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Parents' Perceptions of and Reactions to Their Child's Intergroup Marriage

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2020

Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2017

BS, Central State University, 2016

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Researchers have found that parental support and acceptance are integral to the success of interracial romantic relationships (IRRs) and well-being of interracial romantic relationship participants (IRRPs). Research on couples involved in IRRs is prevalent, but researchers neglected to include the perspectives of the parents of the IRRPs. The lived experiences of parents of adult children involved in Black-White IRRs and their perceptions of societal reactions to the IRR were explored to better understand the mechanisms behind parental support or disapproval of IRRs. Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model of bioecological theory allowed for a focus on a parent's development within the parent-child relationship and in response to prejudice and discrimination from people outside the immediate family. The use of interpretative phenomenological analysis elicited detailed narratives from 7 mothers of adult children involved in Black-White IRRs for longer than 3 years. Validated through member checking of summary transcripts and the current literature, 4 emergent themes of family connections, feelings expressed, and reacting and experiencing racism/prejudice emerged. Study results indicated that the mothers' experience of their child's IRR depended upon their preexisting parent-child relationship and their personality characteristics. These factors and the mothers' evolving view of prejudice and discrimination affected their reactions to society's view of the IRR. Positive social change opportunities exist in maximizing intrafamilial contact in families with IRRs to reduce prejudice. The study's results are useful for family therapists to inform families struggling to integrate IRRPs so the parents and their adult children can form better relationships and confront race issues directly.

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Dedication

My dear husband, you have been supporting my dreams for thirty years, so your love, understanding, and support throughout this dissertation process was not a surprise. I love you, Dr. Fred Aikens, and I appreciate the big and small things you do for me every day.

This dissertation is dedicated to my two children, Jonathan and Rachael. You have so often been my inspirations and my raisons d'être. Jonathan, your passion inspires me and many of your ideas fueled my thought processes as I wrote. Rachael, you are my friend and my sounding board. Always remember that I love you both so, so much. #4enenmw, in fact.

And to my granddaughter, Anayah – although you are too young to fully understand now, this paper is tangible evidence that you can accomplish your dreams, especially with the help of those who love you.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my dissertation committee. Dr. Elisabeth Weinbaum, my committee chair, provided guidance and support throughout the lengthy dissertation process. I requested Dr. Weinbaum as my chair and mentor because she had a unique ability to challenge me and question my thought processes throughout my master's and doctoral coursework, and her mentorship has served me well. Thank you, "Dr. E."!

Dr. Brandon Cosley, my second committee member, is a quantitative specialist, but chose to remain as a part of my team after I changed to a qualitative research design. His questions and feedback helped make my writing clearer because I had to think outside of my research paradigm. His responsiveness and helpfulness throughout the process made the stressful less so. Thank you, Dr. Cosley.

To Dr. Piferi, I am grateful for your time, effort, and commentary. Your input was valuable and integral to my success. I would be remiss if I did not mention Walden's faculty and staff without whose help in the dissertation writing courses and with editing and research, I could not have accomplished this academic milestone. Thanks to you all.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the mothers who participated in this research endeavor were so very generous to share their stories. They each allowed me a peek into their lives and the lives of their families, and, for that, I am eternally grateful. I learned from each of you, and I hope I have honored each of you with the potentiality of the research findings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Although people profess acceptance of interracial romantic relationships (IRRs) in surveys and in abstract conversations, acceptance of such relationships appears to be more challenging if immediate family members are involved. Antimiscegenation laws passed in 1967 by the Supreme Court in *Loving v. the state of Virginia* made it legal for people of different races to marry (Toledo, 2016). Many people have trouble accepting racial exogamy here in the United States, especially Black-White IRRs, because of the legacy of chattel slavery and the Jim Crow South that remains a part of U.S. culture (Davenport, 2020). Even though familial support has been shown to help the interracial romantic relationship participants (IRRPs) with well-being levels, interracial couples often encounter stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination that challenge their relationships (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015: Rosenthal, Deosaran, Young, & Starks, 2019; Yahirun, 2019). I have found no study that has specifically captured the perceptions and experiences of parents concerning their interracially involved adult child. Parents are the leaders within the primary family unit and their reactions to their adult child's relationship may help determine the future of the parent-child relationship, the family's acceptance of the IRR, and the outcome of the IRR.

In Chapter 1, I provide a background of the problem of IRR acceptance in the United States, including the part that IRRPs' families play in that acceptance or lack thereof. I discuss the lack of empirical literature that addresses the parental perspective and affirm my intent to give voice to the parents of adult children involved in IRRs as

they understand the phenomenon within society as they experience it. My research questions are stated. I then discuss the conceptual framework and draw connections between the conceptual framework and the nature and design of the study. Next, I review pertinent definitions, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and the scope of the study. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the implications for social change.

Background

IRRs violate societal norms of endogamy, are subject to bias and discrimination, and cause dysfunction within a family (Paterson, Turner, & Conner, 2015). In 2015, over 17% of marriages in the United States involved people from two different races (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Although 39% of Americans say that interracial marriages may be beneficial for society, only about 10% of Americans say they would approve of their family members being involved in an interracial marriage (Livingston & Brown, 2017). People espouse the phenomenon for others but do not want interracial marriages to affect their own families. However, parents' approval helps the child feel emotionally supported (Brummett & Afifi, 2019), thereby validating their choice of partner and the relationship (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). Acceptance of the union has social consequences for the family members.

Parents that support their adult child's IRR may experience negative reactions from extended family, friends, and society. According to the encounter-based impression theory of Quadflieg and Westmoreland (2019), individuals perceived to contribute to and promote such a relationship may be rejected and ostracized along with the couple involved in the marriage. A disruption in the family system (Brummett, 2017) may result

in arguments or cause a parent to reject an adult child socially, emotionally, or financially (Clark, Harris, Hasan, Votaw, & Fernandez, 2015). The stress caused by intergroup unions and adverse parent reactions can destroy the parent-child relationship (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). How interracial couples navigate their relationships has been researched extensively (see Brummett 2017; Brummett & Steuber, 2015; Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015; Dainton, 2015). Brummett and Afifi (2019) incorporated interviews with parents in their research, but the researchers' focus was on the health of the IRR and the IRRPs. Although parents are an integral part of the family unit, the parents' perceptions and reactions to their respective adult child's intermarriage and the effects on the parent-child relationship have been inconclusive in previous research and translating research into practice continues to be problematic.

Lewis and Ford-Robertson (2010) commented that family members are the first to express disdain and to reject interracial couples. Parents have expectations of their children, and parents may struggle to offer support when a child acts outside of those expectations (Brummett & Afifi, 2019). Sometimes parents may reject an adult child's choice of partner because of racial group affiliation, causing the parent-child relationship to deteriorate to the point of estrangement (Brummett & Afifi, 2019). However, Yahirun (2019) found that select mother-child relationships were relatively unharmed after the child's intermarriage. To mitigate the consequences of intermarriage on familial relationships, parents may have to reconcile or develop coping mechanisms for personal and societal reactions (see Hastings & Castle Bell, 2017). Successful navigation through these relationship obstacles can result in happy families (Brummett & Afifi, 2019).

Interracial relationships may be the key to social change in the United States (Clark et al., 2015; Gaines, Clark, & Afful, 2015; Lewis & Ford-Robertson, 2010) as families form new bonds that cross skin color barriers (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011) and connect cultures.

<div align="center">**Problem Statement**</div>

IRRs have social consequences that affect the family, and parental reactions can affect the parent-adult child relationship (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). Relationship bonds between parents and their adult children are closer for the current generation due to socioeconomic factors, so the parent-child relationship is often vital in an adult's life (Fingerman, Huo, & Birditt, 2020). Parents have reported competing feelings of love and ambivalence when their adult child encountered obstacles in living (Fingerman et al., 2020). The rate of intermarriage in the United States has tripled since 1980 and continues to rise (Livingston & Brown, 2017), and adult children involved in IRRs benefit from parental support. However, the support that a parent provides to their interracially involved child can be emotionally and socially costly (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). Exploring how a parent experiences their adult child's intermarriage will aid in understanding how parents adapt to the norm-violating situation and manage social reactions while addressing their own reactions. Therefore, a phenomenological study is appropriate because the parents' experiences of IRRs are personal to their worldview and circumstances.

The literature speculates on the perspective of the parent of the adult child involved in the IRR via quantitative and qualitative data garnered from the adult child

and study respondents. In a study conducted by Shenhav, Campos, and Goldberg (2017), about 22% of people involved in IRRs reported parental conflict, and 27.1% of those IRRPs acknowledging disputes reported that the conflict was not resolved. Brummett and Afifi (2019) stated that the parent-adult child relationship rather than the IRRP suffers when conflict over the IRR occurs. Castle Bell and Hastings (2015) reported excerpts from interviews with IRRPs in which parents demonstrated anger, issued ultimatums, and resorted to name calling. However, the literature fails to provide such dialogue from the perspective of the parents of adult children involved in IRRs.

Researchers continue to conduct studies evaluating the health of IRRs (i.e., Rosenthal & Starks, 2015; Toledo, 2016; Zhang & Sassler, 2019) and the health of IRRPs (Rosenthal et al., 2019; Tillman & Miller, 2017). Further, the impact of parents, families, and society on IRRs continues to be of interest to researchers (Robinson, 2017; Rosenthal et al., 2019; Tillman & Miller, 2017). However, Brummett and Afifi's (2019) grounded theory study was the only published research I could locate where the researcher specifically asked for parental input, although the parental comments were about support needs in light of the IRR. Therefore, I aimed to give a voice to parents of adult children involved in Black-White IRRs as they reflect upon their very personal thoughts, feelings, and actions. I reported and analyzed the shared experiences of the parents as they considered the effects of their individual reactions on the family unit and as their personal reactions directly applied to the parent-adult child relationship. Documentation of parental perceptions and reactions will help counselors as the number of people dealing

with IRRs in their families continues to grow. Further, the study can help inform intergroup relations literature related to prejudice reduction through intergroup contact.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological inquiry was to explore how parents experience their child's intergroup marriage. The events that the parents find significant to the experience of their adult child's IRR were examined. A goal of the study was to investigate parents' feelings and reactions to possible prejudice, discrimination, or a lack of social support as well as explore positive personal transformations that may have resulted from the child's intermarriage. How the parents' overall perceptions concerning the IRR have changed over time was also explored. Interpretations of the essence of these experiences shed light on how parents cope and how families function in the wake of intermarriage.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of parents as they adapt to their child's Black-White intergroup marriage?

RQ1a: What activities and occurrences do the parents find most significant to their experience?

RQ1b: What are the parents' perceptions of the societal reactions concerning their child's intergroup marriage?

RQ1c: How do the perceptions and experiences of parents change as their child's intermarriage progresses?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework connects the phenomena of interest to other researchers' work so that the phenomena can be better understood. People involved in intergroup relationships are cognizant and often wary of their parents' reactions to their romantic relationships (Shenhav et al., 2017), and parents must adjust to their adult children's relationship choices. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological theory states that people have a reciprocal influence on each other, so when one person in a dyadic relationship changes, the other is necessarily impacted. Similarly, the environment and people within that environment can have a supportive or detrimental effect on the development of a person or a relationship. Certainly, life-changing events can have far-reaching effects for a social system because, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), an event such as marriage causes stress, a change in roles, and reactions from others for the people involved to manage. Yahirun (2019) argued that marriage required a renegotiation of familial relationships and that intergroup marriage presented a unique set of circumstances that the family must overcome.

Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) advanced his theory to include the factors of process, person, context, and time, or the PPCT model. The critical elements identified affect the parent's experiences such as meaningful activities and interactions that occur within the environment, characteristics of the parent, the social system within which the parent interacts with meaningful others, and how relationship dynamics change over time. Therefore, allowing parents to share their stories may illuminate the variations in response that occurred as the intermarriages were revealed

and assimilated into the parents' lives and their social systems. A more thorough review and explanation of the PPCT model can be found in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) I used interviews to obtain information about a parent's experiences of managing their son's or daughter's intergroup marriage. A key component of IPA is using small samples to capture individual experiences and subsequently comparing the intricately analyzed data for similarities between cases (Eatough & Smith, 2017). In such an examination, the individual's reality is honored. IPA is often used when sensitive issues such as race or culture are under investigation (Matua & van der Wal, 2015).

I recruited a purposive sample from social media sources. After obtaining proper consent from participants, data were gathered through semistructured interviews via the Zoom videoconferencing platform. The interviews were audio recorded, a feature of the Zoom application. I subsequently transcribed and analyzed the data by hand while keeping meticulous notes throughout the process.

Definitions

Child/adult child: The terms child and adult child were used interchangeably. In this study, both terms indicate the legally and socially mature offspring of a parent.

Endogamous: A term used to indicate a relationship or marriage occurring within the ingroup (Potarca & Bernardi, 2020). In this study, a White-White or Black-Black relationship is endogamous.

Exogamous: A term used to indicate a relationship or marriage occurring outside the ingroup, or between two outgroup members ((Potarca & Bernardi, 2020). In this study, a Black-White relationship is exogamous.

Interracial romantic relationships (IRRs): An intimate, interpersonal relationship between two people of different races involving love, sex, and commitment (Brummett & Steuber, 2015). Black-White IRRs were the focus of this study.

Intermarriage/intergroup marriage: Terms that describe a marriage between two outgroup members (Yahirun, 2019). In this study, the terms IRR, intermarriage, and intergroup marriage indicate an exogamous relationship, often depending on the supporting literature.

Prejudices: "Evaluations of or affective responses towards a social group and its members based on preconceptions" (Amodio, 2014, p. 1). Prejudices lead to discrimination or negative actions against a social group.

Race: Race is explained as a social category influenced by U.S. history and government labels (Shenhav et al., 2017). Racial categories are based on biological markers such as skin color and hair texture. Study participants choose their racial label because of the shifting and subjective meaning of the word.

Stereotypes: "Conceptual attributes associated with a group and its members (often through overgeneralization), which may refer to trait or circumstantial characteristics" (Amodio, 2014, p. 1). Generally, stereotypes are negative associations.

Assumptions

There were some assumptions for this study. First, I assumed the participants answered the questions honestly and completely. Potential participants self-selected into the study based upon the inclusion criteria, so I assumed each participant was a part of the population of parents of adult children involved in a Black-White IRR. Similarly, during the interviews, some questions required reflection and may have caused the participants to consider their thoughts, feelings, and reactions in new ways. I assumed that each participant considered their responses carefully and communicated their experiences in a way that elucidated their perceptions and relationship outcomes. Finally, I assumed that the IPA approach allowed for each participant's narrative, their perception of the world, to be described and conveyed by me in rich detail along with my transparent, scrupulous interpretation of the participants' data (see Kacprzak, 2017).

Scope and Delimitations

I chose to limit the scope of this study to the parents of adult children involved in Black-White, heterosexual interracial relationships. I excluded IRRs defined by other racial and ethnic labels. The history of negative Black-White intergroup relations supports the intent of promoting more positive societal intergroup relations, and the extant literature covers the Black-White interracial pairing more thoroughly compared to other interracial pairings. Further, the complexities of including the numerous racial and ethnic classifications into a single study exceeded the scope of this study. Including homosexual relationships adds an additional layer of potential parent-child conflict, prejudice, and societal judgement.

I also placed a limit on the study ensuring that the responding parent's adult child had been involved in their IRR for a period longer than 3 years. The placement of this stipulation ensured that the parents had a chance to reflect on their familial situation. Their emotions may not have been as raw, and intervening events such as the addition of grandchildren to the family or a greater number of interpersonal interactions possibly occurred. In this way, the parents had more rich data to contribute to the conversation and more introspection into their personal reactions and growth over the years. The investment of time may have made the parent more willing to disclose, as well. Skewed memory and self-serving bias may have also played a part in the parents' rendition of events after the passage of time, but the IPA methodology helped illuminate such features during interpretation.

Additionally, the literature demonstrates that first generation immigrants react differently to their adult child's IRR (see Shenhav et al., 2017). Limiting the study to those parents who were born and currently reside in the United States may restrict ethnicity and cultural constraints that may be much stronger for parents who have not become more assimilated to American culture. Additionally, the homogeneity of the sample population entailed in the IPA methodology will be further supported.

I chose to focus on the development of the parent as they grow and learn about themselves as they operate within their version of the world. I could have used Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity framework to examine the parents' perceptions, responses, and possible prejudices. As Brown (2020) argued, the focus of the study may have become group processes and the shift in group identity rather than the parental

experiences. Therefore, social identity theory became an explanation for the process of prejudice and stereotype formation. Finally, intergroup contact theory to facilitate prejudice reduction was an aspirational goal of the study that the findings partially supported.

A small, homogenous population with such tight inclusion parameters often limits transferability of the study's data to other settings and populations (Amankwaa, 2016). It was incumbent upon me to ensure that each of the participants' stories and perspectives was represented accurately. Further, it was my job to ensure that the stories be accompanied by detailed descriptions about the decisions I made within the interview process, analysis and interpretation of the data, and the presentation of the study to the audience. Only then can transferability for the sake of counseling, future research, and prejudice reduction efforts follow.

Limitations

Limitations related to design existed for this study. It was possible that I may not have been able to find enough participants for the study because the group I was attempting to source was relatively small. I planned to primarily use a purposive theoretical sampling strategy to attain six to eight participants. Eatough and Smith (2017) indicated that IPA treats each participant as an individual case study, so using much smaller samples and comparing themes would be acceptable. In addition, although qualitative research is used to explore ideas and phenomena, the limited number and the homogeneity of participants restricts the generalizability of the study results to more diverse or to larger populations.

By choosing the IPA design, I, as the researcher, became a limitation within the study. As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, I have a personal connection to the topic. IPA requires extensive researcher involvement with the participants and the collected data (Eatough & Smith, 2017), and reflexivity was vital. My detailed documentation and transparency facilitate the study's transferability and trustworthiness.

Significance

Although interracial marriage is a growing phenomenon, research data suggests that rates of intermarriage vary significantly across the United States (Livingston, 2017). Acceptance of interracial unions varies by education level, geographic region, gender, and group membership, for example. Romantic relationships between Black people and White people invoke the most resistance (Skinner & Hudac, 2016; Skinner & Rae, 2019). Researchers devoted a significant amount of scholarship to negative aspects of interracial relationships including poor outcomes (i.e., Brooks & Ogolsky, 2017; Gabriel, 2018; Robinson, 2017) and social and familial rejection (i.e., Robinson, 2017; Rosenthal et al., 2019; Shenhav et al., 2017; Skinner & Hudac, 2016). By filling the gap in the literature and intricately examining parental reactions to their adult child's IRR from their perspective, this study contributes pertinent information for family counseling and provides a starting point for new research.

The detail characteristic of the IPA methodology allowed me to examine the development of the parent as they work through the life changes in the context of their world. The information elicited may help therapists as they counsel and develop treatment options for families working to welcome and lovingly integrate their

interracially involved children. Further, the data provide the potential for future research including theory-building and subsequent quantitative testing. Finally, the implications for positive social change through prejudice reduction as racial boundaries blur (Santana, 2020) and intergroup contact escalates (Aberson, 2019; Clark et al., 2015) must be considered.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduced the research plan to investigate the viewpoints of parents of adult children involved in Black-White IRRs. I detailed the study's purpose, research questions, and conceptual framework as well as the proposed methodology. I supplied definitions for words that may be misconstrued, and I provided the assumptions, scope, and limitations. Finally, the significance of the study was discussed. I begin Chapter 2 with a review of the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter 2, I present an in-depth examination of the supporting academic literature pertaining to societal norms related to an adult child's IRR, the parent-child relationship and how it may be affected by a child's intermarriage, and how the parent's interpretations and reactions to the IRR are affected by outside factors. First, I explain research strategies. Then, I review the literature concerning how bioecological theory and process, person, context, and time influence a parent's perceptions and reactions. Next, I look at race and identity and specifically addressed three issues: (a) self-categorization as a prelude to intergroup relations, (b) social identity in relation to stereotyping and prejudice, and (c) the intergroup contact hypothesis and how interracial couples and their families may effect social change. Then, I take this information and put it in conversation with the examination of race in America including the influence of government and history on race and race relations, the differences between race, ethnicity, and culture, the Black-White color line in the United States, and the impact of race on IRRs and IRRPs. Next, I explored IRRs in America, including the Black-White IRR experience, society's reactions and consequences for the IRRPs, and how IRRPs negotiate family circumstances. Finally, I blend the topics to explore parent - adult child relationships amid a Black-White intermarriage. I address the limited literature concerning parental relationships with their interracially involved child. I then go on to discuss the parent-child relationship through the life course, especially as it relates to race, parental approval

and support, and the effects of the parent-child relationship on the rest of the family. I

conclude Chapter 2 with a summary and a brief preview of methodology.

Literature Search Strategies

To identify relevant literature, I used Walden University library to access the

following databases: Academic Search Complete, SOC Index with Full Text,

PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycCRITIQUES, PsycEXTRA, and PsycINFO.

Initially, all results were limited to peer-reviewed academic journals. I further limited the

results to journal articles published beginning in the year 2015. Results based on the

keywords *interracial* or *interethnic* or *intercultural* and *relationships* or *romantic*

relationships or *love* or *marriage* were further limited by the keywords *relationship*

satisfaction or *relationship success* or *relationship quality*. The keywords *prejudice* or

rac* or *race* or *discrimination* were added as limiters as well.

The keywords *mother** or *father** or *parent** or *family* or *caregiver** in

combination with *interracial* or *intercultural* or *interethnic* or *intermarriage* helped to

capture the parental perspective. The words *attitude* or *experience* or *perception* or *view*

further defined results as did eliminating the words *adoption*, *education*, or *immigra**

from the search terms. Literature specifically focused on relationships between parents

and their adult children directly related to the child's exogamous relationship was limited,

so the inclusion of academic sources concerning intergenerational relations during critical

developmental periods was necessary.

Conceptual Framework

It is necessary to establish a foundation to guide the study so that the research problem, methodology, and information elicited from participants may be examined and expounded upon from a clearly defined perspective. In the current study, I assessed and applied Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theories to the parent-adult child relationship, especially during and after the disclosure of the child's IRR. In this section, I first define the bioecological theory and discuss the PPCT model. Additionally, I show how a parent's personal interactions, a parent's attributes and surroundings, and the passage of time may influence the developmental trajectory of a parent as they navigate their adult child's IRR.

Bioecological Theory and the PPCT Model

Bronfenbrenner advanced the field of developmental psychology to support the concepts of a person synchronistically evolving with the elements of their environment. Ecological theories emphasize the influence of the environment on an individual as they think, perceive, and behave in different contexts (Araujo & Davids, 2009). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory evolved over nearly 25 years extending from the field of developmental psychology's dissatisfaction with the nature-nurture paradigm and his frustration with laboratory experiments to investigate human behavior (Krebs, 2009). Bronfenbrenner originally posited the four levels of the ecological system during this early phase of his theory's development, and changes in context within the systems became a core premise of his theories as time progressed (Eriksson, Ghazinour, & Hammarstrom, 2018). An examination of a person's experiences must occur in context,

according to Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner's ultimate conception of developmental theory, his bioecological theory of human development, incorporated the elements of process, person, context, and time as influencing interpersonal interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner focused his ecological theory of human development on conceptions of in vivo observation over experimentation as well as person-environment interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1995; Krebs, 2009). Tudge et al. (2016) insisted that the proper use of Bronfenbrenner's theory requires quantitative methodologies and several levels of measurement. Bronfenbrenner (1999) agreed that quantitative research verifies observed patterns and changes, but that qualitative research must always precede quantitative in developmental science. Researchers can explore and examine to gain a fundamental understanding, then define and quantify to verify data. So, an examination of a person's experiences must occur in context, according to Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner's ultimate conception of developmental theory, his bioecological theory of human development, incorporated the elements of process, person, context, and time as influencing interpersonal interactions; these four elements compose the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Process. Bronfenbrenner termed the interdependence of relationships *linked lives* (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 822). Thus, the PPCT model begins with interpersonal interactions, known as proximal processes, which incorporates the people involved, the environment, and the context in which and interaction occurs (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Chuang, Glozman, Green, and Rasmi (2018)

emphasized the importance of reflection upon the characteristics of both the developing person and the person(s) with whom they are interacting when examining the outcomes of proximal processes. Further, proximal processes may involve interaction with elements in the environment, objects, or cultural symbols (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Velez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, and Coll (2017) pointed out that cultural considerations pervade everyday interactions and should be highlighted within proximal processes to a greater degree than Bronfenbrenner's theories accomplished. More modern day influences on a person's development must be considered.

For example, a parent may encounter television programs, advertisements, or exchanges on social media platforms that require developmental considerations. Underhill (2019) revealed corporations' intentionality in creating an environment of morality-based diversity in advertising. Normalizing intermarriage in our culture may change the environment in which the proximal process occurs. The parent-child relationship and the parental response to intermarriage begin with proximal processes. Reactions depend on personal factors as well as context. A family unit is interdependent and change within one person necessarily affects others within the unit. An adult child's IRR affects a parent in multiple ways; a plethora of factors other than the marriage itself may influence the parent's perceptions and reactions to their child's IRR, and the consequences of the marriage and the corresponding parental response reverberate through the family.

Person. Bioecological theorists assumed that people are fundamentally different, and theorists of human behavior must account for diversity in thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and personal qualities. A person's characteristics affect proximal processes, and Tudge et al. (2016) stated that studies should emphasize differences between people, for example, so that comparisons between people are evidence of how characteristics affect development. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) stressed that three key components of a person must be acknowledged to understand the effect of person characteristics on proximal processes more fully: biological temperament, knowledge and experiences, and demand characteristics.

First, Bronfenbrenner acknowledged that biological temperaments could alter proximal processes from the start (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For example, the person who is more likely to encourage interaction through openness and curiosity is called developmentally generative. Some parents value an open relationship with their child and may have historically encouraged the child's revelations and offered support and guidance. However, a developmentally disruptive person who inadvertently curtails processes because of their inhibitions or violent tendencies is called developmentally disruptive. Brummett and Afifi (2019) recognized an interracially involved child who worried about IRR disclosure to their easily angered parent may leave the disclosure of their IRR to their more supportive parent. Secondly, people have knowledge and experiences that are often age-dependent, and these available resources may dictate the success of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). An interracially involved child divulged to a grandmother and the child was surprised when the

grandmother acknowledged that she, herself, dated interracially in her past, which allowed her to accept the child's relationship more readily (Brummett & Afifi, 2019). Finally, demand characteristics are those that define the person, such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, or weight (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Gender, as it relates to familial roles, is a particularly understudied area, according to Berg et al. (2018). So, person differences should predicate the interactions between parents and their adult children.

Context. People are tied to roles in their families, jobs, and communities, introducing context and environment to the bioecological system. The boundaries of each of the ecological environments, the contexts, change in their objective and subjective composition (Krebs, 2009). However, an understanding of the basic structure may help elucidate the construction of a parents' perceptions and reactions.

Close personal relationships, such as familial interactions that occur regularly and across time, compose microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These microsystems include the immediate environment occupied by the developing person and those with whom they engage in proximal processes. The parent-child relationship, as well as the parents' relationship with their spouse and their other children as well as their parents and extended family, affect the parents' perception of their roles and responsibilities (Krebs, 2009). Culture and societal norms are likely to intervene in any microsystem, so parents attempting to explain an IRR may feel pressure from sources outside the immediate social interaction.

The mesosystem and exosystem work together to create the context for the developing person wherein the former contains the person as a player, and the latter merely influences the person (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). A mesosystem forms when two or more microsystems interact, according to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory. Parents and adult children may not interact directly in as many environments as the pair shared when the child was younger, but environments that are common to both parties unite and cause reciprocal reactions in the mesosystem (Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Roggman, 2014). Bronfenbrenner explained that an exosystem incorporates the mesosystem into the pervading social setting such as the neighborhood, church, or school that only indirectly affects the developing person. Extended family and friends from church may associate with the parent and the adult child alone or in tandem and thus affect the parent's views and experiences of their child and their relationship. Bronfenbrenner (1995) described how his intercultural experiences with his schoolmates allowed him to teach his immigrant parents about the American way of life. Similarly, relations between a parent and their intermarried child may be affected by the child's description of a positive or negative conversation concerning the IRR from the child's workplace, for example.

Finally, the macrosystem merges the people and places with the society's pervading culture, norms, laws, and belief systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Race relations in the United States permeate social interactions. Chuang (2018) compared research on Chinese parenting using a bioecological framework and concluded that focusing solely on micro and macro level viewpoints undermined the relevance of Chinese culture and inappropriately emphasized positive aspects of White American

society. Accordingly, drawing contextual comparisons between people and groups that differ in social power, as is the case for race in the United States, must be done with care. The socioeconomic status of the family, their geographical location, and their race or ethnicity all affect a person's outlook. Bronfenbrenner reported substantial differences in how mothers of differing socioeconomic statuses care for their infants and in how race and ethnicity affect a parent's ability to help their child choose an appropriate social group in school. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Certain factors infuse day to day interactions and the functioning of social systems. Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination may be factors that affect life in America.

  Time. The concept of time in the PPCT model refers to chronology as well as progress and makes way for social change implications (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 822). Like the divisions of context, micro-, macro-, and mesotime correspond to increasing intervals and degrees of effect. Microtime, according to Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), speaks to how people change at different rates within the course of ongoing proximal processes. These proximal processes occur through mesotime, or over many days, weeks, or months so that developmental discontinuity between people is readily apparent. Macrotime, lastly, examines societal changes that may encompass norms, values, and expectations over years or generations. Bronfenbrenner defined human development as "stability and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings over the life course and across generations" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 796). Changes within a person affect

those around them and have the potential to reverberate, producing social change stemming from the micro- and meso- level.

Changes in a person or in groups can mark part of developmental science's purpose is to discover and monitor change over time so that implications for human development in the future might be posited (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Similarly, it is equally important to study the development of a single person as groups of people across time, according to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006). The reports of increases in IRR acceptance are inflated, according to research by Skinner and Hudac (2016). Parental reactions to IRRs and the implications for the IRR couple may impact family functioning in the short term, but changes in proximal processes may have enduring social and developmental consequences. Examining the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of parents in the context of the bioecological theory of human development as the parents relate their experiences with their adult child's IRR may lend insight that will impact parents in similar situations in the future.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory was used to elucidate the parents' development through interpersonal interactions considering the parents' personal characteristics, the situations and environments in which exchanges occur, and the length of time of the intermarriage. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, a person's personality, disposition, and traits, for example, can affect interpersonal interactions and predetermine the outcome of an interaction. Further, relationships are colored by proximal and distal influences that have little association with the primary interaction. Also, the length of time a situation has been occurring may affect the interaction outcome. Thus, the

properties of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theories, particularly the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model, were engaged in data analysis.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

The exploration of parental experiences of their child's Black-White IRR is relevant because people naturally form groups and dating and marrying outside of the ingroup breaches societal norms. The Black-White dichotomy is especially problematic in the United States (Buggs, 2017). Examining the research related to the experiences of IRRPs as individuals and as couples may reveal issues that parents consider when contemplating the IRR. Although no literature exists to define the idea of parents processing their thoughts and feelings about the IRR, literature related to family relationships and studies that indirectly discuss support and assimilation helps to explain the parent-adult child relationship in the wake of an intermarriage.

Intergroup Relations, Prejudice, and Discrimination

It is an inherently human process to categorize people. Allport (1979) explained that the complexity of everyday living necessitates social categorization based on personal characteristics. Race, sex, and age are among the first impressions and most noticeable group traits (Rule & Sutherland, 2017), and people use these categorizations to define themselves and others thus forming their basic ingroup and corresponding outgroups. In this way, people can understand themselves in relation to their ingroup members as well as more quickly evaluate others. Despite categories, people can generally relate and interact without friction when there is no need for competition. A

family unit is a primary ingroup, and a competitive atmosphere is promoted when any person seeks to enter.

Families and extended families form communities of similar people with like ideas (Shenhav et al., 2016). Research shows that smaller social groups often perpetuate large groups that support social boundaries, and these boundaries evolve over time and within cultures (Lemay & Ryan, 2020). Society's standards affect the attitudes of the family. Violation of these boundaries and subsequent intergroup interaction may cause intergroup conflict (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015). Macrolevel racial segregation and subsequent socialization experiences may prepare people for suboptimal intergroup interactions.

Social identity theory begins to explain the basis for intergroup prejudice and discrimination which may serve as the basis for difficulties faced by IRRPs and their family members. Brown (2020) explained that although people often wish to be recognized as individuals, they also tend to associate themselves with appropriate groups, ingroups, to maintain and enhance their self-esteem. A person's self-concept often develops from the positive characteristics and sense of belonging that they gain from an ingroup membership (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Assimilation into the family and community equates to pride. Self-categorization into a group necessitates that a person depersonalizes themselves and allows a prototype of the ingroup to substitute for their identity since they are willing to conform to the group's characteristics and ideals while simultaneously assigning people that are dissimilar to the outgroup (Dovidio, Gaertner, Ufkes, Saguy, & Pearson, 2016). The ingroup becomes difficult to breach.

Although circumstances such as competition or threat must be present to perpetuate a strong reaction, supporting family members is the default reaction. Once a person decides on their ingroup affiliation, they naturally favor the ingroup and devalue or avoid the corresponding outgroup (Dovidio et al., 2016; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament, 1971). So, as the person adjusts to stereotypical group norms to achieve more positive feelings, they tend to call upon negative stereotypes to classify and compare people outside of their group to enhance the evaluation of their ingroup (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Consequently, outgroup members become a part of the whole, individuality begins to fade, and a newly encountered person takes on the negative stereotypical characteristics. These stereotypes that correspond to specific outgroups are passed down through ingroup members and generationally. Stereotypes become ingrained in a person's thoughts and feelings, resulting in prejudice and discrimination. A potential marriage partner is an outgroup member. A potential interracial marriage partner may be considered a serious threat to the family and to the community, thus garnering a more extreme response from the ingroup.

Prejudice based upon ingroup and outgroup classifications stem from stereotypes instilled by society, so that parents may be pre-conditioned with a negative opinion about their child's significant other. Brown (2020) noted that social identity theory fails to clarify which identity would or should be most salient for a person and that people's motives and personalities are more complicated than social identity theory posits. When a parent is forced to contemplate someone of a different race entering their family, race may become a salient group affiliation. Brown (2020) noted that prejudice and

discrimination are emotion-based. Perhaps the salient ingroup for the parent is the family, and the fear is that the family may not be able to maintain its privileged position in the adult child's life. The parent may view the outgroup member as an interloper whose presence challenges the ingroup's cohesion.

In some cases, the parent-adult child relationship may override all other concerns for the parent. Sometimes people do not interact within groups but are genuinely governed by only their personal, one-on-one relationship with others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These interpersonal interactions are not at all affected by group norms and social categorizations. The two extremes, purely intergroup and interpersonal interactions are uncommon (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Context or personal characteristics, for example, may affect the interaction process. The repercussions for the parent-adult child relationship and the effect on the family system would be much different when social norms are neglected.

Black-White intermarriage may be especially rare because of familial and social connections. Tajfel and Turner (1979) noted that an implicit social stratification system such as the Black-White dichotomy that restricts Black people from rising from their social caste regardless of levels of success reinforces intergroup relational patterns and discourages interpersonal interactions between ingroup and outgroup members. Parents may perceive interracial marriage as immediately threatening to the family structure, discouraging communication without intergroup overtones. The parents' reactions may change as their perceptions change, especially as the adult children, their IRR partners,

the parents, and families interact – the premise upon which intergroup contact theory is based.

Gordon Allport advanced his theories concerning intergroup contact in *The Nature of Prejudice (1979)* first published in 1954. Thomas Pettigrew, his student at the time, condensed his text to four key factors that were necessary components of intergroup contact to reduce prejudice (Pettigrew, 2018). The factors include "a.) equal status between the groups within the situation, b.) common goals, c.) cooperation between groups, and d.) authority support for the contact" (Pettigrew, 2018, p.13). Since the incarnation of the four factors, over 500 studies uncovered in metanalyses served to supplement the theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Findings suggest that as people spend better-quality time together, stereotypes begin to fade and individual qualities that make people human become more apparent. Marriage traditionally makes that possible as parents support their children in making the union successful.

Families may be able to relate to each other as equals as time progresses. Intergroup contact helps to reduce anxiety and to increase knowledge (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; 2008). Intergroup contact also helps those involved in the interaction to experience more empathy and to think about the issues from alternative perspectives (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; 2008). Certainly, personality factors of the individuals may affect the outcome of positive intergroup contact. In a rigorous examination of the effects of personality factors related to prejudice, Kteily, Hodson, Dhont, and Ho (2017) found that people tested for four of the most commonly cited influences on anti-Black prejudice scored lower after high-quality contact with Black people and results of the contact were

positive for people both high and low in prejudice proneness. However, people who scored higher in measures meant to capture a preference for structure and adherence to norms, those that preferred a higher authority, those that were more close-minded, and those that had difficulty contemplating contrary information were not significantly affected by positive contact in the area of symbolic anti-Black racism (Kteily et al., 2017). People with these qualities mentioned above maintained unilateral beliefs about Black people that worked to maintain the supremacy of White people. Overall, significant strides toward more positive familial relationships may be possible through parents and adult children and their IRR partner only by connecting, cooperating, and agreeing to work on the relationships because family ties are paramount.

Race, Ethnicity, and Culture in IRR

Race, according to some, is a social construction, but governments and history are responsible for racial labels, racial meanings, and much of the division between people. The United States Census uses race to group people by ethnicity, nationality, and culture by employing the categories of White, Black, Other, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (de Guzman & Nishina, 2017, p. 558). However, the single category of Hispanic/Non-Hispanic identifies ethnicity as originating from a specific place and belonging to a specific culture, according to de Guzman and Nishina (2017). Accordingly, since the 2000 census, respondents are permitted to check more than one box for race as well as a box for ethnicity (Parker, Horowitz, Morin & Lopez, 2015). Further, the Census Bureau is working to form more inclusive categories to accommodate peoples' conceptions of self. The employment of these labels allows the

government to dispense social services, produce and enforce social policy, and to gauge

social disparities based on race (United States Census Bureau, 2018). These data may

seem innocuous and even helpful, but the policy outcomes reinforce racial tension and

prejudices that affect IRRPs and their families.

Race, ethnicity, and culture are difficult concepts to grasp because society's

norms and values infringe upon scientific definitions. The meanings of race and ethnicity

are contextual, largely subjective, and intersect with categories of gender, religion,

socioeconomic class, and similar cultural norms (Davenport, 2016). The United States

has a long history of grouping people by race, and the group distinctions have inherent

social hierarchies (Shenhav et al., 2017). Santana (2020) emphasized that darker skin

denotes lower social status, and White people with darker skin are more likely to

intermarry. The lighter a person's natural skin color, the more value they have in society.

Society has sanctioned racial fluidity based upon skin color and the politics of the

time period. The boundaries defining Whiteness have shifted historically with

immigration, so immigration allowed European immigrants to assimilate into Whiteness

(Kalunta-Crumpton, 2020) and, more recently, Latinx and Asians may sometimes be

absorbed into the White category (Buggs, 2017: Leslie & Young, 2015). As immigration

of Latinx and Asian people increases and these non-Black people claim a position in

White culture, the power differential between Black people and White people is

emphasized (Buggs, 2017). Honorary White people are more likely to marry White

people and, although these people of color do not necessarily hold the same social

position, the mixed-race alliance reinforces the social distance between Black people and

White people (Buggs, 2017). So, White is socially dominant and the legacy of maintaining White purity continues to be difficult to dismantle.

Blackness is devalued in the United States. Skin color has been the standard by which people judge others in the United States because of the legacy of chattel slavery and segregation (Davenport, 2020). The one-drop rule, a part of Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924, identified people as Black based upon their ancestry and the belief that Blackness equated to mental and physical inferiority (Afful, Wohlford, & Stoelting, 2015). Therefore, Blackness is recognized as inferior to Whiteness. This fundamental inequality may affect parents' acceptance of and experiences with their adult child's IRR.

The boundaries between Black and White people have been heavily enforced socially through legal and political policy. Miscegenation has been a concern in the United States for centuries and segregation of the races was the norm historically. According to Flores (2019), a Black man merely associating with a White woman was an issue and improper communication or contact could result in a sex crime charge for the Black male. Lynchings were standard practice for such interracial infractions, and most of the country instituted antimiscegenation laws to prevent Black-White boundary infringement (Flores, 2019). The Supreme Court legalized interracial marriage in the United States in 1967 with the Supreme Court's favorable decision in *Loving v. the state of Virginia*, a case involving a White man and a Black woman seeking the right to marry and raise a family (Toledo, 2016). However, over 50 years after interracial marriage was legalized, intermarriage remains a well-researched, controversial topic.

Black-White intermarriage was, and continues to be, relatively rare because of political intervention. The races were separated systematically through residential segregation (Roberts, 2016). Black neighborhoods and White neighborhoods rarely intersected, so people of different races rarely socialized. Even today the Black-White color lines are geographically and socially imposed (Livingston, 2017). The stigma faced by interracial couples continues to be experienced (de Guzman & Nishina, 2017; Toledo, 2016). Alabama, for example, had an antimiscegenation law in place until the year 2000. In order to maintain White supremacy, Black people cannot marry up and out of their social class in the United States, and IRRs and marriage sully the purity of the White race (Roberts, 2016). In their analysis of 250 of the largest counties in the United States, Piatkowska, Messner, and Hovermann (2019) found that in areas where White culture and race is especially dominant, higher levels of Black-White intermarriage are positively correlated with hate crimes against Black people. Therefore, the Black-White dichotomy in IRRs is especially problematic.

Ethnic and cultural considerations may be salient for parents as they consider partners for their child. Leslie and Young (2015) declared that race should be a subcategory of ethnicity which encompasses culture as well as biology. Accordingly, parents who object to interracial relationships for their children may not only be concerned about physical differences, although interracially involved children believed that racial prejudice was a primary motivation for their parents (Shenhav et al., 2017). Parents may object to the marginalization of their family's cultures because people form social groups often based on ethnicity and proximity, and come together to share interests

such as religion, food, music, art, and core beliefs (Shenhav et al., 2017). IRRs challenge

customs and common practices within families and parents may be concerned about

social reactions to the IRR unions and the resulting children. Parents may have good

reason to worry about their interracially involved child. The prevalence of a new,

multiracial generation in which 6.9% of the population identifies with two racial

categories (Parker et al., 2015) may cause apprehension for parents and for White people.

Threats to White culture are a motivating factor for objecting to IRRs and for crimes

against interracial couples (Piatkowska et al., 2019). Piatkowska et al. (2019) found a

positive correlation between Black-White intermarriage and hate crimes when traditional

Black marriages were commensurate with intermarriage rates. The overall result of

intergroup unions may result in parents shifting perspectives and group alliances,

especially because of contextual influences and intergroup reactions.

The IRR Experience in America

People involved in intergroup relationships have very different experiences than

those involved in more traditional, intragroup relationships. Interracial marriage remains

a significant social issue for those involved in such relationships, as their marriages may

be seen as not only unconventional but possibly forbidden (Gaines et al., 2015, p. 650).

Afful et al. (2015) pointed out that people involved in Black White IRRs love beyond

color but must live in a world that is dominated by racial classification, so they become

hyperaware of their conspicuousness. IRR couples are noticeable and often encounter

social stigma when the pair is seen together in public. By gaining a better understanding

of IRRPs experiences, parents' attitudes and experiences might be better understood.

Society's Reaction and Consequences. White people say they do not mind Black-White IRRs, but the numbers reveal their implicit bias. According to research conducted in 2017, 39% of Americans surveyed said that intermarriage was good for society, and opposition to a relative intermarrying declined dramatically (Livingston & Brown, 2017). However, 13% of people from the South said interracial marriage is detrimental to society while such opposition to interracial marriage is 5% in the West and 4% in the Northeast parts of the country (Livingston, 2017). In the South, the legacy of slavery makes Black-White intermarriage taboo. The southern areas of the United States accept IRR at lower rates than other areas of the country, and communities may be more or less accepting based upon size, composition, and history (Afful et al., 2015). In areas with a small Black population, interactions between races do not regularly occur, so IRRs are much less likely and much more distasteful. The context of the IRR is important to the parental reaction.

The rate of Black-White intermarriage is lower than for any other interracial pairings and much lower than chance would suggest (Toledo, 2016). Although one in 10 marriages were intermarriages in 2015, only 11% of those intermarried people were Black-White couples (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Further, White college students reacted with disgust to photos of Black-White IRR couples (Skinner & Hudac, 2016). Toledo (2016) argued that legal and systematic barriers exist along with the sociocultural obstacles that impede Black-White interracial couplings. So, Black-White IRRs present challenges and the interpretation of those challenges by IRR participants' parents may be nuanced.

Society's acceptance of Black-White interracial relationships varies by the race of the IRRP, and the race of the IRRP may affect how they react to society. Flores (2019) found that IRRPs are stereotyped within their IRR. White women are judged to be lower class, less cultured, and driven by sex, whereas Black women are perceived as more educated, disrespecting of Black men, and more culturally attuned to White people (Flores, 2019). IRRPs are more likely to conceal their IRR if their partner is Black because of societal stereotypes (Brummett & Steuber, 2015). Observers of an IRR reconstruct an IRRP's racial identity.

Black people's attitudes about IRRs differ by gender. Brummett and Afifi (2019) interviewed a Black male who expressed his hesitance to disclose his IRR with a White woman because he thought Black women viewed the relationship as depleting the pool of single Black males. Accordingly and statistically, Black women are less likely to get married and are more likely to divorce when they do marry compared to White women (Raley, Sweeney, & Wandra, 2015). Chang, Wilkins, Tang, and Mead (2020) experimentally demonstrated Black women's preference for Black couples and for Black female – White male couples over Black male – White female couples. The data suggest that Black women are more concerned about competition for mates. However, although Black women in college reported fewer available Black men to date, they were also less likely than men to look favorably upon the idea of interracial dating (Stackman, Reviere, & Medley, 2016). Conversely, although 18% of Black people said intermarriage was detrimental to society in 2015, 24% of Black men married interracially in 2015, but only

12% of Black women intermarried (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Such biases are not always predictable to the IRRPs or to researchers.

Commonly, surveys ask about whether the respondent approves of IRRs or if they would mind if a close relative married a person of a different race. As Campbell and Herman (2015) discussed, these types of questions fail to consider the respondent's intended behavior and are subject to social desirability bias wherein people hesitate to answer in a way that portrays them poorly as a person. In 1990, 63% of non-Black people disagreed with someone in their family marrying a Black person, but in 2016 14% of non-Black people opposed an interracial union involving a Black person within their family unit (Bialik, 2017). However, only 7% of White women and 7% of White men married interracially (Bialik, 2017). The reported attitudes reveal the inherent bias against Black-White intermarriage.

Skinner and Hudac (2016) also researched the link between attitudes and behavior. In all incarnations of Skinner and Hudac's IRR questions that addressed explicit bias, non-Black participants agreed that they would engage in IRR behaviors. However, disgust levels for Black-White IRR relationships portrayed in pictures, as measured by brain response patterns, betrayed the explicit survey responses. In related studies, there was less implicit and explicit bias expressed for IRR couples by predominately White participants than by Black participants, of which 75% were women (Skinner & Rae, 2019). The research of Stackman et al. (2016) drew similar conclusions concerning Black women and bias, as mentioned earlier. Interestingly, although implicit bias among both Black and White participants was lower for those that had IRR

experience, explicit bias for Black participants with IRR experience was higher than other participants that lacked IRR experience (Skinner & Rae, 2019). In theory, intermarriage may not be a bad choice for someone else, but that may not be a consideration for the respondent themselves. The interracial couple's patterns of living are likely to be affected by this documented bias.

Prejudice and discrimination affect IRRPs and their relationship health. Evidence suggests that negative bias toward the couples in extreme situations leads to antisocial acts (Skinner & Hudac, 2016). The stress that the IRRPs experience can be harmful to their mental health and to the trajectory of their relationship (Rosenthal & Starks, 2015; Rosenthal et al., 2019). However, research has shown that when the couple strongly shares egalitarian values, societal stigma served to strengthen the relationship and promote greater relationship satisfaction levels (Rosenthal & Starks, 2015; Rosenthal et al., 2019). Societal norms and the feelings of the couple's neighborhood and workplace may confine the health and well-being of IRRPs, but the couple's family and how they manage their relationship impact personal and relationship health.

Black-White interracial couples have trouble integrating into social systems because they are attempting to violate ingroup alliances. Gabriel (2018) examined how Black-White IRR partners affected the couple's ability to access neighborhoods that corresponded to the couples' income level. The Black-White interracial couples experienced neighborhood poverty levels lower than those experienced by Black-other race/ethnicity couples, but couples without Black partners lived in much more financially successful neighborhoods (Gabriel, 2018). Housing discrimination, as well as social

acceptance within neighborhoods, are likely to play a significant part in racial disparities observed. IRRPs may be denied membership into organizations and churches or disagree about such memberships, thus straining the relationship and causing the partners to question their union (Clark et al., 2015). Inequalities and social stigma are issues that must be confronted by IRR couples.

The Interracial Relationship. Race is an issue that IRRPs handle in different ways. Brummett (2017) examined the content of stories posted by people involved in IRRs to discover whether the IRRPs were affected by societal pressures and whether the IRRPs reflected racial differences between themselves and their partner in their writings. The stories overwhelmingly represented racial differences within IRRs as negative and often problematic (Brummett, 2017). Writers discussed how their parents expressed their vehement opposition to their relationship, and one writer felt she must end her IRR because her family would never truly accept her partner. Although some other writers acknowledged differences, similarities, especially those of character and values, were emphasized. Other participants completely erased racial differences and spoke of loving the person beyond racial boundaries, taking on a colorblind ideology (Brummett, 2017). Race was a necessary consideration despite how the participant treated the variable within the relationship, and the couple must learn to negotiate race to ensure well-being.

Relationship management techniques may help couples to make decisions about how, when, and to whom they will reveal their relationship. Brummett and Steuber (2015) interviewed IRRPs to explore how and in what ways individuals within the IRRs maintained their privacy so that they could better achieve needed levels of support and

mitigate negative reactions from outsiders. The participants revealed that they might

choose relationship milestones, commitment levels, or, in some cases, choose to keep the

relationship status a secret for as long as possible (Brummett & Steuber, 2015). Further,

they may steer a conversation to avoid identifying their significant other's name or

identifying characteristics to maintain their privacy (Brummett & Steuber, 2015). Culture

and gender expectations were often the factors responsible for concealment. Also, some

participants fully expected to be negatively sanctioned and did not want to risk personal

rejection or jeopardize their IRR. Although some IRRPs just do not care or acknowledge

others' opinions, some IRRPs talk about their partners in public to solicit validation and

acceptance from strangers even though there is a risk of rejection (Brummett & Steuber,

2015). Also, sometimes IRRPs often want or need to discuss their IRR with family and

friends, according to the research of Brummett and Steuber (2015). The IRRPs reported

that they want to share their happiness, that they felt honesty was necessary out of

obligation to family and friends, and that they sought to educate others about racial

prejudices (Brummet & Steuber, 2015). People involved in IRRs need support and

validation, but they also need to protect themselves from negativity to maintain well-

being for themselves, their significant other, and their relationship.

The IRRP must make decisions about when to disclose to their family and people

in their social circle. Castle Bell and Hastings (2015) discussed how people involved in

IRRs work to maintain face, or their public and private identities, in interactions with

others to try to ensure that others see them in a positive light. This facework occurs when

family, friends, or society communicates disapproval or disgust about the IRR to the

IRRP, and the individual must attempt to save their character and protect the integrity of their IRR. Friends and family may disapprove, as well, so the IRRP must decide to whom and when they disseminate information about their relationship. Rosenthal and Starks (2015) found that stigma experienced from friends negatively impacted IRR couples more than stigma from family members, but that couples find ways to work together to overcome negativity. Further, stigma may support relationship investment, passion, and sexual intimacy, for example (Rosenthal & Starks, 2015). Negative reactions from family members are well-documented in the literature (Brummett, 2017; Brummett & Affifi, 2019; Brummett & Steuber, 2015; Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015), leading to the questions about first-hand accounts of IRR disclosures from the parents.

Researchers studied how couples achieve positive relationship outcomes in the face of adversity with consideration to societal and familial reactions. Marriage health and quality are paramount to marriage partners' well-being (Gilligan et al., 2017), and IRR couples encounter all the typical problems of intraracial couples. Leslie and Young (2015) confirmed that IRR couples do not seek marital counseling because of their IRR status but rather downplay the role race plays in their relationship. However, race is a social condition that may contribute to problems in the relationship. The tendency toward divorce for Black-White IRR couples is mixed despite the disapproval and stigma that creates additional marital stress (Robinson, 2017). As they encounter stigma, couples tend to become closer and present a united front which can be beneficial for the relationship overall (Clark et al., 2015). Couples who endorsed high levels of egalitarianism and who experienced relationships stigma from their family commonly

experienced a more loving, trusting relationship with their partner that included better

sexual communication (Rosenthal et al., 2019). Robinson (2017) emphasized that the

couples who endure display resilience. So, IRRs may benefit from the additional stress

that bias presents, but support from family and friends reduce conflict and helps keep the

primary family unit intact.

Parental Support. IRR participants look to their parents for support. Family may

reject the relationship, the child's IRR partner, or the child themselves, which may result

in substantial emotional damage. There may be a risk for IRR couples to invest in the

relationship because if the relationship ended, friends and family might lose respect for

their interracially involved family member and because the breakup may confirm

negative stereotypes about the outgroup member. (Clark et al., 2015). Rosenthal et al.

(2019) found that stigma from family promoted anxiety and depression among

interracially involved individuals and familial stigma has greater health consequences

than societal disapproval. Perhaps for these reasons, Henderson and Brantley (2019)

asserted that interracial couples have a more difficult time maintaining their mental health

versus those involved in intraracial relationships. The IRR couples can mitigate damage

to individual well-being by being mutually supportive (Rosenthal et al., 2019). Disclosure

to parents is a difficult decision and leads to difficult moments.

When children involved in IRR decide to tell their parents, there is often one

parent that will find the news more distressful. The IRRP chooses a confidante with

whom to share the news, often the parent who can use their social capital to disseminate

the information and help the couple gain needed support (Brummett & Steuber, 2015).

The confidante takes on the duty of explaining the IRR situation and often expects the child to remain silent while the disclosure interactions occur, and the adult children often reported relief at the removal of their personal responsibility (Brummett & Steuber, 2015). It is clear that family support is integral to the success of IRR and intermarriages, so the examination of barriers and facilitators of family acceptance is integral for the understanding of achieving parental acceptance.

A parent's relationship with their child is expected to remain important throughout the life course. An adult child's exogamous relationship may strain the parent-child bond (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). Parental perspectives of their child's intergroup relationship are often affected by factors external to the parent-child relationship. Society's attitudes about race and culture and the impact the parent expects the child's relationship to have on the parent's self-image, their child, and the rest of the family are likely to affect the parent's attitude toward an intermarriage. However, the history of the parent-child relationship and the environment in which the parent-adult child relationship is growing relate to the family and impact development as well.

Contact between Black and White family members may help racial differences seem less important. Consistent with intergroup contact theory, Skinner and Rae (2019) found that implicit and explicit bias against IRR couples was reduced as contact with IRR couples increased. Yahirun (2019) declared hopefulness for positive racial relations if ties between intermarried children and their family of origin remain strong. Marriage helps dissolve ingroup boundaries and create new alliances. Capturing the parental perspective of the phenomenon might help families adapt more easily in the future.

IRRs and Parent-Child Relationships

The research concerning parental perceptions and reactions to an adult child's interracial union is scant, so implications from studies involving IRRPs and IRR couples as well as literature on family development may lend some insight. Parents who are more accepting of their child's interracial relationship often influence the immediate family's reactions to the couple, thus allowing the interracial relationship participants to benefit from a more positive family environment. Castle Bell and Hastings (2015) found that when IRR participants gain parental approval for their relationship, the family becomes a source of support that helps to counter societal repercussions. Especially for couples who have the approval of both sets of parents, the parental homes become physical and psychological safe havens where the couple can relax and rely on their parents to assist them with their relationship goals in the face of society's prejudices (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). So, parents' reactions can benefit the interracial couple but consequences from parental reactions may be damaging to their adult child, their child's relationship, and may affect the family's responses negatively.

When parents dislike the IRR partner, the IRRPs have a more difficult time associating with the family. A parent's negative attitude and behavior toward the IRR affects family members' opinions. The expression of nonverbal signals can influence others' attitudes, and behavioral observation is a key to social learning (Skinner & Perry, 2019). Castle Bell and Hastings (2015) found that the IRRPs that experienced disapproval reported threats, cursing, and disappointment from their parents that was reminiscent of societal reactions. Leslie and Young (2015) stated that microaggressions

and the withdrawal of tangible parental support might also occur. Further, the tension and

negativity persisted over time and tainted the couples' relationship as well as the familial

interactions (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). Ultimately, the adult child feels that they are

no longer welcome in their home because the parent is unsupportive and hostile,

according to Castle Bell and Hastings (2015) research. The reasons behind the lack of

support may be explained through an examination of the evolution of the IRR, its

manifestation in the parent-child relationship, and its potential effects on a parents'

thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

American culture has made it necessary for the parent-child relationship to last

longer than in the past. The most consequential relationship in an adult's life may be the

parent-child relationship (Fingerman et al., 2020). Parents provide emotional and

financial support well into the child's adult years (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016). Rather than

the easy transition from adolescence to adulthood posited by Erik Erikson, young adults

now enter a stage of emerging adulthood. College may be a priority, a good-paying job

may be tough to secure, and marriage is not the key focus. During the transitional period,

young adults are more dependent on their parents as well as extended family members for

support (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016). Zhang and Sassler (2019) posited that this serves as an

extended period of exploration before committing to marriage and may allow emerging

adults time to consider a variety of romantic partners that grows increasingly less limited

by their parents' influence. Strong parent-child relationships help young adults to form

better quality, more functional adult romantic relationships because the relationships

begin with a strong foundation and are supported in a healthy family climate (Henderson

& Brantley, 2019). So, healthy relationship options may include IRRs for an adult child who enjoyed a solid parental relationship, but familial situations often intercede.

Parents' choices and family circumstances often, perhaps inadvertently, influence a child's contemplation and ultimate formation of IRRs. Racial boundaries may not be breached as often as might be expected because of socioeconomic and geographic boundaries (Clark et al., 2015). The scope of a person's social circle is often limited because of where they live and work, so interracial contact is not the norm. White people are less likely to interact interracially, while Black people often co-reside and co-work with people of other races. Those children raised within a single-parent household or in a household with parents who are highly educated are more likely to marry interracially (Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). As a parents' education level increases, the likelihood of their child becoming involved in an interracial union also increases (Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). Contrarily, Black people who attended historically Black colleges and universities were less likely to endorse interracial dating and unions than those who attended predominately White schools (Stackman et al., 2016). Parents may not be thinking about their child's marital choices during childhood and adolescence, but parental influence is pervasive.

The way a parent chooses to deal with race as a topic when raising their children is a predictor for prejudice as well as IRR formation. Failure to acknowledge race, known as a color-blind ideology, promotes the idea that all people are equal and should not be labelled based upon the color of their skin. Although the idea of equality seems preferable to stressing differences, the color-blind message often stressed by White

mothers in socializing their children, the failure to acknowledge differences equates to the promotion of prejudice (Herman, 2019). Differences between people are not appropriate topics for conversation and race-related comments are ignored by parents, but because parents function as their young child's primary socializer, implicit messages are ingrained (Herman, 2019). In families, it may follow that prejudices toward the outgroup that lead to objections to interracial relationships may be overcome over the long term when the outgroup member is assimilated into the family, thereby becoming a member of the ingroup.

The quality of the parent-child relationship influences the propensity of a child's intermarriage. Longitudinal data show that adult children who had stronger bonds with their parents in childhood and adolescence are less likely to marry interracially (Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). Also, close ties to parents may ensure that racial pride is high or ethnic and cultural considerations are paramount to a child's life choices (Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). Family members and friends often have similar beliefs when the ingroup bond is strong, so social pressure to conform to group norms of endogamy may be high. When examining first unions, White people are much less likely to interracially cohabitate or marry (Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). These group factors lead to higher levels of intragroup marriages between Black and White partners.

Perceived and actual social and financial support are needed throughout a child's life, and such support is especially necessary for the health of the parent-child relationship if the child becomes interracially involved. Parents provide varying levels and sources of support to their young adult children based on the parents' own resources

as well as the child's needs (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016). More specifically, White parents are in a better position to provide monetary and emotional support, but Black youth are much more likely to seek and receive advice and support from their parents compared to their White counterparts (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016). Overall, parents were sought out less often and were perceived to provide less support when the adult child obtained a significant other or a child (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016). An IRRP facing societal stigma and emotional upheaval might seek emotional support and advice from their parents. However, IRRPs reported monitoring the information that they disclosed to their parents because of cultural differences between the parents and their IRR partner (Brummett & Steuber, 2015). Brummett and Afifi (2019) noted that the relationship between a supportive parent and their interracially involved child might become even stronger when the child's expectations of support from the parent are met. Implications for a parent's ability to provide such support may be found in relational outcomes.

Relationships in adulthood between parents and their children, particularly their daughters, intimate that parental influence is substantial. Zhang and Sassler (2019) found a positive association between a Black female's IRR choice and strong parental control. Yahirun (2019) found that daughters may be more affected by their parents' opinions, so females may avoid IRRs altogether. However, parents tend to be closer to their daughters, so ties to their daughters may be less affected by interracial marriage choices (Yahirun, 2019). In a different study, Yahirun and Kroeger (2019) found that male and female adult children involved in IRR had weaker relationships in adulthood with parents compared to those in intraracial relationships or those not involved in a relationship. Parents'

contextual perspectives and accounts of interpersonal interactions may reveal the causes of the gendered responses.

Mothers seem to have a more complex relationship with their children. A White male's positive adolescent maternal relationship was associated with a lower incidence of interracial relationship formation (Zhang & Sassler, 2019). Interestingly, Yahirun (2019) found closeness to mothers was unassociated with the child's intermarriage in adulthood and that, generally, children who were intermarried had just as much contact with their mothers as intramarried individuals regardless of gender or ethnicity of the child or their partner. Although children consider their parents' feelings and ideologies, study results show that the mother-child relationship was not substantially disrupted after the child's intermarriage choice. Mothers may seek to maintain the parent-adult child bond despite the IRR.

Parent-child relationships are a negotiation that occurs over time once the IRR is revealed and relationship outcomes vary. Livingston and Brown (2017) found that 18% of interracial couples were cohabitating at the time of their research while only 10% of interracial couples were married. Most interracial couples cohabitate before marriage, ostensibly to allow their families to warm to their union (Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). The parent-child relationship becomes complicated when a parent becomes conflicted about a child's choices or life problems. In their quantitative study, Gilligan et al. (2017) found that daughters reported more symptoms associated with depression when the mother-daughter relationship was disrupted than sons reported in similar situations. The daughters' depressive symptoms in the study may signal the primacy of the mother-child

connection, a link that might be relevant as mothers relate their experiences with their

daughters' IRRs. Parents and adult children may enjoy interdependent relationships

wherein a power differential within the relationship does not exist (Castle Bell &

Hastings, 2015). The parent-child relationship is characterized by respect for decisions as

the people within the relationship work toward mutually agreed upon goals. Less healthy

is the dependent relationship wherein a child's dependence upon parental approval or a

parent's dependence upon a child's adherence to societal and familial expectations may

cause relationship distress because of competition for power (Castle Bell & Hastings,

2015). Disapproval of a child's IRR or a child's choice to continue the IRR may cause

the perception of personal rejection. Parents cited a child's choice of an outsider over the

parent, conflicting values, and a child' punishment for the parents' behavior as reasons

for complete estrangement from the child and their family (Agllias, 2015). The intricacies

of parent-child relationships are nuanced.

Increases in life expectancy have necessarily altered relationships between the

parent and child and the child and their marriage partner. When children marry, roles and

relationships within the child's family of origin must be renegotiated because

commitments change and the marriage partner must be incorporated into the family

(Yahirun, 2019). Greif and Woolley (2019) discussed the importance of positive familial

and in-law relationships across the lifespan as children are incorporated into the family

unit and as caregiving for aging parents is negotiated. The quality of the future parent/in-

law relationship is dependent upon the behaviors and feelings of the pair's relationship

before the marriage, with one-on-one contact benefitting the relationship more than group

contact (Fingerman, Gilligan, VanderDrift, & Pitzer, 2012). Further, anticipating

problems with the in-laws and extended family members led to negative qualities within

the parent/in-law relationship (Fingerman, et al., 2012). The ambiguity in in-law

relationships is often difficult to navigate, and Greif and Woolley (2019) recommended

finding commonalities, defining boundaries, and ignoring issues that are least important

as keys to better mother/daughter-in-law and father/son-in-law connections. The effects

of effectively bonding the IRR couple and the IRRP's parents can help the parent better

negotiate the psychological effects of their child's relationship for themselves and the rest

of the family.

The impact of the parent-child relationship reverberates through the family. As

Fingerman et al. (2020) stated, a parent's bond to their grown child may be the most

significant relationship in either adult's life. It is possible that the quality of parents'

parent- adult child relationship may affect the parents' marital relationship. Not

surprisingly, more positive parent-child relationships promoted more positive marital

relationships for mothers and fathers, according to the study results of Lee, Zarit, Rovine,

Birditt, and Fingerman, (2016). Conversely, fathers are significantly negatively affected

by both their lower quality relationships with their child and their wife's poor relationship

with their child as indicated by the father's marital dissatisfaction (Lee et al., 2016).

Mothers, thusly, may be able to compartmentalize their parent-child relationships from

their own marital relationships. Gilligan et al. (2017) noted that tension within sibling

relationships prompted disturbances in psychological well-being for the children.

Therefore, how a parent reacts to an adult child's intermarriage may not only affect the

nuclear family's reactions but may also act as a catalyst for family relationships and mental health consequences.

Differences in the proposed partner's race may make a difference to the parents and family members. Clark et al. (2015) suggested that family members may initially disapprove but may eventually change their minds. Additional longitudinal studies need to explore for which couples, how, and why attitudinal changes in support systems occur.

Summary and Conclusions

Social psychology attempts to explain the reasons for prejudice and discrimination through the formation of ingroups and outgroups through a person's need for belonging to society and to their family. Although social identity theory is a broad, inclusive conception (Brown, 2020), the implications of exclusion for the preservation of self and the family (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) may be relevant to the present study. Contrarily, the ability to mentally recategorize oneself (Brown, 2020) or to enter into mutually beneficial interactions with outgroup members to achieve mutual goals (Pettigrew, 2018) can help to reduce prejudice and aid interracial couples as they work to gain acceptance. Ideally, such intergroup contact may help to reduce prejudice on a larger scale as the number of interracial relationships increase and families work to integrate the IRRPs into the larger family structure.

The literature documents the historical subjugation of Black-White IRR and the perpetuation of prejudice and stigma toward Black-White intermarriage today through an examination of race, ethnicity, and culture. Government intervention into categories of race, although perhaps well-meaning, caused negative feelings among people because

resources, services, and rights depend on racial distinctions (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Black and White people were specifically kept separated through laws and less apparent segregation policies that continue to disrupt Black-White IRRs today. Even as intermarriage rates are on the rise nationwide, the line between Black and White is especially blatant because other races and ethnicities are absorbed by Whiteness. Therefore, Black-White intermarriage is more upsetting and much less common than intermarriages that combine White people and other races and ethnicities. Familial objections may center around disruption to the social order as well as disturbance in the family system (Brummett, 2017).

Couples involved in IRR have a more difficult time coping with their relationships and marriages, and the IRRPs face threats to their health and well-being. However, divorce statistics are mixed and inconclusive (Robinson, 2017), and the couples often learn to negotiate the terms of the relationship so that the pair becomes stronger and healthier. Although societal opinions and friends' thoughts about the relationships are important to IRR couples, family support is paramount to many measures of success and well-being for the couple. A lot of literature is devoted to the IRR couples' management of communication, of negativity from parents and family, and of parental support. The effects of intermarriage on the parent-child relationship can only be inferred.

A discussion of the importance of the parent-child relationship, child development within context of an impending IRR, and the importance of strong parent-adult child bonds is supported by the literature. A parent's choice of residence, socioeconomic

status, and education level are among the factors that may influence an adult child's choice to intermarry. Perpetuated stereotypes, whether intended or unintended, can be perceived by children differently within the context of the family. The mother-child bond seems relatively unaffected by marriage or an intermarriage, and the maintenance of the parent-adult child and extended family relationships seem to take precedence over concerns of race. However, the literature overwhelmingly focuses on quantitative survey data alone to justify parent – child connections.

The parent-adult child relationship in relation to intermarriage has never been examined from the parent's viewpoint, exclusively, from what I have found in my exploration. Brummett and Afifi (2019) spoke to parents as a part of their overall qualitative study that focused on IRR support, but specific impressions, perceptions, and feelings of the parent were lacking. This phenomenological inquiry asked parents about their thoughts and feelings as their adult child revealed their IRR. The make-up of the parent-child pair, father and daughter or mother and son or father and son and mother and daughter, as well as the family culture and environment of the revelation often affected responses as per ecological theory. Parents were asked to expound upon their own experiences and characteristics that affected their reactions to the IRR and intermarriage. To ensure that every possible nuance of the parents' responses was explored, I examined the responses for thoughts that were not explicitly expressed. Prejudices are often hidden from oneself, so probing the parents' answers for initial bias, for example, and eventual unexpressed acceptance helped to uncover hidden meaning.

In Chapter 3 I described the research design and method for this interpretative phenomenological study. My role as the researcher, including decisions to discuss my relationship to the chosen topic with participants, were considered. Next, I considered the population, sampling strategy, and procedures for identification, contact, and recruitment. Data collection and analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations follow.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

A parent's reaction regarding their adult child's Black-White IRR may affect the parent and the parent-child relationship. The parent's response may influence the well-being of the family system as well. Researchers often infer parental attitudes and perceptions from adult children's answers to study questions (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015; Rosenthal & Starks, 2015; Rosenthal et al., 2019). Study questions ask about how adult children feel or behave due to their parents' expectations or expected reactions. It is imperative to capture the perceptions and reactions of parents as their adult children embark on a trajectory that violates social norms and mores. There is a dearth of research featuring the parents of children involved in Black-White IRRs. The goal of this study was to capture the lived experiences of parents as they acclimate to their adult child's Black-White intermarriage. Activities and interactions that affect the parents' perspectives were explored. Also, a focus of the study was the internal thoughts and feelings of parents as they experienced reactions from those in their social system. I planned to describe the parents' perceptions of the changes in their relationship with their child, especially over time. Finally, I intended to give parents a voice as they explored the effects of their reactions to the IRR on their family system. I intended to document and evaluate the moments as they potentially gained insight into themselves that resulted in attitude transformation.

In this chapter, I covered qualitative research design and justified the choice of IPA. Additionally, I described the unique role of the researcher in the IPA approach.

Next, a discussion of methodology, including participant selection, instrumentation, and the data analysis plan, ensued. I finished the chapter with a discussion of ethics and trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative research explores how and why a phenomenon occurs and what meaning people bring to the situation. I proposed using a qualitative research design for this study to examine the individual experiences of the parents and to elucidate central themes common to the parents. This bottom-up methodology seeks to analyze people's subjective experiences as data in order to answer research questions (Coyle, 2015). Qualitative research allows for a richer understanding of phenomena that depends on an individual's descriptions of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Such data help to "particularize findings with descriptive detail so that the results may be considered transferable to similar populations in comparable contexts" (Clark, Wang, & Toraman, 2019, p. 319). Ganong and Coleman (2014) identified four ways in which qualitative research benefitted family research: "(1) obtaining family members' meanings about family interactions and relationships; (2) acquiring family insiders' views about relational processes and observing family interactions; (3) examining families within contexts; and (4) giving voice to marginalized families and family members" (p. 451). Family dynamics are unique, and the qualitative methodology honors the parents' perspectives. However, traditions of qualitative research serve ontology and epistemology differently.

A qualitative inquiry performed in the phenomenological tradition gives people the latitude to express themselves so that they may construct their version of the world

for the researcher (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Phenomenological research is ideal for capturing and highlighting the intricacies and personal significance of the parents' experiences in a manner that quantitative inquiry may not achieve. According to Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007), meaning is derived from the participants' perceptions as they create them. Researchers ask questions in a way that allows the respondent to feel free to tell their story. Starks and Brown Trinidad highlighted that objective information might not be new, but each respondent's perceptions will allow for a subjective interpretation that may be closer to the truth. For example, several families may objectively be comprised of two parents and two children, one of whom is interracially involved. However, the viewpoints of each parent will yield different information that describes the reality of each family unit from the parental perspective. Each person contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon as the researcher looks for commonalities across space and time (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007).

Phenomenological research is an appropriate method for illuminating the experiences of parents of an adult child involved in IRR because secondhand data exists. However, the literature neglected parents' viewpoints. The parental perspective about the phenomenon of IRRs has not been explored, and the experiences of each parent are unique to their worldview and circumstances. Further, the parents' experience of their adult child's IRR uncovered in this study serve as a starting place for future research. Such research serves to inform counseling paradigms as well as intergroup relations literature. Further, using an interpretative phenomenological design, I was able to

examine each parent's contribution and thus derive a deeper meaning that may not be self-evident.

Consistent with IPA, the constructivist perspective acknowledges that people make sense of their world based upon previously learned systems and beliefs. A person constructs meaning about their environment as they assess facts and ideas (Ültanir, 2012). IPA focuses on how a person experiences a phenomenon in context. IPA is a more recent hybrid of phenomenology that specifically asks for the participants' troubled thoughts and feelings as they recount how they coped with a situation (Kacprzak, 2017). An adult child's marriage requires adjustment, and personal, contextual, or relationship factors may affect parents' experience of the situation.

Interpretative methods of qualitative inquiry are especially helpful when examining family dynamics because of the individuality and complexity inherent in family relationships (Clark et al., 2019). Accordingly, Agllias (2015, 2017) used the IPA method to explore and explain the concept of familial estrangement from both the parent's and the adult child's perspectives. The use of IPA allows for the examination of a phenomenon in relation to context so that the examination of variables such as race, gender, culture, or group position can yield a more thorough understanding of the experience (Matua & van der Wal, 2015). Participants' disclosures amount to a narrative equivalent of a snapshot of their world.

Research Questions

The strong contextual component of IPA — meaning that a person's experiences occur in concert with other people within the boundaries and structure of society —

necessarily involves a participant's subjective analysis (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). The world is meaningful to a person because it is their own experience, and their reactions are a direct result of their interactions with the elements of their world (Larkin et al., 2006). Therefore, IPA fits neatly with PPCT and bioecological theory in that the evaluation of the participant's interactions and reflections upon their subsequent development is a part of the discovery process.

The focus of this study was on the parents of adult children who are involved in Black-White intermarriages. I sought to explore the parents' lived experiences as they understand and interpret their parent-adult child relationship in the context of their adult child's Black-White intermarriage and what that relationship entails in relation to the parent's behaviors and social group reactions. Specifically, the activities and events (proximal processes) that the parents find most significant to their experience were explored. Also, I investigate the parent's immediate perceptions of the societal reactions concerning their adult child's IRR, as well as how those perceptions have changed over the length of the IRR. The main research question and the subquestions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of parents as they adapt to their child's Black-White intergroup marriage? (Person)

RQ1a: What activities and occurrences do the parents find most significant to their experience? (Process)

RQ1b: What are the parents' perceptions of the societal reactions concerning their child's intergroup marriage? (Context)

RQ1c: How do the perceptions and experiences of parents change as their child's intermarriage progresses? (Time)

Role of the Researcher

A researcher properly serving the IPA tradition is involved directly with the participants and the data. The participant is accessing memories and recollecting their account of events, so the perspective and meaning become entirely subjective (Kacprzak, 2017). It is vitally important, then, for the researcher to accurately describe and interpret the data provided by the participants. The double hermeneutic is an interactive relationship between the participant and the researcher (Kacprzak, 2017; Smith & Eatough, 2016). The double hermeneutic is a situation in which the participant is actively working to communicate and understand their experiences. The researcher is working empathetically to understand the participant's experiences through the shared paradigm within the interview. Additionally, the researcher often has a connection to the research topic. However, the researcher is working to separate themselves to make sense of the participant's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. These nuances of IPA have a direct impact on the role of the researcher.

The researcher-participant relationship is dynamic, and the researcher must make specific decisions that affect research outcomes (Larkin et al., 2006). To ensure valid interpretations, it was imperative for me to know myself and make strategic disclosure decisions. Withholding my ties to the research and research topic until the debriefing session made it easier for the participants to be honest and open. Acknowledging and

accepting my bias and deliberately choosing to temper my reactions to the participants ensured that the interviews and my interpretations were fair-minded.

Similarly, my ideas, my reasons for conducting the study, and my epistemological beliefs helped me better understand my participants. "Positionality represents a space in which objectivism and subjectivism meet" (Bourke, 2014, p. 3). The participants must consider their backgrounds, biases, and social roles in their responses; I must acknowledge my positionality within the study.

I am a 49-year-old White woman involved in a 29-year-long Black-White interracial marriage. My husband and I met when I was 18 years old and he was 23 years old and my parents and his mother strongly objected to our relationship. Drama ensued. My husband's father was not overtly supportive; he had conversations with both of us about the trials our future children and we would face and he offered advice. We eventually moved 3 hours away from our families and married without their knowledge. After our families discovered our marriage, they integrated us into the respective family units. Once our son and daughter, now 26 and 24 years old, respectively, were born, our parents behaved as if nothing unseemly had ever happened. Although my mother's parents have passed on, my parents strongly dispute and even deny that they objected to our relationship so many years ago. My experiences made me more sensitive to and sometimes more critical of IRR families. However, my recollections may be different from participants in the current study because, as Craig-Henderson and Lewis (2015) so aptly stated, "What constitutes an interethnic or interracial marriage today is unique to this moment in time and likely to differ from what exists in the future" (p. 689). Parental

reactions from 30 years ago were subject to context, and the context of today's world is very different.

It was my responsibility to make good decisions in research design, participant interaction, and interview data interpretation and coding. In choosing IPA, I was required to acknowledge and process my subjectivity (see Bynum & Varpio, 2018). Acknowledging my experiences and feelings before and during the interviews and as I analyzed and interpreted the interview data affected the outcomes of the study. As directed by Bynum and Varpio (2018), reflection on the participants' responses, on my interactions with the participants and my reactions to their narratives, and on representing the participants accurately as I interpret their experiences helped ensure that the phenomenon was well-represented. Bracketing bias and personal feelings are not conducive to the IPA tradition and to achieving reflexivity (Bynum & Varpio, 2018). All my choices were well-documented, as discussed in the *Trustworthiness* section below.

Methodology

Sampling and Recruitment

Although the rates of intermarriage are increasing, Black-White IRRs and intermarriages are the least common and the most controversial. I intended to recruit mothers and fathers of adult children involved in Black-White IRRs based upon the parents' definition of their inclusion in the sample. The race of the parent was inconsequential, and only the parent's perception of their child's race as either Black or White and the classification of their child's IRR as a Black-White intermarriage is significant. Because personal definitions, cultural considerations, and societal norms

define race in the United States, I asked the parents to self-select into the study with the provision that they were born in the United States and currently reside in the United States. The IPA paradigm allowed for conversation to elucidate the parents' views on their study inclusion decision. Also included in the inclusion questions is the length of the adult child's IRR, which had to be greater than three years because time creates emotional distance and a chance to reflect. Finally, the parent was required to have access to Zoom so that interviews could be conducted remotely and recorded. Appendix B lists inclusion criteria.

Emphasis on divergences in experience and opinion is a distinctive part of IPA, and the evaluation of individual participants as case studies is valid (Smith & Eatough, 2016). Kacprzak (2017) emphasized that a good study in the tradition of IPA must share strong, descriptive narratives, include the insight and process of the researcher, and paint a picture for the reader so that there is no question about the integrity of the interpretations or the research outcomes. IPA researchers recommend a small, homogenous sample of participants and, commonly, studies utilize one to 15 participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Smith and Eatough (2016) agreed that a small sample is ideal for close examination of data and recommended six to eight participants. Pietkeiwicz and Smith (2012) agreed that data saturation should occur with six to eight participants in a phenomenological study design. Therefore, I aimed to recruit six to eight parents of adult children involved in interracial marriages. I sought a participant base about equally divided between mothers and fathers and between the self-selected Black and White racial designation for the study.

Craig-Henderson and Lewis (2015), researchers who conducted a meta-analysis of effective methodology for research on IRRs, recommended a nonprobability sampling method to yield a base of participants from which additional participants might develop. Agllias (2015, 2017) suggested a purposive theoretical sampling strategy wherein participant recruitment occurs through outlets they may commonly use or see and based upon identified criteria. Therefore, after receiving IRB approval (07-29-20-0668805), I posted an announcement that described the study, that specified a $20 gift card incentive, and that identified the inclusion factors of the participants via social media. The announcement can be found in appendix D.

The potential participants were asked to contact me via my Walden email address. After the potential participant initiated contact via email, I emailed the study description and the inclusion questions along with the informed consent. After receiving the signed informed consent from the potential participant indicating that they qualified and agreed to proceed, I scheduled an interview date and time with the participant. Although I planned to send potential participants that did not qualify based upon an equal distribution of males and females and Black and White parents an email that explained that not everyone that responded was needed (Walden Institutional Review Board [IRB] office hours, personal communication), that communication was not necessary. Only females responded to the flyer. Data collection was terminated at seven female participants, as data saturation was reached.

Instrumentation

I addressed demographic questions in the first part of the interview. Participants should be relaxed, and the interviewer should reduce tension with easy conversation before progressing to more serious material (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), and the demographic questions and prompts helped ease the participant and me into the interview. Additionally, proximal processes must be the focus of any study that incorporates the use of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model and elements of comparison in person characteristics, process, context, and time (Tudge et al., 2016). Knowledge of the parents' circumstances and their social, economic, and geographical situations will illuminate the interactions of the PPCT elements. The proper use of Bronfenbrenner's model is interactive (Tudge et al., 2016), meaning that factors must be used in combination to assess developmental influences. Therefore, a parent's attitude and behavior regarding their child's IRR is an ongoing reaction within the proximal processes that are simultaneously affected by the PPCT factors. I had to be familiar with each person's circumstances so that I could properly assess the PPCT factors.

A semistructured interview guide constructed with instructions from Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) provided a framework for the conversation. The guide addressed each of the research questions and included follow-up questions to help glean additional information to maintain the conversation flow. I used the interview protocol to direct conversations to ensure each question received attention, but each participant was be encouraged to expound upon their stories. See appendix A.

Data Collection

I scheduled a 45-minute interview with each of the seven participants. The interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom. It was necessary for me to see the participant so that I could notice body language that might have added nuance to their words. Zoom calls were audio recorded by the Zoom application. I advised the participant that the recording would be taking place in the informed consent. On the day of the interview, I reiterated the purpose of the meeting and once again secured verbal informed consent from each participant via the recording. I sent the $20 gift card promised for participation before the interview started, but I ensured that each participant understood that they were free to terminate the interview at any time for any reason.

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) advised that the researcher should allow for silence within the interview space so that both the interviewer and the participant may reflect on the question. As the interviews progressed, I probed for the content of the stories to expose dynamics that reflect parent-child relationships, familial interactions, or parent growth themes. Larkin et al. (2006) emphasized that to understand the participant experience fully, the researcher should be looking for the issues that most concern the participant and the experiences that occupy the participant's account of their narrative.

After the interview, I asked the participants if they had any questions or comments or if they wanted to clarify any of their answers. I reminded the participant that I would be contacting them again via email after their responses were condensed and summarized. I answered any questions the participants posed, thanked them for their time, and concluded the conversation.

Data Analysis

Smith and Eatough (2016) emphasized that, by definition, the researcher's goals guide the process of data analysis in IPA. The process of IPA is not prescriptive (Larkin et al., 2006; Smith & Eatough, 2016). Interaction between the researcher and the participants will lead the researcher in how to identify, analyze, and interpret themes (Smith & Eatough, 2016). Most importantly, in sharing with the reader the words of the participants and the process of the researcher, the ideas will reveal themselves to the reader and become self-evident. Therefore, I transcribed and coded each of the interviews carefully by listening to the recordings repeatedly and typing the content myself.

Larkin et al. (2006) suggested searching participants' dialogue for experiences as well as what concerns them most. Kacprzak (2017) recommended analyzing words for social and political undertones and for phrases that have meaning that go beyond what the words denote. I followed my participants' lead, but Smith and Eatough's (2016) suggested approach, adapted herein, was useful as a guide for my interpretation. During and immediately after the interview, I journaled my thoughts and feelings about the interview. I read and reread each of the interviews several times and compared the readings to my feelings within the interview space. I became thoroughly immersed in the data until I was drawn to specific themes and I made notes in the margins of the interview transcript as Smith and Eatough (2016) suggested. Detailed documentation of data immersion and thematic construction was essential. As the researcher leads additional interviews and feels a sense of closure for each participant, only then should comparisons be drawn between participants' experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2016). After calculated

and documented steps to understand and interpret each participant's narrative, I was better able to represent the parents' experiences and perceptions accurately.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Trustworthiness

In quantitative research, reliability and validity are quality indicators. In qualitative research the equivalent of the quantitative quality indicators is credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability (Amankwaa, 2016). As recommended by Amankwaa (2016), to achieve credibility in this study, I utilized my committee chair to discuss my plan, ideas, and any conflicts that I encountered. I also kept detailed notes from the proposal throughout the interviews and through data analysis. I transcribed my journaling into computer files. Easy access to the journal transcriptions for auditing purposes fully support confirmability. Further, in IPA, detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences and responses are necessary (Larkin et al., 2006). Likewise, to achieve the required component of transferability, I used properly constructed questions that elicited rich responses that were subsequently amenable to effective translation and interpretation (Amankwaa, 2016) so that results are more easily transferrable and dependable. Finally, I asked each of the participants for permission to send their transcribed, summarized interviews to them so they could check the information and provide feedback. Edits to correct misinterpretations followed so that the credibility of the study was uncorrupted. These steps ensured that my study is rigorous.

Ethics

  The American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct insists that psychologists make clear their commitment to the ethics code (American Psychological Association, 2017) Further, the Code emphasizes that psychologists vow to avoid or minimize harm to their research participants. To ensure that I complied with these statements, I thoroughly explained the study to the participants, including the topics contained within the interview and the possible risks and benefits to the participant.

  Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) noted that because IPA may bring up negative or uncomfortable feelings, the researcher must be sensitive to the participant's mood and reactions to the questions. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) discussed concluding the interview and referring the participant to a mental health provider as a necessary measure. However, Smith and Eatough (2016) noted that such emotional reactions are rare and stopping the interview to discuss the participant's reaction to the question is the ethical response. I advised participants that they could conclude the study at any point. They could simply end the interview or tell me that they would like to stop. Additionally, I provided counseling resource options for the participants on the emailed informed consent sheet and on the day of the interview. See appendix C.

  The informed consent, presented to the participant before they agree to participate and again immediately before the interview, explained confidentiality to the participants. I was the only person involved in any way with their raw data, and their names, identifying information, and recorded interviews are stored in my password-protected

personal computer. Each participant was invited to choose a pseudonym for the study. One participant opted for me to choose the name for her. Finally, a $20 gift card was delivered electronically to each participant at the beginning of their interview. By explaining consent, confidentiality, and providing nominal compensation, I created an environment of trust.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I reiterated the research problem and purpose. I then discussed why a phenomenological study, and particularly IPA, was appropriate. After reviewing the research questions, I described the role of the researcher, including positionality and my relationship to the research. My methodology decisions for sampling, recruitment, and instrumentation follow. A discussion of data collection and analysis precedes the proposed steps to ensure trustworthiness and ethical practices throughout the study. Moving forward, Chapter 4 describes the implementation of the data collection and discusses data analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gauge parents' perceptions and reactions to their adult child's Black-White IRR or intermarriage. The inclusion criteria for participants included having an adult son or daughter involved in a Black-White IRR or intermarriage that has lasted more than 3 years. The parental experience of the IRR was captured, especially concerning the parents' relationships with their adult child involved in the IRR. Additionally, parents spoke about their experiences integrating the IRR couple into the family, revealing the relationship to extended family and friends, and participating in everyday activities with the IRR couple or their children that may occur in a public setting. Finally, the participants shared their hopes for their interracially involved child and their families as well as their feelings regarding racism and prejudice. The consistencies across participants were few, and as one of the women commented, everybody has a story.

In Chapter 4, I discussed data collection procedures, including necessary alterations to the interview setting. Then, I discussed data analysis procedures and measures taken to ensure trustworthiness of the data. Next, I displayed and described the demographic characteristics of the participants. Finally, I presented the study's results. I ended with a review of Chapter 4 and a preview Chapter 5.

Data Collection and Setting

A semistructured interview protocol was used to conduct in-depth, free-flowing, one-on-one interviews that elicited the necessary responses from the participants. The

IPA framework merged effectively with Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model of bioecological theory in that the participant in the context of the phenomenon is the focus (see Larkin et al., 2006). The design of the research questions corresponds to the elements of the PPCT model.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of parents as they adapt to their child's Black-White intergroup marriage? (Person)

RQ1a: What activities and occurrences do the parents find most significant to their experience? (Process)

RQ1b: What are the parents' perceptions of the societal reactions concerning their child's intergroup marriage? (Context)

RQ1c: How do the perceptions and experiences of the parents change as their child's intermarriage progresses? (Time)

As the analysis unfolded, elements of person, process, context, and time revealed themselves and sometimes overlapped, as the interpersonal interactions disclosed were often marked by the parents' person characteristics and viewpoints or environmental considerations.

Face-to-face interviews would have been the preferred method of data collection for this study. The Covid-19 pandemic placed restrictions on data collection procedures such that remote interactions were the only option available at the time of this study. Therefore, the Zoom video conferencing platform served as the connection between the study participants and me. Therefore, seven participants met with me via Zoom. The interviews were advertised to last for 45 minutes. The shortest interview was 34 minutes

long, but it was necessary for me to apologize to four of the participants because their interviews far exceeded the 45-minute time frame. The longest interview was 1 hour and 18 minutes long. Each interview was audio recorded and saved to my personal computer. I then transcribed each recording by hand and saved the transcript in the same file folder as the audio recording.

The Zoom connection provided a few minor problems. First, a participant used her phone to access the Zoom platform without charging her phone's battery. She worried about the charge during the interview and she lost power near the end of the interview. I waited for her to rejoin the virtual meeting room and we resumed the conversation without loss to continuity, but it was an interruption, nonetheless.

Second, only one participant joined the video call without the video option. She said she chose not to use it because she was tending to her infant. Unfortunately, the connection was unstable, and her accent was thick, so I had difficulty understanding her throughout the interview and the subsequent transcription. A phone call may have been the better option in this case. I asked for clarification from the woman several times during the interview, but she did not seem frustrated or irritated. There were two instances in the transcription when I could not decipher her words, but it did not affect the overall coding of her interview.

Finally, one participant did not understand how to use the videoconferencing platform. She expected me to contact her somehow, so she did not log on to the call. I emailed her to follow up and express my thanks for her interest in the study. At that time, she quickly responded and asked for directions for how to join the Zoom meeting. We

connected via Zoom, albeit 40 minutes late. The interview went well once it started, and the woman did not seem negatively affected by the poor start.

Data Analysis

IPA is not a particularly rigid methodology for qualitative data analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), Smith and Eatough (2016), and Smith and Osborn (2007) provided some guidelines for examining participant narratives and their meaning-making process. That is, the researcher must assess the participants' experiences and their expressions of their experiences while the researcher is simultaneously monitoring their own interpretations of the situation. This is known as the double hermeneutic (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This meaning-making process allowed me to capture the narrative of each participant's story as well as the underlying messages in their words as we worked through the interview protocol together. After each participant's information is examined individually, the data from subsequent participants are merged systematically to identify common thematic elements. Through the in-depth interview, interpretive thematic analysis, and amalgamation of data, the parents' experiences of and reactions to their child's IRR are validated.

Because the nature of IPA requires the active involvement of the research and the reflexivity of the researcher is paramount, the biases and assumptions must be evaluated and reassessed constantly (Eatough & Smith, 2017). I began the data analysis, therefore, with a journal to document my thoughts before the interview process began, to describe my feelings immediately before each interview given the limited data I may have had for each participant, and to record any problems or concerns. I transitioned to the interview

transcript thereafter. According to IPA methodology, it is necessary to examine each participant's interview individually, treating it almost like a case study, before melding the data with that of the other participants (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Each interview was hand-transcribed so I needed to listen to each interview by section multiple times. When the transcription was complete, I read and reread the transcript, often highlighting areas that needed further analysis. A transcript summary was created to send to the participant for member checking. The holistic examination of the interview and transcript ensures that the integrity of the participant's perspective is maintained (Smith & Eatough, 2016). I then moved to a more detailed analysis.

Per the suggestion of Smith and Eatough (2016), I created columns on the right side of the participant's transcript. In these columns, I took notes about important points. The participant's words, as well as their word choices, became relevant. Rereading the transcripts closely helps to stabilize the participant's perspective, then new ideas that emerge are sure to be true to the participant's intent (Smith & Eatough, 2016). I documented my interpretations of the data as I repeatedly scrutinized the transcripts. For example, I asked about advice for parents who may have to work on accepting an IRR. One participant stated, "I think as a society we need to look at the heart of people and make, and just… I think the whole racial skin color is… I don't understand it." Although the statement seemed straightforward, I realized that her self-presentation concerns throughout the interview tainted her responses. So, she failed to acknowledge race and the impact of her rejection of prejudice and discrimination.

Next, I went through and grouped my notes by emergent themes (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Eatough, 2016). To begin the process, I transferred my columned notes to separate documents whereupon I could more easily read the information, separate it by research question, and notice patterns. I examined the italicized annotations wherein I preliminarily commented about possible categorizations and created thematic labels. Each label was color-coded so that it was easily recognizable as I scanned the columns. After the first couple of interviews, I noticed a few patterns and made notes about possible connections. For example, the first few participants mentioned their location as a reason for more or less prejudice among people. The next step was to amalgamate the seven transcripts.

A final document was created to combine all the themes from each transcript (see Smith & Eatough, 2016). The pseudonym of each participant was listed along with their color-coded themes in a column on the left. As commonalities among the seven lists developed, I moved the theme to the right column and changed the color for all seven participants. The colors were grouped, so the orange category contained supportive mother, family members being supportive, a mother's support, and progressiveness vs. acceptance/indulgence, for example. Each category was then renamed appropriately. The orange category was renamed support systems. Next, the subcategories were combined and renamed. So, the orange theme has two subcategories: mother's support and family's support. The orange theme was absorbed into the purple category of feelings expressed, which contains a subcategory of support. Finally, the part of the PPCT model that corresponded to each category was noted.

Although many of the responses fit neatly into themes such as feelings expressed and reactions to racism/prejudice, several specific cases produced data that was tough to classify. For example, although Honey spent much time talking about how intelligent her daughter is, she criticized her daughter and her daughter's significant other repeatedly. She spoke about the significant other's shortcomings and about why he has so much to accomplish before he will be a suitable partner for her daughter. Although she characterized her relationship with her daughter and the significant other as very positive, I could not categorize her experiences as family cohesion, for example, so I chose to name the category family connections and included the subcategories mitigating circumstances, positive family relationships, and legacy.

Trustworthiness

Necessary components of trustworthiness in a qualitative study are transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility (Amankwaa, 2016). The research questions were constructed carefully to elicit detailed but reproducible responses to ensure transferability and dependability. I maintained detailed notes that document my process from preinterview through final data analysis to support confirmability. My committee chair and I discussed my plan for interviewing and data analysis. Critical issues and details concerning interview content, trends, and critical issues were addressed with my chair as they arose, thus ensuring credibility. Further supporting credibility, each interview participant was asked to check their interview summary for misinterpretations. Six of the seven member checks were returned, and any subsequent corrections were

made. Finally, rich descriptions and detailed explanations of the participants' responses lend trustworthiness to the study's results.

Demographics

Each of the seven participants was a mother. All the women chose a pseudonym and provided specific demographic information through the course of conversation. Specifically, I inquired about the participant's gender, place of birth and current residence, occupation, and education information. Marital status, number of children, the ages of their children, and information about the adult child involved in the IRR were solicited. If I could not gather racial identity and age from the context of the conversation, I inquired specifically. Tables 1 and 2 contain demographic information and information relevant to the study.

Table 1

Parents' Demographic Information

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Marital status	Education	Occupation	Born	Currently reside
Devon	F	63	W	Divorced, remarried	Bachelor's	Estate administrator, paralegal	VA	VA
Elton	F	47	B	Widowed; remarried	Bachelor's	Nurse	CO	CO
Honey	F	48	B	Widowed	Master's	Works for airlines	OH (grew up in CA)	OH
Jane	F	48	W	Divorced, remarried	Master's +	Nurse, educator	AL	AL
Marie	F	60	W	Married	Bachelor's	Registered dietician	OH	OH
Nancy	F	54	W	Divorced 2x; boyfriend	Bachelor's	Small business owner	WV	WV
Ruth	F	55	W	Divorced, remarried	Some college	Office manager	PA	NC

Table 2

Participants' Adult Child IRR Information

Name	Age/sex of IRRP	# of years in IRR	IRRP children	Proximity to mother/family	IRRP trauma
Devon	39/Daughter	3+ (coparenting)	1	Relatively close; lives with dad	Divorce
Elton	27/Son	5	2	Within walking distance	Divorce, IRRP father died
Honey	22/Daughter	3	0	Same apartment complex	IRRP father died
Jane	26/Daughter	3	0	1 hour away	IRRP is stepdaughter
Marie	35/Son	7	1	45 minutes away	Husband's 2nd marriage- IRRP is stepson
Nancy	25/Daughter	5	1	Live in duplex together	Divorce, IRRPs father struggles with drugs
Ruth	33/Daughter	5	1 on the way	2 hours away	Divorce

Devon. Although Devon was the oldest of the participants, she was the most

aware of the unstable social climate that she largely attributed to racial tensions. She is an

active member of Project Race and the NAACP because she feels both organizations help

her understand racial issues better. She was born in Washington, D.C. She grew up and

continues to live in northern Virginia, which was an important distinction for her

throughout the interview because she views the area as more progressive than most. She

has been married for 20 years to her second husband, and she is the mother of a 36-year-

old son and a 39-year-old daughter. Her daughter was involved in a long-term friendship,

IRR, and marriage with a Black man. The couple has a son who is now 8 years old. The

couple works to coparent while Devon negotiates the role of mother, friend, supporter,

and grandmother.

Elton. Elton was the youngest respondent. She is 47. Her parents were born in

Africa, and they met and married in Colorado, where Elton and her family still reside. In response to the question about her race, she said, "Everyone is Black here." Elton has a 4-month-old son from her second marriage as well as a 27-year-old son. Elton was very charming when she said of her eldest son, "We are actually very close. He's always been there when I needed him. Ya, in both marriages, when I needed him. Ya. And I love him so much! (giggles)." Her son is married to a White woman and the couple has two children. Elton is extremely family oriented. When pressed, she acknowledged societal problems that leaked into the family structure.

Honey. Honey is a 48-year-old biracial woman who identifies as Black. She was born in Ohio, raised in California, and moved back to Ohio when she was in high school. She credits her progressive ideology to her California upbringing as well as her college experiences. She is a single mom to a 22-year-old daughter who recently became engaged to her long-term, White boyfriend. Honey worries that the couple is not ready for marriage, mainly because the significant other (SO) does not have a college degree and may not be prepared to care for a family financially. Honey was the only woman out of the seven to mention ethnicity. She used the word as a substitute for race, as in "for the average person looking at my grandmother, they would think she's White. So, it's not a matter of [SO's] ethnicity."

Jane. Jane is a White woman from Alabama. She is a Ph.D. student in the medical field, and although she is more used to a hospital environment, she now works in higher education. She is 48 years old and has been married for the second time for 17 years. Jane has two daughters from her first marriage and she helped raise her

stepdaughter from the age of 8 years. Her stepdaughter, now 26 years old, has been involved in an IRR with a Black man for 3 years. The couple lives together in a city over 1 hour away from Jane and her husband. Jane said the relationship between her and her stepdaughter "was good, then it was bad, and now it's just okay, I guess".

Marie. Marie is a 60-year-old White woman from Ohio. The mother of four adult children, she got married at 32 years old and has been married for 28 years. A registered dietician, she has also done some teaching and currently has not decided if she wants to return to the workforce. Marie's oldest son, her stepson, is 35 years old. Marie raised him from the age of 6 years. He has been married to a Black woman for 4 years. The couple has a 9-month-old son. Marie was very complimentary toward her stepson and his wife but comments such as:

> We don't really see much of them even though they're close by and I don't know why. I think it's just uh, well… I mean, we used to visit, and they'd come here occasionally. But it's not on a regular basis.… And it's not because it's strained or anything, that's not what I mean…. It's just, um, I don't know… Yeah, I don't know why.

Her response indicated a complicated relationship.

Nancy. Nancy is a White woman who was born and raised in West Virginia. She is 54 years old, and she has a bachelor's degree. She is a small business owner and operator, so she keeps a hectic schedule. She has been married and divorced twice, and currently has a supportive boyfriend. Nancy raised two boys and a girl on her own. Her daughter, now 25 years old, is interracially involved with a Black man. The couple has

been together for about 5 years, and they have a 1-year-old son. Nancy spoke of her admiration for her daughter and the SO. She expressed her frustration with society and why people are obsessed with whom other people love.

  Ruth. Ruth is a 55-year-old White woman who was born and raised in rural Pennsylvania. She is a bookkeeper and an office manager, and she dropped out of college in lieu of marriage and family. Now married for the second time, she and her husband live with her two youngest children and their families in a multigenerational home in North Carolina. Her oldest daughter and her Black husband have been married for 3 years, and they are expecting a daughter in the fall. The IRR couple lives about 2 hours from the rest of the family, but it seems to be out of necessity. Ruth's intense love, compassion, and understanding for her family were evident in myriad ways throughout the interview. For example, she said that she would love nothing more than to have her entire family around her all the time, mainly so that she could have very close relationships with her grandchildren. Also, she worked very hard to integrate her son-in-law (SiL) into the family unit and "make him know that we love him for who he is." Ruth was the only person to mention culture out of the seven interviews.

Results

  Four themes emerged from the data. The themes were family connections, feelings expressed, reactions to racism/prejudice, and experiencing racism/prejudice. The many nuances of each thematic element are shown in appendix A and described in the corresponding sections. The correlations of the themes and subcategories to the appropriate research questions conclude the data analysis.

In analyzing the data, especially in relation to the conceptual framework, it is important to recognize that each woman had a very different relationship with their adult child. There were not any universal truths among these women. To do justice to each woman's story and to demonstrate the growth that some women achieved within their parent-adult child relationship and within themselves, the themes that correspond to each research question must be expounded upon substantially and must occasionally overlap. Each woman's development within the parent-adult child relationship varied, sometimes regardless of the IRR. Sometimes the IRR experience served to reorient the mother's viewpoint. Each woman had a story to tell and each was anxious to do so.

Family Connections

The main research question addressed the lived experiences of parents as they adapted to their adult child's Black-White IRR. The family connections theme was most dominant in the data surrounding this research question. Not surprisingly, much of what the mothers talked about was associated with the way they related to their adult child, their child's SO, and the family. The background of each mother and their family explained the circumstances surrounding their parent-adult child relationship and prepared the context for the IRR. The existing relationships drove the mothers' experiences of their child's IRRs. The family connections theme included the subcategories of positive family relationships, mitigating circumstances, and legacy.

Positive family relationships. Several mothers had strong bonds with their children, indicating positive family relationships and signified by classifications such as good relationship, family relationships, family connections, and family cohesion/ties.

Although there were situations within each family that caused some level of emotional distress for the mother and adult child, the mothers that characterized their relationships with their adult children as very positive also described more exactly the circumstances that caused the distress and how the pair dealt with the situation together.

Devon. Devon and her first husband divorced when her two children were young. Devon went into great detail about the tumultuous relationship she and her daughter shared during her daughter's teenage years. Devon described her daughter as rebellious and said that her daughter had spiraled out of control. Her daughter ran away, and Devon followed. Of the struggles of that time, she said:

> It was, that was the turning point, and I think part of it, you know, in retrospect, I think the divorce was harder on the kids than I realized. They handled it well, but I think she needed that realization that I would come pluck her off the train because I cared enough to do it. And I think that was something I missed, that she was feeling, too.

When asked about what she hopes never changes about her parent-child relationship, Devon said:

> How close we've become. I think I value it more than most moms because it was just, it was such a, such a struggle. I just don't see that there would be any significant breach [in the relationship] at this point.

Nancy. Similarly, Nancy spoke about a time when she and her daughter had to work through the daughter's father's drug problems:

[The situation] was very strained for she and I because of that whole other situation that neither of us knew what to do with. And, so it's better now. My relationship with (daughter) is better now because, well, we kicked ourselves out of that situation that we were in with her dad and her dad is better now.

When asked about the best parts of the mother-daughter relationship now, Nancy said, "For me, maybe, it's that [daughter] and I understand each other on such an intimate level. I feel like I can read her emotions and she can read my emotions very much."

Ruth. Ruth described the relationship between her and her oldest daughter as "really close" but acknowledges her divorce as trying for their relationship.

I mean the only difficult time we ever had in our relationship was during the divorce. Because it happened when she was away at school, so she felt like she was very adrift. She didn't have that family nucleus to kind of hold her close. But I think that's the only time that there, there was a struggle for us.

Ruth says that her relationship with both her adult daughters is close. She said, "They're older, like, they feel more like my sisters than my daughters at this point, you know. They're old enough, they have their own family nucleus, they have their own friendships. And we just kind of come together and giggle, and share stories, and text each other stupid pictures of things that happen to us throughout the day (chuckles)."

These mothers overcame obstacles with their daughters and spoke about it freely. The pain of the moment strengthened their relationships and laid the foundation for the healthy adult relationships they have currently. The adverse experiences of the daughters happened in the broader environment of the family, but the interpersonal interactions

between the mothers and daughters are prominent in the mothers' accounts. The mothers were open to learning and growth and took ownership of a part of the distress that their child experienced. Although no relationship is perfect, these mothers were open to accepting the IRRs as a part of their adult child's development as well as their own.

The IRR partner. For these mothers who talked about the process of acknowledging the distress of their child and working through the circumstances with them, freely accepting the IRRP seemed virtually effortless. The connections between the parent and child were strong, so adding another person did not compromise the parent-child bond. These mothers see the IRRP as good for their daughter and as a positive addition to the family, although the family is defined differently in each case.

Devon. Devon stated that she knew from the beginning that the marriage between her daughter and SiL was not going to last. Her daughter became pregnant when the pair first began dating, and the SiL did not want to be the stereotypical Black father who was not around for his child. He wanted to be married, but the daughter married because she wanted to make him happy, according to Devon. Despite the knowledge, Devon planned the wedding down to the last detail. Although the couple divorced, Devon remains close with the SiL and his new girlfriend as the pair helps to coparent Devon's grandson with her daughter. The entire family celebrates holidays together, vacations together, and is very close.

Nancy. Nancy knew that her daughter and SO were a couple before they acknowledged it themselves. Nancy explained:

Well, I think I was the one saying to them, "Quit telling everyone this isn't a

relationship because you guys are spending a lot of nights together**."** I think I told

her after a week that you can't call it spending time with someone, you have to

call it more than that.

Nancy said that the SO balances her daughter. The daughter met the SO during the time

her father was struggling with drugs, so the SO helped ground her. Nancy said:

I feel like he was a stability that she needed at that point. And I feel like that must

have been very attractive to her. That he was strong and solid and well, [SO] is so

calm. 99% of the time [SO] remains very calm and I feel like that's what she

needed at that point.

The couple has an infant son, and Nancy's love for her grandson and the SO was evident

throughout the interview.

Ruth. Although Ruth's response to her daughter's IRR revelation was virtually

the same as Marie's, she was much more accepting and worked to integrate him into the

family. When explaining how her daughter told her about her IRR, Ruth recalled:

She said, "Is it okay if we stay in the same room" and I said "Of course" (laughs) I

said "Of course, it's fine". Um, and then she said "Well, I need to tell you

something" and I said "What" you know, Is he okay? And she said "Well, he's

Black" and I said "And....?" It just doesn't, it doesn't matter. It was never a blip on

my radar. It just wasn't. Mostly because, because the Black family I did know in

any kind of way from school when I was growing up, were nice people. I never

thought of them as anything other.

Ruth spoke about learning her SiL's quirks such as needing alone time to decompress and about how they are largely due to his background. She regrets not understanding his culture more but listens closely to the stories he shares about his life so she can better appreciate him. The couple have a baby on the way, and the SiL's parents vacation with Ruth's entire extended family.

Mitigating circumstances. The mitigating circumstances category encompassed some of the more negative elements in the family connections theme. Contained within this subcategory was denigrating stepdaughter, stepchildren, and age/maturity of daughter, for example. Parent-adult child relationships captured within this subcategory had the elements of distress and trauma, but the mothers diminished or dismissed the effects that divorce or loss of a parent may have had on their child. The stepmothers, especially, separated their stepchildren, the adult children involved in the IRRs in both cases, from their concept of family and the parent-child relationships were compromised. The mothers used words to mask underlying and unresolved issues within the parent-child relationship.

Marie. Marie's husband divorced his first wife, and he and Marie "basically raised [the stepson] from the age of six". She does not talk about the divorce itself or the impact on the stepson directly. Instead, Marie's words mostly spoke of close family connections, but she sometimes betrayed herself. For example, she said the relationship between her and her stepson was good, comfortable, and easy. When asked about the best parts of their relationship, she said:

I think the fact that he acknowledges me as, as a mom or respects me, accepts me, I guess. It's never been a real close warm and loving relationship, and I don't know why. But I think it's just, um. But yet I think since he's older, as an adult, I think, I think it has, it's much easier than it may have been in his youth, you know, in his teens. So, I think things are, he's very mature. And I think I respect that of him - that he is a good husband and a good father and, and I admire that in him. Yeah.

Marie revealed in instances throughout her interview that she and her stepson had a shaky past and being the stepmom may not have been easy. At 35 years old, the stepson may have learned to treat Marie much differently than he did when he was younger, so she feels that there is a better quality to the relationship. The shades of meaning in the characterization of the relationship show that she probably did not feel like a mother to the stepson, even though she raised him for most of his life.

Later, Marie says that family may not be as important to her stepson because he is an only child "from his pare—from my husband and his mom – their only child". Marie commented on her stepson, his intermarriage, and the couple's infant son but referred to the child as her husband's grandson. It appeared that the family connections were not as strong, which was evident as Marie went on to talk about elements of the IRR and her experience of the relationship.

The stepson disclosed his IRR to his father when the couple began to date. Marie found out about the IRR when the stepson brought the woman home for dinner for the first time. Marie said she was not at all impacted by the news of the

IRR or by the introduction of the relationship into the family unit. She did,

however, discuss her impressions of the daughter-in-law (DiL) whom she has

known for several years:

> She's, she's a lovely person and, and I'm very happy for them. So no, I, (small
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> chuckle) um, based on what I know of her and her character, I think she's, she's
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> great. Yeah right. She's, I, um. No, I think they have great respect for each other
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> and, and to me that's what matters is that they love each other and have great
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> compatibility and I'd have to um, honor that. And I mean, that's his decision and
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> I, I don't have any, any reason to disapprove of it at all. No reason.

The lack of familiarity and hesitancy to fully endorse the relationship that underlies her

admiration for the DiL and the IRR spoke to the lack of family connection in Marie's

case.

Jane. Similarly, Jane's stepdaughter was the person in her life involved in the

IRR. Jane indicated that the relationship with her stepdaughter was precarious and

currently just okay. She talked about how blending her family with her husband's was

difficult in the beginning. Both families had 8-year-old daughters at the time, and Jane's

stepdaughter was an only child. It was a difficult adjustment made more complicated by

friction between Jane and her stepdaughter's mother. Seventeen years later, Jane says the

family gets together at Christmas, and she and her husband sees the stepdaughter and her

SO two or three times a year for a few minutes at football games. When asked if she

wanted the couple to be closer, she said:

Well, yeah? I kinda wisht, I wish that they were, I wish they were closer and I wish that they were... and I invite them all the time down. I'm like "Hey, you all come down for the weekend and let's take you to lunch or something, you know" and they'll say "yes, we'll do that" but it never happens. You know, I always extend that olive branch and everything. We're friends on Facebook and, and Instagram and stuff. And if they're like, planning a trip and they have to go almost through Auburn to get to the beach, I'll say, you know, "Hey, y'all stop by, we'll take you to dinner". So you know, always extending the olive branch. But, um, it's just, I don't know if the relationship between my husband and her, it's just, he's just sort of given up, which I think he has because I just think he's tired of being hurt. He's tired of trying, and everything. But, but, yeah. I always try to include them and stuff. And everything.

Jane defended her position by talking about the daughter's bad habits and the negative interactions with the stepmother. However, the couple's physical distance from the family and the frequency of the visits may not be accidental. Jane talked about the daughter's mother telling "untruths" and complimented the SO by saying:

 We really like him. He's just like, a very, very nice guy. Very good for her because he sort of keeps her in check. Because this is my opinion of my stepdaughter - she is all about money - if that makes sense. You know, she doesn't want to see my husband unless my husband's giving her money. Um, and um her boyfriend, we call him [SO], that's what everyone calls him - he sorta keeps her in check.

Although Jane may feel the need to protect herself and her husband from being labeled as bad parents, Castle Bell and Hastings' (2015) concept of protecting face, she is also disparaging a family member. Jane went on to say "If I say something to her she'd get mad at me, you know. Or she'd go tell her mom that…". So, the contentious relationship between the mother and stepmother overshadows the stepmother-daughter relationship and stunts true IRR integration.

Honey. At 22 years old, Honey's daughter was the youngest of all the adult children in the participant set. Honey acknowledged that the relationship between her and her daughter is underdeveloped compared to the level of the relationship between Honey and her own mother. This relationship immaturity is because her daughter is so young, according to Honey. The daughter's father passed when she was 13 years old. He and Honey were not married, and Honey felt that her daughter was not negatively affected by the loss. She believes that her daughter may be on the border of the Autism spectrum, so her response to emotionality was stunted. Honey reasoned:

> Because there are some things where she is totally didn't get other people's reactions to things because she thought it was unnecessary, it just was not relatable to her. She just didn't understand it. Um, so, fast forwarding back to her father passing - She was sad, but it wasn't something that was like, life-ruining for her.

So, the loss of the daughter's father may have been a factor affecting the parent-child relationship, depending on how the two women processed the loss. Honey said that she helps her daughter deal with emotions on an ongoing basis, even regarding the SO.

The daughter and the SO have been together for about five years with a short break when the daughter first went to college. Although Honey does not have a problem with the relationship itself, her objections seem to stem from her daughter's age and maturity level. Honey is adamant about what she wants for her daughter and expects her to want those things, too. When the SO's mother brought up the couple having children, Honey said:

> That's, that's not the environment I raised her in, that's not the environment I grew up in. There are certain things that need to be achieved first before we remotely even think about wanting to have children. She's like "I know Mom, I know". I'm like, OK.

Honey said she never thought about marriage at such a young age, and that adventure and life experience should come first because when children arrive, those opportunities vanish.

The daughter's SO talked to Honey about the marriage proposal. Honey feels that he must identify a career path, get more education, and deal with his emotional issues before he will be ready to marry her daughter. She said:

> I don't want my child to ever have to struggle. That's not, it's not something that I want her to ever have to do. Not that there's never gonna be struggle, but if you struggle together that's one thing. But for her, I, I, I didn't invest everything, all of my time, energy, finances, everything into her and be with someone that isn't equally yoked with her.

So, the integration of the IRR and the SO is not complete for Honey. A more intimate, adult mother-daughter bond that includes Honey's acceptance of her daughter as an independent woman with the ability to make her own decisions may need to precede the IRRP acceptance.

Legacy. Legacy was the final subcategory in the family connections theme. Although none of the women were currently involved in an IRR, almost all the participants had some connection to an IRR or intermarriage in their life. Marie did not have a link to IRRs or intermarriage that she could cite, but each of the other participants had close family members or friends to reference for help in integrating the IRR into the family. The idea of the affinity for IRRs being a personality trait was mentioned by two participants, as well. Legacy served as the link to acceptance of the IRR for some of the participants.

Elton, Ruth, and Nancy all had close relationships with people who were involved in long-term IRRs, which made their children's IRR revelations and relationships much easier to accept and understand. Elton has a friend who has been successfully intermarried for ten years. After saying she fully accepted her son's IRR, Elton said this about her friend's relationship and how it helped her accept her son's IRR: "Ya, so that's what encouraged me even more because it was working. So...definitely a struggle [to accept son's relationship] but I wasn't going to worry about the rest.". The influence of the friend's IRR was positive for Elton, and Ruth had a positive experience as well.

Ruth. Ruth's oldest sister's life partner was Black, although their relationship was "very tumultuous", according to Ruth. She discussed how she and he talked at family

gatherings and how his children and her children played together. This association may have been significant for Ruth and her family because, living in a small town in Pennsylvania, Ruth explained that she rarely interacted with a Black person. Her references to Black people were from 70s television shows and from a single family that she met in her school days. So, although the sister's IRR was less than perfect, the intergroup contact between the families may have contributed to the acceptance of the daughter's SO.

Nancy. Nancy's best friend has been involved in an interracial marriage for 20 years and she professed to be around IRRs her whole life. She said she felt very comfortable with the idea of her daughter being in her current IRR because she has had previous IRRs. Additionally, Nancy said:

> I felt like, since before [daughter] could walk, I knew that [daughter] would be in an IRR.

> Because she had 2 older brothers and I would notice that their friends, that they came around, Jamie was drawn to them at a very, very early age. She was drawn to their friends that were other races. She was drawn to, would sit on their lap, or say their names. And I don't know, I really, truly felt like she was attracted to men of color. So, I kind of anticipated that her whole life.

Nancy went on to tell a story about her daughter having a Black boyfriend in kindergarten. She came home and told Mom and Dad that she was going to marry the boy. The news from young daughter caused Mom and Dad to fight, and Dad whipped the

daughter. Nancy said that from that point she always knew that the daughter was going to be independent and love who she wanted to love.

Jane. Although she disassociated her own family and her husband's blood relations from interracial involvement, Jane explained that her stepdaughter's mother dated interracially. She asserted that the mom wanted her daughter to be in an IRR by saying of the mother, "I'm not going to say [she] pushed her to date interracially, but she has pushed her." Jane asserted, "So her mom has sort of pushed her, but um, yeah. I have no, you know, I love everyone. You know. It's hard here in the South because things that have happened here in the past.". Although she did not outwardly express negative feelings for the IRR, she did not accept responsibility and freely spoke of negative ramifications of the IRR.

Devon. Most notably, Devon dated and nearly married a Black man after her first marriage. Devon described her experiences of being the only White woman in a large auditorium and wondering how her then-fiance's Black parents were going to accept the White woman in his life. She stressed that the experiences were formative and valuable. Devon expressed her belief that being interracially involved and more progressive may be in the family genes. She started by saying that in "..every generation or so, about every generation there's someone who's definitely the rebellious figure of the generation" and she referenced her grandfather as one of the rebellious ones in the family. She went on to talk about the family traits of being a late bloomer, being a talker, and progressiveness. She finally said:

But it was a little inkling – it has made me wonder is it nurture versus nature on

this? I mean, is it, is it, in our blood to be a very accepting family? Or is it that the

nature, you know we're a fairly open-minded family? Because I realized I don't

think my Grandfather would have had any problem at all with my dating a Black

man or the fact that I, you know, have a biracial grandchild. That, that, that was

not in his nature. And neither did my grandmother but she, she sort of came along

for the ride.

Devon accepted her daughter's IRR along with her SiL, his girlfriend, and perhaps most

of all, her grandson. Intergroup contact through the generations may have made it easier

for Devon and the family, but Devon and Nancy both agree that the nature of the people

involved was a factor.

Feelings Expressed

The first subresearch question asked about the activities and occurrences that the

parent found significant to their experience of the IRR and explored the mothers'

thoughts and reactions to their child, the couple, and the IRR as the IRR was revealed and

assimilated into family life. The theme of feelings expressed was important to recognize

because the participants demonstrated their support, opposition, and varying degrees of

emotion for the IRRs and IRRPs as they told their stories. In some cases, the mothers

supported their children throughout their lives, so an IRR was not going to change their

feelings or their relationship with their child. In other cases, the mother may have had to

acclimate to the idea of the IRR. Each participant expressed acceptance of the IRR and

the IRRP, but some of the words opposed the overall acceptance message. The

subcategories under this theme were admiration/compliments and support, and criticism.

Admiration/compliments. Admiration/compliments as a subcategory represented

the positive feelings expressed by the mothers for their children. Every mother said

something positive about their child and their child's SO. However, their feelings toward

the IRR were complicated by their words and the underlying messages. So,

admiration/compliments bleeds into the other subcategories depending on their feelings

about race, their parent-child relationship, and their personal ability to accept change.

Marie. Marie's interview was filled with compliments and words of veneration

for her stepson and for her DiL. She often repeated how much she admired their marriage

because of the honor and respect she has observed. She credited the quality of the

couple's marriage to their age, their advanced education, good jobs and values, and

common sense. She said that although she was not sure where they acquired such good

thoughts, maturity, and rationality, they traits all have to do with their marriage's success.

In answer to a question about experiences involving the intermarriage that had a

significant impact on Marie, herself, she said:

> I think the impact is just how easy it is. I think they, they do things in tandem
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> and it's just really beautiful to see um and, and I admire that I just think they - and
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> I and I don't see it as a racial thing at all. I just see it as a beautiful marriage. I
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> don't, I don't see color in it at all. I mean it's not, I mean when I'm with her I don't
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> even see color it's just, it's not even something I think about, um. I just admire that
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> they are both individuals that really value marriage and values their family and I

think that's something that is lost in a lot of ways in this society and I, I, I guess because they value that I think I admire that so I guess your question is what do I see I just see family values and marriage as commitment.

The racial bias evident in her statement, the colorblind racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2015), requires reflection. There may be sincerity in Marie's statements, but her unwillingness to acknowledge race in her stepson's relationship, may not be supportive to him and his wife. The admiration and compliments for the stepson, the DiL, and their relationship dominated Marie's interview, but her feelings about their intermarriage may not be as straightforward.

Support. Nancy and Devon supported their daughters unconditionally. They both had many good things to say about their daughters, but they were both realistic in their views in that they recognized flaws and areas of improvement for their daughter as a person and for the daughter's IRR. So, both women complimented and supported their child.

Nancy. Nancy expressed admiration and support for her daughter. It seems the close, positive relationship is genuine in that although Nancy said that her daughter is "sunshine in our family" she also said "The sunshine can also be, uh, maybe loud and overbearing and demanding sometimes. But I thought that was part of the beauty of her, her entire life." She recognizes that her daughter sometimes depends on her too much, but she also acknowledged that her daughter is the one that helps her get through her bouts of depression.

She said she has supported her daughter since grade school when teachers would tell her to try to temper her daughter's behavior. Nancy said "I would tell them I'm not taking the fight out of her. She'll need it for this world and I'm not trying to temper that. And I try really hard to not temper her, win or lose." Nancy confirmed her unwavering support for her daughter when she said:

> I knew she was going to be the kind of girl to fight for what she believed in, always. And, um, I'm always going to back her when she's fighting for the right thing whether it's with my parents or the kid on the schoolyard or whoever. I always want her to know that if she's fighting for what she believes in, I'll always fight alongside her.

Although Nancy said she did not know if she liked or disliked the SO as a person before she got to know him, she could tell that he was having a positive effect on her daughter. She felt that she may have been promoting the relationship because of the changes she was witnessing. Although she has grown to love the SO, she says that she will always be there to support her daughter without judgement. Nancy supports the IRR and hopes that the pair stays together because they are good for each other.

Devon. Devon was also an extremely supportive mother. She consistently spoke positively about her daughter and expressed admiration for her, although many times the positive words seemed to be a defense of the daughter's questionable behavior or choices. For example, she talks about how her daughter needs support and how she's happy to provide it, but says "Sometimes I think now I'm her complete security blanket, too, and

so sometimes I have to be like - no, I can't do that 'cause I have a life, too." Devon

excuses her daughter for this neediness by saying:

> [Daughter] is fascinating – it's fascinating to watch her grow up. I think she has
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> still got some growing up to do, I expect. Funny that she'll be 40, but again, this is
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> actually kind of a family trait where, where we call it late bloomers.

Although the IRR couple is no longer together, Devon supported the relationship

and the marriage. She said that she knew her daughter was marrying her SiL because

marrying was important to the SiL. Although the daughter expressed to Devon that she

wanted to marry to fulfill the SiL's wishes, she was not in love but that she was willing to

give marriage a try. She said:

> But the entire time I was saying to my husband, "you know, this isn't gonna last."
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> And I knew it! And at one point, we were halfway through, and I took [mu
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> daughter] aside and said, "I just want to ask you one more time" I said, "we're
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> very happy to pay for the wedding and I'm happy to be your wedding planner and
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> all that, but are you sure this is what you want?" and she said "You know it's very
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> important to SiL", and I said, " But is it important to you?" And she said, "I think
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> so". So, you know I, I knew, I knew.

Devon's devotion to her daughter may have been to the detriment of her daughter

and the SiL. In other cases, as well, Devon's unwavering support may have bordered on

indulgence. Given Devon's earlier admission that she did not like the authoritarian role

she was forced into when her daughter was younger. She said her ex encouraged the

dichotomy of his fun, carefree time with the children versus her time enforcing the rules,

and that even decades later it "still stings a little bit". So, the unwavering support Devon shows for her daughter may be repayment for past indiscretions so that the positive mother-daughter relationship can remain intact.

Elton. Themes of support within the family were evident in Elton's comment, although she equally expressed her adoration for her son. The feelings of love, attachment, and trust that Elton felt towards her son were evident throughout her interview. She was happy that he remained a "mama's boy" and that the families met every weekend. She emphasized that she and her son could talk about almost anything and that they continued to share in many of the same activities. She was grateful for the support he provided to her in both her marriages, and she provides support to his family through babysitting and helping with problems. She expressed that she is proud that he has grown into a mature, responsible man.

Additionally, she discussed how her DiL integrated into the family well. Elton said, "Once she comes to my home she is willing to learn traditional dishes from my country because I know them, and so she's willing, really good with that...so I will say she's open-minded, too.". Elton went on to say that she loved her DiL's hard-working, bubbly personality.

About the IRR, Elton recounted, "I never objected to the relationship because I am a very open heart. And, also, you cannot - they had progressed to what they wanted - they wanted to get to married. So I had no objection to that." She accepted the marriage without any apparent judgement. However, she called her son's wife "the other partner" and "the lady" and confessed that she had a bad feeling about her in the beginning due to

previous interactions with White people. Elton said that she never interfered because the marriage was God's plan and because her son was an adult, so it was not her place. It was evident that Elton had to adjust to the idea of her son's intermarriage, but because of her abiding faith in God and the love she has for her son, Devon is managing the assimilation of her DiL into the family unit.

Criticism. Most of the mothers evaluated their child in a way that left a little room for growth. Devon stated that her daughter was a little messy, and Devon and Nancy agreed that their daughters relied heavily on their input. Elton would like her son to come to her with his problems more often. Marie would like her stepson to be more oriented toward extended family. Jane and Honey both criticized their stepdaughter and daughter, respectively, although Honey's criticism was more widely directed. Honey criticized her daughter, the SO, and the idea of the IRR much more strenuously than any of the other mothers.

Honey. Honey expressed her concerns about her daughter marrying her fiancé repeatedly. It was clear that Honey believed her daughter to be highly intelligent and accomplished because she spoke of her educational achievements, her travels abroad, and the success she enjoys at her job. It was also clear that Honey thinks her daughter is much too young to marry. She expressed feelings concerning her daughter's emotional immaturity, impulsivity, and the need for her daughter to experience life before making an enduring commitment. Honey was very open and honest about the family's background, and the life choices she expects of her daughter may be completely

reasonable. Additionally, the combination of criticism and complimentary words may be signs of a close, constructive relationship.

Although Honey does not object to her daughter's SO as a person, she criticized him for his lack of tenacity and accomplishments. The SO is a couple of years older than Honey's daughter and he has yet to choose a solid career path. His jobs are temporary, and he has few aspirations for the future. Further, he had an adverse childhood experience that affects his mental health periodically. Honey would like to see him resolve these issues for his own well-being and for that of her daughter.

Finally, and not inconsistent with the relevant literature, Honey mentioned that although she has no problem with the SO being a White man, she has occasionally joked with her daughter, saying:

> Wow, you couldn't have upped our Asian DNA or grabbed a Latino and upped our Latino DNA? You had to go right back to the European DNA? Like, why? We have enough of that. I wanted to see something like, tan or brown. But, I've said that jokingly because I'm, like, it is what it is. It wasn't a big deal to me.

For Honey, the real issue about the IRR is the rush to marry. When asked about her feelings toward the SO and the impending marriage, Honey said, "Well, I had to change the perspective. This is going to happen if I support it or not because this is going to happen whether I support it or not. This is the path that they're on." In returning the member check, Honey happily noted that the couple planned to delay the marriage plans for an additional two years.

Reactions to Racism/Prejudice

The second subresearch question probed the mothers' perceptions of societal reactions concerning their child's intergroup marriage. The participants largely agreed that racism and prejudice presented problems for the IRR couple. Although a few of the mothers claimed that their knowledge was only secondhand, they all had an opinion about the subject. The theme of reactions to racism and prejudice describes the parents' responses to negative reactions from family, friends, and people the encounter in their everyday activities. Although the theme does not represent the denotations of racism and prejudice, the title depicts the mothers' understanding and usage of the two words. The subcategories within the reactions to racism/prejudice theme are action, inaction, insight gained, and developmentally generative personality traits. Further, nearly all the participants cited age of the person with whom they were involved in interactions as a contributing factor for racism and prejudice.

Action. Although most of the mothers acted to integrate the IRRP into the family unit in one way or another, their action was often overshadowed by other factors. For example, fear of repercussions from family and friends or the inability or lack of tenacity to engage with people when racism or discrimination was obvious inhibited their behavioral intentions. Therefore, the subcategory of action was impressive in its content, limited in scope, and enhanced or blurred by other subcategory content.

Devon. Devon represented the subcategories of action, insight gained, and developmentally generative personality. She acknowledged encounters with older relatives and friends, as well. Devon had an excellent understanding of herself and her

relationship to racial issues. Of the seven participants, she was the self-aware mom who pushed herself to do more and learn more so that her daughter, her SiL, and her grandson would be more comfortable in the environment she works so hard to create. She feels that she began to acknowledge racial issues over a decade ago when she was involved with her Black fiancé, so her more current efforts are merely a continuation of those thought processes. She realized that she had some self-assessment to do when she met her SiL's family.

> I was so anxious to show, when I was meeting [SiL's] mom and his sisters, that I was like a cool White person and that I had no objections [to the relationship]. I kinda missed the whole point, and that's the one thing that I wish I could share. It's like, no that's not me. My intentions were good, but you have to go beyond your intentions.

Devon discussed several instances that caused her to grapple with her own feelings because of the reactions of others, especially when she was in the company of her grandson. For example, she told a story about taking her grandson for swimming lessons at the city pool. The pool manager confronted Devon. She recounted the story:

> The pool manager came out informing us that only family members could teach children how to swim. I said I was the grandmother. He said "biological?" and I said "Excuse me?!" I said, "First of all, I am his biological grandmother." I said, "How dare you??", too. And so I ended up creating this big stink, but all of this began to make me realize that I need to think this [idea of racism/prejudice] through a little bit more.

Devon did not let her experience pass without action. Devon's grandson was the catalyst for much of her action toward better racial awareness. She joined a national group that works on issues affecting biracial children and wrote an article about her pool experience for the group's magazine. She began to read material related to social justice, follow the Black Lives Matter movement, and worry about her grandson's well-being in relation to racial issues. Devon is proud of the smaller actions she has undertaken, such as reevaluating the art she has in her home, noticing the toys and books her grandson is exposed to, and decolonizing her bookshelf to be more representative of authors of color. Such actions demonstrate to her SiL and her grandson that she intends to embrace her multicultural family.

So, Devon achieved insight about racial issues fairly early because of her experiences interacting with others. Interactions with older family members during which the family members denigrated the IRR caused Devon to completely terminate the relationships. She often questioned herself and her own reactions and corrected her thoughts and behaviors when necessary. She took decisive action to help herself and her family progress toward a healthier, happier home environment as related to race. These actions were possible for Devon because she was open to new experiences and was motivated to create change.

Inaction. Mothers that chose inaction often supported their children and acknowledged their experiences. Further, they understood the ramifications of racism and prejudice. However, Honey spoke about not noticing situations, although she recalled her daughter speaking about discriminatory situations and Honey said she felt SO would

protect her daughter in such situations. Similarly, Jane understood racism and prejudice exists, but said that she did not encounter it when showing pictures of the IRR couple. However, she conceded that a potential grandchild could be subject to negativity. Nancy often avoided behavior that involved actors in unpleasant situations, but her recognition of racism and prejudice was evident.

Nancy. Although Nancy did not always engage to rectify situations, Nancy recognized racism and prejudice and had superior insight into the experience of her daughter and the SO, possibly because of the amount of time she spent with them. The primary negative interaction that Nancy spoke about involved her parents. Her parents disapproved of the IRR and would not invite the couple to Thanksgiving dinner. Nancy said she, the couple, and her other sons boycotted her parent's dinner, but all were invited to Christmas dinner. She believes that her and the SO teach the parents about racism by choosing times to correct their erroneous beliefs, however she and the SO often walk away from the confrontation rather than engaging her parents. She talks about managing the interactions with her parents.

> Maybe we're picking and choosing things we're teaching and not teaching. People my parents' age, who are late 70s, maybe will never understand. Or maybe they will not understand when they're doing something that the rest of us are kind of embarrassed by.

Nancy's insight into society's perception of her daughter's IRR presented an interesting metaphor. She discussed what she termed "the look", describing the stares from strangers that her daughter, her SO, and their infant son receive when they walk in a

room. Nancy says that she has experienced that look when she accompanies the family to restaurants or the grocery store. She said:

> I don't know how I missed it all of that time. I wished I would have realized that the prejudices run so much deeper and they come out in such small ways that it's almost like a little hen pecking at you instead of one large blade. It's almost like we're not going to lean on this guy's neck for the next nine minutes, but it's the little hen pecks - the way people look, and the way people say "Oh, is that the dad?". Sometimes people will ask me "Oh, are you okay with her being in this relationship with this Black guy?" or "Are you okay with this?" I wish I knew how angry things were going to make me.... It definitely has opened my eyes to a world that I didn't know existed.

Insight gained. The mothers' understanding about people, generally, and race more specifically grew because of their interactions with others. Although Ruth was generally mild-mannered, she was frustrated and angry, especially about the reactions of much older people to racial issues. Elton, however, learned to accept racism and prejudice calmly and in a dignified manner.

Ruth. Ruth does not have a lot of experience with interacting with people of color, but her sense of morality affects her outlook on living life. Although Ruth was a bit more forgiving with her description of her father's reluctance to accept her sister's and her daughter's IRR, her comments about how age coincides with racism were a bit shocking. It is evident that her life experiences have taught her that racism and prejudice are insidious and obscured until the time is advantageous. She told the story about her

husband golfing at a semi-private golf course with other retired White men. Her husband

came home and told her about the conversations that she calls "idiotic". She says about

the golfers:

> They have no concept at all about what someone else has gone through. And they
>
> claim to be Christians and they claim all this superiority to others, and I just can't
>
> wait for them to be gone and that dogma, that attitude to just leave the face of the
>
> earth. I just can't wait. Someday, I pray.

Ruth believes those kinds of opinions can't be changed because that generation

isn't open to it. She said:

> I don't think you can change those kind of opinions. Those ones that have been set
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> from when they've been very young and now they're in their 70s and 80s? I don't
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> think you can change it. You're not going to get them to go to a Black church.
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> You're not going to get them to have dinner with a Black family and see what
>
> their family life is like. You're not going to talk them into doing that. But my
>
> generation? I think we're still young enough to learn.

Elton. Although Elton did not mention age, she's learned to live with racism.

Elton's message was one of acceptance. She learned to distrust White people from

experiencing racism herself, and her friends and family reinforced that notion. So instead

of having to learn about racism and prejudice, she had to overcome her feelings about

White people as the perpetrators of negativity against her and against the people she

loves. Elton says her friends did not accept her DiL easily.

You see, [my friends and family] are Black, too. They feel that White people are

so discriminative. [White people] are not friendly. If a White person does

something discriminatory, my friends will just part ways. They've never taken it

personally.

Elton also accepts that people stare at her and her family, although strangers do

not generally approach them or say anything. "It's part of life. Just move on, just let them

look. Then they'll go, then they'll leave. It's not a big deal." She says her family is

comfortable with themselves, so the looks do not matter. Although she later cautiously

references the Black Lives Matter movement, Elton has learned that there is no need to

take action outside of her family because the circumstances for her and her family are not

going to change.

Experiencing Racism/Prejudice

Focusing on change over time, the final subresearch question asked about changes

in the perceptions and experiences of the mothers as the intermarriage progressed. The

final theme deals with the realities of racism and prejudice and how the participants

understand the issues after several years of experiencing an IRR with their child. The

subcategories within the theme of experiencing racism/prejudice are avoidance, growth

through experience, and location. One of the participants denied racism or prejudice

existed for her family. Others acknowledged the effects of the racial climate for the future

of the IRR famiy. Many of the mothers agreed that they have grown and gained

knowledge about racial issues because of the child's IRR. Some of the moms realized

some very important truths, especially in relation to the current social climate, because of

their experiences. Most of the responses were grounded in the participant's location or ideas about location.

Avoidance.

Marie. Marie was acutely aware of the way in which she would be portrayed, and her language indicated that she wanted to deny race was a concern for her. The stance of colorblind racism necessitates that she acknowledges that racism is something that others might encounter, but she must sever her own connections. Marie's endorsement of this stance was evident when she answered a question about the effects of COVID-19 by saying:

> Yeah, I don't see it as an intermarriage at all. So the fact that there - it's a - biracial or it's a - you know the color of the skin - is not impacted - in how we communicate or - lack of communication has nothing to do with it. I think right now, um, my stepson is concerned about, kind of, staying isolated. Not because, or having anything to do with the family. It's just his choice in wanting to stay isolated, for, for his personal reasons.

Additionally, when asked about the racial unrest in the country, Marie intimated that she did not have an opinion and that her DiL, who is Black, would be better suited to address the question. She said:

> I love that question because that is a topic that I wanted to talk to my daughter in law about. You know, how she felt, and we just never had that opportunity. But that's something I wanted to talk to her about as to how it impacts her personally. And, and everything. But I honestly, um, from what I know and from - Nothing's

been said to us as far as any, anything that has impacted them. It has not impacted

our relationship or anything but that's a good question. One that I think it would

be more addressed to her because, um I don't know - I think it's a great question

but - um, and one day you know when we get together I will talk to her about it

but, but - It's, it's very sad. I, I you know - It has, you know - I don't know what

else I could say about it. It's just - It's very ugly, the whole situation. But you

know I just pray that we all can get beyond this somehow. I don't know, yeah.

Growth through experience.

Jane. Like Marie, Jane seemed reluctant to acknowledge racist ideas in a couple

of instances but exhibited some comprehension of racism and prejudice as the interview

progressed through to the end. She was careful about discussing which family members

had a difficult time with the IRR, and had trouble recognizing negativity when she and

her husband met with the IRR couple at football games, for example. Jane said IRRs are

more accepted now than they were in the past. However, other comments contradict such

a positive assessment of the social situation.

Jane knew that many of the ideas represented by the South are antiquated. She

understands that the ideas and mindsets of some people have consequences, and she has

begun to question social norms. She said that she knows intellectually that everyone is

the same because she is a nurse, but everyday living does not reflect the scientific truth.

She said:

We don't, as a society, we don't look at a Caucasian woman and an Asian father,

you know, we don't look at that couple as an interracial couple. It's like "no,

they're okay, no, that's fine" But why do we look at a Caucasian and an African American, you know, why do we look at that as an interracial couple? And it just does not make sense to me (breathy exhale) You know, that just does not make sense to me. These are my thoughts, you know?

And of her feelings about the South and what it represents, she said, "Sometimes I hate saying that I live in the South. Just because of things that have happened in the past and things that are going on right now and the tensions." Jane recognized that the South might be problematic for her future grandchildren. On prospects of potential grandchildren for the IRR couple, Jane said, "I would spoil! spoil! that baby. Oh my gosh. But I know - just because of living in the South - I know that that child would have a hard time. But you know, we would be the protector of that child." So, although it was evident in parts of the interview that Jane would rather not deal with race if she could manage it, she understands the realities and is adjusting her way of thinking.

Nancy. Nancy talked through some ideas and came to some conclusions during the interview, especially concerning location and her current situation regarding race. First, Nancy denied that prejudice and racism existed in the area of Virginia where she lived for a long time. She did not experience it, so it just did not occur. She described it in this way:

We live kind of in the deep country hollers and there's an idea in the world that lots of people here are redneck cowboys prejudiced, and that exists. But I couldn't tell you where. I feel safe here because I know the people here and I just stay away from a certain element of people, maybe. Maybe I'm comfortable here and I

know where to go and where not to go. Maybe that's true. This is where I've lived

the majority of my life It would be hard for me to understand if there would be

another place that would be better or more tolerant or where I wouldn't have to

worry, but I suspect there's not a place.

Nancy went on to discuss that she realized more prejudice existed than she thought

possible for her area. She said she witnesses it every time she goes to a restaurant or

walks through Walmaart with SO, and it makes her angry. It also makes her worry about

the safety of her daughter and her grandson, although she's sure SO would protect his

family at all costs. She lamented, "I didn't realize that I needed to be afraid."

Nancy discussed how the state of race in the country would affect her and her

family. She repeatedly said how afraid she was:

We're at some kind of strange, scary turning point in this world, I hope. I'm scared

it will turn the wrong way. Things are so volatile in the world right now that it

does scare me. But I just try to believe that what I believe is the right way will be

the winner.

She mused aloud:

Maybe I should have been more like (daughter) fighting that fight in the school

yard at 6 or 7 years old instead of being 54 years old before it dawns on me "Oh, I

think I'm going to have to fight this fight." And I'm not sure how to teach how to

love people based upon who the person is, but let's try!

Ruth. Ruth's childhood recollections of Black people were from a single family

and from situation comedies from the 1970s. She described the derogatory images of

Black people that television offered and recognized the strength of media portrayals to alter perceptions. She rejects those roots and embraces the morality and good character that she found by grounding herself in family and faith. Her frustration with her childhood is evident from her statement:

> It, it, has become so clear to me at this point in my life that so many of the things that we saw and were taught in rural America were so isolated to what the world really is. And a lot of my friends never left so they have no idea what life is like outside of [small town]. They go to the beach, they visit, they talk about people, and they go back to their little town that has a Walmart, you know? That's it. It has a Walmart.

Ruth is learning about systemic racism, White privilege, and disparities based on race. It is her mission to teach others as she continues to grow. She declared, "Life doesn't have to be this hard. It doesn't. The color of your skin should not predetermine your success."

Ruth reflected that, at 55 years old, her life is literally half over. She is thinking about her legacy and thinks other people should, too. She believes her children and grandchildren will speak to that legacy, and she says it is important to think about how you want to be remembered.

> So how do you want people to remember you? Do you want them to remember that you were a racist? Because those are the things that people remember...Did you ever have dinner with a Black person? Did you ever go to church with a Black person?

These are the ideas that are important to Ruth and the philosophies that she perpetuates within her family.

  Elton. Although Elton did not talk about location, it was clear that she had experienced racism and prejudice. She and her family have made a conscious decision to live life to the fullest while trying to navigate the intricacies that their race adds. For example, she wanted to ensure that her final message of Black Lives Matter was communicated, but she felt she had to add that the message was not meant in a racist way. She then went on to say, "When you get married, don't let race be a determining factor. Just make sure that you are looking at personality, you are looking at how you can deal with problems. But don't let the race deter you from having a relationship." Elton added that race would only be a factor for her son and his family if they allow it to happen. She said: "If they don't let what people are saying get to their heads, then they will survive. But if they let a lot of people just meddle in their affairs, then it will interfere with their relationship."

  Honey. Honey began speaking about racism and discrimination in relation to socioeconomics. She talked about access and how living in a more affluent area and attending a influential schools and colleges provided a solid basis for opportunity. However, she said that in a race-driven society, money does not matter outside of the community in which a person lives.

Honey spoke about her perceptions of IRRs in the Black community and how she believes Black IRRPs are perceived:

Black people, in general, have been more receptive to their children dating outside

of their race. If you look at them dating White people, they're usually more

welcoming to that. …When an Asian dates a Black person. Then, it's like. "Oh,

no, no, no!" Or you know, if you're a Latino - we're part Afro-Latino, so it's like,

"Oh, okay, but how dark are they?" But that's even in the Black community. Are

they Black-Black? Or are they just (breathy)Black? You know? How Black is

Black?

So, Honey emphasized that other races do not want members of their family to

marry Black people. Further, discrimination based on shades of skin color, as proposed

by Santana (2020), was confirmed by Honey. She went on to discuss the gender

differences between IRR acceptance. She said:

I know that if I had a son, I would be less supportive of him dating a White

woman just because I don't want [him] to think that that's better. I don't want [him

to date a White woman], because historically, this is what is perceived as

achieving something in life.

In her corrections on the member check, Honey noted that her objections to her

hypothetical Black son dating a White woman are rooted by "historical and cultural

effects of colonialism" and because "Black men have been falsely accused by White

women and lost their lives". She went on to say that:

Black men who date White women seem to hold women on a higher pedestal and

do not support women of color, especially Black women because there is a belief

that Black women are "less than" or "problematic". While I am more open to

Black women and White males dating/marrying it is still not necessarily my first

choice. My female friends who have White mothers and Black fathers have all

married Black men. While my male friends who have White mothers have been

more open to dating White women.

Honey's experiences of socioeconomic opportunity, insights from a multicultural

perspective, and growth from her daughter's IRR have given her the necessary

perspective to reflect on the ramifications of racism and prejudice for herself, her

daughter, and the IRR family. Honey feels concern for the future is justified, although her

daughter's SO is capable of handling the challenges. She says that kids will be kids, and

it is the parent's job to support them.

On racism and discrimination, Honey said, "People always have an opinion,

whether it's their business or not. It's just to you on how you want to address it." And

perhaps most profoundly:

Loving vs. the state of Virginia is barely 50 years old. People don't realize how

recent that really was! That is so recent. People made it work through hardships,

or not, [despite] people's different views. I believe that if [people] want to be

together they'll make it work.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I attempted to amalgamate the responses of 7 mothers as they shared

their experiences of their adult child's Black-White IRR or intermarriage. The stories

were complex, and few similarities emerged. There were no universal truths within the

sample of seven. Neither race nor education nor location predicted their perceptions and

reactions to their child's IRR. The only thread of commonality is their agreement that racism and prejudice may be a problem, but that connection is tenuous. The thematic elements did not support the research questions singly. Thoughts, feelings, and actions melded to form a complete picture of the complicated relationships and IRR acceptance process.

Although the initial mother-child relationships were not always close and some of the bonds were not particularly strong, the mothers learned to accept their child's IRRP. Those mothers who were more open to change and growth saw their child as a capable adult with whom they formed a relationship that was healthier and closer. Most of the mothers acknowledged racism and prejudice experienced by their child and their child's family, although that acknowledgement may have been subtle. Where the family was located geographically as well as the ages of the people who contribute to racist attitudes were common comments for the participants. Finally, every mother wished the best for their child and hoped others would work to look beyond skin color in one way or another.

In Chapter 5, I inserted the conceptual framework into the analysis of the research questions to aid in interpretation of the study's outcomes. Additionally, I compared the findings of this interpretative phenomenological analysis to current research in the field. Finally, I discussed limitations and provided a conclusion to the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover how parents of adult children involved in Black-White IRRs or intermarriages experienced the relationship. IRRs, especially those between Black people and White people, are particularly taboo in American society (Toledo, 2016)). Chattel slavery, the Jim Crow South, and antimiscegenation laws reinforced the boundaries between Black and White people (Flores, 2019). The social ramifications of infringing on strictly enforced racial boundaries can be harsh, even 50 years after *Loving v. the state of Virginia* legalized interracial marriage. The personal and social ramifications for those involved in IRRs are numerous (see de Guzman & Nishina, 2017; Toledo 2016), but this study focused on how the IRR affected the parent and the parent-child relationship, both overtly and covertly.

Previous research focused on IRR couples and the health of IRRs, although parental support is helpful to an IRRP's well-being (see Brummett & Affifi, 2019). Through techniques inherent in interpretative phenomenological analysis, I explored the thoughts and feelings of seven mothers as they discussed their relationships with their children as the child's IRR progressed. Necessarily, my interpretations of the meaning-making process of the mothers concerning the IRR, the IRRP, and social reactions were a part of the analysis. The main findings of the study were that the mother's experiences of their child's Black-White IRR were dependent upon connections with their families and how they expressed feelings within the parent-child relationship. The parents' perceptions of societal reactions and their reactions as the IRR relationship evolved were

described by how they experienced and reacted to racism and prejudice. In Chapter 5 I discussed the interpretation of these findings in conjunction with the PPCT model of bioecological theory (see Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Additionally, I also discussed the limitations of the study, offered recommendations regarding future research, and cited implications for social change before concluding the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The review of the literature provided limited information regarding parents and families of those involved in IRRs. The information concerning parents was based on opinion and conjecture of those involved in the relationships or those contemplating the relationships (see Brummett & Afifi, 2019; Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015; Shenhav et al., 2017). Therefore, the literature review's main themes were compared to the study's findings to clarify the parents' experiences further.

Research Questions

In his PPCT model of bioecological theory, Bronfenbrenner discussed the importance of acknowledging how people's existences are intertwined through interpersonal relationships (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1999). People develop through ongoing proximal processes, or interpersonal interactions, that incorporate the people, environment, and context. The relationship between the parent and adult child and the parent's response to the child's IRR begin with proximal processes, and personal factors as well as contextual information occurring in the micro-, meso-, or macrosystems must be recognized. Just as the factors affecting the parent-child relationship are multiple, so are the reactions of the parent. The results from this study indicate that reverberations of

the reactions are consequential for the development of the parent, the health of the parent-child relationship, and the implications for the family. Further, the parent develops over time and through experience, possibly prompting change within others with whom they interact. The change may potentially lead to large scale social change. These elements of change were evident in the research question analysis.

RQ1. The main research question was *What are the lived experiences of parents as they adapt to their adult child's Black-White IRR?* I asked the women about their current relationship with their child, including the best parts of the relationship, the worst parts of the relationship, and what they would like to change. I also asked about the details of the child's intermarriage, including the couple's proximity and how they all got along. Finally, I asked about the relationship between the parent and the IRR couple. I wanted to know if the parent viewed their child differently, if the parent got along with the child's SO, and if they would have chosen a different partner for their child. The primary theme that was relevant to this question was family connections because the interpersonal relationships between the participant and adult child are highlighted. The feelings expressed theme was also implicated.

This question was designed specifically to gauge the parents' person characteristics. People inherently feel, think, and behave differently. Knowledge and experience, temperament, and demand characteristics affect a person's personal development and interpersonal interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Specifically, a more curious parent, more open to new ideas, more active in their child's life, and who has previous experience regarding IRRs will build better relationships and

learn to accept their child's IRR much more quickly than a parent with opposing person characteristics.

   The parent-child relationship. At the heart of this research question lies intergroup relations and interpersonal relationships. People categorize themselves and each other to form basic ingroups and outgroups. When others outside the ingroup, outgroup members, try to encroach on the ingroup conflict often results (MacInnis & Page-Gould, 2015). However, threat must be present for the ingroup member to call upon their ingroup membership as a reason for outgroup member rejection. Brown (2020) further commented that a person's identity is emotion-based, and a person's motives are more complicated than theory can capture. The mothers described mostly positive and sometimes complicated relationships with their adult child, and none of the mothers rejected the IRRPs outright.

   Tajfel and Turner (1979) stated that interpersonal interactions are nearly always affected by intergroup norms. It is possible that the parent-child relationship was paramount to most of the mothers so these mothers disregarded social categorization and personal ramifications. When the mothers were more accommodating, a generative personality characteristic, the parent-child relationship, and the family system were much different. Three of the participants fully acknowledged the social problems inherent in the Black-White dichotomy but chose to embrace their child and their child's SO wholeheartedly. The two Black participants resigned themselves to the fact that the IRR was a fact with which they were required to contend, so they decided to accommodate their child and the relationship. Whether a function of personality or a result of bad

experiences with race, the two Black mothers chose tolerance over rejection of their child despite their negative feelings.

Family relationships. All seven of the mothers intimated that they accepted their child's IRR. Ideally, parental approval creates a supportive family environment for the IRR couple to find comfort and refuge (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). Zhang and Sassler (2019) stated that IRRPs, especially White IRRPs, receive less family support than those in intraracial relationships. Five of the seven mothers interacted with their interracially involved child closely and regularly. These five mothers spoke fondly of integrated family vacations, loving grandchildren, and activities the families share, for example. Two mothers, incidentally the mothers of the stepchildren involved in the IRRs, only saw their child sporadically or on holidays. Notably, both stepmothers had biological children that they more readily claimed as their children. The parent-child bond is particularly important in today's society, so the affinity for holding onto these closer, easier biological bonds may be warranted.

Fingerman et al. (2020) declared that the parent-child relationship is the most consequential in an adult's life. For the child, high quality and better functioning adult relationships begin with a strong parent-child relationship and a healthy family (Henderson & Brantley, 2019). Each of the seven mothers' familial circumstances included at least one adverse childhood event for the interracially involved child. Divorces, paternal deaths, integrating stepfamilies, and a case of substance abuse caused some turmoil within each family unit and for each parent-child relationship. Four mothers acknowledged the crisis, helped their child work through the circumstances, and managed

to keep the parent-child relationship functioning well. For these mothers, the acceptance of the IRR and the IRRP was nearly effortless. The parent-child bond was not compromised, and the mothers' relationships with the IRRPs were strong, as well. In a longitudinal study, Yahirun and Kroeger (2019) found that children who enjoyed stronger childhood relationships with their parents were less likely to form IRRs. So, the current study demonstrated that either the strength of the relationship may function independently of tragedy or that other factors besides relationship strength between parent and child affect an adult child's propensity to enter into an IRR.

Relatedly, parent-child connections are sometimes specific to the family relationship. For example, in adulthood, daughters tend to be closer to their parents (Yahirun, 2019). Five mothers in this study have daughters, and four of the five mothers profess to be close to their daughters despite their IRR. Yahirun (2019) found that an adult child's closeness to their mother in adulthood was not associated with intermarriage at all. Further, according to the study by Yahirun & Kroeger (2019), mothers have weaker relationships with their stepchildren, and single mothers struggle to connect with their children, explaining the three less functional mother- adult child relationships. Therefore, the seven mothers' parent-child relationships may not have been affected by the IRR. The mother-child relationship may have been predetermined, and the reactions to the IRR were a byproduct of the preexisting relationship. The demand characteristic of gender within the PPCT model is integral to this study's findings.

Legacy. The theme of legacy was found in most of the women's stories and speaks to the mothers' experience with IRRs and their knowledge about how such

relationships function in society. Six of the seven women had some connection to Black-White IRRs within their social circle. Two of the six women wondered whether their daughters were born with the propensity to date or marry Black men. One of the six women blamed her stepdaughter's IRR on the biological mother's influence. The rarity of Black-White intermarriage because of the social distance between Black and White people is emphasized in the literature (Buggs, 2017; Flores, 2019; Livingston, 2017). Intergroup contact with outgroup members, the size and composition of the child's social circle, and where the parents choose to reside impact the adult child's choice of an IRR partner (Zhang & Sassler, 2019). The mothers' relative openness to their child's Black-White IRR and their ability to see the ramifications of racism and prejudice may be related to their previous experience with IRRs. Therefore, parents may make an IRR more or less acceptable for their adult child based upon their choices and attitudes.

   Person characteristics. Demand characteristics, experiences, and biological temperaments of the mother affected their child, as Bronfenbrenner's theory suggested (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). First, all seven mothers had at least some college, and one of the six was a single mother. According to Yahirun and Kroeger (2019), a child's likelihood of interracially marrying increases as a parent's education level increases (Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). Further, children raised by single parents are more likely to become involved interracially (Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). Most of the mothers mentioned where they reside as a factor for IRR acceptance. Gabriel (2018), Roberts (2016), and Zhang and Sassler (2019) discussed the importance of neighborhood and location on the probability of IRR formation. The mother-child relationship's inherent

properties may have made the IRR inconsequential to the mothers, implicating gender (Yahirun, 2019). The innate differences between the mothers lend insight into their individual experience of their child's IRR. Moreover, the mothers had different levels of knowledge and experience concerning IRRs and intergroup relations. Six of the seven had previous IRR contact and at least some contact with people outside their race. However, the mothers' temperaments and personality factors were the catalysts for more positive parent-adult child relational outcomes.

As Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) postulated, biological temperaments and personality factors like the generativity demonstrated by the mothers who were more accepting of the IRR affect how participants interacted with their adult children. The open-mindedness demonstrated by four participants led to more support for their child and the child's significant other, thereby ensuring better IRR health (i.e., Rosenthal & Starks, 2015; Toledo, 2016; Zhang & Sassler, 2019). IRRP's well-being is positively affected when positive parental support is provided (Rosenthal et al., 2019; Tillman & Miller, 2017). Kteily et al. (2017) found that people who were more close-minded and those who could not process information that conflicted with their own opinions, for example, had difficulty divesting themselves of symbolic anti-Black racism. In the one case, the mother denied seeing color in their White stepson's SO, which denotes colorblind racism, or a message of equality cloaked in White superiority (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). A professed inability to see color is considered a microaggression or a brief display of discrimination (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Leslie and Young (2015) stated that microaggressions were possible when a parent disapproved of the IRR relationship. The

negativity filters through to other family members over time, hampering familial interactions for the IRR couple (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). Although continued contact with the DiL should lessen prejudice in this case, the damage to the relationship may have been done because the stepson and his family moved away, and he limits contact with the family of origin. Discontinuing contact with a family that expresses overt or latent negativity may be a defense mechanism for the IRR couple.

Summary. The IRR experience within the context of the mother-adult child relationship was largely inconsequential to the seven participants. The foundation of the relationship proved to be the overriding factor for the mothers. Although all professed acceptance of the IRR, the subtext of one mother's words belied her narrative. Although locations and experience varied, four mothers had more generative personalities than the other three, which made a difference in their propensity for personal development and growth toward better relationships with their adult children and the IRRPs.

RQ1a. The first subresearch question was *What activities and occurrences do the parents find significant to their experience?* I asked the mothers about the experience of their adult child initially telling them about their SO. Their reaction in the moment, what their child said, and if the parent would like to change anything about the moment were all important pieces of information. Additionally, I asked about experiences such as the wedding, grandchildren, or the couple moving far away. The themes of family connections, feelings expressed, and reactions to racism/prejudice were all relevant. The question implicated family ties and feelings about the SO and the adult child, and because

the opinions of family members and friends were often a part of the process, racism and prejudice sometimes had to be confronted thoughtfully or through action.

This question speaks to proximal processes. That is, interpersonal interactions between the parent and the child, as well as the parent and those within the overall interaction, must be examined. These interdependent relationships are termed linked lives because they occur with context and within changing environments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1999). So, an interaction between the parent and child necessarily includes overtones of relationships between other family members, roles within the family, and norms governing parent-child interactions. Intergroup interactions, such as those that occur at a wedding, may include the ceremony's formality, the expectations of marriage, and the preexisting relationships between family members. Additionally, lack of knowledge, fear, and anxiety may accompany meeting the IRRP's family for the first time (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Finally, norms and laws about IRRs, the representation of IRRs and people of color in media, and the current social climate may impact a parent's development regarding proximal processes.

Relationship Revelation. Relationship revelation is the entry point to familial support for IRR and IRRPs. Brummett and Afifi (2019) noted that IRRPs look to parents for support, and the parent-child relationship can potentially become even stronger when the parent meets the child's support expectation. Brummett and Steuber (2015) found that adult children were careful about disclosing information about their SO to their parent. The adult child decides upon a confidante who, in turn, shares the news of the IRR with the rest of the family (Brummett & Steuber, 2015).

Consistent with the literature, two mothers reported that their child found an ally in their father, so the mother found out about the IRR second-hand. One of the study mothers knew about her daughter's SO very early because her daughter was still in high school when the couple met. Three of the mothers described IRR disclosure conversations in which their child tried to broach the subject carefully. These three mothers rejected their tentativeness and welcomed the IRRP, although one admits it took some time to accept the IRRP into her heart fully. One mother brought the relationship to the IRR couple's attention and counseled them to stop concealing their relationship status. All seven mothers claim to have mostly positive or very positive relationships with their children. Nevertheless, the five mothers who were allies to their children, supported them, and embraced their IRR interact more frequently with their child and portray a warmer relationship overall.

Marriage. Adult children, wary of parental reactions to their IRR, tend to cohabitate before marriage (Livingston & Brown, 2017; Yahirun & Kroeger, 2019). As the current literature supports, only three of the seven IRR couples represented in the study were married, so only three mothers discussed the wedding plans' implications and the wedding day. Of the three, the only remarkable comments were that the day was uneventful in the context that the mother expected there might be racial tension between the families. However, discussions of holiday events that included family yielded more interesting findings that included familial reactions to the IRR.

Extended Family. Six of the participants revealed that their extended family members and friends had difficulty accepting the IRR. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and

in-laws expressed their distress and outright opposition to the interracial unions. Family members' negative reactions are mirrored in the literature (Brummett & Afifi; Brummett & Steuber; Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015). Age was the overwhelming factor attributed to the rejection of the IRR by the extended family and friends. The era in which the dissenting individual lived coincided with their inability to tolerate interracial relationships because of historical precedent in the United States. Although some mothers reported more than one incident of prejudice or self-described racism, the mothers generally shielded their child from the dissent. They tried to reason with the family member. Parents who support their children through words and actions can change others' perceptions (Clark et al., 2015).

Proximal processes. A healthy adult relationship acknowledges that a person is not perfect. Hence, a parent that recognizes that their interracially involved child has room to grow is a sign of a functional relationship. Six of the seven mothers either bragged about their child's school and work accomplishments, character, personal value system, or personality traits. Four of these six mothers tempered their compliments with areas where their child could find room for improvement. Of the remaining three mothers, two mothers criticized excessively, and only one of these two mothers countered the criticism with positive comments. One mother only spoke in favorable terms and offered accolades. Although the positivity may have been genuine on some level, the overly-positive tone served self-presentational purposes, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The interpersonal and intergroup relationships, the linked lives, converge in weighted patterns for the three mothers with less healthy relationships with their child.

First, two of the IRR couples in this subset found allies in the other parent when revealing their relationship, and the other adult child's mother is a single parent. Second, two of the IRRs cohabitate. Also, two of the couples chose to live far away from their family. The mothers with more realistic, functional relationships with their children more easily avoided these issues that signal a lack of support.

Summary. The participants' adult children did not seem confident about their mother's reaction to their IRR, as evidenced by their hesitant IRR revelation. The IRR couple's cohabitation patterns, wherein Black-White couples choose to live together before marriage so family members can acclimate to the relationship, are consistent with those documented in the literature. However, the mothers generally accepted their child's choice and defended the IRR against prejudice from aged family members. The majority of the relationships between the mother and the adult child were healthy and functional. The mother-child relationships that were not as functional included more tentative and distancing adult child behaviors.

RQ1b. The second subresearch question, What are the parents' perceptions of the societal reactions concerning the adult child's intergroup marriage?, strongly implicated reactions to racism/prejudice. I specifically asked about family and friends' reactions to the IRR and how that made the parent feel. I solicited uplifting or disheartening comments that the parent may have received from family and friends. I asked for responses to the comments, which lead to specific responses and cognitive and affective consequences.

To understand the context of interactions, the nature of the levels of the environment in the bioecological model is necessary. The microsystem, the individual, merges with others to form mesosystems. Mesosystems and exosystems combine to create context and produce influence that may impact the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). For example, the parent is affected by their close social connections and their work and their spiritual beliefs, their communities, and the overarching laws and cultural beliefs of society. Although parents may find support for their beliefs and actions, they may also encounter challenges. So, although a Black parent may fully accept the IRR and IRRP, family members and work friends may disagree with their choice. Additionally, the view of a Black man married to a White woman is not well-accepted by Black society, so the parent may have difficulty justifying their choice to themselves and in public situations.

Race and Culture. The issue of race is central to American culture. People are defined by their skin color in the United States because skin tone denotes social status (Santana, 2020), and the social dominance of White people creates problems for Black-White IRR acceptance. An increasing population that identifies as multiracial (Parker et al., 2015) may be threatening to White people.

Additionally, bias against Black-White IRRs has been well-documented. Black women, especially, dislike the idea of IRRs (Stackman et al., 2016). One of the Black women in this study explicitly agreed with Brummett and Afifi's (2019) findings that Black male-White female couples deplete the pool of Black men. The same mother reported that her daughter had no choice but to date a White male because there were no available Black

men. The other Black mother in the study stated that she and her friends dislike the idea of her son's wife, specifically, because of the implications of her being White. White participants displayed less implicit bias against IRR couples, but implicit bias tests revealed disgust (Skinner & Hudac, 2016). In a study in which most participants were women, Skinner and Rae (2019) found that White participants expressed less implicit and explicit bias than Black participants. In this study, all five of the White participants overtly expressed little to no bias.

Action and Inaction. People involved in Black-White IRRs have difficulty gaining social acceptance (Gabriel, 2018). Clark et al. (2015) noted that IRR couples might have trouble finding acceptable social outlets because they do not belong. Five of the seven women related stories of lack of access to resources or of people questioning or challenging the IRR couple. Three of the seven women experienced the challenges of the IRR couple by being present and associated with the couple. Six of the seven women recognized and understood racism and prejudice as it occurred. Only one of the six took decisive action to counter the effects of racism and prejudice through thoughtful reflection and directed behaviors, thereby sending strong anti-racism messages to her family members and the community. The mother who actively engages with agents of racism and prejudice is creating positive social change.

Two of the seven women choose inaction in the face of racism and prejudice. One of the mothers has confronted racism for so long that she counsels her family to simply ignore it and move on with their lives because it is not going away. The other woman

talks about teaching others about racist ideas and has good intentions to do so, but fails to follow through on her rhetoric.

Insight gained. People involved in IRRs realize that race is a subject that does not disappear. IRRPs become hyperaware of their interracial status and the stigma that accompanies it (Afful et al. 2015). Five of the seven mothers discussed revelations about race that occurred to them because of their public experiences with the IRR couple. One mother denied that racial issues arise at all. She insisted that she did not receive adverse comments when talking about the IRR couple or when showing pictures and suggested that it might be because people in society are past the race issue.

Summary. Black-White IRRs are the least common of the IRR combinations (Toledo, 2016) because of the context in which the United States casts race. The two Black mothers explicitly echoed the reasons that they theoretically objected to Black-White IRRs. White people's bias is more implicit in the literature, and the mothers in this study did not express personal contempt for Black-White IRRs. While sharing experiences in public with the interracially involved couple, most mothers were subjected to the prejudice and discrimination that the couples often encounter. The recognition and acknowledgment of the prejudice and discrimination caused some mothers to alter their thought processes and behaviors.

RQ1c. The final subresearch question was: How do the perceptions and experiences of the parents change as the intermarriage progresses? This question speaks specifically to the time element of the PPCT model and refers to developmental progress as well as chronology (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1999). Accordingly, the first question

to which I sought a response was about the trajectory of the relationship between parent and child. Any changes in the family or in family relationships because of the IRR and how the parent was affected by the changes were important. I probed for the parent's hopes for their child, the SO, and the couple's family. Additionally, asking about society's effects and implications on the IRR couple's family and advice for parents in similar situations yielded information that provided grounding for some of the interviews. This final question primarily engaged insight from racism/prejudice. Thus, the concept of time in the PPCT model in relation to social change within the person and for society is addressed as well.

The future of the family. All the mothers felt that their families were growing together and becoming stronger. Overwhelmingly, the mothers pledged their allegiance to their adult child. Unequivocally, every mother wished the best for her child, the child's IRRP, and current or future grandchildren. Most of the mothers were fiercely protective of their grandchildren, real or imagined. Each mother voiced a message of acceptance of people, although some mothers were more passionate in their discourse. As some of the mothers spoke about society's direction and the implications for their interracially involved family members, their personal development from the IRR's inclusion in their family became more apparent.

Location. Geographical location was a recurrent theme for the mothers. Six of the seven mothers spoke about IRR acceptance as dependent upon the area in which the people reside because of historical implications. Small towns were cited as being much less accepting by four mothers, although another said that a smaller community worked

to her Black family's advantage. Much higher opposition to intermarriage is reported in the southern portion of the United States because of the lingering effects of chattel slavery (Livingston, 2017), a fact with which one mother vehemently agreed. However, according to Afful et al. (2015), areas of the country that are not integrated are less accepting of IRRs, so the context of the IRR drives social reaction. Two of the mothers disagreed with this integration sentiment. Although the mothers hoped that the outlook would become brighter concerning such racial division, the six mothers who admitted to race problems did not seem optimistic.

Growth through experience. The mothers reflected on current events, their location in time, and the impact of what they learned from the IRR experience. Each mother offered insight into racial division in the U.S., the racial climate in light of the protests and riots over the summer of 2020, and people's need to see others as human. One mother consistently worked to avoid the topic of racism and prejudice in society. She corrected questions that included words about race to better suit her viewpoint. She conceded a question about race relations to her Black DiL who was better equipped, in her opinion, to answer the question. She did, however, speak about God wanting people to choose to be good to others.

Personal growth over time. These seven mothers advised other parents of adult children involved in IRRs that conveyed hope for the future. They talked about love, support, and unconditional acceptance by getting to know a person beyond skin color. Three mothers considered their religious views and morality as reasons for integrating their child's SO

and treating all people equally. Although some mothers had trouble expressing their views, their aspirational goals for parents and humanity were made clear.

Limitations of the Study

The implications and interpretations of this study have limits. First, the inclusion criteria limited the sample population to parents of children involved in Black-White IRRs. Although Black-White intermarriages represent only about 11% of the rapidly rising intermarriage rates over the last 40 years (Livingston & Brown, 2017), Black and White IRRs face more opposition than intermarriages of other racial combinations (Skinner & Hudac, 2016). The effects of societal reactions on Black-White IRR parents and families were never studied directly and may have also been more apparent because the literature suggests harsher consequences for the Black-White IRR couple (Skinner & Hudac, 2016; Skinner & Rae, 2019). However, other racial groups certainly experience challenges in IRR integration (Livingston, 2017), although this study only addressed the Black-White interracial pairing.

IPA protocol calls for a limited number of participants so that each person's story can be respected (Smith & Eatough, 2015). The target sample size for this study was six to eight participants, and commonalities, trends, and alignment with the current literature began to emerge after the seventh participant, as predicted by Pietkeiwicz and Smith (2012). Ideally, fathers would have been a part of the sample population, but no males responded to the advertisements. The inclusion of seven mothers aided in the small sample's homogeneity, which the IPA methodology prescribes. However, the limited number of participants hinders the possibility of generalizability. Few generalizations can

be made about parents of children involved in IRRs from the seven mothers' stories in this study. Further, five of the mothers were White, and two of the mothers were Black. Therefore, it was necessary to provide context and illuminate the rich detail evident in each woman's story so that any possibility for generalization could be realized and that transferability might be supported. However, this study was meant to be exploratory, so the findings function as the basis for future research.

My demographic characteristics were a limitation to the study in several ways. First, as a White woman involved in a 30 year-long interracial marriage, I brought my own biases to the study. I used journaling before interviews began. I documented my thoughts and feelings before and after each interview. Further, as I transcribed and evaluated each interview, my notes reflected the questions and ideas that challenged me to consider my visceral responses. This reflexivity and mindfulness reduced the likelihood of my perspectives influencing the data. Additionally, I spoke with my chair about my reactions to the interview content and relied on my committee members to review my coding, as Patton (2015) suggested. Thus, credibility and confirmability were supported.

In several instances, my demographic characteristics made a difference to the participants. Two of the participants perceived me as an ally and assumed I understood their point-of-view. One of the Black participants was very careful with her words when speaking about race relations, presumably because she did not want to offend me. To combat reactions from the participants, I utilized the interview protocol to ensure dependability. I adhered to open-ended questions, avoided offering my opinions, and

ensured my comments were value-free (Bourke, 2014). By reducing my influence as much as possible, my personal attributes' limitation was mitigated, thus supporting trustworthiness.

An inclusion criterion was that the adult child's IRR had to be older than three years so that interactions and events involving the IRR and relevant to the parent-child relationship had sufficient time to develop. The study participants' interview material included their subjective recollections about their reactions and experiences. These memories may be altered by subsequent thoughts, feelings, behaviors, interactions, and self-serving bias. However, this study aimed to understand and document the parents' perspectives, and the current literature supports much of the mothers' experiences. The confirmation and disconfirmation of the study's findings in the literature support credibility and transferability.

Recommendations

The limitations found in this study present opportunities for several recommendations for future research. First, replicating the study using different parental demographic characteristics might yield data that would help with future, more specific work concerning parental development and race relations. The mothers in this study mentioned the father-child relationship incidentally, and no fathers volunteered for inclusion in this study. A sample population targeting fathers, specifically, would be valuable to gauge differences in the parent-child relationship and the IRR experience.

Additionally, age and location were mentioned by the mothers as significant

variables to IRR acceptance. Social class and education levels were important variables

for researchers. Isolating any of these demographic factors may generate data that

illuminates the parental IRR acceptance experience. Of course, expanding the premise of

this study to include a more diverse array of couples that include racial, religious, and

ethnic alternatives may affect study outcomes. Finally, concentrating on social factors

that occur within a family such as specific adverse childhood experiences, parental

marital status, or cohabitation choices for the IRR couple would be supported by the data

within this study and extant literature. Once these variables and topics are explored

through mixed methods and quantitative means, a more thorough understanding of

parental experiences of their child's IRR can be grasped.

<div align="center">**Implications for Positive Social Change**</div>

Family Level

Benefits for family therapy exist in this study's results. First, adverse childhood

experiences were present for the adult children in each of the seven mothers' stories.

Family members cannot always fulfill the needs of others while caring for themselves.

The introduction of the IRR element in some families may have added stress to family

relationships that were already strained. Gilligan et al. (2017) highlighted the necessity of

positive familial relationships to prevent depression and improve well-being for everyone

in the family.

Similarly, IRRs may disrupt the family system, and it may be difficult for parents

to support their adult child when their child departs from expectations and norms

(Brummett & Afifi, 2019). IRRPs have similar support expectations for their parents and

family members (Brummett & Afifi, 2019). Three of the mother-adult child pairs in this study were not functioning optimally although the parent expressed support for the IRR, so an investigation into the source of this dysfunction may reveal expectation violations. Physical or emotional family estrangement is possible when a family member fails to meet expectations (Agllias, 2017). Functional parent-adult child and family relationships are important to the health and well-being of IRRPs, especially, because IRRPs need the break from the real world that their families provide (Castle Bell & Hastings, 2015).

Family counseling can help families work through general issues in the parent-adult child relationship, integrating the new IRR relationship into the family, or intrafamily relationships. Larson, Malnar, and Busby (2016) emphasized ecosystems theory as a predictor for therapeutic outcomes in that changing environmental elements affect parental approval of their child's relationship, for example. However, a culturally competent therapist can help the family confront issues of race straightforwardly, regardless of discomfort (Leslie & Young, 2015). By confronting race, similarities and differences, history, power differentials, and microaggressions can be discussed in the context of the IRR and family functioning.

Societal Level

This study's aspirational goal was prejudice reduction via Allport's (1979) and Pettigrew's (2018) theories about intergroup contact. Pettigrew, a student of Allport's, asserted that prejudice reduction through intergroup contact occurred under conditions of equal status between groups, common goals and cooperation, and support of the contact by authority (Pettigrew, 2018, p. 13). In the current study, all seven of the mothers

accepted the concept of the IRR. Six mothers had previous experience with IRRs, and a decrease in prejudice and its components was evident in these six mothers' interactions.

Pettigrew and Tropp (2006, 2008) investigated further and found that prejudice reduction through intergroup contact resulted in reduced anxiety about contact with outgroup members, which helped mitigate stereotypical thoughts. The intergroup contact also helped to increase empathy for outgroup members and to get to know them personally. Six of the mothers reported personal relationships with the IRRP. Four of the six mothers reported close, loving relationships with the IRRP and mentioned them in the context of positive intergroup contact with extended family. Although one of the mothers out of the six did not seem enthusiastic about her DiL, the mother was open to sharing the family's culture, childcare responsibilities, and extensive amounts of time with her. Another of the six mothers did not see the IRR couple often and did not share a close relationship with her stepdaughter, so her relationship with the SO was not overly close. However, she sincerely liked the SO and shared many positive points about the SO compared to the particularly negative traits of the stepdaughter. Overall, the mothers became well acquainted with the IRRPs, which helped them to relate well personally. Further, the mother's awareness of social issues based on race was affected, implicating knowledge and empathy. Therefore, the contact between the IRRPs and the mothers may be successful in reducing prejudice.

The implications of prejudice reduction through intergroup contact are extraordinary as rates of IRRs and intermarriages continue to rise. As the data concerning legacy in this study suggest wherein six of the seven mothers professed to have someone

in their lives with links to a previous IRR, families will be confronting issues of outgroup members entering their inner circles more regularly. Santana (2020) asserted that the color lines between White and Brown are beginning to fade, and the acceptance and integration of IRRPs into the family are integral to a functional society. Therefore, a more macrolevel of social change may be involved.

Conclusion

The mothers in this study accepted their adult child's Black-White IRR, but each mother's overall experience of the relationship was different. The parent-adult child relationships varied, so the foundation for the trajectory of the relationships differed. No two stories were exactly the same, but four mothers experienced significant personal growth as they experienced IRR relationship milestones and began to understand the ramifications of the IRR. These four mothers' personality characteristics and temperament helped them grow significantly more within their relationships and how they perceived and reacted to prejudice and discrimination. The other three mothers' personalities were disruptive to their development in that they were more guarded and less open to new ideas. Two of these three mothers preferred not to challenge familiar ideas. They accepted racism and prejudice as a part of life. The other of the three mothers was the discrepant case because she presented a relatively unmarred picture of her parent-adult child relationship and the IRR relationship. She failed to acknowledge race as a factor in her family's life.

The lived experiences of parents as they adapt to their child's Black-White IRR varied based upon the relationship between parent and adult child. The IRR revelation,

the choice of cohabitation versus marriage, and grandchildren were occurrences to which the parent was forced to react. The reaction largely depended upon the parent's openness to the IRR and factors in the parent-adult child relationship. Dynamics that separate Black from White at the macro level permeate social systems and intergroup and interpersonal interactions, and parents witnessed and sometimes reacted to the resulting prejudice and discrimination. Parents' perceptions and experiences changed over time, largely because of interactions with the IRR couple. Person factors, especially personality characteristics, were key to the mothers' personal development within the parent-adult child relationship. Concerted growth in families working to integrate IRR couples can lead to large scale, positive social change through intergroup contact.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Demographic Questions

1. In order for me to understand you and your family, can you tell me a little

about yourself?

Prompts: How old are you? What is your gender? What is your race?

What is your level of education? What is your occupation? Where were

you born? In what state do you reside currently? What is your marital

status? If married, how long have you been married? How many children

do you have? What are their ages? How old is your child that is involved

in the intermarriage? If you have children living at home, what are their

ages?

Interview Question

What are the lived experiences of parents as they adapt to their adult child's Black-

White intergroup marriage? (Person)

1. Please tell me about your current relationship with your son/daughter.

Prompts: How close do you feel the two of you are? What are the best

parts of your relationship? What are the parts of your relationship that you

would like to change? What do you hope never changes?

2. Can you tell me about your child's intermarriage?

Prompts: How long has your child been married? Does your child and

their husband/wife have children? Do they live close to you? How do you

feel about their proximity?

3. Can you reflect upon the relationship between you and your son/daughter since they revealed their IRR to you?

> Prompts: Has the relationship changed? In what ways is the relationship the same? In what ways is it different? Do you view your child differently now that they are married? How do you feel about your child's partner choice? What type of partner would you have chosen for him/her?

What activities and occurrences do the parents find most significant to their experience? (Process)

4. How did your son/daughter tell you about their IRR relationship or intermarriage?

> Prompts: How did you feel at the time? What did you say at the time? How did you feel upon reflection? Do you wish you could change anything about the moment?

5. What experiences can you tell me about involving the intermarriage that significantly impacted you?

> Prompts: (Wedding, grandchildren, moving far away) Who were the people involved? What about that situation had the greatest effect on your relationship with your child? What had the greatest impact on you as a person outside of your role as a parent?

What are the parents' perceptions of the societal reactions concerning their child's intergroup marriage? (Context)

6. How did friends and family react when you told them about your son's/daughter's IRR?

Prompts: How did you feel about the person when they voiced their opinion? How did you feel about your child in that moment? How did you feel about yourself and your reaction to the situation that your child put you in?

7. What types of comments and questions have you received regarding your son's/daughter's IRR and how did you respond?

Prompts: Can you tell me about a comment that was surprising? Disheartening? Uplifting or supportive? Was there a comment that reflected exactly how you felt in the moment? What was that comment and how did you respond?

How do the perceptions and experiences of the parents change as their child's intermarriage progresses? (Time)

8. Now that your child has been interracially involved for three years or more, how has the relationship between you, your child, and their significant other developed?

Prompts: What are some changes within your family that occurred because of the IRR? Which family relationships have been affected the most? If other family relationships were significantly changed, how have you been affected by those relationship changes?

9. Considering the current state of the relationship between you and your child, how was your life and your parent-child relationship affected overall by your child's intermarriage?

> Prompts: What advice would you give to other parents who are dealing with intermarriages in their own family? What information do you wish you had that might have made the experience easier for you, your family, or your child? What elements in your life made the situation more difficult? What do you hope to see for your child in 5 years? In 15 years? Where do you and the rest of the family fit into that picture? How do societal reactions affect this outlook?

Appendix B: Inclusion Questions

1. Do you have an adult son or adult daughter involved in a heterosexual Black-White

interracial romantic relationship or a heterosexual Black-White interracial marriage?

2. Has your son's/daughter's heterosexual Black-White interracial romantic relationship

or interracial marriage lasted longer than 3 years?

3. Were you born in the United States?

4. Do you currently reside in the United States?

5. Do you have access to Zoom?

Appendix C: Mental Health and Counseling Resources

Crisis Text Line – This is an anonymous, free counseling service. Text 741741 and message "Start" to begin a conversation with trained intervention counselors (Crisis Text Line, n.d.).

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) – This national network connects people in crisis to those professionals who can assist in critical times of need. The organization's aim is to provide resources and prevent suicide through intervention.

The Samaritan's Crisis Hotline at 1-212-673-3000 provides confidential services at no cost from trained professionals around the clock to those who need emotional guidance and support or ongoing intervention during difficult experiences.

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

Study Seeks Parents with an Adult Child Involved in a Black-White Interracial Romantic Relationship/Marriage
45-minute interview - $20 gift card

There is a new study called *"A Qualitative Exploration of Parents' Perceptions of and Reactions to Their Child's Intergroup Marriage"* that could help parents and families in similar situations by providing information to therapists. To participate in this study, you are invited to answer some questions about how you feel about your adult child's interracial marriage and how it has affected you, your family, and your relationship with your child.

This interview is completely voluntary and is part of the doctoral study for Theresa Aikens, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during August 2020.

About the study:
- One 45-minute Zoom interview that will be audio recorded
- 10-minute member check
- You would receive a $20 Target gift card as a thank you
- To protect your privacy, the published study would use fake names

Volunteers must meet these requirements:
- English speaking
- Have an adult son or adult daughter involved in a heterosexual Black-White interracial romantic relationship/marriage that has lasted longer than 3 years
- Born and currently live in the U.S.
- Have access to Zoom for the interview

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approved: (07-29-20-0668805)