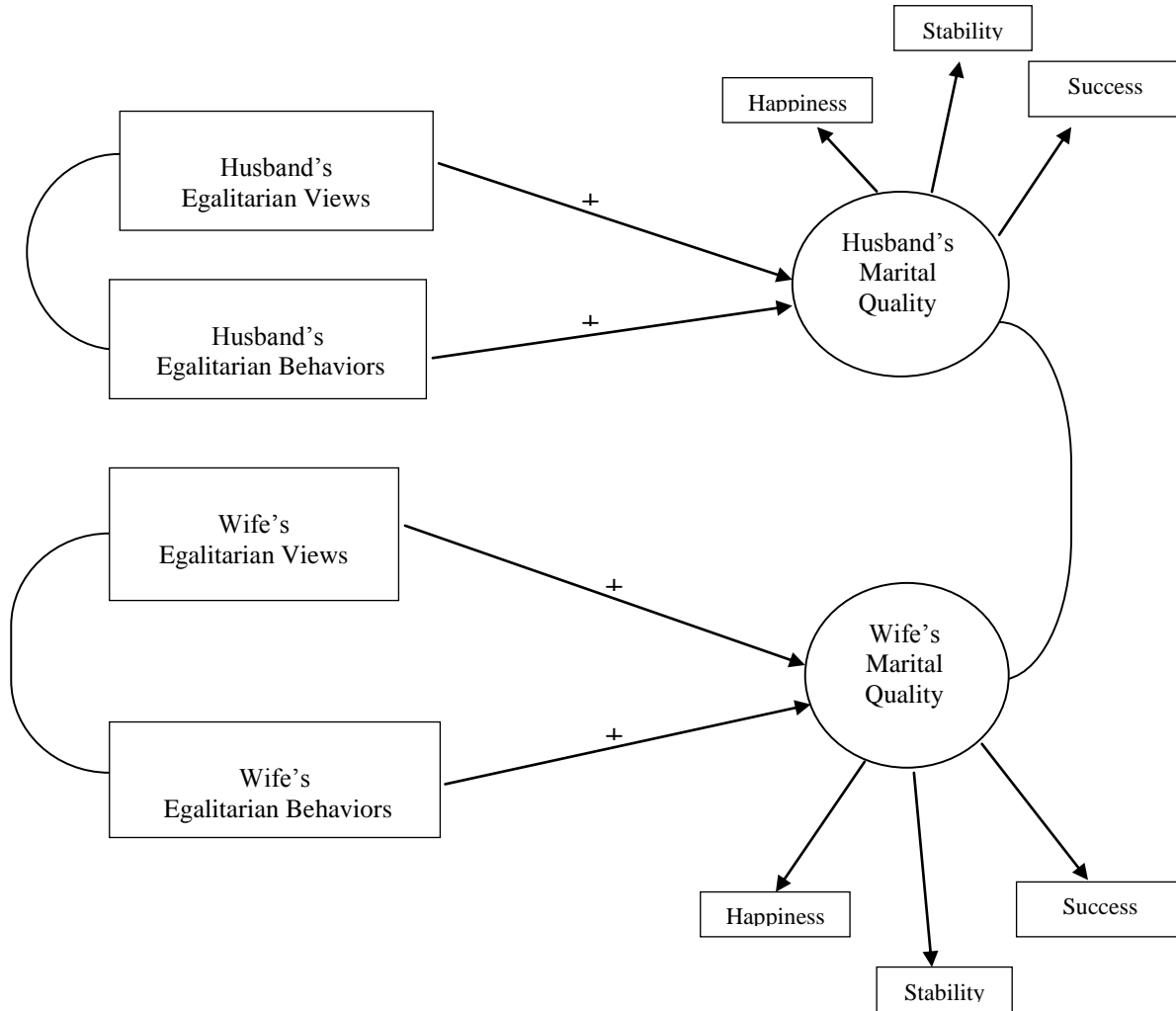
congruence (McHale & Crouter, 1992) among African American spouses, which would in turn promote the development of more healthy, nurturing home environments.

Figure 2: Description of logical mental process for developing study hypotheses



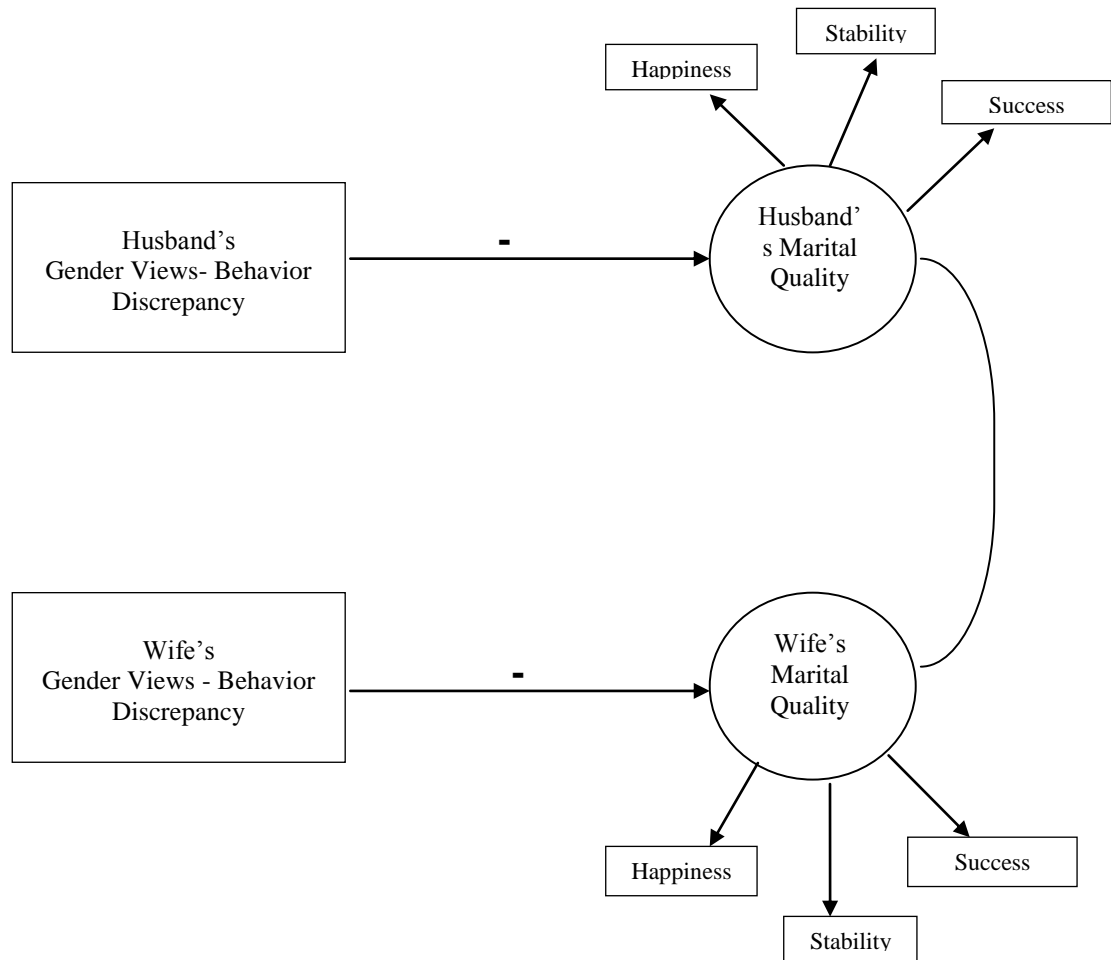
STUDY HYPOTHESES AND MODELS

Figure 3.



H₁: I expect to find the highest marital quality scores among African American spouses whose reported gender role preferences and actual behaviors are Egalitarian (Afrocentric).

Figure 4.



H₂: I expect to find lower marital quality scores for African American spouses as reports of gender behaviors at home are more inconsistent with their reported gender role preferences.

METHOD

During this study I will focus on household gender role views, gender role behaviors, and marital quality variables in the African American Marriage and Health questionnaires. I will examine African American husbands' and wives' reports of household gender role preferences, actual behaviors, and their consistency/ discrepancy on marital quality. The study will control for SES, education and age.

Sample Selection & Data Collection

The data for the present study came from a project funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), A Study of African American Marriage and Health. It is a three-wave, ongoing longitudinal study of African American couples residing in a Southern state. The present study uses data from wave 1 collected in 2005 (N=634). African Americans comprised 46% of the population in the study area (average percentages based on 2000 Census of the United States). The study area was characterized by a 20% poverty rate, and a 5.0% unemployment rate. The crime rate (number of murders, assaults, and theft per 1000 residents) was 6.2 %. About 18.5% of households were female-headed. About 30% of the homes were housing units. Sixty five percent of the workers were service or maintenance oriented.

This study targeted recently married couples. An efficient way to identify “newlyweds” was via marriage licenses because it was apparent that those individuals who applied for marriage licenses had intentions to marry. Thus, marriage license information was obtained from the state since that information is public record. Marriage licenses in this state also provided

race/ethnicity information. Letters were then sent to those African American couples (to the addresses on the marriage license applications) inviting them to participate in the study. Some of those targeted people ended up not marrying, but most did, indeed marry. To be eligible for the study, both partners had to be African American and at least 18 years of age. Both partners in the relationship had to agree to participate. Face-to-face interviews were scheduled in the homes of the participants through follow-up calls. Two interviewers visited the homes of the participants; one person interviewed the husband while the other interviewed the wife in a different room. Interviewers read each question to the participants. The average length of the interview was about two hours. All interviewers were African American. The interviewers asked questions about several topics, including racial discrimination, health, marital interactions, psychosocial resources, social networks, and community characteristics. Of the 1018 couples who were initially contacted, about 4% were unavailable (moved), 27% were refusals, 22% were uncooperative, 47% were interviewed. Only 8% of the data were missing in the sample. This study used full information maximum likelihood (FIML) to manage missing data and increase the effective sample size.

Among the African American wives in the study sample, 65.6% had more than a high school education, 85.1% had incomes below \$40,000, and 52.7% worked 40 hours or more per week. The mean age, median age, and age-range for wives were 32.5, 29, and 20-70, respectively. About 75% of the wives were under 37 years in 2005. This was the first marriage for 77.0% of the wives. Among the African American husbands in the sample, 50.7% had more than a high school education, 71.1% had incomes below \$40,000, and 79.6% worked 40 hours or

more per week. The mean age, median age, and age-range for husbands were 35, 32, and 20-75, respectively. About 75% of the husbands in the present study were under 40 years in 2005. About 76 % of husbands had entered into marriage with children. This was the first marriage for 67 % of husbands.

Measures

Gender Views at Home

To assess gender role views or preferences regarding appropriate behaviors at home for African American spouses, six items were used to identify the types of views held by African American husbands and wives as it relates to the division of labor within the home (i.e. who should do the laundry, wash the dishes, clean the house, pay the bills, prepare meals, mow the lawn). These items were coded on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Husband to have sole responsibility) to 5 (Wife to have sole responsibility). A score of 3 (Husbands and Wives to share responsibility) reflected egalitarian gender views on this scale (see APPENDIX A). Low scores (i.e. 1 or 2) on items 355 and 358 reflected traditional European American gender views (see APPENDIX A), while high scores (i.e. 4 or 5) on items 354, 357, 359 and 360 reflected traditional European American gender role views (see APPENDIX A); so these items were reversed coded so that low scores reflected traditional European American gender views. Based on this recoded scale scores of 2 reflected egalitarian gender views, as scores of 1 reflected traditional gender views. This was done to refine the scale for later use in creating the Gender Views-Behaviors Discrepancy scale. A mean composite variable for gender views at home was

created. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients for the gender views at home measure was .71 for husbands and .72 for wives, indicating good internal consistency (see George & Mallery, 2003).

Gender Behaviors at Home

To assess gender role behaviors at home, participants responded to the same 6 items to identify the actual division of labor that exists within their homes. All 6 items were self-reported, (e.g. how often do you do the laundry, wash the dishes, clean the house, prepare meals, mow the lawn-do yard work, pay bills). These items assessed actual behaviors in regard to household division of labor. They were coded on a 4 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1(always) to 4(never). A score of 3(Sometimes) reflected egalitarian gender behaviors on this scale (see APPENDIX B). For female respondents, a score of 4 (never) on items 339 and 342 for assessing actual gender behaviors in the home reflected traditional European American gender role behaviors (see APPENDIX B), while a score of 4 (never) on items 338, 341, 343 and 344 reflected traditional European American gender role behaviors for husbands(see APPENDIX B). Scores of 1 reflect traditional gender behaviors, and scores of 2 reflect egalitarian gender behaviors. A mean composite variable was created for actual behaviors for wives and husbands separately. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients for the gender behaviors at home measure was .64 for husbands and .67 for wives, indicating acceptable internal consistency (see George & Mallery, 2003).

Gender View-Role Behavior Discrepancy

Scores for gender role view-role behavior discrepancy, ranging from 0 to 1, were calculated by taking the absolute value of the difference between the composite values for gender role behavior/division of labor scores from composite values for gender role views/ preferences scores.

Marital Quality

The latent construct of Marital Quality for African American spouses was assessed through the use of the three items marital happiness, marital stability and marital success. Marital happiness asked “all things considered, how happy are you with your marriage so far?” It was coded on a 5 point Likert scale: 1(Very happy), 2(Somewhat happy), 3(Neither happy or unhappy), 4(Somewhat unhappy), 5(Very unhappy). High scores on this item reflected more marital quality. To assess marital stability, participants responded to a single question asking how likely is it that your marriage will last at least five years? It was coded on a 5 point Likert scale: 1(Very likely), 2(Somewhat likely), 3(Neither likely nor unlikely), 4(Somewhat unlikely), 5(Very unlikely). High scores on this items reflected higher marital quality. Marital success was also assessed using a single item coded on a 4 point Likert scale: 1(Desperately), 2(Very much), 3(Sort), 4(Not at all). This question asked how much do you want your relationship with your spouse to succeed? High scores on this item reflected greater marital quality. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients for the marital quality measure were .66 for husbands and .63 for wives, indicating acceptable internal consistency (see George & Mallery, 2003).

Analysis

Using Multiple Regression (MR) procedures in MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2002), Marital quality was regressed on scores of gender role view-role behavior discrepancy to test whether or not consistency between gender role preference and actual division of labor at home has an effect on reports of marital quality for African American spouses. Moreover, spouses' reports of marital quality were regressed on their own reports of egalitarian gender views and actual behaviors, separately.

RESULTS

Univariate Statistics

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Variables of Interest -- Gender Views (EgalV) (for both husbands and wives), Gender Behaviors (EgalB) (for both husband and wives), Discrepancy between Egalitarian Views and Behaviors (Discrep) (for both husbands and wives) Marital Happiness (MHap) (for both husbands and wives), Marital Stability (MStab) (for both husbands and wives), and Marital Success (MSuc) (for both husbands and wives)

Measures	Husbands			Wives		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
EgalV	1.69	0.28	1.0 – 2.0	1.70	0.30	1.0 – 2.0
EgalB	1.56	0.34	1.0 – 2.0	1.30	0.31	1.0 – 2.0
Discrep	0.35	0.30	0.0 – 1.0	0.46	0.32	0.0 – 1.0
MHap	4.74	0.63	1.0 – 5.0	4.67	0.69	1.0 – 5.0
MStab	4.81	0.52	1.0 – 5.0	4.79	0.61	1.0 – 5.0
MSuc	3.62	0.53	1.0 – 4.0	3.63	0.52	1.0 – 4.0

African American husbands and wives in the current study reported similar egalitarian gender views at home, with means of 1.69 and 1.70 and standard deviations of 0.28 and 0.30 respectively. Wives, however, reported less egalitarian gender behaviors at home ($M = 1.30$, $SD = 0.34$) than husbands ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.31$), with similar variation in reported behaviors. There were also more discrepancies between egalitarian views and behaviors at home for wives ($M = 0.46$) than for husbands ($M = 0.35$). Means for each marital quality indicators were relatively high for both spouses. When viewed collectively, husbands' reported marital quality appears to

be slightly higher than that of wives (see Table 1). Ranges for all scales were identical for husbands and wives.

Bivariate Analysis

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Observed Independent and Dependent Variables for Both Husbands and Wives

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. EgalV_H	1.00											
2. EgalV_W	.25**	1.00										
3. EgalB_H	.36**	.19	1.00									
4. EgalB_W	.03	.29	.81	1.00								
5. Discrep_H	-.45**	-.10	-.15	.69	1.00							
6. Discrep_W	.00	.62**	-.10	-.36**	-.17	1.00						
7. MHap_H	.13**	.04	-.04	-.16	-.15	-.03	1.00					
8. MHap_W	-.07	-.08	-.04	.11	.11	-.27	.39**	1.00				
9. MStab_H	.08	.06	.08	.07	-.13	-.27	.61**	.35**	1.00			
10. MStab_W	-.06	-.02	.12	-.11	-.13	-.21	.32**	.51**	.36**	1.00		
11. MSuc_H	.05	-.06	-.05	-.06	.05	-.03	.27**	.19**	.31**	.12**	1.00	
12. MSuc_W	.01	-.09	-.05	0.11	.01	.02	.20**	.32**	.19**	.24**	.22**	1.00

** $p < .01$

Spss statistical software was used to conduct a bivariate analysis to test for relationships among all of the variables included in the study. The four predictor variables, husbands' and wives' egalitarian gender views and behaviors (EgalV_H, EgalV_W, EgalB_H, EgalB_W), were

mean centered to combat possible multicollinearity issues and increase interpretability of relationships (Aiken & West, 1991; Judd & McClelland, 1989). Results of the bivariate analysis revealed 21 statistically significant relationships among all of the variables (see Table 2). There was a positive relationship between wives' egalitarian gender views (EgalV_W) and wives' views-behaviors discrepancy (Discrep_W) ($r=.62, p<.01$), indicating that egalitarian gender views were associated with increased views-behaviors discrepancy for wives on average. For husbands, results were the reverse. There was a negative relationship between husbands' egalitarian gender views (EgalV_H) and husbands' gender views and behaviors discrepancy (Discrep_H) ($r=-.45, p<.01$), indicating that traditional gender views were associated with increased views/behaviors discrepancy for husbands on average. Only wives' egalitarian gender behaviors (EgalB_W) were significantly related to their reported views-behaviors discrepancy (Discrep_W), and the relationship was negative ($r=-.36, p<.01$). This meant that wives' increased views-behaviors discrepancy was accompanied by their reports of traditional behaviors at home, on average. Husbands' egalitarian gender behaviors (EgalB_H) were significantly correlated with egalitarian gender views (EgalV_H) for both husbands ($r=.36, p<.01$) and wives ($r=.25, p<.01$), such that their reports of egalitarian behaviors were associated with having egalitarian preferences for both husbands and wives on average. All correlations among the observed marital quality subscales (i.e. MHap, MStab and MSuc) were positive and statistically significant within group (i.e. husbands' to husbands and wives' to wives') and between groups (i.e. husbands' to wives'). This was to be expected for within group correlations for these variables, since they were all assessing

the same latent construct. The most notable of these relationships existed between within group MHap and MSuc.

Multiple Regression Analysis

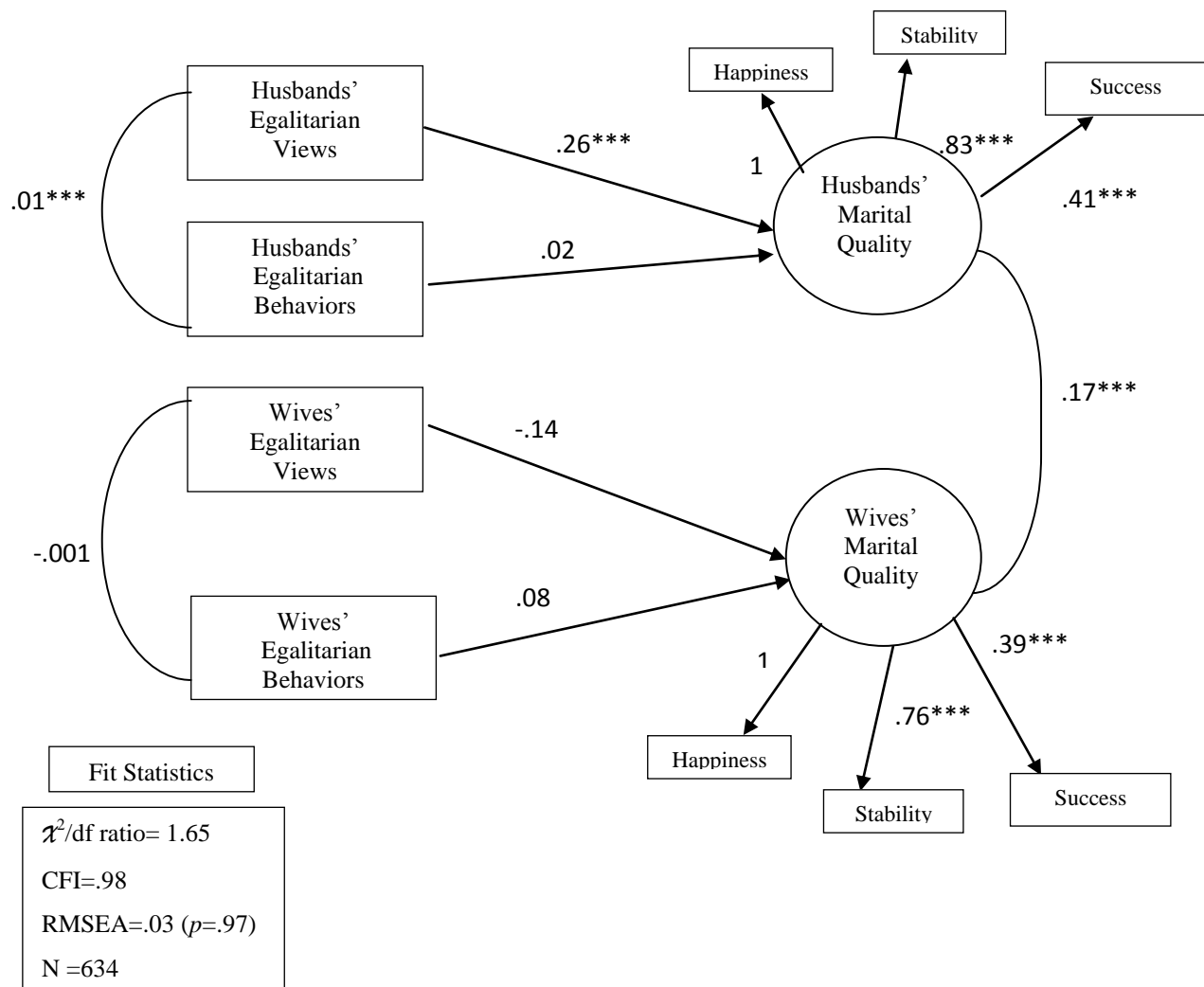
Hypothesis 1

In order to address the two study hypotheses, I fit two regression models using Mplus. First, the hypothesized model for the regression of husbands' and wives' gender views and behaviors (EgalV_H, EgalV_W, EgalB_H, EgalB_W) predicted Marital Quality for both husbands and wives, measured by MHap_H, MHap_W; MStab_H, MStab_W; and MSuc_H, MSuc_W (see Figure 5). Model fit indices were examined to determine whether the model fit the data well in this regression analysis. The first fit statistic observed was the Chi-Square statistic ($\chi^2 = 46.33$, $df=28$, $p\text{-value}=.02$), which along with the χ^2/df ratio= 1.65 indicated that the data fit the model well. An examination of the other fit statistics verifies this as both the estimate for the Comparative Fit Index (CFI= .98) and the estimate for the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA= .03, $p = .97$) statistic indicated good model fit also.

An examination of the unstandardized coefficients for this regression analysis of the study model (see Figure 5) indicated that there was a positive statistically significant relationship between husbands' gender views and husbands' marital quality ($\beta=.26$, $p< .001$). For wives there was a negative relationship between gender views and marital quality, but this relationship was not statistical significant ($\beta=-.14$, $p> .05$). The regression of husbands' gender behaviors on husbands' marital quality yielded no statistically significant relationship ($\beta= .02$, $p> .05$), and the

same was the case for wives' gender behaviors regressed on wives' marital quality ($\beta=.08$, $p>.10$). The first study hypothesis that high marital quality scores will be found among African American spouses whose reported egalitarian gender preferences and behaviors at home was partially supported by the data for husbands only. Their gender views and behaviors accounted for 26% of their marital quality on average. Gender views and behavior accounted for 14% of wives' marital quality.

Figure 5. The influence of African American husbands' and wives' gender views and behaviors on marital quality.



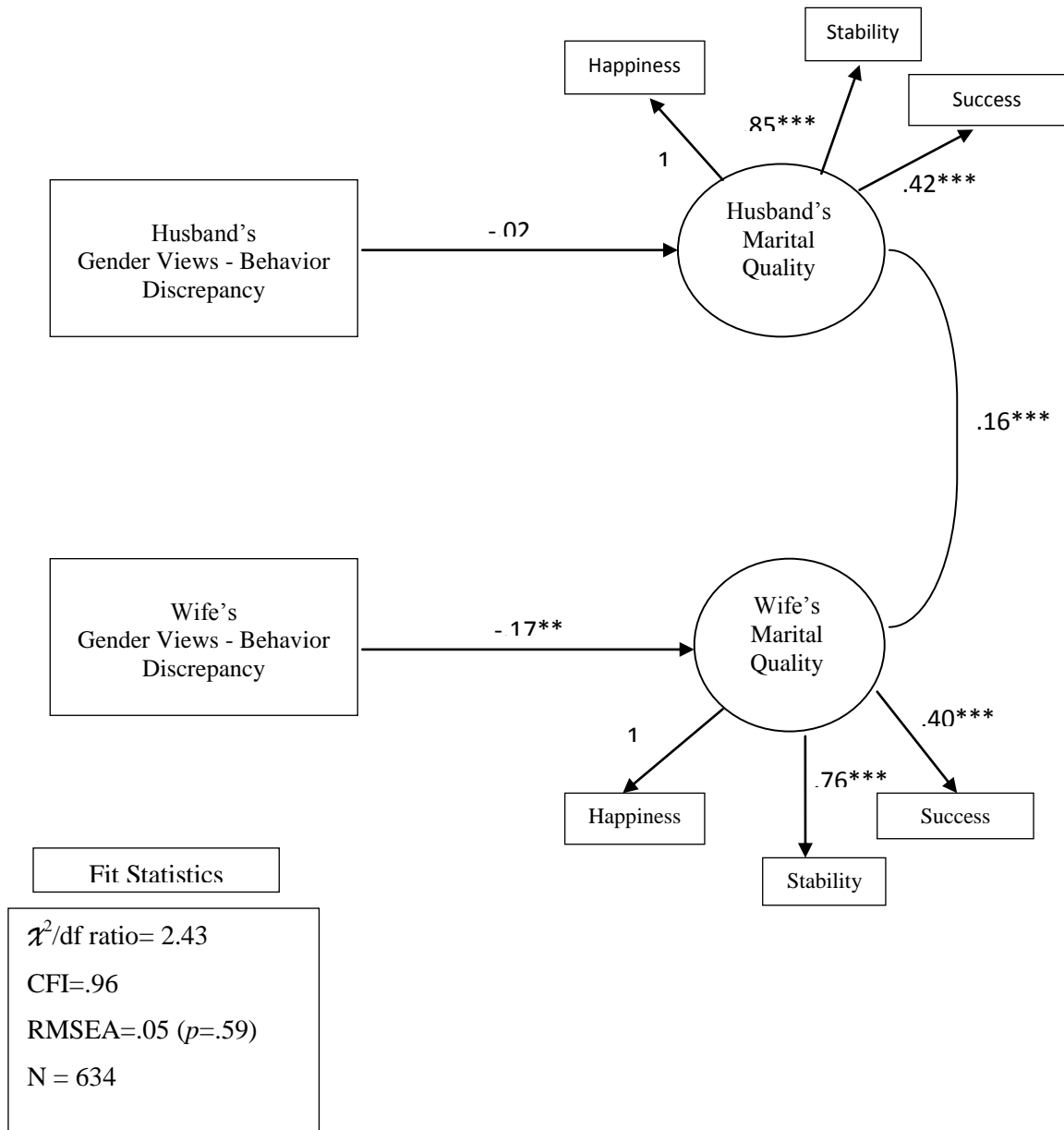
Note: Estimates shown are unstandardized coefficients

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesized model examined the relationship between views-behaviors discrepancy for husbands and wives (Discrep_H, Discrep_W) and their Marital Quality, respectively (see Figure 6). An examination of this statistic by looking at the χ^2/df ratio= 2.43 indicated that the model was a good fit with the data, and an examination of the CFI= .96 and RMSEA= .05 fit statistics verified this indication.

An examination of the unstandardized coefficients for this regression analysis of the second study model (see Figure 6) indicated that there was a negative statistically significant relationship between wives' gender views-behaviors discrepancy and their marital quality ($\beta = -17, p < .01$). For husbands, there was a negative relationship between their gender views-behaviors discrepancy and their marital quality as well, but this relationship had no statistical significance. The second hypothesis is only supported with statistical significance for wives.

Figure 6. The influence of discrepancy between gender role views and behaviors on marital quality for African American husbands and wives.



Note: Estimates shown are unstandardized coefficients

Snapshot of Gender View-Role Behavior Discrepancy/ Consistency Grouping

Groupings were done for gender views-behaviors discrepancy/ consistency to get an idea of how spouses were distributed among the four possible groups; Egalitarian Consistent (EgalV-EgalB), Traditional Consistent (TradV-TradB), Egalitarian Discrepant (EgalV-TradB) and Traditional Discrepant (TradV-EgalB). Only data for spouses who responded to all 6 items for both scales were included in this analysis, thus spouses with missing data for any of the 12 total items were excluded. As a result, grouping results were based off of only 89 spouses. Of those 89 spouses, over 56% were consistent in either direction, and of those consistent spouses just over half were egalitarian consistent (52%).

Figure 7. Gender views-behaviors grouping for overall sample

		Egalitarian Behaviors (EgalB)			
Egalitarian Views (EgalV)		Consistent <i>n</i> =26	Discrepant <i>n</i> =27	Traditional Views (TradV)	
		Discrepant <i>n</i> =12	Consistent <i>n</i> =24		
		Traditional Behaviors (TradB)			

Note: Results are not separated by sex. Only participants who responded to all Gender Views and Gender Behaviors questions were included in this grouping. Levels of discrepancy and consistency were not examined. only types

DISCUSSION

Over the years, there has been much attention placed on researching the effects that gender views and behaviors have on marital quality. However, this type of research is very limited among nationally representative populations of married African Americans, and the results of existing research are marked by contradictory findings. In Allen and Olson (2001)'s study of marital typology for African Americans using the ENRICH assessment on 415 married couples, it was found that the African American couples who were the most egalitarian were also categorized in two groups which fell on opposite ends of the marital quality continuum. These couples were either the most happy and least likely to divorce or the least happy and second most likely to divorce (Allen & Olson, 2001). It is important to note that the measurement used to assess egalitarianism for Allen and Olson (2001)'s representative sample of married African Americans was limited to gender behaviors only. In that study, it may be that those egalitarian couples who were the most happy and least likely to divorce also held egalitarian views. Those egalitarian couples who were the least happy and second most likely to divorce may have held "traditional" gender views which would not allow them the flexibility to engage in egalitarian behaviors without experiencing some sort of strain. From this point of view, the presence of consistency between gender views and gender behaviors seems to be important for egalitarian African American spouses to experience good marital quality.

To find support for the relationship mentioned above and add to the little knowledge already known about African American marriages using representative samples, the purpose of the current study was to examine the effects of both egalitarian gender views and behaviors on

marital quality for a diverse sample of African American spouses residing in the south. Moreover, the effect of the discrepancy between gender views and behaviors on marital quality for these spouses is also assessed. Using a culturally sensitive lens, the results of the current study are examined as a start point in lessening gaps that exist in the research on African American marriage, and several significant findings were made. The two study hypotheses will be used to organize and provide an outline for study findings. First, the relationship between African American spouses' marital quality and their gender views and behaviors at home will be discussed, followed by a discussion about the relationship between husbands and wives marital quality and the discrepancy that exists between their gender preferences and the actual behaviors carried out at home. Findings provided some empirical support for the two study hypotheses, however this support varied by sex.

Egalitarian Views, Behaviors and Marital Quality at Home

Consistent with expectations based on the first study hypothesis stating that high marital quality scores would be found among African American spouses with egalitarian gender preferences and behaviors at home, husbands' marital quality was positively associated with their egalitarian gender views at home ($\beta=.26, p< .001$). However, the relationship between wives marital quality and their egalitarian gender views at home was a negative one, which held only marginal significance ($\beta=-.14, p< .10$). This meant that on average, marital quality scores were high for African American husbands with egalitarian preferences at home and low for African American wives with egalitarian preferences at home.

Views-Behaviors Discrepancy and Marital Quality

The second study hypothesis proposed that high marital quality scores would be found among African American spouses whose gender preferences are consistent with their reported behaviors at home, and the results of analyses testing this hypothesis did provide some empirical support. Consistent with hypothesized expectations, there was a negative relationship between spouses' gender views-behaviors discrepancy and marital quality; although, it was only statistically significant for wives. Wives' gender views-behaviors discrepancy accounted for 17% of marital quality. Wives' egalitarian gender views were significantly and positively correlated with their gender views-behaviors discrepancy. Wives' egalitarian behaviors were significantly and negatively correlated with their views-behaviors discrepancy. Based on these correlations, wives' gender views-behaviors discrepancy would be characterized by egalitarian views and non-egalitarian behaviors. These findings are consistent with prior research findings supporting the idea that African American wives still do the majority of the housework, on average, despite the pervasive theme of egalitarianism within the African American community (Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993; Kelley, 1997). Wives' average egalitarian views scores ($M = 1.69, SD = .28$) in the current study were similar to the average scores for husbands ($M = 1.70, SD = .30$). However, wives' average reported egalitarian behaviors at home ($M = 1.30, SD = .31$) were lower than the average for husbands' reported egalitarian behaviors at home ($M = 1.56, SD = .34$), indicating that wives' behaviors at home were more "traditional." "Traditional" gender role behaviors at home require wives to do more work than it requires of husbands.

Feeling Overwhelmed: Doing More Than One Feels They Should

Afrocentric egalitarian preferences often provide African American spouses with the flexibility necessary to engage in various behaviors as needed. In so saying, engaging in non-egalitarian, traditional European American gender behaviors at home should not bring about adverse consequences for spouses with egalitarian preferences due to this flexibility. However, traditional European American scripts for gender behaviors require far less involvement from husbands than they do from wives at home. This makes it more likely for egalitarian wives to feel overwhelmed when engaging in “traditional” behaviors at home, than it would for egalitarian husbands when engaging in “traditional” behaviors at home (McHale & Crouter, 1992), because in this situation egalitarian wives are required to do far more than they feel they should do. Having the preference for sharing household tasks with their husbands equally, they are prompted to carry out far more than the half that they envisioned themselves doing. Findings from prior empirical research postulate that this perception that one is doing more than he or she should has more of an effect on marital quality than the actual behaviors that they carry out (Broman, 1988; Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993; Kelly, 1997).

Following this logic, African American husbands with “traditional” preferences for household division of labor, who are required through necessity and /or customs to behave in an Afrocentric egalitarian manner, should experience poor marital quality as well. However, the relationship between husbands' views-behaviors discrepancy and their marital quality did not have the statistical significance that it did for wives in the current study. Notably, husbands' views-behaviors discrepancy was found to be negatively linked to their egalitarian views with

statistical significance ($r = -.45, p < .01$), but the relationship between husbands' views-behaviors discrepancy and their egalitarian behaviors did not achieve statistical significance. It would seem that although African American husbands have been found in past research to contribute to household tasks more than husbands from other races (Coltrane, 2000; Cowerdy et al., 2009; McGhee et al, 2002), their contributions may still not be enough to account for a truly egalitarian division of household labor. The expectation that husbands' views-behaviors discrepancy, being linked statistically to husbands' non-egalitarian views, would also be linked to husbands' egalitarian behaviors was instead met by the reality of its association with non-egalitarian behaviors. Thus, discrepant husbands' holding “traditional” views at home are performing more household tasks than they feel they should, but they are still falling short of doing what would constitute their fair share from an egalitarian standpoint. The fact that the negative relationship between husbands' egalitarian view and their views-behaviors discrepancy achieved statistical significance and this relationship for husbands' egalitarian behaviors did not only reinforce the idea husbands' views at home carries more weight than the actual behaviors they engage in.

Characteristics of Low Marital Quality in Current Study

It is clear that low marital quality among the spouses in the study is distinctly characterized by African American husbands with non-egalitarian, “traditional” views at home and African American wives with egalitarian preferences engaging in non-egalitarian behaviors at home. To get a more complete views of the distribution of the African American husbands and wives involved in this study it is important to highlight the views-behaviors combinations

that have not yet been discussed. Continuing to draw upon the logic used by McHale and Crouter (1992) and the statistical support provided by the current study, it appears that any type of views-behaviors consistency at home (i.e. egalitarian views with egalitarian behaviors or non-egalitarian, “traditional” views with non-egalitarian, “traditional” behaviors) would be linked to good marital quality for African American wives. A quick glimpse at the views-behaviors groupings for the overall sample reinforces this idea, because there were just as many egalitarian consistent spouses as there were non-egalitarian, “traditional” consistent spouses.

The Prevalence of Egalitarianism for African American Spouses

These groupings also allude to the idea that more African American spouses engaged in egalitarian behaviors at home than they did non-egalitarian, “traditional” behaviors whether they were categorized as consistent or discrepant. This finding along with the importance of views-behavior consistency for marital quality for wives does help to explain Allen and Olson (2001)'s contradictory findings. It could be that the happy, stable African American spouses, categorized as “Vitalized”, had egalitarian preferences which complemented the egalitarian behaviors they reported. Conversely, it could be that the unhappy, unstable African American spouses, categorized as “Conflicted”, had non-egalitarian preferences which worked against their reported egalitarian behaviors to undermine their marital happiness and stability. This possibility is, however, only supported for African American wives based on findings from the current study. To gain support for a relationship between gender views-behaviors discrepancy and marital quality for African American husbands, future research should examine the views held and

behaviors engaged in both within the home and for paid work outside of the home. The effects of each of the four different types of consistency/ discrepancy categories on marital quality for African American husbands and wives should also be examined.

Societal Views of Egalitarianism

Although existing research supports the beneficial shift toward egalitarianism in mainstream American society (e.g. Coltrane, 2000; Helms, Proulx, Klute, McHale & Crouter, 2006; Olson & Olson, 2000; Vega, 1990), its longterm endorsement of “traditional” European American gender scripts continues to take a toll on the way Afrocentric, egalitarian gender patterns are perceived. These patterns of behavior are often perceived as being deficient when “traditional” European American patterns are used as the benchmark for comparative analysis, creating undertones of cultural inferiority (Sudarkasa, 2007). The pervasive nature of those undertones may very well influence some African American spouses to engage in counterintuitive behaviors, especially when those undertones are magnified by the harsh social circumstances linked to discrimination.

Some African American husbands may feel pressured to embrace societally endorsed “traditional” gender scripts at home in response to the powerlessness many feel as societal barriers hinder them from gaining the affluence they desire (Cowerdy et al., 2009). As the Afrocentric practices of egalitarian flexibility and reciprocity continues to live on in the African American community as functions of tradition and survival mechanisms, adopting an “if you can't beat them, join them” response at home to experiences of discrimination outside of the

home will contribute to strain. This strain will succeed in undermining good marital quality for some couples if wives, blinded by their sympathy for husbands' experiences, allow the strain to remain unaddressed (Cowerdy et al., 2009), simultaneously accepting the burden of taking on more than their fair share of responsibility within the home. African American wives are in turn enveloped in a state of continuous conflict similar to that experienced by husbands as they continue to do more housework than they should.

Extending the Scope for Future Research

Non-normative societal images of egalitarianism may have adverse effects on some African American spouses. Marriage and family therapists should reinforce their culturally sensitive approaches to treatment by emphasizing positive images of the Afrocentric presence of egalitarian patterns in the African American community. Healthy marriage initiatives should also highlight the presence of egalitarian patterns within the African American community as a traditional function of Afrocentric heritage. The elements of role reciprocity and flexibility present in the Afrocentric custom of harambee are also essential components of the new trend of egalitarianism in American society. This movement toward egalitarianism has quickly gained statistical support to become the fruitful alternative to the “traditional” European American family system. All government funded programs and private sectors offering social services to families in need should also incorporate this Afrocentric perspective to views of egalitarianism when helping clients. Embracing an inclusive views of egalitarianism may assist in making fathers in need of assistance (e.g. Hossain & Rooparine, 1993) feel more supported, and as

messages of inclusion for Afrocentric perspectives on egalitarianism become more pervasive, all members of society (i.e. relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, church members etc.) will feel more comfortable showing support for fathers/ husbands in need of help (Hossain & Rooparine, 1993). However, to sufficiently justify this call of action, more empirical support is needed. Future research should replicate the current study, using representative samples of African American spouses, to also include a look at gender views and behaviors involved in paid work outside of the home and their effects on African American marital quality.

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APPENDIX A
Gender Role Views/ Preferences (Home)

Tell us what you want to happen in your home.....						
		Husband to have sole responsibility	Husband to have most of responsibility	Husband and wife to share responsibility	Wife to have most of responsibility	Wife to have sole responsibility
354	Prepare meals	1	2	3	4	5
355	Pay bills	1	2	3	4	5
357	Clean the house	1	2	3	4	5
358	Mow the lawn – do yard work	1	2	3	4	5
359	Do laundry	1	2	3	4	5
360	Wash dishes	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B
Gender Role Behaviors/ Division of Labor (Home)

How often do you do the following tasks?					
		Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
338	Prepare meals.	1	2	3	4
339	Pay bills	1	2	3	4
341	Clean the house	1	2	3	4
342	Mow the lawn – do yard work	1	2	3	4
343	Do laundry	1	2	3	4
344	Wash dishes	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX C
Marital Quality

How do you feel about your marriage so far?						
Marital Happiness						
		Very happy	Somewhat happy	Neither happy nor unhappy	Somewhat unhappy	Very unhappy
82	All things considered, how happy are you with your marriage so far?	1	2	3	4	5
Marital Stability						
		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
119	How likely is it that your marriage will last at <u>least</u> another five years?	1	2	3	4	5
Marital Success						
		Desperately	Very much	Sort of	Not at All	
84	How much do you want your relationship with your spouse to succeed?	1	2	3	4	