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The Lived Experience of La Raza's Membership in Lowrider Car Clubs: A Phenomenological Study

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Elizabeth G. Ramos

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Walden University
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Abstract

The Lived Experience of La Raza's Membership in Lowrider Car Clubs: A Phenomenological Study

By

Elizabeth G. Ramos

MS, University of La Verne, 2000

BS, William Woods University, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Lowriding is a cultural practice that has become a way of life among some Raza or individuals of Mexican descent. However, the literature lacks an understanding of these individuals and what has influenced their participation in car clubs. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experience of Raza, who are members of lowrider car clubs. The theoretical frameworks were Erikson's identity development theory, social identity theory, and Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. These guided this qualitative study to answer the following research questions: How Raza described their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club and how being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine men and four women of Mexican descent, who have been members of a lowrider car club for at least five years. Five themes (familia, pride, giving back/community, respect, and comradery) were identified and found to resonate with cultural values associated with Raza. In-depth descriptions highlighted the essence of lowriding among Raza. Findings demonstrated similarities and differences in terms of clubs, geographical location, and gender. Lived experience helped dispel misconceptions about lowriders and validated their accomplishments. Implications include increased acceptance of cultural differences within and between car clubs, drawing positive attention to members of lowrider car clubs, adding to psychology literature on Raza in lowrider car clubs, and aiding clinicians working with Raza leading to positive social change.

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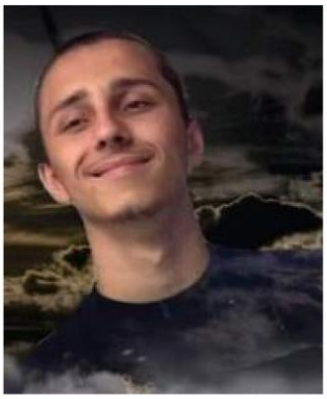
Dedication

This dissertation is, first and foremost, dedicated to my father. He has been my rock, my inspiration, and my hero. Since I can remember, he has always emphasized the importance of education and not being another negative statistic. While I may have taken the long way to the finish line, it has primarily been with him in my thoughts and in my heart that has pushed me to see this study and my education to its completion. It is also due to his continued encouragement to think outside the box that I decided to embark on this study, which was different from that of most of my cohort. But it was important to me to explore a familiar concept I came to understand while working at a psychiatric hospital – the importance of a healthy social support system to prevent or minimize the adverse effects of mental health problems.

I also want to share this dedication with two special people that passed away unexpectedly during the course of this study. The first is Johnathon Mendez. While I did not know this young man personally, he was family to one of the car clubs – son, godson, nephew, etc. Learnind about his passing presented an opportunity for me to see how the lowrider community rallies together in support of each other – through fundraisers and supportive gestures. I witnessed a caravan of lowriders that escorted family and friends to the cemetery. But even before this tragic circumstance, I was also able to see how family becomes an integral part of a lowrider's pursuits – from their car to how they utilize that platform to express themselves (values, practices, and pride). The second is Angel Serralta, a co-founder of Suavesitos Car Club. He was warm, inviting, and curious about my study. During a time when I thought my gender would become a barrier to moving

forward, he expressed his appreciation for, not only inquiring about lowriders, but for highlighting the positive impressions they have on both the lowrider community and the general public. He was more than excited to tell me about his experiences. He and his club were a tremendous help in motivating me to keep going and connecting with other clubs. What struck me more about this man was all he did to help others, motivate them, and guide them when they straddled the pressures of inner-city life..



Johnathon Mendez

Jul 19, 2001 – Dec 18, 2018

Angel E. Serralta

July 30, 1957 – June 22, 2019

Acknowledgement

Before I recognize all the clubs that helped me complete this study, I have to acknowledge the two individuals that inspired me to undergo this venture. The first is my uncle Jose Gaeta. While he was not thrilled about my idea for this study, he is the one that introduced me to lowriding and the first on in my family to go to graduate school. He has always stressed the importance of an education and knowing your history. The second is Ismael Mendez, who took me to my first Lowrider Super Show – over 30 years ago. His enthusiasm and dedication to this culture and lifestyle have always encouraged me to learn more and experience more of it. I've always had a curiosity to understand people, all people. This study not only gave me an opportunity to learn more about my own culture, but more about who lowriders are, why they chose this lifestyle, and to better understand their story, so that I can share it with others. I also could not have completed this study without the steadfast help and encouragement from Ruben Zavala – my information technology (IT) consultant and close friend. Knowing how important this was to me, he never hesitated to explain, educate, and support me every step of the way.

The following clubs all expressed a willingness to help, but due to COVID-19 and other unforeseen circumstances, they were not able to participate: USO, San Jose; Impalas, San Jose; Pharaohs, Riverside; Frisco's Finest, San Francisco; Groupe, Riverside; Amigos, San Diego; Vintage Ladies, Los Angeles; Individuals, San Diego; Ranflitas, Milwaukee; Viejitos, San Diego; Viejitos, Orange County; Techniques, Los Angeles; and Highclass, Los Angeles.

The clubs that made themselves available, who's members were incredibly inviting and helpful, and were open to be interviewed or to consult are as follows: Suavesitos, Riverside; Temptation, Orange County; New Mexico OG Veteranas, Española, NM; Groupe, E. LA & North (San Diego) County; Revolution, Imperial Valley; Members Only, North San Diego County; G-Cana, Inland Empire; Bajito, Inland Empire; Califas, San Francisco/Bay Area; Ranflitas, Mecca, CA; Impalas, San Diego; and Obsession, Atlanta, GA. The individuals that I interviewed were incredibly gracious and I think equally curious about what I would learn from this study. I look forward to sharing my results with them and working with them again to continue and expand my research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Despite experiences of legal injustices, exploitation, and discrimination, Chicana/os, also known as *La Raza*, have still been able to persevere by working together as communities (Acuña, 1981; Alaniz & Cornish, 2008; Almaguer, 1971, 2009; Duncombe, 2002; Palomares, 1971). One aspect of Raza's history that overlaps with psychology, and exemplifies resilience and *rasquachismo*, is the practice of *lowriding*. Lowriding is the practice of designing, building, and maintaining of customized lowrider cars, trucks, vans, and bicycles (Best, 2006; Lowrider Network, 2002a; Tatum, 2011). Ybarra-Frausto (1991) defined rasquachismo as praxis and an attitude of resourcefulness and adaptability, by Raza, that demonstrates the tenacity and desire to be the best they could with what they had. Lowriding is the product of creativity and flexibility which involves using what others discard or adapting to meet certain needs. Customization sometimes included blending parts from other cars or even other machines (Padilla, 1999; Tatum, 2011).

Raza started out by customizing cheap and large family-sized cars. They shared these cars with multiple families living in their *barrio* or *colonia*, Spanish-language terms used to describe relatively small-sized neighborhoods that were often densely populated by Raza (Alaniz & Cornish, 2008; Penland, 2003; Valdés, 2000; Villa, 2000). These impoverished, yet overpriced, barrios were an example of the ongoing exploitation Raza experienced (Acuña, 1981, 1995). For many, sharing a car was done out of necessity. Many families could not afford a used car, let alone a new car; therefore, they often had

to share. Public transportation was also not often a viable option because of their limited routes. Today, lowriding is known for the unconventional and innovative transformations of modern or old cars, trucks, vans, or bikes into living pieces of art that continue to evolve (Padilla, 1999; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011; Zaragoza, 2015b).

Small and large publications in metropolitan cities across the United States publish articles about lowriders. However, these articles most often focus on the cars or organizations associated with them, rather than the people behind the cars. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. Zavala (2013) defined the term Raza as a hypernym for all people of Latin American origin or *mestizos.* Mestizos are individuals of mixed race produced via the colonization of the indigenous people of Latin America (Almaguer, 1971; Comas-Diaz, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the term Raza was more narrowly defined as individuals of Mexican descent, born in the United States. Such terms are included in the definition section of this chapter.

Raza are often part of generalized studies that identify their participants as Latinos/Hispanics, a broader term that encompasses most Spanish-speaking individuals. By targeting Raza specifically, this study will explain protective factors lowriding affords this cultural subgroup. It will also focus on Raza's pride in community and unity. By exploring lived experiences of Raza's membership in lowrider car clubs, this study may demonstrate the strength, pride, commitment, and creativity these individuals have shown for their culture and identity. Social implications of this study may be derived by presenting both the struggle of Raza and the progress they achieved through their

membership in lowrider car clubs. Scholars and clinicians can better understand the meaning lowriding has for Raza, furthering their cultural competency. A phenomenological study that explores the lived experience of Raza who are members of a lowrider car club is needed to clarify erroneous generalizations that they are criminals and/or gang members. It may also demonstrate the positive impact lowriding has had on the Chicano community. Study outcomes may result in continued support and participation in car clubs, as a means of establishing *social capital* or connections between people and organizations, maintaining a connection to culture and heritage, and reinforcing an acculturative process rather than an imposed assimilation propagated by the dominant or mainstream culture.

Chapter 1 contains the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions and hypotheses. It also includes a discussion of a theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and a summary

Background

Historical

This section includes a synopsis of the role Raza's history and American politics has played in the evolution of lowrider culture and a review of events that changed lowriding. This phenomenon continues to be purported as a source of cultural resistance, passion, and self-expression for all who participate in it (Fregoso, 1980; Padilla, 1999; Tatum, 2011; Usner, 2016).

Roots of Lowriding

Lowriding as a hobby, trade, and lifestyle began making its presence in the 1940s (Miner, 2014; Penland, 2003). Its place of origin continues to be debated. Some believe lowriding first emerged in Los Angeles, California (Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011), while others believe it was in Española, New Mexico (Miner, 2014; Usner, 2016) or in the border towns of El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico (Arredondo, 2016; Boyle, 2016). World War II (WWII) created a booming economy and gave rise to new opportunities. In the years following the war, Raza returned from their wartime deployments with minimal education (Miner, 2014; Penland, 2003), limiting them to low-paying jobs in agriculture, industry, or railroad (Acuña, 1981). Purchasing a car meant looking at older and bigger models that often were in need of work. While White youth were racing hot-rods, Raza's pursuit for the American dream began with owning a vehicle (Best, 2006; Frost, 2002; Padilla, 1999). As they struggled to help their families make money, Raza began organizing collaboratives (Acuña, 1981; Alaniz & Cornish, 2008; Tatum, 2011). Whether they started off as extensions of one's family or social outlet for youth, lowrider car clubs began to appear.

Figure 1

Rustic 1948 Chevry Bomb: El Veterano

Early Conflicts: 1940s and 1950s

The practice of lowering cars and crafting them to display unique qualities and capabilities burgeoned in response to sociopolitical clashes in East Los Angeles and neighboring communities across California and the country (Lowrider Network, 2002a; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). These conflicts included two major incidents in 1943 which inflamed negative stereotypes of gang violence among Raza youth or pachucos (McWilliams, 2016; Sanchez, 1943). The first was at the end of the Sleepy Lagoon case that resulted in the conviction of 17 young men, portrayed by the media as gangsters and killers (McWilliams, 2016; Mazón, 1984; Salomon, 2003). The second was the Zoot Suit riots. Salomon (2003) dubbed these the sailor riots because they were instigated by and perpetrated by hundreds of white sailors and servicemen across the southern California coast, some of which were days from deployment and feared no consequences. What started as a fight between some Raza and a few sailors turned into nearly 10 days of

seeking out Raza, forcing them to take their clothes off, and beating them (McWilliams, 2016; Mazón, 1984; Salomon, 2003).

The 1950s were an era continued racial tensions between lowriders and law enforcement. Due to war-time economic opportunities, Raza was better able to customize their lowriders (Lowrider Network, 2002b). Lowriders were visible in larger numbers, meeting at local hang-outs, cruising the boulevards, and attending community events, resulting in the media describing individuals as gang members intruding into otherwise peaceful neighborhoods (Salomon, 2003; Tatum, 2011). They were accused of instigating violence, destruction of pavements, and disrupting traffic (Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011).

In 1959, in an effort to limit cruising by lowriders, California introduced vehicle code §24008, which limited how low a car could sit (CVC, 1959; Lowrider Network, 2002c). Raza, demonstrating their rasquachismo, developed hydraulics using discarded plane parts and the skills acquired during WWII. This innovation allowed them to cruise low, while still making their cars appear street legal when the police were present (Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011)

Call for Unity During the 1960s

After decades of not responding to aggressions against La Raza, political protests united Raza to create positive social change. The limited options for better housing, barriers to education, and narrowed opportunities for higher paying jobs left Raza laborers and youth feeling defeated. La Raza continued to organize to address these disparities. The Chicano Movement was one such effort, and it worked in solidarity with other Latino/Hispanic, Native American, Asian American, and African American civil

rights groups and farm workers' movements. Together, these groups struggled to acknowledge the contributions minority groups made in agriculture, industry, and the military (Acuña, 1981; Almaguer, 1971, 2009; Martinez, 1991). This tumultuous time also saw the first in a series of restrictions on cruising, as well as strict regulations on car shows, in Los Angeles and across the southwestern states (Best, 2006; Penland, 2003). Many who came together over issues such as the war in Vietnam and ongoing civil rights violations, also united to keep lowriding alive (Alba Cutler, 2009; Martinez, 1991; Penland, 2003).

The 1970s

With the advent of the media, lowriding began gaining more attention. In 1974, NBC aired a sitcom that featured a lowrider (*Gypsy Rose*) in its introduction (Frost, 2002; Lowrider Network, 2002a; Simpson, 2015). This lowrider has since been included in the National Historic Vehicle Register, maintained in the Library of Congress. In 1977, Lowrider Magazine sparked a new conversation about lowriders that continues to flourish today (Lowrider Network, 2002a; Lowrider Network, 2011). The 1978 movie, *Up in Smoke*, debuted a rasquache-looking lowrider (Tatum, 2011). However, it also negatively characterized the owner. In contrast, *Boulevard Nights* is a less known movie, but provided a more accurate depiction of a lowrider car and the struggles experienced in the barrio. Yet, this 1979 film was considered to be a form of exploitation in a society that was in the business of making Raza into an economic commodity (LoBianco, 2016; Tatum, 2011). Both movies continue to impact rules and bylaws of lowrider car clubs today.

New Generation of Lowriders

In the late 1970s and early 80s, lowriders began making greater strides in crossing racial lines. While lowriding had long been associated with La Raza, lowriding culture was also represented in the African American community and spreading throughout other ethnic groups and countries (Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). This growth became most evident as lowriders began being featured in music videos (Frost, 2002; Kercher, 2015; Penland, 2003). Lowriding also began to openly recognize women as more than sexual objects or symbols of lowriding (Chavez, 2013; Tatum, 2011; Sandoval, 2003). In 1990, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History acquired *Dave's Dream*, a lowrider from New Mexico with a significant legacy (Boyle, 2016; Frost, 2002). As a result of cars like *Gypsy Rose* and *Dave's Dream*, museums began displaying lowriders and their history (Penland, 2003; Usner, 2016).

In 1992, because of the dangers of car-jacking and gang violence, lowrider car club members reached out to car clubs nationwide to safeguard car shows and community events so that they could continue (Lowrider Network, 2002d, 2002e; Penland, 2003; Zaragoza, 2015b). The notoriety of longstanding lowrider car clubs, as well as the introduction of new members, continued to flourish as a result of their solidarity (Penland, 2003). Despite the protests and barriers Raza experienced, being banned from mainstream car shows, and restrictions on cruising, interest in lowriding continued through the 1990s.

Cruising, car shows, and hanging out at the park were revitalized by music labels that are associated with lowriding. Thump Records offered popular titles in genres like

freestyle and hip hop (Olson, 1999; Tatum, 2011) and Art LaBoe created compilations such as *Oldies but Goodies* (Kirsch, 1974). The Internet helped lowriders gain national and international acclaim (Kercher, 2015; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). Being in a lowrider car club has, for many, become a family tradition (Aguilar, 2014; Lowrider Network, 2002a). What has remained consistent is the expression of self, community, and culture within each lowrider (LaBelle, 2008; Miner, 2014).

Research Studies

Studies about lowrider culture have been conducted by anthropologists (Bright, 1994; Chappell, 2010; Plascencia, 1983) and sociologists (Chavez, 2013), but a review of the literature did not yield studies from a psychology discipline. Bright (1994) and Sandoval (2003) examined how lowriding practices have impacted the development of Raza's group identity. Chappell (2010) researched how lowriders interact with their environment and the political pressures they continuously experience. Chavez (2013) studied how Raza's masculinity is both symbolic of and represented in lowriding. The role of art in lowriding culture has been explored regarding the aesthetics, mechanical ingenuity, and cultural symbolism (Calvo, 2011; Usner, 2016; Zaragoza, 2015c).

Books have been written that focus on the history of lowriding (Best, 2006; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011; Usner, 2016). Best and Usner discussed interviews conducted with lowriders – but provide limited insight into the individuals themselves. While these books explored why many became involved and remain involved in lowriding, it is usually in the context of how lowriding has evolved and how the lowriding community has responded. Best focused her review of this phenomenon in San

Jose, CA. While both Usner (2016) and Padilla (1999) examined lowriding in New Mexico, Padilla provided a more personal account of their experiences.

Countless newspaper, magazine, and internet articles are written every year, ranging in topic from lowriding as an art form to the sensational super shows and from lowriding history to the various ways the media portrays this experience (Gold, 2016; O'Brien, 2015; Patton, 2015; Vega, 2001). Articles about museum exhibits featuring lowriders continue to amass (Boyle, 2016; Frost, 2002; Gomez, 2016; Simpson, 2015). LaBelle (2008), an artist, explained how lowriding could be both an artistic expression and an extension of the self, reinforcing the views that lowriding has been both a form of cultural resistance and a means of expressing pride. Lowrider Magazine has produced a series of videos showcasing individuals they consider to be *roll models* for this subculture (Ray, 2016). It proposes to "expose the true beauty of the personalities behind lowriding" (para. 2) and demonstrate that lowriding is not a reflection of gang life but rather a lifestyle shared by professionals and hard-working individuals (Ray, 2016). Zaragoza wrote a series of articles, in 2015, featuring various aspect of lowriding life, such as the people, aesthetics, technology, and how lowrider car clubs have become family to its members and community. What the scholarly literature lacks is an understanding of the people behind the lowrider cars; the people that represent lowrider car clubs across the country. This study will fill a gap in the literature by providing a unique perspective of Raza who continue to carry on the lifestyle of lowriding and what their lived experiences mean to them. Findings will also offer insights into the perceptions and meanings that reinforce their identity and cultural pride

Problem Statement

Lowrider car clubs and the people the carry on this phenomenon have impacted communities across the US, as well as internationally. They have also influenced trends in the media, technology, and popular books (Best, 2006; López Pulido & Reyes, 2017; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). Previous studies have explored conflicts between the social and cultural perception of Raza as lowriders (Chavez, 2013), its impact on pop culture (Bright, 1994; Sandoval, 2003), the role of art in the practice of creating lowriders (Calvo, 2011), and the aesthetics of lowriding within Raza's culture (Gradilla, 2016; Sanchez, 2017). However, what continues to be missing in the research is the cognitive and emotional aspects of lowriding which can be examined via the lived experience of Raza who participate in lowrider car clubs and the meaning it holds for them. Questions regarding why, when, and how one decides to be part of such an enclave can be answered using a phenomenological approach. This is the literature gap I will fill.

Books (Best, 2006; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011) and articles (Bright, 1997; Rifkin, 1996; Stone, 1990) written about lowriders were reviewed to gain a general overview of the history, politics, and mechanics of this subculture. Lowriding has changed over the past decades. Media outlets such as Lowrider Magazine and the Internet have reached new audiences and moved lowriding from disadvantaged or plebeian communities to mainstream communities across the world. Olson (1999) also said music labels, like Thump Records, helped rebrand music by networking with lowrider car shows and associated partners.

For a multitude of reasons, many unfounded, lowriders were associated with gang violence and drug involvement by law enforcement and mainstream American media (Best, 2006; Lowrider Network, 2002a; Plascencia, 1983). These negative views may have negatively contributed to the well-being of la Raza. *Lowrider Magazine* reported that the lowrider tradition was born in East Los Angeles out of a need to survive oppressive forces, pressures to acculturate and relinquish their culture, and poverty (Lowrider Network, 2002a). Being a member of a lowrider car club has, for many, become a family tradition (Aguilar, 2014), such as with Jesse Valadez Sr. and Jr who owned *Gypsy Rose.* Maintaining this tradition allows the expression of self, community, and culture (Aguilar, 2014; Madriaga, 2014). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. By examining their lived experiences as members of a lowrider car club, this study may provide insights into what keeps this lifestyle alive and growing.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car club. Gaining phenomenological data from Raza who are members of a lowrider car club may help demonstrate how participation in a *homophilous* social network has served as a protective factor against stigma and psychosocial stressors (Ayón & Ghosn Naddy, 2013; Denner et al., 2001; Silver, 2015; Wutich et al., 2014). For a multitude of reasons, many unfounded, lowriders – also known as cruisers – were portrayed by law enforcement and mainstream U.S. media as being associated with gang violence and drug involvement (Best, 2006; Lowrider

Network, 2002a; Plascencia, 1983). Salomon (2003) described a fallacy engendered in the early 1940s by law enforcement which may have contributed to these misconceptions. Salomon said that it was believed that Raza were genetically predisposed to violence because of their ancestors, the Aztecs and Mayans. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, cruisers were indiscriminately targeted by police simply for being in the vicinity of Raza who were protesting (Penland, 2003). The National Council of La Raza reviewed several studies that demonstrated how the media portrayed Latinos as criminals, poor, uneducated, and/or lazy (see Navarrete & Kamasaki, 1994). These views may have negatively contributed to the well-being of la Raza, especially adolescents who were negotiating difficult challenges in life and developing their own identity. Hispanic teens continue to have high levels of mental health issues and substance abuse (CDC, 2010). It is reported that Latinos of Mexican heritage make-up the largest Latino subgroup in the United States (U.S. Census, 2010) and Raza were found to be at greater risk of manifesting a psychiatric disturbance (Alegria et al., 2007).

Survival for Raza has meant dealing with poverty, lack of acceptance into mainstream society, and pressures to assimilate and relinquish their culture (Acuña, 1981, 1995; Alaniz & Cornish, 2008; McWilliams, 2016; Salomon 2003). Within the lowriding community, the craft and lifestyle have been a way for Raza to endure these struggles (Lowrider Network, 2002a; Padilla, 1999). Rifkin (1996) said that Raza have demonstrated an inimitable drive to be unique that is different than mainstream U.S.A. and in some respects, different from *Mexicanos* born in Mexico. Locke (1998) said that Mexican Americans are likely to associate the cause of illness with external factors –

rather than intrapsychic distress. Sue and Sue (2008) discussed the importance of bridging both internal and external experiences to mediate the onset of severe mental health issues. Gaining personal insights into the lived experience of Raza's membership in lowrider car clubs may offer clinicians a better understanding of what the lowrider culture represents to la Raza.

This study may also provide insights into how building social capital within Raza who are members of a lowrider car club has enabled this marginalized community to preserve and express their values and cultural traditions, despite pressures to assimilate into mainstream society. What the literature lacks is an understanding of the people behind lowrider cars and represent lowrider car clubs across the country. Best (2006) reported that while lowriding has become more of a middle-class phenomenon, the fundamental need to belong and feel a sense of freedom from external pressure still exists and is paramount in terms of how identity is developed. Mower (2015) said group participation impacts the development of self-concept and attitudes towards self and others. This study aims to understand the lived experience of lowriders and how they have impacted their identity. The literature review in Chapter 2 includes information regarding values and cultural norms within Chicano psychology, as well as those known about Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs

Research Questions

The Chicano Movimiento influenced many lowriders to embrace their identity as Raza and incorporate that into their practices and designs (Calvo, 2011; Penland, 2003; Sandoval, 2003). The purpose of this inquiry is to explore the lived experience of Raza

who are members of lowrider car clubs. The research questions in this study are as follows:

RQ1: How do Raza describe their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club?

RQ2: How has being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza?

Answers to these questions may also help provide insights into the meaning and perceptions of Raza who are members of a lowrider car club. This study may help offer new perspectives on the culture, identity development, and group dynamics which may explain what keeps this lifestyle alive and growing, further adding to the knowledge base of both Chicano psychology and clinical psychology.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks for this study were Erickson's identity development theory, social identity theory, and Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. Erikson's theory of human development involves the concepts of enculturation and acculturation. The social identity theory involves the concepts of group think and social capital, while Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory involves the idea that collectivistic subcultures hold core values such as harmony and fidelity. These theories guide the study which explore the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. Research questions reflect the scope of the study. The propositions of the chosen theories are given below, but will also be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Erikson's Theory of Human Development

Erikson's View on Identity Formation

Erikson (1968; 1978) described eight stages of human development. Each stage has a corresponding crisis or internal conflict that must be successfully resolved to avoid psychological distress or confusion, which can follow the individual and impact successive stages. This study has a focus on the fifth and sixth stage spanning adolescence and early adulthood, as they are more closely related to the formation of identity. Erikson (1980) described the fifth stage (Identity vs. Identity Confusion) as a period of life during which adolescents lets go of their childhood and transition into adulthood. During this process, they may look towards a parent, friend, or a hero to explore and emulate. A complete absence or failure to complete this process may result in identity diffusion or a rejection of most, if not all, roles that may have been suggested or expected by family, culture, or society.

Whether or not an individual is able to develop their enduring identity is then the crisis experienced during the fifth stage of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1980). During this stage, the individual may begin with creating a sense of sameness with others and then moves towards determining his or her own individuality (Erikson, 1980). Erikson (1980) described identity as the pinnacle of human development as one's true self emerges going into adulthood. The greatest significance of this stage is likely the individual's ability to tie together their different experiences, lessons, and perceptions of how others view them, as well as how they view themselves within the world around them.

Erikson (1968; 1978) said individuals seek out intimacy or the closeness of a committed relationship with others during the sixth stage (Intimacy vs. Isolation). While this may include romantic relationships, it is not limited to them. Intimacy is then more about a person's relatability or ability to successfully connect with others. Erikson (1980) explained that a well-developed sense of intimacy can produce healthy friendships, effective leaders, and a capacity to mediate conflict. These are all qualities that are often endorsed by group or club memberships like those in a lowrider car culture. Club participation may sometimes become a surrogate for family relationships. For Raza who are experiencing acculturative stress and/or negotiating ethnic identity, group membership can also provide them with the support needed to establish a sense of self, as well as a sense of belonging through meaningful relationships (Marquez et al., 2016; Mulvaney-Day et al., 2007; Patrón & Garcia, 2016).

Development of a Lowriding Identity

For Raza who are members of a lowrider car club, the process by which they embrace their ethnic, social identity, and self-concept, is likely supported by their positive interactions with other Raza who are members of a lowrider car club, adding to their sense of belonging (López Pulido & Reyes, 2017; Sandoval, 2014). Raza have historically been branded with negative stereotypes (Almaguer, 1971); however, lowrider car clubs have provided this marginalized group with an opportunity to demonstrate that they are competent, skilled, tenacious, and resilient and not lazy, gangsters, or criminals (Aguilar, 2014; Best, 2006; Madriaga, 2014; Tatum, 2011). As adolescents, Raza begin to internalize these negative attributions, which may result in the rejection of what they

believes defines them. This may include heritage, physical characteristics, language, and belief systems that would otherwise characterize their identity. In adulthood, it can adversely impact their ability to establish meaningful relationships. Members of a lowrider car club can be afforded the support they need to develop a sense of pride in self, culture, and sexual orientation, as well as belonging. Lowrider car clubs also tend to espouse a sense of familismo within chapters and clubs. For example, while driving to a car show, a lowrider may see another lowrider pulled over with mechanical problems. They will often stop and offer their help, despite being part of a different car club (personal communication, September 8, 2018). Lowrider car clubs also encourage their members to include their children and/or spouses in their quest to customize their *ride*. This allows the lowrider to share personal insights, skills, and cultural values, thus passing on their heritage and pride.

Social Identity Theory

Principles of the Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner (1979) developed the social identity theory out of a desire to explain intergroup dynamics that they were observing during a critical time in Europe's history. The theory also differentiates intergroup from interpersonal behavior, such as how Raza unites in solidarity with other minorities to empower and support each other rather than competing fighting between clubs (Brown, 2000). Individuals have both a personal identity comprised of the various characteristics and a social identity. Social identity is derived from the process of self-categorization or associations with different groups, which in turn provides a sense of significance and meaning (Tajfel & Turner,

1979). Self-categorization, therefore, contributes to self-esteem, self-concept, and sense of pride through shared activities, communication, and attitudes (Haslam et al., 2009).

Social Identity of Lowriders

Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs may identify or self-categorize themselves based on their social status (e.g., coming from the barrio), peer groups, and/or affinity with cars. What lowrider car clubs then mean to them helps determine their social identity. In line with with social identity theory, Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs develop shared sets of beliefs, values, practices, and goals (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In-group versus out-group dynamics can lead to negative stereotypes and attitudes as members of a group will highlight their own positive attributes and achievements while generalizing negative or less desirable qualities to those outside their own collective groups.

Growing up around lowriders, one of the common themes I would hear about was the idea of brotherhood/sisterhood and working together for la Raza or the Chicano community. Raza have faced decades of oppression and out-group attitudes (Ahadi & Puente-Díaz, 2011; Alaniz & Cornish, 2008; Plascencia, 1983). Lowrider car clubs appear to use group dynamics in a positive and constructive manner by competing, innovating, and participating in community enhancements (Lowrider Network, 2002d; Penland, 2003). They collaborate on social activities such as fundraisers and car shows. They support each other in times of need, such as illness, death, or mechanical breakdowns, and to celebrate milestones.

Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture Theory

Individualism versus Collectivism

One of Hofstede's six cultural dimensions is individualism versus collectivism. Individualistic cultures promote personal gains over group achievements and loyalties are cursory (Hofstede, 2001). Collectivistic cultures, however, hold core values such as harmony and fidelity within groups. Collectivism is also characteristic of a willingness to subordinate one's self for the greater good of the group. These collectivistic values are strongly associated with the Latino community, la Raza being included amongst Latinos as a whole (Holleran & Waller, 2003; Rinderle & Montoya, 2008). Hofstede (2001) also said that cultural groups share similarities in terms of personality, values, and behaviors. Generations of lowriders have helped retain Raza's culture, language, values, and art. Raza lowriders have long been examples of group collaboration, loyalty, and conformity, which have historically been strong Mexican values and continue to resonate amongst communities and enclaves of Raza (Lowrider Network, 2002a; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011).

Collectivism and Resilience

Triandis (1995) described collectivism as the surrendering or minimizing of one's personal interest for that of a collective or group. A core value for Raza has been familism or the sense of familial obligation, which often extends beyond the nuclear family (Marin & Marin, 1991; Sabogal et al., 1987). Holleran and Waller (2003) said that a protective factor against the degree to which Mexican Americans adolescents living in the borderlands perceived life challenges was their identification with cultural values and

beliefs commonly associated with Raza living along the Mexican and U.S. border. Consoli and Llamas (2013) said strong cultural values associated with personal identity served as protective factors. They also suggested that more research should be done to better understand how cultural values serve as protective factors to improve resilience or Raza's ability to cope with adversity in life. Navarro et al. (2014) said life satisfaction among Mexican-American college students was positively related with heritage and cultural retention, meaning the greater the degree to which college students embraced their culture and identity, the better they felt about themselves. Ahadi and Puente-Diaz (2011) said personality factors such as extraversion were directly related to psychological adjustment or their ability to effectively manage distress. Lowriding is an art form that allows Raza to express their personal identities while also showcasing their cultures and clubs.

The research questions for this study are: How do Raza describe their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club? and How has being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza? The research questions were selected to elicit information and glean the essence of Raza's lived experience, perceptions, meanings, and attitudes about being a member of a lowrider car club. A phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study because the purpose is to gain a better understanding through commonalities expressed by participants (Creswell, 2013).

Nature of the Study

Qualitative Design

This study involved the qualitative method using a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. Creswell (2013, 2014) said using a phenomenological approach is appropriate when there is a dearth of information in the literature. Little is known about the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. Using this approach will allow for an inquiry into meanings associated with lowriding and an evaluation of common themes expressed by participants.

The target population was men and women who were of Mexican descent or Raza and active members of lowrider car clubs. The distinction of car club members is made to exclude those individuals who may simply pay others to build them a lowrider and those who may have a lowrider only as a hobby.While women have participated in car shows for decades (Penland, 2003; Zaragoza, 2015d), there have been few exlusive lowrider car clubs. During the 1970s, Lady Bug Car Club was established in Los Angeles (Bueno, 2010; Tatum, 2011), while the Ladies Pride Car Club and Specials Car Club were opening doors and empowering them to demonstrate that they too could be lowriders in San Diego (KQED Arts, 2014). These women not only cruised, they purchased and maintained their cars, as well as designed all the modifications to their cars. They held positions of leadership, not only in male-dominated lowrider culture, but also in their community (KQED Arts, 2014; Tatum, 2011). In 2004, San Diego, California, saw the

formation of yet another all-female lowrider car club, The Unique Ladies (Marks, 2013; Moran-Zejli, 2007).

Figure 2

G-Cana Style Car Club

I intended to recruit a minimum of 10 participants, as suggested by Polkinghorne (1989). Recruitment included women, as much of the literature includes studies using only male participants or feature mostly men as car owners. This study involved locations that were local or accessible to participants and can be free of interruptions when conducting interviews. Data were analyzed inductively to identify patterns in lived experiences which may yield generalizations about the population, if not the greater lowrider community. Generalizability is the ability for research findings to be applied to a broader or larger population sample (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). This means that participants' responses were reviewed and key statements or words were flagged. These flags were used to draw links between participant responses

and develop the essense of how and what participants described as their lived experiences (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Chapter 3 includes a more detailed discussion of the research method.

Definitions

Chicana or Chicano: Mexican American with a non-Anglo image of him or herself (Salazar, 1970) or a U.S.-born or long-term resident of Mexican origin (Alaniz & Cornish, 2008).

Cultural resistance: The process by which an identified group of people sharing common ideological and political views collaborate in an attempt to create community, networks, and organizational models that promote shared language, practices, and attitudes which may not align themselves with the dominant culture (Duncombe, 2002).

Homophilous: When people maintain relationships with people who are similar to themselves, as characterized by age, race, gender, religion, or profession (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010).

La Raza: This term is a hypernym for all people of Latin American origin (Acuña, 1995; Zavala, 2013), but has also been used interchangeably with the term Chicano (Alaniz & Cornish, 2008). The term may have initially been used to represent the people as many Mexican Americans struggled with identifying a name that did not invoke insults and stigma that was the zeitgeist between the 1850s and 1950s (Gutierrez, 2016). While it has been used as a generic term referring to mestizos, it is more commonly associated with political movements during the 1960s and 1970s among Chicana/os (Buriel, 2012; Palomares, 1971).

Lowrider: This term is used to identify both vehicles and people associated with lowriding. It was first used in the 1950s to describe a customized car, van, or truck that "has been lowered within inches of the ground" (Marks, 2013, para. 2). This process may be done either through rudimentary means such as cutting coil springs, adding sandbags to the trunk, or by more modern means, such as adding hydraulics (Marks, 2013; Padilla, 1999; Tatum, 2011).

Lowriding: The practice, art, designing of, and lifestyle associated with lowriders (Best, 2006).

Mestizos: Individuals of mixed race produced via the colonization of indigenous people of Latin America (Comas-Diaz, 2006).

Rasquachismo: The everyday practice, production, and understanding of a particular aesthetics code in any particular community; the ability to adaptor attune oneself by making do with whatever may be at hand (Ybarra-Frausto, 1987).

Social capital: A bond or connection between people, agencies, networks, and/or institutional collaboratives who share common norms, activities, and experiences which may promote physical, mental, and spiritual health (Denner et al., 2001; Mulvaney-Day et al., 2007).

Assumptions

In this study, it was assumed that all participants understood the expectations of the study and were engaged willingly. An outline of study guidelines and consent form were provided to each participant. It was further assumed that all participants were forthcoming in terms of their disclosures of lived experiences and truthful when sharing

thoughts and feelings about being members of lowrider car clubs. All participants were assumed to be actively engaged in lowrider car clubs and self-identified as being of Mexican descent.

Identifying assumptions was necessary to ensure safeguards were put in place for the effective planning and organizing of this study. Assumptions are also needed to protect the integrity of the study. Assuring guidelines are clearly expressed and maintained for all participants is one way to safeguard the collection and analysis of data (Brink, 1993; Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also took all precautions to minimize and eliminate bias when conducting interviews, as well as influence data outcomes.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on gaining a better understanding of the lived experiences Raza have as members of lowrider car clubs. Lowriding has been subculture within the Chicano community and has experienced, as well as created influence across the country and even the world (Kercher, 2015; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). For this study, participants were limited to male and female adults of Mexican descent, also known as Raza, who were born in the Unites States. Although African Americans have also shared a significant role in lowriding culture, it is outside the scope of this study and was not addressed. Using a phenomenological approach helped demonstrate how participation in this homophilous social network served as a protective factor against stigma and psychosocial stressors. Groups of like-minded people and ethnocentric organizations help empower and support individual who may otherwise feel disenfranchised and isolated

(Ayón & Ghosn Naddy, 2013; Denner et al., 2001; Silver, 2015; Wutich et al., 2014). Theories that were reviewed but not selected for this study include Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development, Bowen's family systems theory, object relations theory, Allport's trait theory, and acculturation theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory involves external processes and experiences from family dynamics to sociohistorical events and how they impact individuals' development as a child/adolescent and whether dysfunction or competency was a result (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). By contrast, Erickson's theory involves development as a lifelong process. Due to the emphasis placed on family within the Raza's culture, Bowen's family systems theory (1966, 2004) and object relations theory were also considered. However, they were rejected because the focus of this study is not on the relationship dynamics of club members, but rather individual lived experiences of participants. Allport's trait theory (1921, 1931) could be used as a way of describing personality traits that are representive among participants and the lowrider subculture. Personality traits are not a focus of this study but may be considered for future study. Finally, acculturation refers to the progressive change in one's culture after prolonged exposure and engagement with individuals from different cultures (Berry, 1997; Redfield et al., 1936). This theory could provide further insight into participants, and the meaning culture has within their participation in lowrider car clubs, this will be addressed further within the discussion on social identity theory in Chapter 2.

Whereas there is an abundance of literature on the history of lowriding and vehicles, the literature lacks an understanding of people behind the cars. This study was

focused on Raza aged 18 and over living in the continental Unites States. Participants were be both male and female, as previous research has focused on men. Lowriding is often considered a lifestyle and a part of the person's identity rather than a hobby (Best, 2006; Lowrider Network, 2002a; Padilla, 1999; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). Participants had at least 5 years of membership in a lowrider car club.

Delimitations that may be present will be from decisions made regarding how many and where participants reside. Data were collected through demographic forms and interviews conducted face-to-face or by phone. The more restrictive the sample size, the less likely results are transferable to other populations throughout the United States. Transferability of study findings using a phenomenological approach is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Limitations

This study involves using the phenomenological approach, and just as with quantitative research, it requires adherence to certain requirements for it to be considered sound and effective in contributing to the field of psychology. The trustworthiness of a phenomenological study is contingent on whether it can demonstrate an adequate level of rigor (Brink, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Nobel & Smith, 2015). In terms of quantitative research, this would be the extent to which validity and reliability can be assessed (Creswell, 2009; Krefting, 1991), as well as the ability to effectively identify limitations.The results of this study were limited by ethnicity and geography. This study utilized sampling that was purposive and homogenous. It limited participation to Raza who were members of lowrider car clubs rather than any ethnic group. Another limitation

involved selection of participants and where they live. Lowriding has become an international phenomenon and is undoubtedly represented across the continental U.S., as well as the world. Attempting to sample each state was not feasible for this study. Lowriding has been described as having its own geographical culture and meaning. This study contains a sample from several states ranging from California to Georgia. Selection of participants for this study limited the transferability and applicability of findings to all members of lowrider car clubs. In an attempt to facilitate transferability, detailed and compelling descriptions of participants' lived experiences were obtained. Special attention was placed on geographical differences and the significance of the lowrider networks they established.

I completed an analysis of the findings. Bracketing was utilized to reduce possible researcher bias. Bracketing incluces putting aside all personal experiences and beliefs about a phenomenon and focus on the purpose and process of the study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). By attempting to gain detailed responses without leading the participant, taking notes of the interview process, and conducting member checking to clarify interpretations (Brink, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), dependability or confirmability in the findings can also be obtained (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1989).

If scholars and clinicians have a better understanding of membership in lowrider car clubs and how it supports cultural pride, family values, and a sense of community, then they may have a better understanding of how lowriding can serve as a protective factor when coping with stressful situations. A dearth of literature about the lived

experience of members of lowrider car clubs was identified, verifying a gap in the literature. A phenomenological approach to this study, rather than a quantitative one, is appropriate as it calls for the inquiry of participants' lived experiences, their perceptions, and meaning of what it is to be members of lowrider car clubs. These insights could not be gleaned using standardized questionnaires. The techniques used to assess the trustworthiness of this study will be further detailed in Chapter 3.

Significance of the Study

The potential contributions of this study are threefold – its focus on Raza who are members of a lowrider car club, adding to psychology literature on Raza in lowrider car clubs, and its availability to clinicians working with Raza. Lowrider car clubs are one aspect of Raza's culture and a unique enclave that celebrates ethnic identity, cultural pride, and decades of struggle against sociopolitical embroilments. Chappell (2012) said lowriding as an affectivity or practice that elicits deep feeling rather than just a transient hobby or pasttime. Thoughts and feelings about Raza's lived experience as members of lowrider car clubs can be better understood when using a phenomenological approach.

Focusing on this marginalized community can also encourage the support of and empowerment needed for continued espousal of their culture despite years of being told they must abandon their culture and assimilate in order to be accepted (Ahadi & Puente-Díaz, 2011; Alaniz & Cornish, 2008; Tatum, 2011). It may help dispel misconceptions about lowriders being criminals and/or gang members. Lowriders have had to deal with negative stereotypes for decades (Aguilar, 2014; Chappell, 2012; Morris, 2014). Findings provided to members of lowrider car clubs can validate accomplishments and

acknowledge their work in their local communities. Understanding stressors and vulnerabilities in this community can also present opportunities for discussion of mental health needs within lowrider car clubs. Establishing a discourse within enclaves or social networks can create a safe place to address difficult issues and develop problem-solving skills, whether directly or indirectly (Guan & So, 2016; Marquez et al., 2016; Vega et al., 2011). This study may also support increased acceptance of cultural differences among club members and between car clubs. It is this acceptance that can help reduce violence between rival clubs and facilitate international acclaim and participation in this lifestyle (Kercher, 2015; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011).

There is much research on therapeutic approaches, both empirical and adapted, which have been shown to be effective with Raza (Benuto & O'Donohue 2015; Casas & Pytluk, 1995; Chavira et al., 2014; Dana, 1993; Mercado & Hinojosa, 2017). However, what is missing in the literature is how to address mental health needs within groups like lowrider car clubs, which are not generally made up of immigrants, do not all operate within proximity of each other, and may not fully understand mental health issues. Learning about Raza's lived experience as members of lowrider car clubs can help bridge a gap in the literature about how this social network has influenced Raza's own personal and ethnic identity, family dynamics, or connections to Raza culture. These are essential aspects of Raza's life, wellness, and collectivistic values despite their degree of acculturation. Individuals with collectivistic values interact in groups, seek a sense of belonging, and focus on preserving relationships (Cohen, 2015; Hofstede, 2001, 2011; Triandis, 2001) Understanding the role of these collectivistic values can lead to positive

social change in that it can help scholars and clinicians support Raza youth develop a stronger ethnic identity and personal sense of self (Mower, 2015; Silver, 2015), which may in turn result in less acculturative stress (Berry, 1988; Lui, 2015; Parton & Garcia, 2016). Comparisons and contrasts of themes presented by respondents to those known to be associated with Chicana/os can help clarify aspects of Chicano psychology (Padilla, 1984).

Gaining personal insights into what it means for Raza to be members of lowrider car clubs may also offer professionals a better understanding of what lowrider culture represents to Raza's communities and those engaged in them. Lowriders are not a represented population in psychology literature. While studies do focus on the importance of ethnic-based groups or organizations as a support system for Raza (Choi & Berho, 2016; Marquez et al., 2016; Moreno & Sanchez Banuelos, 2013; Patrón & Garcia, 2016), there is little known about this subculture. Understanding their lived experience may also help professionals identify what has helped these individuals cope with intra- and interpersonal conflicts which may otherwise have led to mental health problems. Professionals can also develop programs and interventions to be provided to lowrider car clubs as a whole, rather than as individuals, while fostering similar core values and beliefs. Hispanics, as a whole, continue to underutilize mental health services for a variety of reasons (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015). By spreading awareness and adapting interventions to different populations within communities represented by Raza, the service gap might be reduced.

Summary

La Raza has been subjected to a series of pulls – into this country – and pushes – out of this country and into Mexico. At times, regardless of birthplace. For many, they were, and continue to be, pushed out into a country they were grossly unfamiliar with. In the 1940s, Raza saw an opportunity for a better life – for "the American Dream," which for many has been symbolized by the car they drove. It was as if for every step they took forward, they were met with a new struggle.

Raza's culture has long been distinguished by its rasquachismo or ability to use whatever was available to address fiscal issues. The lowrider culture has become an example of this. No matter what barriers they have encountered, Raza has found a way to manage it by working together. Unity and solidarity with other minority groups, has become a prominent asset as they addressed social injustices, as well as economic hardships. Much is known about lowrider cars, car shows, and even the ingenuity that goes into designing them. However, little is known about the people behind the cars, their lived experience, perceptions, their attitudes about being in lowrider car clubs.

This phenomenological study aims to capture the essence of Raza's lived experience by interviewing individuals with at least 5 years of membership in a lowrider car club. These car clubs have become an extension of their family. This study will provide a better understanding of what lowriding means to them and how this expressive art form is symbolic of their cultural values, traditions, and identity. Findings will fill the gap in the literature by addressing women since most prior studies focused only on men. Next, outcomes can also contribute to positive social change by helping increase cultural

competency among scholars and clinicians, clarifying false generalizations that lowriders are criminals or gang members, and increasing awareness of and support for participation in car clubs as a way to empower both men and women. Finally, it is hoped that study findings will enhance understanding of how identity, culture, and social capital serve as protective factors for Raza.

In Chapter 2, I provide a more detailed review of literature search strategies, the theoretical foundation, literature review, and a summary of all major themes in the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The legacy of lowriders spans seven to eight decades and was born out of struggles with oppression and segregation (Gradante, 1982; Ides, 2009; Sanchez, 2017; Sandoval, 2003; Tatum, 2011). Since its inception, it has experienced many changes, barriers, and controversies (Penland, 2003; Plascencia, 1983; Tatum, 2011). Lowriding may have started along the borderlands with Mexico but it has since spread across the continental U.S. and around the world (Kercher, 2015; Penland, 2003; Sandoval, 2003; Tatum, 2011). Miner (2014) described Raza's history as a journey or a "movement across time and space" (p. 73) and reflected on how lowriding can also be described as a journey. Lowriding is not just about the restoration or customization of a car, but rather the process, which may last decades. For many, lowriding becomes a lifestyle, family affair, and a lifetime membership to a car club. Lowrider car clubs offer a sense of pride and empowerment (Gradilla, 2016; López Pulido & Reyes, 2017; Plascencia, 1983; Sterngold, 2000), shared culture—values, language, and attitudes (Ray &Whyner, 2014; Sandoval, 2013; Sanchez, 2017)—and brotherhood which crosses racial divides (O'Brien, 2015; Sandoval, 2013; Sanchez, 2017).

A multitude of lowrider characteristics have been examined by researchers—from the art and symbolism to the language and clothes associated with lowriding. Gradante (1982) wrote about the history, politics, and practices of the lowriding culture. Bright (1994) reported that lowriding is manifested in different locations of the U.S. and overlaps in terms of expressions of culture and sociopolitical struggles. Sandoval (2003)

described how Raza's identity has been influenced and expressed through lowriding practices and values. What remains constant is that lowriding, as a general practice and lifestyle, is a source of strength and resilience for Raza. It is an opportunity for them to display their culture, pride, creativity, work ethic, and unity (Bright, 1994; Gradante, 1982; López Pulido & Reyes, 2017). The purpose of this study is not to add to the literature on lowriding cultural expressions and practices, but rather to explore the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. First-hand accounts from participants help demonstrate how engaging in this social network has positively influenced their identity and served as a protective factor against stigma and psychosocial stressors. I also hope to gain a better understanding of what it means for Raza to remain loyal members and why negative stereotypes about lowriders are misguided and harmful.

In this chapter, I present literature search strategies, the theoretical foundation, and a literature review of key concepts. Relevant literature and media sources on lowriding history and culture among Raza were examined. A review of seminal research on identity and culture helped guide the framework of this study. The purpose of this proposed study was discussed, along with the literature and rationale for using theories. The chapter will close with conclusions and a summary of major themes in the literature, how this study fills a gap in the literature, and how it adds to the knowledge base of this discipline through lived experiences of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was initiated by search for dissertations broadly focused on lowriders using the Dissertations & Theses at Walden University and the ProQuest

Dissertations and Theses Global databases. Initial search criteria included key terms like *lowriders, low-riders, low riders, and car clubs*. While several studies were identified and reviewed, none were found within the field of psychology. I then turned to reading books written about lowrider history, art, and the people who dedicate their life towards this lifestyle.

As I gained a better understanding of the history of lowriders, I explored research on various seminal events that impacted this population. Using the Walden University Library, a search was conducted aimed at finding peer-reviewed journal articles in Academic Search Complete, Thoreau Multi-Database, PsycInfo, PsycArticles, JSTOR, ERIC, EBSCOHost, and SAGE Journals. Due to a dearth of academic information related to the lowrider subculture, the search was then expanded again, to include search engines, such as Google Scholar, and Google. Key search terms were enculturation, acculturation, assimilation, culture, Latino, Hispanic, Chicano, familismo, resilience, cultural resistance, social support, social capital, identity, social identity, collectivism, and brotherhood. These terms helped me narrow my focus and conceptualize the purpose of this study. In addition to Walden's ProQuest EBook Central and SAGE Research Methods Online, I also used my local library's Link+ system to access books and videos from other California-based universities and library branches. I traced citations in articles and books to original sources and to supporting resources. Next, I inquired about Erikson's theory of human development, social identity theory, and Hofstede's dimensions of culture theory which were the theoretical frameworks of this study.

When possible and when literature was limited, I also reached out to local authors, such as Paige R. Penland, Gloria Moran, Denise Sandoval, Barbara Zaragoza, Alberto López Pulido, and William Calvo-Quiros. Additionally, since my target population was Raza living in the continental US, I decided to seek out individuals who identified themselves as either belonging to a car club or embodying the lowrider lifestyle. Included in this process was personal communications via social media. Two primary sources were from Barcelona, Spain, and Victoria British Columbia, Canada. I have also received personal insights from members of car clubs such as Suavesitos Car Club in Riverside, Techniques Car Club in Los Angeles, Frisco's Finest in San Francisco, Impalas in San Jose, and Groupe Car Club, North County San Diego. These individuals either were not able to participate in the study or did not meet criteria to participate.

Theoretical Foundation

I was unable to find a study that examined this population from a psychological perspective. Howerver, there were several studies that demonstrated the importance of identity among members of lowrider car clubs, as determined by ethnicity, race, gender, and social class (Bright 1994; Chavez, 2013; Sandoval, 2003). The research has also shown that lowriding is not a hobby but can span across generations, and members sometimes remain active after they have stopped working on cars (López Pulido & Reyes, 2017; Padilla, 1999; Sandoval, 2014). That means that membership can evolve from working on cars with friends to becoming a family affair that includes sharing years of stories, expertise, and insights. This influenced me to look further at identity (personal and social) and cultural values like collectivism. I reviewed videos about lowriders in

Japan (Hodgkinson & Ellison, 2017) and lowriders in California (Film Lab Productions, 2012; KQED Arts, 2014; PALM, 2005). What seemed to resonate with participants was that lowriding was a form of self-expression, resistance, social identity, pride, and the importance of family.

Three theories, Erikson's identity development theory (1968), Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory (1979), and Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (2001; 2011), were used to guide this study in exploring the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. Erikson's identity development theory may both borrow from and contribute the ideas of William James (1890), George H. Mead (1934), Sheldon Stryker (1987, 2007), Marcia (1966), and Phinney (1990). It is relevant because it supports the concepts of acculturation and enculturation. Berry (1980, 1993) defined acculturation as the process by which one culture is influenced, emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively by persistent interaction or exposure to a second or additional cultures. Enculturation, by contrast, is the socialization process that happens within one's own cultural or social group (Berry, 1993; Weinreich, 2009). The social identity theory involves concepts of groupthink and social capital (Guan & So, 2016; Mulvaney-Day et al., 2007). The cultural dimensions theory by Hofstede supports the idea that collectivistic subcultures hold core values such as harmony and fidelity. While each lowrider car club tries to establish their unique characteristics, their foundation is based on specific cultural beliefs and values that Raza has handed down from generation to generation, to preserve their culture.

Erikson's Theory of Human Development

Identity Formation

Erikson (1968, 1980) reported that identity starts with the initial processes of socialization, as a child begins to learn language, values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with his or her immediate (familial & social) culture. Then, as adolescence approaches, the individual begins to negotiate what they want to keep and reject, hopefully resulting in a resolution of roles, morals, and beliefs that will follow him/her into adulthood. It is this "sameness" (Erikson, 1980, p. 94) in character that becomes associated with an individual's identity. While identity may continue to evolve with experience and environment, Erikson (1980) posited that there is a core part of one's identity that will continue into their golden years.

To answer the question of *Who am I?* one has to first consider those around him or her and how they interact, examine the roles they have assumed and those imposed on them (e.g., by agency, family, or society; Marcia, 1987), and account for both world views and how one perceived him/herself (Erikson, 1968, 1980). This process is fluid, and therefore, is continuously present throughout the lifespan – as roles and experiences change (Marcia, 2002). Because core elements of identity do remain stable, these ongoing re-examinations of identity should be welcomed and not avoided. Lowriders may experience this as they transition from adolescence – a time when lowrider cars are about girls, independence, and leisure life – to adulthood – when lowrider cars become more about family, cruising, and club life (Ides, 2009).

Identity of Lowriders

Raza have struggled with a legacy of oppression and segregation which has influenced their sense of self, pride, and how they interact with the world around them. Rifkin (1996) reported that Raza grew out of a movement to adapt to their environmental pressures and decide how much they would retain of their Mexican ancestry and how much of the mainstream culture they would embrace as their own. Raza were not born in Mexico, and they were not accepted by US-born white Americans (Ahadi & Puente-Díaz, 2011; Alaniz & Cornish, 2008; Tatum, 2011). Phinney (1990) suggested that ethnic identity formation should be viewed and described in terms of a bilateral relationship between content and process. She explained that the content of identity development includes behaviors, cultural practices, and attitudes. With lowriders, the content may include their interactions with fellow car club members, family members' involvement, and the support they receive from engaging in this lifestyle. Within the process of developing a self-identity, Phinney (1989) reported that individuals need to feel a sense of belonging in addition to a stable sense of self-concept. For Raza who are members of a lowrider car club, the process by which they embrace their ethnic and social identity or their self-concept is likely supported by their sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves and the "sameness" (Erikson, 1980, p. 94) they share with people from all walks of life.

While Phinney et al. (2001) focused her study on immigrants, the fact that Raza have had to struggle with their desire to embrace their culture (enculturate) while experiencing pressures to acculturate, if not assimilate, can lend itself to the same

struggle evidenced within immigrants. Immigrants face developing an identity that is without a country, much like Raza have experienced. Lowrider car clubs and the lifestyle they promote have provided this marginalized group with an opportunity to accept cultural practices that mainstream society may not (i.e., breakfast fundraisers with menudo and pozole or reunions at the park with piñatas, carne asada, and Mexican music). The individuals (immigrants and U.S.-born Raza) working in the fields and living in squalid housing in the barrios refused to be degraded with negative slurs and connotations of their ethnic identity, such as being called "greasers" and "wetbacks" (Acuña, 1981). They instead decided to hold on to their roots even stronger, because a person without roots has not identity.

Social Identity Theory

Formation of Social Identity

Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) posited that identity is made up of both the social and personal identity. Person identity consists of the qualities and characteristics with which one identifies, while social identity is formed by the groups with which one associates with. Therefore, the groups one identifies with help define and shape who they are – the attitudes, beliefs, and values that guide the way they relate to others and the world around them (Haslam et al., 2009). I remember an undergraduate professor asking us to introduce ourselves by a personal characteristic that the class could easily remember. I chose "Chicana with long black hair" because it clearly distinguished me from the rest of my classmates (none of which were women of color). Being a Chicana was my social identity while having long black hair was my part of my ethnic and

personal identity. But that didn't mean that I always acted or talked like a Chicana or Raza while interacting with my peers. Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) suggested that group membership helps shape how someone thinks of themselves. This is especially true for the individuals who belong to a collectivistic culture, such as Raza. This was demonstrated in Piña-Watson et al.'s (2014) description of how a sense of belonging can be empowering enough to encourage someone to adopt an alternative role to complete a task. In their study, Piña-Watson et al. found that Mexican American women in college who adopted an individualistic attitude – while at school – were able to feel a greater sense of satisfaction in their academic pursuits, without necessarily giving up their cultural identity or life back home. Raza may adopt an alternative role in a car club, without giving up all of their identity.

Ethnic Identity

Erikson (1968, 1980) explained that the psychosocial stages of development were influenced by culture and social experiences. The fifth stage addresses identity development, which includes ethnic identity or the belief and attitude that one belongs to a particular culture of heritage. This often times begins with family but may change over time as an individual explores and learns more about themselves and their heritage (Phinney, 2003; Romero & Roberts, 2003). For example, my cousin once believed he was Mexican American because that is the social group he was most exposed to at school and he knew his father spoke Spanish. I later corrected him and explained that while he was Latino, he was not of Mexican descent, but rather of Salvadoran heritage. Tajfel and Turner (1986) referred to ethnic identity as part of social identity because it corresponded

with both associating oneself with a group and engaging in behaviors that were specific to a group.

Identity of Lowrider Car Club Members

Tajfel and Turner (1986) purported that individuals will generally place a significant effort into maintaining positive beliefs and attitudes towards a particular group membership, especially when comparing themselves with other groups. When I asked a friend to list three things that made his lowrider car club different from others, he was able to rattle off more than enough answers. However, when asked to identify three ways it was similar to other lowrider car clubs, he struggled to give me three responses. This peaked my curiosity – how does someone select a lowrider car club and how have these group differences impacted lowriding culture? Lowrider car club members have found a sense of solidarity and respect amongst themselves as a network (Sanchez, 2017; Sandoval, 2003), while continuously facing innumerable social, legal, and/or occupational stressors (Lowrider Network, 2002e; Plascencia, 1983). However, each lowrider car club seems to demonstrate a unique social identity, as do their respective members.

Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions

Individualism

Hofstede's (2011) sixth cultural dimensions are individualism versus collectivism. Collectivistic cultures hold core values such as harmony and fidelity – placing greater value on the needs of the group before one's own. Loyalties lie not only with extended family but may also extend to other groups the individual is associated with. Collectivism

is a pervasive attribute or attitude associated with Raza (Comas-Díaz, 2006). For example, a lowrider car club member may think about how both every-day and life choices may impact the reputation of the car club – or their friends, co-workers, and/or other club memberships. A friend once explained that as a member of a lowrider car club, he always takes into consideration how his actions and decisions will impact the reputation and cohesion of his club (personal communication, September 6, 2017).

Hofstede (2011) offered an example of how working as a team at work is ultimately more productive than everyone or every department working independently to achieve the company's mission. So too have lowrider car club members realized the value of working together as a greater network (Best, 2006; López Pulido & Reyes, 2017). Although they may vigorously compete against each other at car shows, lowrider car clubs will work together when it comes to giving back to their community or helping out another lowrider or lowrider car club. This display of solidarity is something lowriders are often recognized for and even considered as reasons for induction into a Hall of Fame. Some lowrider car clubs may even have chapters in different states or even countries (such as the Majestics in Japan). While Raza may not face the same indignation, they did in the 1940s or even the 1960s, when problems arise, they know they can turn to their brother/sister lowriders for help. So the same respect they would show their families, they demonstrate to their lowrider car clubs.

Collectivism

Triandis (1995) argued that the concepts of collectivism and culture should be examined as part of the individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Collectivism is an

example of a core value associated with Raza (Marin & Marin, 1991; Sabogal et al., 1987). Lowriding is an art form that allows Raza to express their personal and social identity – who they are as an individual and who they are as a part of a larger cultural group that is full of history, adversity, and pride. Hodgkinson and Ellison's (2017) video, "*Chicano influence on the Japanese culture,"* described their admiration for Chicano lowriders because of their love for family, strong social identity, and their willingness to express themselves (albeit indirectly). Through their cars, lowriders are able to showcase their culture and their club – placing the collective before themselves, but not in place of themselves. Lowriders can also demonstrate their individuality and their own story in the subtle details of the car – through their graphics, hydraulics, sound system, or even the type of car itself.

Rationale for the Choice of Theories

This phenomenological study explores the shared meanings and perceptions Raza holds about being members of a lowrider car club. The research questions for this study are: How do Raza describe their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club? and How has being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza? The research questions will help me understand the role their car club plays in their life, the role they play in their car club, and how this relationship has influenced the respondent's life.

When I was a teenager, I (like many others) thought that lowriding was just a social pastime – for cruising and as a hobby. Throughout the years, though, I have come to see them in a very different light. Social media has undoubtedly played a key role in its

influence and perpetuated its growth – moving lowriding from merely showing hometown or community pride to becoming part of pop culture around the world (Bright, 1994; Padilla 1999). I have also seen how lowriders have become surrogate families for each other – functioning much like an extended family would, to promote opportunities for upward mobility for all. Through their brotherhood, they also help promote and preserve their common heritage and culture. But it was a conversation with my uncle (personal communication, October 30, 2015) that reinforced my curiosity. Having once owned his own lowrider, he now viewed this phenomenon as primarily pop culture – valueless and without merit. For me, it begged the question: what happened to change his views? and what did it mean to him that lowrider culture changed (in his views)?

Erikson (1968; 1980) proposed that while identity formation may begin in adolescence, it can be part of a lifelong process. This study hopes to add to the research on identity development (Phinney, 1992; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014) by examining the motivations to join a car club, the age at which they joined versus developed an interest in lowriding, and how much their membership in a lowrider car club has impacted their identity development. It would stand to reason that Erikson's three stages in adulthood also relate to identity. For young adults, the idea of starting a family may not be the same as those held a generation ago (Intimacy vs Isolation). They may instead satisfy their sense of belonging and intimacy through a social network, like a lowrider car club. Lowriders, in passing on their heritage, their trades and their stories, have exemplified generativity (stage seven). Likewise, a lowrider once told me (personal communication, May 24, 2018) that there comes a time when lowriders take a step back from the daily

grind or working on cars and participating in car shows, and reflect on their accomplishments and their experiences with pride and ownerships of their membership in a lowrider car club (Integrity vs. Despair/Disgust).

As noted before, lowriders have gained a misleading reputation that they are associated with gangs and or develop rivalries through their competition. While it would be ignorant to say that these have not been the exception from time to time – as I look back at some of the competitions my friends participated in at car shows – however, lowrider car clubs do not generally engage in these destructive practices. The car shows are not only a way to display their achievements, but can also a structured forum to demonstrate intergroup differences that can lead to a sense of dominance between lowrider car clubs. Tajfel and Turner (1979) explained that not all intergroup comparisons have to result in violence or hostility. They can in turn help promote growth and change in both individuals and groups. Therefore, social identity theory seems appropriate in trying to understand why participants chose one group over another and what it means to them to be a member of their lowrider car club.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (2001; 2011) relates to this study because it lends itself to the idea that members of a lowrider car club share cultural values that make them a "strong, cohesive group" that also demonstrates "unquestioning loyalty" (2011, pg. 11) for its members, as many have lifetime memberships. Whether they are socializing with other lowriders or enjoying a car show they are not directly involved in; lowrider car club members are usually displaying their club name in some form or fashion. Participants will be asked what roles they play within their club and the role the

club plays in their life to better understand their lived experience of in-group dynamics. The findings may help professionals and non-professionals appreciate the nature and value of this phenomenon and why it continues to be such a significant part of Raza's culture.

For non-professionals, perhaps it will demonstrate that these individuals are not gangsters and do not fit the demeaning stereotypes that have been perpetuated in the media. Professionals may also see the significance of this phenomenon regarding it being a source of social support that helps many men and women find a purpose in life, develop meaningful relationships, and/or cope with day to day struggles that can otherwise result in serious mental health problems. Social implications of this research can include exposure to both the struggles and the benefits of Raza's membership in lowrider car clubs. These lived experience may also resonate with individuals of other ethnic groups who have also experienced similar struggles or have felt a desire to find a productive forum for self-expression.

The study may also provide clinicians and scholars with an example of the importance of social support systems. Hendryx et al. (2009) discussed how social support systems provide individuals with hope and connections with others. Support systems help individuals develop confidence and a sense of belonging (Mancini et al., 2005; Thomas et al., 2016). Attending cars shows and talking to my friends about their participation in lowrider car clubs, it has become evident to me that these car clubs foster these values and provide their members, and the communities around them, with these resources. I

hope to illustrate this through this study – through the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

While phenomenology has been used within the field of psychology to describe individuals' lived experience with different aspects of their identity (Dancy, 2017; Geertz Gonzalez, 2017; Iwamoto et al., 2013; Sollenberger, 2017), there is limited research that explores how non-immigrant Latina/os experience their identity development. There is, however, a growing number of studies that focus on how social support systems or social networks serve a purpose among Latinos – meeting spiritual needs, health concerns, and community needs. Lowriding is a form of personal and social identity among an enclave of Raza that serves as a form of personal and cultural expression. However, there are no studies in the field of psychology that explore the lived experience of lowriders. While this subculture has experienced much change and its own acculturative process, understanding how they experience their group memberships and identity can benefit both Raza and the field of psychology. It will provide a window into what it means for them to be a lowrider and address some of the misconceptions or negative stereotypes that have type-casted this population.

Identity Development

Mead (1934) would have referred to this process as the difference between the "Me" and the "I." For Mead, the "Me" would be comprised of the various roles someone assumes during their life and the specific characteristics that make up their defining roles and attitudes. Whereas, the "I" would be described as the individual's reaction to external

factors or social demands – at times exemplified by alternative attitudes, depending on the circumstance. Identity can be referred to as simply the characteristics, internalized beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors expressed by an individual or a group (Marcia, 1980; Vignoles et al., 2011).

Personal Identity

Erikson (1978) described the "human endeavor" (p. 21) as either a fight for survival (achieving a personal identity that fits) or sacrificing personal identity and "just becoming another number" amongst all others (as my father would say). Lowriding provides a forum for which Raza can become empowered to explore different world views, explore their heritage, and establish their own identity. Erikson also argued that one's identity, while defined as that which is held constant, is ever evolving – incorporating new things and leaving behind what is no longer needed. While his theory on psychosocial development is made up of a series of stages, which one has to negotiate their way through, there may be occasions where they may be revisited. For example, the fifth stage is initially experienced in adolescence. This may include decisions about ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and/or what peer group to join. However, individuals may experience this again at a later age, depending on changes in their environment or experiences. It is important to consider that when we ask ourselves "Who am I?" The list we come up with today may not be the same list we derive ten years from now. For Raza, the need to belong, to be part of a family or a brother/sisterhood is often paramount. Being a member of a lowrider car club provides that *hermanidad* that helps young adults negotiate life's challenges and develop the characteristics that resonate best with them.

Acculturation

Acculturation is the process by which affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes occur as the result of direct interaction with a second or more dominant culture (Berry, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2010). Phinney (2006) added that the resulting changes during acculturation also impact a person's developmental process. The developmental changes may result from a sense of crisis experienced when the individual does not quite know how to negotiate varying aspects between cultures. This resulting psychological distress has been referred to as acculturative distress (Berry, 1988; Sam & Berry, 2010). Ahadi and Punte-Diaz (2011) found that cultural resistance or the reluctance to accept the dominant culture as primary was found to be related to increased depressive symptoms, which could contribute to acculturative distress.

Enculturation

Berry (1993) described the enculturation process as a learning process, whereas the acculturation process focused on creating change from direct exposure to a different culture. Weinreich (2009) described a process by which an individual adopts aspects of a different (dominant) culture without rejecting the culture of heritage. Hernandez and Bámaca-Colbert (2016) emphasized that the focus of enculturation was not on the acquisition of new aspects of a dominant culture, but rather on the retention of one's own heritage, despite exposure to a different culture.

Kohatsu (2005) explained that the new information would then be integrated if deemed to be a better fit within their personal views and values, which were initially derived from the culture of origin. This process of blending beliefs, attitudes, and

behaviors serves as a means of increasing wellness, as it is meant to help an individual find a balance between two competing cultures and become more bicultural. Holloway-Friesen (2018) found that Latino college students who were enculturated, thus identified with the dominant culture while also identifying with their Latino ethnic pride, were better able to manage potential barriers to their college success.

Social Identity

While our identity may be described by the different roles we play, the qualities we pose, and the various achievement we have to our credit; social identity may be better accounted for by the things we have in common with a particular group or the collective attributes that represent a group we are associated with. Our identity may be dynamic, depending on the situations we face, but our social identity will be less fluid and more dependent on the group dynamics. Social identity may include the non-physical or biological attributes and attitudes we identify with, such as gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation; but it may also include our thoughts and feelings about the various groups, communities, or organizations we may identify with (Turner et al., 2014).

Tajfel (1979) might have argued that while some lowrider car clubs require lifetime memberships, this impedes the members from being able to join another car club, thus preventing them from growing and establishing themselves within better social groups. However, it has been my experience that lowrider car clubs borrow from their heritage and cultural values while providing a positive reflection of Raza and their communities. Lowrider car clubs burgeoned out of a struggle to cope with discrimination and a social climate that refused to acknowledge personal and group (ethnic)

achievements. Raza's desire to belong and engage in social interests – like cars, the pursuit of the opposite sex, and pride in community – motivated them to define their own in-group favoritism. This new group identity would provide them a means of communicating their resistance, group accomplishments, and cultural practices that were salient to their ethnic identity, but still relatable to the greater social environment.

A friend of mine and long-time lowrider car club member explained that lowrider car clubs encourage members to socialize with other car club members, learn from them, and even network with them. This did not compromise their club loyalty, but rather expressed solidarity within the brotherhood of lowriding culture. This to me is an example of lowrider car clubs empowering their members to achieve more – both inside and outside the car club.

Ethnic identity

Erikson (1968) suggested that ethnic identity is a collection of elements relating to one's heritage, upbringing, sociopolitical issues and experiences, cultural values, and desires for the expression one's ethnicity. This idea was supported and expanded on by Phinney (1990, 2001) and Phinney and Ong (2007) who explained that while the development of ethnic identity may begin in adolescence, it occurs over time and in stages. These stages are contingent on social influences, personal curiosity, and level of agreement with cultural representations. Phinney proposed that individuals either found themselves in the stage of the moratorium (actively exploring and discovering), commitment (the espousal or embrace of a particular ethnicity), or diffusion/foreclosure (no curiosity or desire to explore one's ethnicity). Erikson purported that an individual

may move from one stage to another throughout the lifespan, depending on the influences of life events and social encounters, but while in a particular stage, ethnic identity would be a stable, internal, and global sense of sameness with others who identify with the same ethnicity. Tajfel & Turner (1979) suggested that it is this sameness and connectedness to a group of people that contributed to the well-being of individuals.

Rivas-Drake et al.(2014) completed a literature review focusing on the protective factors associated with increased ethnic pride and a stronger sense of belonging to a socio-cultural group. In contrast, a study of minority nursing faculty (Kolade, 2016) found that there was a need to minimize their personal and ethnic identity to be accepted as scholar-leaders in their field and to be afforded more opportunities to advance in their career. A situation like these can result in acculturative stress and psychosocial stressors.

Groupthink

Raza who are members of a lowrider car club build an identity around their club, their peers, their family, and their cultural heritage. Janis (1971, 1972) explained the concept of groupthink in terms of members in an in-group sharing or aligning themselves with the values of harmony and solidarity, but at the expense of individuality or even the candor of the group during times of distress. While harmony and solidarity may be values that are endorsed by lowrider car club members, they are not always held at the expense of free will or progressive thinking. In fact it is forward thinking and ingenuity that have allowed lowriding to evolve and grow into a world-renowned lifestyle.

Redding (2012) demonstrated that groupthink could be detrimental to the integrity of a group because it narrows the perspective and attitudes shared by the in-group

members. Groupthink will further isolate out-group members and can engender discriminatory practices. Lowrider car club members are not exempt from experiencing stress or crisis. An example of this type of scenario took place during a car show where six chapters of a car club were set to show their cars. This was a significant amount of cars for the size of the car show. After the cars had been polished, displays had been set-up, and car owners were seeking a break at the end of a long day, a fire broke out in one of the cars. Subsequently, all of the members of that chapter abruptly left the show – removing their cars (in what could be interpreted as groupthink) – and assisted their group member in removing the burned car and returning to their respective communities to assist their brother, who was clearly in distress. One club member remained near the car show, with plans to return home the next day. However, after news circulated amongst the other car clubs, some of who had to clean their own cars and displays again due the fire smoke and debris put out a call for solidarity. They banded together to help the remaining club member clean his car and display items – a process that sometimes takes a good part of a day for owners and their families to do on their own – and re-entered the car in the show by the next morning.

Nawata and Yamguchi's (2014) study on an anticipated rejection of view and practices by out-group membership would suggest that other car clubs would have rejected the fact that the chapter members left the show, criticizing the abrupt departure and further isolating the one remaining member. Instead, they provided support and embraced him as an in-group member (like *familia*), despite potential competition at the show and/or between clubs. Frisch (2014) discussed the benefits of working together and

creating a positive groupthink process rather than viewing it as a misguided response to a challenging situation. Frisch described how physicians from similar ethnic backgrounds work together, despite having different specializations, in order to provide support, learn from each other, help others trying to enter the field of medicine and give back to their respective communities. This ideology resembles that of lowriders, who also work together, despite coming from different geographical areas or even ethnic backgrounds.

Social Capital

Lowrider car clubs serve as a form of social capital because they help form connections with others – both within and outside the groups or their car clubs. The stronger the bonds/relationships they develop within their lowrider car club, the better equipped these men and women are to cope with criticism about their car from non-lowriders or even losses at car shows and competitions. Just as their unity has helped them cope with hegemonic pressures, adapt to changing social climates, and deal with family struggles. They also work as a network of agencies or business that provide services (e.g., installing hydraulics), receive services (e.g., rent lowriders for special events or request that one be custom designed), and organizations that share (cultural) norms, language, and values. These characteristics have helped to form trans-generational connections (López Pulido & Reyes, 2017; Sandoval, 2014; Usner, 2016) – working with youth, as well as learning from elders. Denner et al. (2001) discussed how social support systems or social capital could positively impact identity (i.e., sense of self-pride), promote cohesion, enhance physical and mental health, and help preserve common traditions (e.g., religion, language, and history). In a 2001 report, the Department of

Health and Human Services discussed the importance of protective factors and social support in preventing and managing stressors that could result in mental illness. The brotherhood and sisterhood created through lowriding car clubs continue to be a significant source of social capital for Raza.

Cultural Dimensions

Individualism and Collectivism

People for millennia have been working together for the greater good of the masses. Western society teaches us that we should be individuals and aspire to maximize our own potential in order to achieve success – individualism. However, there are still many cultures that disagree with this value system or point of view. Raza in lowrider car clubs have long been examples of what a collectivistic culture is. Their emphasis is on collaboration among members, associated networks (social capital), and even other car clubs (culture). Emphasis is placed on loyalty and conformity to the car club (its preferences) and the lifestyle (the culture). This may include only rebuilding only Chevy cars or trucks or displaying the club name on/in your car during all club events.

Allik and Realo (2004) might argue that Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs might be more individualistic than collectivistic. Allik and Realo identified that the more individualistic a person was, the more dependent they would be to society or social networks. While this may be limited to meeting the needs of social support – as with political movements or civic activities, Raza has long identified as collectivistic because of their commitment to prioritizing the needs of family and community first. Lowrider car clubs have their individual guidelines and criteria for membership – suggesting

conformity and cooperation – but lowrider car clubs abound, so Raza also has a plethora of clubs to chose from – suggesting individual preferences that align with the member's personal beliefs and value systems. Within a lowrider car club, there is flexibility of thought and practice among its members. Triandis (2001) explained that while creativity and self-improvement may be supported by the car clubs, it is typically with the idea that all actions will benefit the club or organization as a whole – further supporting the concept of collectivism.

This combination of individualism and collectivism within the lowrider car club culture can be exemplified by a trip to a car show. A given lowrider car club may showcase upwards of 20 cars or trucks and, it may appear that there are very few similarities from lowrider to lowrider – unless you are familiar with the individual car clubs. Individualism may then be demonstrated by the personal preferences and self-interest in being unique, but once you look at the lowriders as a whole (group), you may see that they are all Chevy's, they are all 2-doors, or they all have similarly sized rims – sometimes it is in the details, which represents the collectivistic approach of the lowrider car club. Brewer and Chen (2007), as did Tajfel and Turner (1979), explained this concept as the intragroup cohesion versus the intergroup competition. Raza within a club works together to build a reputation for the club, while members of a lowrider car club may compete against members of different lowrider car clubs to build their own reputation and provide the best lowrider in a particular class.

Brotherhood and Sisterhood

Choi and Berho (2016) also looked at how a sense of connectedness to a community was experienced and the meaning Latinos derived from their involvement in church membership. Being part of their local church was both empowering and reinforced ethnic identity, which may otherwise result in this population being marginalized within their greater community or social environment. Choi and Berho added that their group membership or group consciousness contributed to their identity development and helped to preserve certain cultural factors, such as language, values, and traditions, across generations. This process, in turn, also helped influence the structure of the church – helping it better be able to meet the needs of its community.

Using a different type of qualitative method, Silver (2015) conducted a 4-year ethnographic study examining school clubs or culture-sharing groups meant to assist first- and second-generation Latina/o students entering a new school. Findings demonstrated that these clubs provided a safe place for students to learn about and discuss mainstream behaviors and attitudes while affording them social capital or a support system among peers that shared (cultural) values and ethnic identity.

Whether they be ethnic-based organizations such as Latina/o Greek sororities or fraternities (Moreno & Sanchez Banuelos, 2013), or they are interest-based groups (i.e., sports, academic clubs, co-curricular activities), involvement in some type of group promotes resilience, a sense of belonging, and stronger sense of identity among Raza (Patrón & Garcia, 2016).

The benefits of social capital for the success of Hispanic women engineering majors was also demonstrated using a case study approach (Martin et al., 2013). Even the most simplest of connections can sometimes have great influence – especially with regards to something as significant as someone's ethnic identity, which can otherwise leave a person feeling isolated and lacking self-worth (Lerma et al., 2015).

Fidelity and Familismo

Familism or familismo has been described as both an attitude and a set of behaviors (Constante et al., 2018; Hernandez & Bámaca-Colbert, 2016) that represent a legacy of Raza's family values. Familismo can be explained by the belief that family comes first and that there is an obligation to support (Ingoldsby, 1991), honor, and obey family members before all others. It is also defined by a commitment to hold the needs of the family as principal, to care for and respect parents and elders (Fuligni et al., 1999), and to make decisions as a family unit.

An example of how lowriders are more than just a club to show off cars and trucks, let me describe a recent experience I had when a friend of mine, who is a member of a lowrider car club, lost his adolescent son – his first born. He did not have the financial means to pay for any of the services required to bring his son home and bury him, let alone the understanding of how he was going to cope with the loss. However, the week prior, another club member also lost his son and became a valued support system for him. Both the car club and the community came together and held a fundraiser. By identifying each other's strengths and connections, they managed to unite a community – both locally and within the greater lowrider circuit. It was described as the largest car

wash they had been part of, to date. They also succeeded in raising more than enough money to assist my friend and his family. On the day of the services, the club members were not only present, but they also provided a motorcade with their lowriders, and displayed their cars in solidarity and support. During this difficult time, this brotherhood demonstrated cultural pride, familismo, and community.

Stein et al. (2014) conducted a literature review that supported the concept of familismo as a protective factor because it provides a support system, relatability, and a sense of ethnic pride that helps individuals (adolescents) manage acculturative stresses. These protective factors are carried forward throughout the lifespan or the individual's commitment to their ethnic identity. This was evident in a study by Lerma et al. (2015) which examined how Hispanic doctoral graduates in the field of counselor education perceived their ethnic identity. Participants were reported to have focused more on value-oriented aspects of their culture (i.e., familismo, strong work ethic, and community) rather than gender or ethnicity (sometimes experienced more as barriers than sources of pride). The findings supported the idea that strong ethnic identity and a strong commitment to family values (like familismo) can be a significant determinant for academic success. Family connectedness was also found to be a key factor in academic success by Liang et al. (2016), who explored how Latina college students experienced their identity within the context of their culture. While these women strived for independence (from gender-specific roles), which may contradict family values, they found strength in their connectedness to family and community. While they may have been breaking with traditional roles, it can be argued that the determination and

commitment needed to success in academic and career pursuits is based on a greater desire to provide for or give back to one's family, which is in line with placing the family's needs before one's own (Ingoldsby, 1991).

Synthesis of Research Findings

Lowriding can be described as both a pastime where the car is a means of mobility that affords individuals opportunities to socialize with others both inside and outside their community and a lifestyle that is passed on from one generation to the next. Ides (2009) described the former within the context of youth in Los Angeles. He provided a historical perspective of lowriding as a "leisure interest" (p. 100) among teenagers who are looking for attention from the opposite sex and from others who may be attracted to their car and the various customizations they have employed. Ides also explained that lowriding had been utilized to express personal identity, a sense of belongingness (to a group or community), and dominance (e.g., cultural pride, trade/technique, and resistance to political pressures). However, Ides did not explore attitudes or trends outside of Los Angeles, which could present alternative views about lowriding or help generalize findings across the lowrider car culture. Different regions of the U.S. have varying perspectives on what lowriding is and how the lifestyle is experienced (personal communication, September 13, 2018)

Bright (1994) took a broader approach to her ethnographic study of lowriders– interviewing and observing lowriders from California (namely Los Angeles), Texas, and New Mexico. She highlighted the idea that lowriding is a reflection of identity (ethnic, social, and/or political), which has its regional differences. Bright also demonstrated that

there were common themes across locations – emphasizing an underlying desire for lowriders to dispute negative stereotypes, to represent the zeitgeist of their community, as well as to demonstrate strengths and values held by Raza in their respective communities. There were some consistencies across communities, such as, but not limited to, the (ethnic) values they identified with, a strong work ethic (across socio-economic status), an ability to be unique and innovative (despite skill level), and cultural pride. Bright argued that while the media, such as Lowrider Magazine, was able to disseminate information about cultural norms and cultural ties to lowriding, it also creates change within the communities that can be seen among the lowriders and their cars. For example, as Georgia learns about new trends in California, they too begin to incorporate those changes into their lowrider scene, their community, and their own families (personal communication, September 13, 2018).

Sandoval (2003) took a broad approach at examining lowriding culture – exploring the role media, gender, and history played in this primarily ethnocentric lifestyle. She interviewed and observed members of lowrider car clubs in Los Angeles, in order to obtain a more personal account of what it meant to be a lowrider and what the lowrider culture represented to them. While she emphasized the significance of lowriding within the Chicano community, she did not limit her interviews to only Raza – highlighting the impact lowriding had on members of other ethnic and social communities that sought solidarity amongst Raza and the lowriding community. Overall, Sandoval demonstrated the relevance and importance of representing "family, brotherhood, and community" (p. 248) in all aspects of lowriding.

These three value systems were also examined by Patrón and Garcia (2016) – not in relation to lowriding, but rather demonstrating that social outlets or networks that foster like beliefs, values, and behaviors can be beneficial in promoting resilience and self-esteem. Patrón and Garcia reviewed challenges teens faced, whether they be due to socioeconomic issues, related to sexual orientation, or sociopolitical factors in their environment. They posited that participation in ethnic-based organizations or activities that empowered them to be more than just the context they came from and promoted pride in who they were, assisted them in staying focused and becoming successful students and members of their community. Lowriding car clubs are (ethnic-based) organizations that provide support, guidance, and empowerment, just as well as sports and extracurricular academic activities.

In addition to empowering its members to discover themselves and their strengths, lowriding car clubs also help its members by being support systems – forums where they can discuss current issues, problems, or just learn more about something. Both Martin et al. (2013) and Marquez et al. (2016) demonstrated that the presence of social capital or a support system in someone's life could create positive social change. Martin et al. looked at Hispanic women who were majoring in engineering due to the lack of representation in this field. They found that the presence of social support or social capital did not need to be significant – it just needed to be present – in order to make a student feel connected and valued in their respective academic program. Marquez et al. also found that participation in civic groups did not have to be significant to motivate individuals to be more outgoing and socially engaged. Individuals who participate in lowrider car clubs are

not always the embodiment of social individuals, especially when they have encountered economic strife, discrimination, and/or failures in academic pursuits. However, their cultural heritage and pride, as well as the support they receive from other members, can impact them in ways they never thought possible.

Summary and Conclusions

> Human beings are part of the cultural world; we make various cultures, and are shaped by these cultures. One task for psychology is to sample these variations in order to appreciate our magnificent variety; another task is to employ them in comparative research in our search for our common humanity. (Berry, 2009, p. 362)

The limited literature on lowriders and the lowriding culture consistently reported that this is more than a hobby. Raza, a disenfranchised community, has been able to find solace, social support, and pride in this lifestyle. They have incorporated their heritage, their religion, and their resilience to adversity. Whether they are unskilled or perceived as misfits within their own family or community, Raza can receive a sense of belonging and acceptance as a member or a lowrider car club. The clubs, who often have multiple chapters within nearby communities or across state lines, offer their members a network of resources and motivation for self-improvement. It is not to say that lowriding has not faced its share of criticism or challenges, but many have evolved and grown with the changing times. Women have gone from being pin-up models standing next to the car of the month to building and owning their lowriders. Differences in lived experience between men and women will be further addressed in Chapter 4. This once male-

dominated culture now encourages each other to include their family – making more of a lifestyle rather than a pastime.

While studies have been conducted in other fields, focusing on the symbolism of the lowriding practices and culture, there are no psychological studies that examine the individual and focus primarily on their lived experience. Limited studies have examined lowriding within different states, but what is still missing is a study that reaches a broader sample or Raza, at varying ages, and different degrees of commitment to a lowrider car club. Books have been written about the cars, trucks, and bicycles that are represented in lowriding; they have even described the history and evolution of lowriding. Lowrider Magazine, which has been criticized for its representation of lowriding and its respective cultural legacy, is a contributing motivation for this study because of a new series of videos it has created called *Lowrider Roll Models* (MotorTrend Channel, 2020; Ray, 2016), which focuses on telling the stories of individuals who have overcome obstacles and demonstrated positive influences lowriding has had in helping them achieve success in their life. In this study I identify Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs from coast to coast, different socioeconomic backgrounds, and ranging in age.

In Chapter 3, I provide an introduction to the chosen methodology, followed by the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, issues of trustworthiness, and I end the chapter with a summary of and transition to Chapter 4.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experience of Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. This approach is appropriate because the study aims to explore how membership in lowrider car clubs is experienced and perceived by Raza. Lowriding is an internationally accepted lifestyle that is indifferent to race and nationality (Kercher, 2015; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). However, I focused on Raza's living in the continuental United States. Lowriding is reported to have its roots in the Chicano community (Arredondo, 2016; Boyle, 2016; Miner, 2014; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011; Usner, 2016) and it has been a significant source of support and pride for those who identify with this subculture. Changes since the birth of lowriding, nearly 80 years ago, have contributed to how Raza perceives themselves and their identity in relation to the world around them. The term Raza was used as a generic term to describe all individuals of Mexican descent, regardless of generational status. This study also aims to understand how the lived experience of Raza in lowrider car clubs has influenced their identity.

In this chapter, I describe the study design and rationale for choosing a phenomenological approach, the sample under study, and sampling procedures. Then I explain how data were collected and analyzed. Next, I address issues of trustworthiness and rigor, as well as ethical considerations and protections for study participants. Finally, a summary will include a brief review of this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Design

For this qualitative study, I used the phenomenological approach to explore the lived experience of Raza who have been members of a lowrider car club for at least 5 years. Participants were both male and female adults living in the U.S. Research questions were developed to glean the essence of lived experience, perceptions, meanings, and attitudes about a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007). Moustakas (1994) stated the purpose of phenomenological research was understand the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspective of the experiencer.

The following are the research questions guiding this study:

RQ1: How do Raza describe their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club?

RQ2: How has being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza?

Rationale

This study sought out to understand lived experience as described by respondents. Using statistical inquiry that reduces responses to averages, norms, or correlations between variables is therefore not appropriate (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2010). Instead, the qualitative research method with a goal to understand lived experience, personal beliefs, and cultural values (Giorgi, A. & Giorgi, B., 2008) will be used. With the phenomenological design, the participant is considered a co-researcher (Boylorn, 2008;

Moustakas,1994) and the expert of his or her own lived experience (Finlay, 2009; Glesne, 2006; Morse, 2015a; Wertz, 2005). Data collected are, therefore, as valid as that obtained through quantitative research methods. In order to answer this study's research questions, the phenomenological method was used to explore common meanings and perceptions Raza has about being members of lowrider car clubs.

Not all qualitative research methods are appropriate for this study. Grounded theory research involves a large sample to develop a theory or explanation of how a process or action works (Charmaz, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Grounded theory was not chosen because the goal of this study is not to develop a theory about why Raza become members of lowrider car clubs or how a lowrider car club functions. Narrative research uses a small sample to examine a story or composite of stories about participants' life (Creswell, 2013). The structure and context of the story become as much a part of the focus as the story itself (Riessman, 2014; Squire et al., 2013). The goal of this study is not to understand participants' life over time or their life as the object of the study, but rather a segment of it—which relates to their membership in lowrider car clubs.

Lowrider Magazine has been showcasing videos and articles on what they refer to as *roll models,* who are individuals they identify as demonstrating the spirit of lowrider culture (Ray, 2016). A case study on one or more roll models may yield results, which would be unique and limited to those participants rather than the broader culture-sharing group. Lived experience described in a phenomenological study are not bound to place or time, as they would be in a case study (Stake, 2010). Participants in this study may vary

in terms of age and how long they have been part of a car club, and their car clubs may also be in different regions of the state or country and subject to unique circumstances. An ethnographic study of a large sample of lowrider roll models or even all the members of a particular lowrider car club may focus on the entire culture-sharing group. Findings of an ethnographic study are limited to an examination of their behaviors and language (Creswell, 2013; Fetterman, 2010). The goal of this study is to understand personal beliefs, experiences, and behaviors. Therefore, neither research method was conducive to this study.

Social media has enabled the world to meet and learn about lowriders and their cars. Conducting a phenomenological study will add a new and unique understanding of how Raza experienced this phenomenon, which social media has not formally provided. According to Moustakas (1994), a phenomenological study will provide a description of lived experience: what participants have experienced (textural) and how they have experienced it (structural). By providing participants with a voice, I can offer a better understanding of what belonging to a lowrider car club means to them, the impact their membership has had on them, and how they perceive lowrider culture. Phenomenological research, therefore, is a fitting method for this study.

This study also includes a discussion of meanings, perceptions, and attitudes experienced by participants from their points of views. Findings may, in turn, help professionals and non-professionals appreciate the nature and value of this phenomenon. An aim for this study is to explain why lowriding continues to be a significant part of Raza culture. Not only have lowriders become surrogate families for each other and

promoted the preservation of heritage and culture, but they have also demonstrated the benefits of learning and growing during changing times. Lived experience may also resonate with individuals in other ethnic groups and may provide clinicians and scholars with information regarding the importance of social support systems. Social implications of this research can include the exposure of both the struggles and the benefits of Raza's membership in lowrider car clubs.

Role of the Researcher

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the primary role of a researcher in a qualitative study as instrumental in designing the study. After identifying what and who will be studied and relevant research questions, I determined the most appropriate research method to use. Next, I chose how best to collect data, select the appropriate method for analyzing the data, and then presented findings in a way that can reach a cross-section of readers. Unlike with a quantitative study, the role of the researcher is to be an observer or someone who engages participants rather than subjecting them to experiments or providing them with close-ended questionnaires that are numerical in nature. I interviewed participants using open-ended questions which allowed for generous responses that were rich in detail and avoided using leading questions that skewed or limited disclosures.

When using a phenomenological approach, the researcher's role was to better understand the lived experience of Raza who are members of a lowrider car club. I gathered data using semi-structured interviews and utilized member checking to ensure that the essence of what was shared and any interpretations gleaned were accurately and

effectively represented (Harvey, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is this process that also makes the role of the researcher one of learner (Glesne, 2006). By gathering data in a variety of ways, the researcher can analyze the phenomenon from different perspectives.

When the researcher addresses the interview process, the aim is to learn from the participant. The researcher has not personally experienced the phenomenon in question and should approach participants as the expert of their own lived experience (Glesne, 2006). The researcher's role is, therefore, to listen and understand the phenomenon as the participant has experienced it (van Kaam, 1966). The researcher needs to minimize the potential for contaminating data with personal beliefs and opinions (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Lowriding has been an interest of mine since I was a teenager. Being of Mexican descent, I have a particular interest in learning more about my culture and heritage. I employed epoché or bracketing to put aside my experiences and preconceived ideas about lowriding culture and practices, as well as those related to race. By reflecting on both my interactions with participants and what they disclosed, I was able to separate my ideas from the data. Journaling and consultation was also utilized to keep personal biases separate and not adversely impact or influence findings. Acknowledging my enthusiasm towards the lowrider culture and practices facilitated my curiosity and inquiry process. My attitudes towards injustices and experiences of cultural struggles were tempered by the understanding that study findings would help scholars, clinician, and lowrider communities.

Moustakas (1994) recalled his mother suggested he focus on "what is really there" (p. 85) and listen to what and how participants describe as their experience. This concept helped me focus on the data rather than on personal experiences, beliefs, and prior knowledge of lowrider culture. The interviewing process included informing participants of the purpose and focus of the study, being present and listening to them describe their lived experiences, and affording participants an opportunity to debrief and reflect on their experiences during the study. To ensure that the risk of harm to participants was minimized, I completed the web-based training course called Protecting Human Research Participants, offered by the National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research (see Appendix A).

Methodology

Participants Selection Logic

I used purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is appropriate when focusing on a specific population to be sampled, what strategy will be employed, and how many participants will be used for the study (Creswell, 2013). Participants were both male and female adults of Mexican descent, also referred to as Raza. Participants were required to be members of a lowrider car club and actively engaged in their respective car club activities for at least five years. Prospective participants responded to flyers or postings (see Appendix C) and were screened over the phone based on the criteria stated above (see Appendix B).

Lastly, a minimum of 10 individuals was needed for the study sample. Creswell (2013) and Dukes (1984) suggested this was an appropriate range for a small study to

meet saturation, while Polkinghorne (1989) reported that 25 participants was the median amount. If a sufficient number of participants was not initially obtained, then I would have requested assistance from respondents who may have a working relationship with other car clubs and others who may have explicit experience with the phenomenon. This alternative sampling method is referred to as snowball sampling (Berg & Lune, 2011; Polkinghorne, 2005). Using snowball sampling is beneficial in that participants would have an understanding of the target population and would be able to provide assistance in networking and recruitment of participants.

Morse (2015a) reported that saturation is likely to be obtained if the interviews are thorough and elaborate in their description of the participants' lived experiences. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define saturation as the point at which no new or unique information is identified in the data. While there is no universally agreed upon number of participants that will meet this threshold, it is the responsibility of the researcher to take copious notes and be mindful of information that may be irrelevant. Morse (2015a) further suggested that focused samples provide participants that are "experts in the phenomenon of interest" (p. 588) and this may lend itself to provide replication in themes and descriptions of experiences.

Researcher-Developed Instruments

Two researcher-developed instruments were used for this study. The first was a demographic questionnaire that addressed information such as gender, age, occupation, educational level, and family structure. This helped to demonstrate that the sample used met the criteria expressed for this study. Demographic data allowed results to be

compared between and among demographic groups. The comparison helped direct the need for future research. The second researcher-developed instrument was a semi-structured questionnaire that was supported by a theoretical framework. Making sure questions and subquestions address specific concepts ensured that content validity was achieved (Creswell, 2013; Kvale, 2007; Landsheer & Boeje, 2010). Interview questions explored the shared essence of Raza's lived experiences with regards to identity development, how social capital influences group identity, and how cultural values such as collectivism are represented by the phenomenon being studied. Grossoehme (2014) reported that content validity was the extent to which data was reflective of what the study was trying to understand. Moustakas (1994) explained that phenomenological studies should provide a description of the phenomenon being studied by focusing on both *what* the participants experienced and *how* they experienced the phenomenon. Therefore, interview questions were reviewed by committee members, colleagues, and lowriders consulted in the community in order to make sure the interview questions effectively answer the research questions.

Stake (2010) suggested that qualitative research provided unique perspectives about a phenomenon that are as concrete and definitive as responses provided in quantitative research. Rigor is paramount in any research study. A sequence of questions was used in a standardized method. However, interviews were also conversational to aid in building rapport and obtaining robust answers. Socrates described himself as a midwife to the research process because the purpose of conducting research was to gather information that was not otherwise understood by the researcher (Vivilaki & Johnson,

2008; Wengert, 1988). Despite what I know about the subculture of lowriding, it was not in my purview to understand how being a member of a lowrider car club can influence a person's identity, values, and perceptions of the world around them. A single interview session, followed by member checking was utilized. This ensuree that the research questions were thoroughly explored and responses had been clarified. The process of member checking was undertaken after completion and review of interview transcripts or after interpretations and summaries of the interviews had been completed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Varpiro, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017). Saturation was obtained and no additional interviews were conducted when no new information was gleaned from the data. Morse (2015a) stated that saturation was achieved when the researcher was able to identify shared meanings and inferences about the phenomenon.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

Before beginning the recruitment process, I requested approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University. Upon receiving the approval from the IRB, I distributed of flyers (see Appendix C) to car club leadership to distribute to their members and posted the flyer on social media sites. Flyers included a brief description of the study, criteria, and my contact information. Recruitment also included networking with individuals at car shows and on social media sites associated with lowriding. If there were initially too few participants, participants would have been asked to hand out flyers to other lowrider car club members that may be interested in participating.

For a more detailed description of the study focus and procedures, I provided potential participants the Invitation to Participate letter (see Appendix D). Raza are inherently reluctant to personal self-disclosure, but were open to the idea of participating in an interview about their lived experience if they know more information about the purpose of the study and what the findings were going to be used for. While the Invitation to Participate letter included additional information, it also invited individuals to ask questions and discuss the study with the researcher.

A pilot study was not conducted before initiating this study. Doody and Doody (2015) reported that pilot studies are usually undertaken if a study using a large population is intended. Kim (2011) added that pilot studies are helpful when the researcher is looking to make "adjustments and revisions" (p. 191) to the study procedures. Pilot studies have also been used to ascertain whether a study will be efficacious in promoting changes or improvements in "new interventions, assessments, and other study procedures" (Leon et al., 2011, p. 626). As neither of these was relevant to this study, the use of a pilot study for this researcher-developed interview protocol was not warranted.

Participation

When individuals who expressed interest were contacted, the criteria for participation was reviewed. I answer any questions and concerns about participation to determine whether the individual was appropriate for the study. Individuals who agreed to participate were reminded that the interview would be completed face-to-face. An interview was then scheduled at a location agreed

upon by both participants and researcher. Neutral interview locations, such as a library, were suggested to afford participants a sense of privacy and comfort. Locations were selected to help participants feel relaxed and facilitate self-disclosure. To assist with achieving a more accurate assessment of context, participants were asked to bring or provide the researcher with additional documents or pictures. Alternative settings were considered to offer flexibility for both the participant and research and to aid in building rapport and trust.

A briefing was provided before beginning an interview session. All participants were provided a verbal outline of the study purpose and process. This included reviewing and discussing the consent for participation form. I also explained that confidentiality would be maintained by using coded pseudonames and that the inclusion of pictures would be at their discretion. Car club names would be provided only as an acknowledgment of their participation. With the consent form, participants were afforded a list of mental health referrals in the event that participation caused any unexpected distress. After participants were given an opportunity to ask additional questions and express any concerns, they were required to provide both verbal and written consent. I also reminded all participants that withdrawal from the study was at their discretion and without penalty. Each interview session included a debriefing at the end to allow the participant and opportunity to reflect on their experience during the interview and to expand on any statements. Community resources provided in the consent form were reviewed for both personal use and as general referral sources. Participants were reminded that additional contacts may be needed for member checking or the clarification

of responses. Follow-up contacts were also afforded to participants who requested information on study outcomes or had questions about any unexpected thoughts or feelings as a result of their participation.

Data Collection

Data was collected by me using a demographic form (see Appendix F) and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix G). Demographic forms were used to obtain specific information about the participant, such as name, age, race/ethnicity, occupation, and lengh of participation in a lowrider car club. Information was obtained before the interview process began to facilitate raport building. The interviews were completed in person, whenever possible, and interview questions were based on the research questions and the literature review (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Participants were interviewed individually rather than in a group. I reminded participants that the interview could be stopped or terminated at any time without castigation. The interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. To refrain from taking a positivist approach (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008), I employed a more conversational approach to the interview process. By relying on interviewing skills and paying close attention to body language, voice inflections, and facial expressions, I was able to facilitate more in-depth self-disclosure. It was important to avoid using leading questions which could adversely impact the findings (Kvale, 2003; Mishler, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1989).

I provided follow-up contacts by phone or other internet-based tools in order to complete member checking. This process was used to review and clarify responses from the initial interview. While these follow-up contacts were brief and informal, I

maintained confidentiality and privacy throughout. Interviews and follow-up sessions were not conducted in the presence of others, in group texts, or public platforms. Overall, the interview process lasted 60 to 90 minutes, between the initial interview and member checking. Sufficiency of data was established when saturation was identified and no new information could be gleaned from any subsequent data collection process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Niu & Hedstrom, 2008).

All communications, during the interview process, were recorded using an audio recorder and with the participant's explicit consent. A copy of the consent form was afforded to each participant when they sign it at the beginning of the study. Some consent forms were emailed to the researcher. Participants were reminded to keep their copy because of the additional resources it provided. Recordings were transcribed verbatim, and a separate Microsoft Word document was created for each communication or interview. Transcriptions were labeled with an alpha-numeric code consisting of two letters and two numbers to depersonalize them and prevent identification during the analysis process. A Microsoft Excel file was utilized to pair the participants' full name and the pseudonym used in the transcriptions, in case the identification of the participant was needed. A file was kept for each participant with all their personal information and raw data. All electronic files were saved on a non-networked computer. Backup files were stored on a secured thumb-drive. All research materials was placed in a locked container and kept at the my home.

Data Analysis Plan

To establish a connection between the data and interview questions, each cluster of questions was linked to a different research question (see Appendix G): How do Raza describe their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club? and How has being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza? The use of a semi-structured interview allowed some flexibility in asking questions as discussions progressed. All questions were asked in the same order (structured), while allowing for probing or additional questions (flexibility) to illicit a more thorough response. Moustakas (1994) reported that to understand "what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience" (p. 13) requires obtaining rich descriptions of the phenomenon. This also helped in identifying themes in the data.

Verbatim transcriptions of audio-taped interviews and personal notes were analyzed to identify both similarities and differences between participants' accounts. Themes then helped develop in-depth descriptions of the essence of the phenomenon being studied. Moustakas (1994) explained that there are different schools of thought on what phenomenology is and how it should be used. The modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method described by Moustakas was used to examine recurring themes and unique differences to develop a semiotic and experiential summary through the perspective of the collective group of participants.

The following steps for the analysis of data are summarized from Moustakas (1994):

1. Establishing epoché. This is also referred to as bracketing or the process by which the researcher "sets aside personal experiences." The researcher writes a detailed description of the phenomenon. This will help the researcher identify personal experiences, as well as, beliefs and biases that could influence the analysis process. The researcher will then follow the rest of the steps to attain the essence of her own personal experience with the phenomenon being studied.
2. The researcher analyzes transcribed notes to identify non-overlapping and non-repetitive statements (horizonalization). This process is also called the reduction process by which all the non-essential information is eliminated.
3. Next, the researcher organizes the invariant statements or meaning units into themes or clusters.
4. Using verbatim passages, a textural description of "what [was] experienced with the phenomenon" with be developed. This process includes the "thoughts, feelings, [achievements], and struggles" experienced with the phenomenon.
5. This is followed by developing a structural description of "how" the participants experienced the phenomenon – focusing on the "setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced."
6. The researcher will then write a composite description of the phenomenon that blends both the textural and structural descriptions to provide the essence of the participants' lived experience with the phenomenon.

The line by line analysis of transcriptions was primarily done by hand to facilitate the capturing of nuances within the transcriptions. Notes were created from the review of the audio recordings, pictures, social media sites, and member checking (Polkinghorne, 2005; Willig, 2013). To assist me with the organization and coding process, the qualitative analysis software program, NVivo12 (QRS International, 2017), was used. Flick (2009) and Willig (2013) both encouraged researchers to remember that software programs are a "tool" to help facilitate the analysis process and not a means of automating the process for the researcher (Flick, 2009, p. 370). For the purpose of this study, NVivo 12 was used sparingly as an additional tool, while most of the analysis was completed by hand.

Creswell (2014) discussed the importance of including notes and discussing discrepant cases. By identifying the discrepant or disconfirming statements and reviewing them with the participant during the member checking process, they can yield valuable new insights or even confirm information that could have been overlooked in the initial interview (Patton, 2015). Creswell also reported that including discrepant cases can help make participants' accounts appear "more realistic and more valid" (p. 202). Patton (2015) said that limitations in sampling can result in disconfirming results and should be addressed along with the confirming cases that arise from the findings. By highlighting discrepant information, I also identified new directions for future research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a phenomenological study is contingent on whether it can demonstrate an adequate level of rigor (Brink, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Nobel &

Smith, 2015). In terms of quantitative research, this would be the extent to which validity and reliability can be assessed (Creswell, 2009; Krefting, 1991). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that the question of trustworthiness refers to how relevant and compelling findings are to the knowledge base. A study of the lived experience of Raza who are members of a lowrider car club may have implications for positive social change. These changes may include dispelling negative stereotypes associated with lowriding, providing new support for participation in the lowrider community, and enhancing cultural competency in clinicians and scholars.

Credibility

One of the questions used to assess trustworthiness is whether there is credibility in how well the study was conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krefting, 1991). In quantitative research, credibility is referred to as the internal validity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this the "truth value" (p. 290) or the assurance that what the participants expressed was, in fact, their lived experience and was consistent with the context of the study. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) explained that credibility is determined by how well the researcher's descriptions represented what the participants reported and the extent to which similarities in lived experience can be identified across participants. Lincoln and Guba suggested that the researcher should review and confirm statements and interpretations with participants.

Lowriding has grown dramatically since the 1940s and has now achieved a strong following internationally (Kercher, 2015; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). Due to this significant increase in popularity, participants have differences in lived experiences

depending on their age, state of residence, cultural background, and involvement in lowrider car clubs. However, if the findings of this study can resonate with other lowrider car club members of different ethnicities, age, and geographical locations, then the study can demonstrate its authenticity or truth value (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To achieve credibility, it is essential that the research avoids interjecting any bias and values, remaining objective and open-minded to what is real for the participant. To minimize this potential, I adhered to interview protocols as closely as possible, utilized a field journal to take notes, and conducted member checking to review and clarify data collected. I was also in constant consultation with faculty advisors and consultants to verify the interpretation of participant responses.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings apply to other contexts or settings. A small sample was defined as 10 to 15 and determined to be a suitable range for phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2013; Dukes, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1989). The sample was purposive and homogenous by limiting it to Raza that are members of lowrider car clubs. However, the selection invariably limited the transferability or applicability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krefting, 1991; Nobel & Smith, 2015). By focusing on Raza, findings cannot be generalized to a more diverse population of lowriders across the country. However, it may reason that some aspects of the lived experience described by participants can be indicative of those experienced among other Raza. Therefore, it is the expectation of this study that there will be some aspects of participant responses that can be representative of other lowrider car club members who

are not Raza and live in other areas of the county. The lived experience of participants in this study may be relatable to the lowrider community in that they share similar values and attitudes about lowriding. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this the applicability of the findings. Detailed and thorough descriptions of the participants engaged in the study were obtained to facilitate transferability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Toadvine & Lawlor, 2007). Birt et al. (2016) and Varpio et al. (2017) suggested that descriptions should be reviewed with participants as part of a member checking process to confirm accuracy and group consensus in the meanings and perceptions they hold.

Dependability

Another element of trustworthiness is dependability, or what Kerlinger (1973) referred to as consistency. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define dependability as the researcher's ability to effectively describe the research design so that someone else would be able to obtain the same or relatively similar results. Krefting (1991) suggested that the researcher use a coding-recoding strategy to ensure that the process used for analysis and interpretation yields the same results. An organizational plan was developed to illustrate the steps taken for this research study. Specific practices were als documented in a journal in order to consolidate the overall research methods used to conduct this study. Journaling helped ensure that steps were carried out consistently with each participant. By reviewing notes on practices, barriers, and outcomes, it can help someone else understand and replicate this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is determined when credibility, transferability, and dependability have been identified (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Confirmability means that there is a degree of certainty that the method used to conduct the research has met the equivalent standard of objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Noble and Smith (2015) and Willig (2013) suggested that to accomplish confirmability, the researcher needs to demonstrate transparency in method and reflexivity – the ability to recognize how personal experiences and biases may influence the study. Jacinto et al. (2016) suggested that intra-rater reliability tests should be conducted over an extended period of time. However, this is not likely to be feasible given the limited time for collecting data on a smaller sample. In lieu of intra-rater practices, the use of qualitative research software, such as NVivo (Bergin, 2011), can be used to facilitate the stability or the consistency in which the data is conceptualized (Jacinto et al., 2016) using thematic nodes and case nodes (NVivo by QSR, 2015). Creswell (2014) and Morse (2015b) suggested that inter-rater reliability should be obtained to support the consistency in which data is coded and themes are identified.

Because I worked with a committee that was actively evaluating the analysis process, other strategies were used to achieve the same goals of confirmability and reproducibility of this study and its findings. Triangulation and keeping a personal journal are methods suggested to facilitate confirmability (Creswell, 2013; Flick, 2009). Triangulation of data helped achieve rich descriptions of the participants' lived

experiences. This process of reviewing pictures and newspaper or magazine articles helped provide an alternative perspective that supported what the respondents described.

I also consulted friends that belonged to lowrider car clubs (but too close to be unbiased participants) and other professionals who have published articles on this subculture to gain clarity with historical context and lowrider culture. To support the inductive process, a coding system or codebook (Creswell, 2014) was used to identify elements of the key concepts being explored: (1) how enculturation and acculturation impacts identity, (2) how social capital influences group cohesion, and (3) how cultural values are represented in life choices and associations. Participant accounts can also be verified through observations. This latter form of triangulation allowed the researcher to acquire a different perspective or a richer answer to a question (Morse, 2015b). I used reflexivity through the use of a field journal to minimize bias and ensure that objectivity was maintained throughout the study. The NVivo software helped me identify and verify links between these different sources. As suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985), I utilized an auditing process with the research committee to verify that the "findings were grounded in the data" (p. 323).

Ethical Procedures

This phenomenological study was conducted with the permission of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Walden University (see Appendix H). I adhered to the ethical guidelines set forth by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017). A web-based training course called Protecting Human Research Participants, offered by the National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research, was completed

(see Appendix A). The training focused on the importance of respecting and protecting study participants. Specific measures were taken to do no harm and to ensure that the benefits of the study exceed the potential risks to the participants. I sought to provide both a benefit to the field of psychology and the respondents sharing their lived experiences. I avoided any personal and professional relationships that may offset the balance of power or could create a conflict of interest between the participant and me. To eliminate potential conflict of interest, I did not work for any affiliated organization, such as an auto parts store or body shop that does regular business with a participant or associated car club. I was not an instructor, therapist, supervisor working directly or indirectly with a participant and did not have any financial interests with a respondend or participating car club. While these measures were taken to avoid any conflicts of interest prior to the study commencing, participants were reminded that the IRB could be consulted or early withdrawal from the study was allowed without penalty. Participants had the right to refuse to answer select questions without withdrawing from the study. If a participant were to have withdrawn from the study, the interview data would have been destroyed.

As potential participants were identified through a direct response to a solicitation (see Appendix C), I provided the potential participant with a letter providing additional information regarding the study (see Appendix D). A brief discussion by phone helped determine eligibility for the study. Verbal and written consent for voluntary participation was obtained after I had explained the purpose of the study, possible benefits from participation, how to withdrawal from the study, and how to contact me in case there are

questions or concerns. I informed participants that only the interview session would be recorded using an audio recorder. Any follow-up sessions would allow me to make additional inquiries and clarify initial responses, but would not be recorded. Notes were kept on these additional contacts.

Participation in a study that requires an individual to describe lived experience he or she may not have otherwise thought about can result in feelings of unease or even distress. If a participant were to experience discomfort from over-disclosing or a new awareness about an aspect of their life, previously unexplored, I would have provided that participant with a debriefing session and reviewed local resources listed on their consent form (see Appendix G). Debriefing sessions allowed the participant time to talk freely and process their unease with the audio recorder off. The combined time needed to complete the interview and member checking process was estimated at 60 to 90 minutes.

Before initiating interview sessions, I reviewed the respondents' rights and responsibilities, as well as the benefits and limitations of confidentiality. To make sure this study gives each participant a voice and an opportunity to share their life events, the extent to which anonymity is used will be discussed with each participant (Parker, 2005, p. 17; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Not including participants' identifiable information can help encourage them to be open and genuine in their responses (Quick & Hall, 2015b; Willig, 2013), as well as to protect those that are not able to consent to the disclosure of information about them (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). This protective action is necessary because participants may refer to others by name and affiliation within the interview. It is the responsibility of the researcher to be diligent about the possible risks

to both the participants and those they may relate to in their lived experience (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). All participants were provided with a copy of their signed consent form.

All recordings and written documents were kept in a locked file cabinet. Any computer equipment used to process the data was password protected and maintained in a locked case or cabinet to assure confidentiality was maintained and data was not breached. Respondents were also advised that the research data belongs to me and that follow-up sessions can be scheduled to review transcripts and/or results before and after publication. After five years, the data will be destroyed and disposed of safely. All written documents will be shredded through a private agency such as, but not limited to, Shred-it San Diego. Any electronic records kept on a hard drive will be destroyed by reformatting the hard drive and writing zero to it, a binary code that essentially clears it of all the data saved to it. Thumb drives will be reformatted as well to eliminate all saved documents.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the methodological approach selected for this study. I discussed the research design, rationale for the study, and the role of the researcher. An overview of the methodology described participant selection, instrumentation, researcher-developed instruments, recruitment strategies, participation, data collection, and data analysis plan. It was followed by a discussion on issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. I concluded the chapter with a summary and transition to Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 will provide an overview of study data and findings. Study data will include an introduction (to the data), settings, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, discrepant findings, and a summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe interview settings and participant demographics. Then I review the data collection process detailed in Chapter 3 and modifications. Next, I address issues of trustworthiness. Finally, I present results, discrepant findings, and a summary of this chapter. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of Raza, who are members of a lowrider car club. The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: How do Raza describe their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club?

RQ2: How has being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza?

I chose to focus on this population to help demonstrate how lowriding has helped empower this community, continues to serve as a protective factor against everyday stressors, and minimizes the potential for more serious mental health issues. I hoped to provide information to mental health clinicians regarding how this thriving social network and practice builds resilience and self-worth. Through strong cultural values, personal and ethnic identity, and familismo, Raza have been able to overcome adversity through lowriding.

I remember growing up hearing things like, “the border crossed us, we didn’t cross the border” and “they don’t want us here any more than they want us there.” La Raza was here and determined to make the best of a situation—to live the “American

Dream" and provide a better future for their family. They sought out a sense of belonging, pride, and respect. Some found pride in the practice of lowriding. While the White American youth were racing their hot-rods, Raza was cruising their cars *low and slow*. Lowriding has become not only a subculture for Raza but a lifestyle for people of all races and economic backgrounds across the country and the world. However, most notably, it has given them the sense of belonging, pride, and respect they seek.

Setting

I initiated this study intending to conduct face-to-face interviews to gain a better understanding of Raza who are members of a lowrider car club. Face-to-face interviews included direct observations and possibly seeing their lowrider. My first two interviews were completed in person. However, due to COVID-19, a public health emergency, the rest of my interviews were conducted by phone for the safety and protection of both participants and researcher. Participants were offered several different options, including using a video option like Zoom or Facetime, but all chose to complete the interview by phone. For many, accessing and using certain technologies was a barrier to video options. The pandemic, experienced across the country, also created additional obstacles for some potential participants. For some, increased time constraints due to work prevented them from participating. For others, trying to manage demands at home also limited their time and ability to participate. Interviews conducted by phone also tended to be shorter than the initial two conducted in person, resulting in potential consequence from the change in setting. By not having face-to-face contact and the inability to observe body language, interview strategies had to be adjusted. The four primary questions (see Appendix I) were

at time amended when responses were not as rich or detailed, limiting my ability to gain information regarding the participants' lived experiences as members of lowrider car clubs. To minimize this potential, I rephrased questions and used supportive questions to elicit more content. Questions were not changed in nature or purpose from what was identified on the interview protocol.

Demographics

In this section, I provide a review of participants in this study. I intended to obtain a sample that ranged across the U.S. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent public health emergency, I was limited in my ability to recruit and schedule participants who were out of state. While there were 20 lowrider car clubs and chapters approved for this study, they only included two states outside California. I was still able to obtain a sufficient number of participants to reach saturation. As discussed in Chapter 3, saturation is met when continued interviews yield the same or similar information and no new information can be identified in the data. Thirteen interviews were conducted, two of which were from states other than California. Of the 11 from California, this included participants from seven different counties, one of whom was from Northern California. Including a participant from Northern California has significant connotations within the lowrider community. There continues to be disagreement regarding whether the origins of lowriding came from Northern or Southern California (Penland, 2003; Plascnecia, 1983; Tatum, 2011). Within the lowriding community, this dissonance may translate into differences in the design and painting (aesthetics) of their cars.

Additionally, the participant from Northern California was a female, which also afforded me a unique perspective into lived experience among Raza.

All participants were of Mexican descent, had been members of a lowrider car club for at least 5 years, and were at least 18 years of age (see Table 1). Demographics also included gender, level of education, and annual income. JR63 was the youngest of the participants at age 22. The oldest participant was 64 and had over 35 years of membership in the same club and chapter. JQ91 from New Mexico is a female and also a co-founder of her car club. Four participants were female, and two of them were presidents of their all-female car club. Eight of the 13 participants were married, and all but three participants reported having had an intact family system growing up. The majority had over 10 years of membership in at least one club. Nine of the 13 participants were over the age of 50, and five of those nine were presidents of their car club or chapter. All but three either held a leadership cabinet position in their club or chapter or were co-founders of their club or chapter. Two of the participants who indicated they were presidents of their club or chapter were under the age of 50, but each had at least 25 years of membership in their respective lowrider car club.

Concerning socioeconomic status, three participants reported making less than $45K per year, while three participants reported earning over $75K per year. And while there is no occupation more consequential than another, the breadth of employment descriptions was significant. Participants included a physician who delivered over 10,000 babies, retired mental health therapist, and firefighter. There were also business owners,

factory workers, and contract workers. Participants lived in communities ranging from a population of 10,000 to cities with over 3,000,000 residents.

Diversity of participants' backgrounds, including ethnic identity, place of birth, the type of community they currently live in, and location of their lowrider car club or chapter, are provided in Table 2. Two participants were born in Mexico. Three were born outside of California, but still within the United States. Over half were born and raised in Southern California. Independent of where they were born, participants identified a variety of different ethnic identities, including Hispanic (4), Mexican (3), Chicano (2), Mexican American (3), both Mexican American and Chicano (2), and miscellaneous (1). JS39 noted that he identified as miscellaneous because his ethnic background includes Mexican, Spanish, English, Irish, and French. Of those participants who did not reside in California, one participant was from Georgia and the other from New Mexico and both identified as Hispanic.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Demographics				
Participants	Gender	Age	# of yrs Membership	Highest Educ.	Annual Income
MT17	M	57	>40	MS	$60-75K
JS39	M	64	>35	MD	>$100K
TC28	M	45	25	14yrs	$45-60K
FA41	F	53	5	14yrs	$60-75K
GL86	M	53	18	GED	$60-75K
WA37	M	55	12	13yrs	$75-100K
PB42	F	53	10	HS	<$30K
CT91	F	53	6-7	HS	<$30K
HV58	M	50	29	HS	$60-75K
KE35	M	53	13	HS	$75-100K
JX70	F	39	20	HS	$45-60K
RD94	M	22	7-8	HS	$45-60K
SN63	M	49	30	HS	$30-45K

Note: F = female, M = male, D = diverse, HS = high school, MS = masters, MD = medical doctor

Table 2

Participant Demographics – Identity and Geography

	Demographics – Identity & Geography			
Participants	Ethnic Identity	Birth Place	Current Community	Geographic location of Car Club
MT17	Hispanic	Southern CA	City/D	Southern CA
JS39	Misc.	Detroit, MI	City/D	Southern CA
TC28	Chicano	Los Angeles, CA	Rural	South Eastern CA
FA41	Native Am / Mexican	Southern CA	City/Latino	Southern CA
GL86	Mex Am / Chicano	Southern CA	Rural	Southern CA
WA37	Mexican	Tijuana, Mex	City/D	Southern CA
PB42	Hispanic	Southern CA	City/D	Southern CA
CT91	Hispanic	New Mexico	City/D	New Mexico
HV58	Mexican American	Southern CA	Rural	Southern CA
KE35	Mex Am / Chicano	Guanajuato, Mex	Rural	South Eastern CA
JX70	Mexican	Northern CA	City/D	Northern CA
RD94	Hispanic	Georgia	City/D	Georgia
SN63	Chicano	Southern CA	City/Asian	Southern CA

Note: Misc. = "Miscellaneous," AM = American, CA = California, Mex = Mexico, D = diverse

Data Collection

A predetermined semi-structured interview protocol, approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 01/17/20, was used for this study. As described in Chapter 3, this protocol served to guide the interview and provided some flexibility in how questions were posed to achieve more thorough responses. It also allowed the researcher to integrate information from previous interviews to build on what was already learned and obtain more consistent responses. Before the interview, a consent form was completed by the participant. Three different consent forms were utilized due to the transition to telephone interviews and to accommodate for technology barriers among participants. Some participants did not own a computer or were not able to respond appropriately to the first consent form the IRB approved for email. A second consent form was approved by the IRB and used for most participants. This time afforded them an opportunity to review what was to be expected, confidentiality, and their right to withdrawal from the study at any time, without penalty to them or their car club.

All participants were reminded that the interview would be audio-recorded and the purpose of the recording. A debriefing was also offered after the interview, and the recording had been terminated. Participants were then advised that additional questions may be requested for further clarification and to review any directs quotes or passages that might be used in the write-up. I informed them that this process would be informal and could be completed through text messages, email, or social media sources. Transcriptions were completed on all 13 interviews. An alphanumeric code was assigned

to all participants. All electronic files, notes, and journal entries were coded with this and stored on a password-protected laptop and locked cabinet.

I set out to recruit a minimum of 10 participants. I anticipated that at least three participants would be female to determine whether gender differences existed. A total of 13 participants were interviewed. Of these, four females participated in the interview process. Interviews were also expected to last approximately 60 minutes when conducted in person. The first two face-to-face interviews did range between 50 to 60 minutes. The first one was conducted at the participant's home, at his request, and allowed for privacy. The second was conducted at a park to accommodate the participant's work schedule, and it was next to the hospital he was working at that day. However, the phone interviews, not counting the initial briefing and demographic data collection, lasted between 35 to 50 minutes. Phone interviews were conducted at the researcher's home, in a room that afforded privacy and was without interruptions. Audio-recording were completed using a phone purchased specifically for the study and not for personal use. It was also password protected and stored in a locked cabinet with the study files.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure that the integrity of the participants' responses was maintained. While the interview protocol consisted of four general questions, for some participants, additional supplementary questions were used to elicit a more thorough and detail-rich response from the participant.

I then followed the six steps outlined by Moustakas (1994), as shown in Chapter 3, to analyze the data. First, I reflected and journaled on my own experiences and beliefs

about the lowrider culture – bracketing – to identify any preconceptions and prior experiences regarding the questions and my own experiences with the lowrider community. Bracketing helped me put any biases aside and focus on the data presented. It was important that this researcher separate prior knowledge from what was presently being analyzed. I then reviewed both the audio recordings and transcriptions separately. Once all the transcriptions were completed, I read through them again and made notes on my impressions, identifying non-overlapping statements or what made them unique. Third, I read through the transcriptions again to develop a sound conceptualization of the lived experience, as described by each participant. Codes, such as words or phrases, were identified to highlight meaning units or themes that resonated within and between participant responses. These themes were then used to create a textural description of what Raza experienced as members of a lowrider car club, such as the thoughts and feelings presented by the participants. Next, I developed a structural description of how Raza experienced their membership in a lowrider car club. Lastly, these two descriptions were merged to create a composite description that expressed the essence of participants' lived experience as a member of a lowrider car club.

Coding Procedures

While reading and rereading through transcriptions, key words and phrases (codes) were identified to best reflect the nature and meaning of the responses. These codes were then sorted and grouped into themes based on similarities in meaning and purpose. These themes were then analyzed in terms of the three key concepts guiding this study discussed in Chapter 2: 1) How cultural values are represented in life choices and

associations, 2) How social capital influences group cohesion, and 3) How enculturation and acculturation impacts identity.

Codes associated with identity (e.g., personal identity and ethnic identity) included being different, wanting to prove themselves (to break negative stereotypes), demonstrating their passion, staying grounded, and staying humble (true to themselves). JS39 reported, "I think it's augmented it," when explaining how being a member of a lowrider car club has impacted his life or changed him. HV58 explained that being a member of a lowrider car club has helped him "change the way [I] treat people." In terms of social identity, codes that resonated across various participants related to friendships, being around like-minded people, and representing one's culture. GL86 described being in a lowrider car club as "an organization of a bunch of guys and girls that enjoy the exact same thing." JX70 stated it's "like a brotherhood/sisterhood.. you share the same passion." Lastly, codes such as loyalty, empowerment, family, brother/sisterhood, and providing support (for others & community). When asked why he is a member of a lowrider car club, KE35 reported, "our club is family-oriented… whatever you need, they will help you," while SN63 said he feels he has been able to "pave the way… like as in made the streets more safe." These codes were then grouped into five themes, which also represented core values within la Raza. Themes included: familia, pride, giving back to the community, respect, and comradery.

Themes Identified

Table 3

Codes and Themes

Themes				
Familia; Brotherhood/ Sisterhood (core value)	Pride (core value)	Giving back to the community (core value)	Respect (core value)	Comradery / Social Support (core value)
Understand each other	Be seen; Be recognized	Being a service the (one's) community	Be empowered	Want to be accepted by all
Appreciate one another	Flying the (club) plaque	Fundraisers	Empower others	Do things together
Dependability	New experiences	Becoming a non-profit organization	Creating positive social change	
Relationships evolve to be like family	Share/Create new memories	Making the streets safer	Breaking negative stereotypes	Comradery/ Camaradas
	Emulate, the lead		Give respect & Get respect	
	Keep the culture alive		Being real & genuine	
	Continue the traditions		Loyalty	
	Staying grounded		Honor	
	Share the same passion		Teaching the next generation	

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To demonstrate that the research data is trustworthy is to show that it has validity and reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness means that the data doesn't just stand alone, but rather, it can be compared, related, and/or supported by other research. While there are no other studies like this in the field of psychology, findings can still be aligned with studies in other social sciences. Four components of trustworthiness must be met: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

To assert that something is credible, one has to demonstrate that the information being reported is accurate and represented truthfully (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As suggested in Chapter 3, this researcher utilized several different strategies to achieve credibility. Adherence to an interview protocol, audio recording all interviews, and completing a thorough transcription of each interview served to ensure the same protocol was being followed for each participant. Journaling was used to process personal thoughts and feelings about the interviews or interactions with the participants. Member checking through the use of texts, emails, and or social media was used for additional contacts that afforded this researcher clarification and/or additional information related to their interview responses. Member checking helped confirm that the data collected was stated correctly and that the researcher understood what was being expressed. Participants were given a summary of their responses and asked to elaborate or confirm the accuracy and meaning of what was stated. The Institutional Review Board approved the informal methods used for member checking as a response to the need for extra safety protocols in

the midst of a pandemic, such as utilizing appropriate social distancing measures. Credibility was also facilitated by discussing parallels or similar concepts expressed by participants with my chair, friends who were not participants, and the research used for this study. Triangulation supported the credibility or internal validity of the data by supporting responses, especially when noted by multiple participants. For example, looking at pictures of club/chapter membership, a clear difference was noted between those clubs who reported they were family-oriented and included family in their photographs, whereas other clubs did not. Participants who provided referrals or facilitated connections with other potential participants were never advised if that referral agreed to or completed an interview. Participants were asked to refrain from discussing interview questions with other potential participants. Due to the public health emergency resulting from COVID-19 and the inability to attend car shows or related events, this researcher utilized social media to review pictures, posts, and videos that supported their interview responses. This researcher also consulted other lowrider car club members not participating or associated with this study to substantiate some of the interview data.

Transferability

This study was conducted with individuals of Mexican descent. Being able to demonstrate that participant responses agree with what persons of different ethnic backgrounds, ages, and geographical locations would help verify that the data has transferability. In this study, two participants were born and raised outside of California, and two were born in Mexico but have spent their adult life living in California. In general, participant backgrounds were very diverse – ranging from a physician living and

working in a suburb of Los Angeles to an electrician's apprentice living in the greater Atlanta area to a fry cook living in rural New Mexico. To address the issue of age, this researcher attempted to capture a broad range. Of the thirteen participants, one was in his 20s, four were between 30 and 50, and one was over 60. As noted in Chapter 3, I attempted to obtain detailed and thorough descriptions of participant responses. After reviewing the transcriptions, participants were contacted to confirm and/or review responses. This process of member checking allowed for similarities and differences among participants to be identified. For example, all participants expressed a love or passion for classic cars and a desire to give back to their community. These similarities support the notion that the data can be transferable to members of other lowrider car clubs outside the immediate demographics for this study.

Dependability

Dependability is exemplified by the researcher's ability to explain the steps and procedures used to conduct the study in a way that not only supported the idea that each participant was approached in the same way. These steps and procedures should then enable someone else to obtain similar responses with a similar participant sample. In Chapter 3, I described a plan for recruitment, conducting interviews, data collection, and storage. I also provided a six-step plan for data analysis. Organization, reliability, and consistency are critical elements in demonstrating dependability. A plan of action was established to help maintain consistency, transparency, and a map others could use to replicate this study. These were followed, with a few exceptions, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The most significant deviations from this plan were the use of an emailed

version of the consent form, the use of telephone interviews rather than face-to-face interviews, and the informal methods for member checking. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of four primary interview questions and some supplementary questions to augment the responses. While there was some variation in how these questions were posed, the integrity and nature of the questions remained intact. As the interviews were conducted, it became apparent that the questions were not worded in a conversational tone focusing on the individual participant's own lived experience. For example, instead of asking a participant: How do Raza describe their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club? This researcher asked participants supplementary questions. For example, on the first question, participants may have also been asked: Can you tell me a little bit about what it has been like for you to be a member of your car club? or Can you tell me a little bit about your experience being in a lowrider car club? All other forms of data collection, including recording and transcription methods, note-taking, member checking, and journaling, remained the same with all participants.

Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that if credibility, transferability, and dependability were identified, then confirmability would be expected. Confirmability is accomplished when the researcher can demonstrate that objectivity was used, transparency was evident, and bias was minimized, if not eliminated throughout the study with audit trails. Keeping the study structured with audit trails allows someone to follow the same steps to review and analyze the data collected and understand how the researcher reached their interpretations and conclusions. As discussed in Chapter 3, I

used several strategies to accomplish this. Journaling was used to process personal experiences, consultations with friends or professionals, and reflect on potential biases that may influence the study. Triangulation was also used to review photos, newspaper and magazine articles, and social media posts. Notes were also kept to demonstrate how codes related to the three key concepts described in Chapter 2 as the theoretical framework for this study. To avoid any ethical issues and eliminate bias, this researcher did not have any close relationships, maintained professional boundaries with participants, kept logs of activities, and separated electronic and paper files for each participant using pseudonyms for anonymity.

Results

This study explored the lived experience of Raza as members of a lowrider car club. The research questions were: How do Raza describe their lived experience as a member of a lowrider car club? and How has being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza? They provided the framework for the interview questions used. Four interview questions made up the semi-structured interview protocol. Several themes emerged from which Raza's lived experience as members of a lowrider car club can be described: familia, pride, giving back to the community, respect, and comradery.

Theme 1: Familia

The most common theme identified amongst all 13 participants was that being in a lowrider car club was like being part of a family, having an extended family, or feeling a sense of belonging to a family. This was in line with findings by Sandoval (2003), who demonstrated that the lowriding community not only promotes the importance of but

exemplifies the meaning of *familia*. Familismo/Familism was explained as the practice and attitude one adopts, emphasizing the importance of putting a family's needs before personal or individual needs (Constante et al., 2018; Hernandez & Bámaca-Colbert, 2016). Ingoldsby (1991) demonstrated that familism is the key to the success of a family, with both parents or the family system working together as a unit. Within some car clubs, the parent role may be represented by the cabinet, while all members work together as a family unit. TC28 explained:

> Through the months and then the years… we've become family. Family that ah… my kids see them like uncles and aunts. The older members become like grandpas to my kids. When they leave, we know that we have a brother that we can go visit somewhere else. It's not only that we're a club, we are more like a family kind of club. This club has given me a lot of familia out there… you start learning that the most important thing is familia.

Eleven of the 13 participants noted that being a member of a lowrider car club was like having an extended family or were encouraged to become members by other family members who were already in the car club. Garcia Diaz et al. (2019) discussed the idea that minorities (likely embracing collectivistic beliefs and attitudes) experienced family as an extension of themselves. This extension can be defined by one's own family engaging in lowriding practices, as well as club members who share interests, provide support, and demonstrate loyalty and commitment to the lowrider club lifestyle. Sabogal et al. (1987) explored this concept among Hispanics, suggesting it was associated with acculturation or one's desire to maintain strong (select) cultural values.

RD94 shared:

> Basically, we are like a family. Mainly, we're real close – everybody knows each other, everybody knows each other's families… everybody is always there for one another. We have our ups and downs, our agruments, but it's just like a family for me and we treat each other like a family. Only three are blood-related, the rest of us – the other guys have just been in the club for a long time, that's why we are like family. It's probably one of the things that keeps me connected to our culture… we don't have much family out here.

Four of the 13 participants reported that their car club was like a brother/sisterhood – emphasizing a sense of trust and belonging. A sense of pride in one's family has been associated with increased emotional support, unity, and an increased potential for an overall sense of happiness with life (Livas Stein et al., 2019). GL86 described being a member of a lowrider car club as follows:

> [We] develop this great thing that we call *carnalismo*... that is the heart of our club… and, to be part of that… with my new brothers and sister… we do stuff for each other… we experience changes every day. It's amazing to see… my brothers respect me just like I respect them… there's pretty much not much I would not do for any one of my car club members and family members – children especially… we're about the love and support from my fellow brothers and sisters from our club... my experience with the car club, I mean, it's amazing. It's a huge family and… it wouldn't be right, for me, if it wasn't like that.

Theme 2: Pride

Eleven of the 13 research participants in this study identified experiencing a sense of pride in being a member of a lowrider car club. Pride has been described as a unique virtue one can develop – whether it's in one's accomplishments or as a group effort. Others can also perceive it as a display of vanity or an attempt to elevate oneself in contrast to those around him/her. While pride might arguably have dual characteristics (Dickens & Robins, 2020; Tracy & Robins, 2014), it may be more of a demonstration of triumph over the decades of negative stereotypes, oppression, and marginalization. Lowriders have found a positive way to showcase that they can and have achieved something unique and appreciated across socioeconomic and racial lines.

JS39 recounted what it meant to be a member of his car club:

> So, it's been an amazing thing... there's something about it – there's like a real genuine friendship and comradery with it... I like it because it's one of the, I think, fundstions of lowriding in this country. And some people kinda thought of them as gangs on wheels… and I always wanted to try and show people that it's not like that. It's a lot of people that are hard working – police officers, businessmen, attorneys…there's myself – a physician. All kinds of people… lowriding has become part of the U.S. culture now and it's something unique the Mexican community sorta created. Whoever heard of a car going up and down? Nobody ever did that before Mexicans figured out how to do it. Now that stuff is extremely high-tech. People used to sorta think that lowriders… there's no way they could be as good as classic cars (or hot rods)… everybody thought lowriders

> couldn't be anything like that, but now some of them… are every bit as good as any other classic, amazing car in this country – except with a lowrider style. So we sort of invented this new part of American culture that a lot of peole like.

GL86 jokingly recalls a conversation with a man about his car:

> He asked me about my car: Why the small tires? Why the rims: Why the color? Why this, why that? And then I opened up my trunk and he goes, "Oh wow! What is this?" And I go, "These are hydraulics. This is what makes this car go up and down and makes it sit on 3 wheels, like you see it right now." And he goes, "Wow, look at those big speakers. What are they for?" And I go, "Those are to announce my arrival."

Seven of the 12 participants explained that it was vital for them to express their passion for lowriding and their love for cars. CT91 shared:

> I've always loved lowriders. I come from a family that's loved cars in general. I've just always admired cars… like a passion that I've always had in my heart. I can remember when I used to… buy Lowrider Magazines… I must have been like 10 years old and I used to look through the pages… till they were worn-out and I promised myself that I would someday own a lowrider and be in a car club… it's always good to be part of something in your life. Being part of a car club is wonderful… people have the same passion as you. If you work had… put a lot of… blood, sweat, and tears – like they say – into it, until you fulfil our dreams.

When asked if culture played a role in their reason for being a member of a lowrider car club, five of the 12 participants noted that culture was a significant part of what lowriding meant to them. SN63 described his pride in culture and lowriding as follows:

> It reminds me of all of our past, our parents… I was born into it… you have to have that love for it, you gotta have that… you gotta have the heart – you know, passion for it. My dad… he always wanted a car but never had one fixed up until I came along. My dad always had… a car… he considered a lowrider. He put sandbags in the trunk and it was lowered. It was back in the Pachuco time. I had a picture in front of these cars, doing Chicano Power, you know… holding my hand with my fist in the air. I was a little kid in diapers. It was in my blood. Then I came along… I got my first Impala and it was like end of story.

Two of the twelve participants who endorsed pride as a core value explained it by discussing the importance of being different, wanting to change/grow, or striving to be and do better. Sandoval (2003) discussed how Raza has always attempted to make something of themselves or for themselves despite their limited resources. With this same inclination, lowriders have been dedicated to improving themselves, their family, and their community, despite their limited resources. While the methods may have changed over the years, the goals and attitudes have remained within the now greater lowrider community. MT17 stated:

> I think being Hispanic, there's this… it's not an arrogance, but it's a sense of pride that… we come from a rich background of history and tradition. The majesty of all this history and rich culture… plays a huge factor in the lowrider

> scene. It's taking pride in that machine – in that vehicle that your're building. Your're gonna use that car as a tool, to effect some kind of positive change in people. So, we want better… nobody ever told me… my dad never told me that. He just said, "work and you can build your car." So a lot of pride, a lot of culture, a lot of history… it's kind of a sense of accomplishment and achievement to be able to build a car.

Theme 3: Giving back to the community

Ten of the 13 research participants in this study expressed similar views about the importance of giving back to their community – geographically and the overall lowrider community. Giving back to their community was the second most common core value or identifying factor in describing participants' lived experience as members of lowrider car clubs. KE35 described his experience with giving back as follows:

> With the classic car club that I'm with, we've been going out and doing… not community service, but we've been helping out the community. Um, we help with… funerals, with the little money that we collect, like from our dues, we can… we've been helping out the different causes. More for the community. And so I think,… that's something I think is really nice. We feed the homeless… we've done a lot of things and like, go to the hospitals. We used to do the Christmas in July. Um, that was for the kids that probably weren't going to make it till Christmas. So we used to do it in July… so it's something beautiful. I got to see the kids that were really sick… but they would come out and were very happy

> to see the cars. They would get very excited and for me, it was so beautiful to be able to take toys and them to the kids.

FA41 recalled her experience with giving back as follows:

> We try to do a lot of charity events – where all the money goes to one person, either they are fighting cancer or whatever it may be. We try to feed the homeless… try to keep all the grandkids or our kids in it… teaching, um… we can give blankets or jackets… to the homeless. We try to do that. we do it in our cars. And, as we go out, you know… we keep our hearts open, our minds open… and we try to help. And I just let them know… we are all one and we are all here for the same thing… to have fun and give to our community.

Theme 4: Respect

Nine of the 13 research participants in this study expressed similar views about respect. The concept of respect has been widely studied (Clucas, 2020; Dillon, 2010; Prestwich & Lalljee, 2009), especially regarding trying to distinguish it from the concept of liking someone (Prestwich & Lalljee, 2009). Lowrider car clubs, by virtue, choose to be family and choose to engage in (in-group servicing) activities. The put the needs of the whole before their own. This often includes staying in constant communication with each other, modeling appropriate behaviors, and demonstrating loyalty to the club and its members. WA37 illustrated how he shows his club (26 members) respect & how they are, in turn, given respect back from the community:

> … same thing, like when we go to a car show, I make sure all my members… wear the right colors, the right logo t-shirt that we're gonna represent for the

> day… and I make sure that we meet at a certain spot. All of us. Not just 3 or 4 of us. The whole club. Who's ever gonna show up, I make sure that we are all on the same page. I don't want anyone to ever feel they like they are not part of the club because he hasn't been around for because he doesn't put his 100% of time in to the club. I make sure all of us, we're on the same page. And that helps out tremendously.
>
> So we do get… like they say, a free pass like in Monopoly… "here comes Impalas Car Club, you guys are supporting us with all these cars, comen on in and you guys can come in early and set up wherever you guys want."

Of these 13 participants, seven of them specifically described respect as a specific value they feel is important to them and their club. Four of the 13 discussed empowering others as something they tried to bring to their club. JX70 described an experience where she was able to empower others:

> Last year I was invited, along with other girls – women lowriders – to be part of a panel for Women's Day and speak to the youth. That was one of the best things I've done because not only were we speaking to young girls, but young boys. And a lot of them didn't even know that girls can have cars ilke ours. And so they thought we were driving our boyfriend's cars, our husband's cars, our dad's cars. And when we all got there and we rolled-in in our cars. They all just stopped whatever they were doing… because we went to speak at a school… we made sure they knew we were there… had sirens and revving engines and everything…

> and it was like the coolest thing. A lot of them had really good questions, so it felt good. We were together… from different clubs… and the kids got to see that. A lot of them were inspired to go out and get their car or… do something else, other than whatever… society is telling them to do. They… saw that we all came from different backbrounds, we all have jobs, and we all are different in many ways, but because we share this passion we're all the same.

Lowriders come together around their passion for classic cars, their desire to cruise and show their cars together, and (perhaps selfishly) to feel a little sense of respect (from others, from the community), which they may not experience outside of the lowrider scene. Six of the thirteen participants noted positive social change, such as breaking negative stereotypes, creating a positive reputation, and promoting changes within their community as a key part of making their membership in a lowrider car club meaningful. Janis (1971, 1972) explained that groups might come together around a core set of values that espouse harmony and solidarity. Getting noticed and building a positive name for themselves, rather than letting people continue to see them as just a bunch of gang members, drug users, or self-centered narcissists that are only in it for the fame and glory (as my uncle once told me), has become so important for some car clubs that it has even been written into their bylaws.

Theme 5: Comradery

Six of the 13 research participants in this study shared that being a member of a lowrider car club and the greater lowrider community gave them a sense of comradery and being amongst others who shared their interests. Wilkins (2019) discussed comradery

amongs English as an additional language (EAL) stuents in terms of groups providing shared interests, cultural experiences, opportunities for resources, and imparting knowledge. Some Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs join a club because they are able to create close bonds with individuals who offer these elements to their life, but do not necessarily relate to their members or the lowrider community as family. Their solidarity is paramount, but continue to see their participation in the lowrider community as compartmentalized and separate from family.

JS39 described his experience being in a lowrider car club as the following:

> It's basically a brotherhood of friends and associates and family [members] that have been through this for years and years and years, like me. We met when I was in high school, which was back in 1973. And I've been in the club ever since. I think of it as being kind of a Kiwanis Club or the Lion's Club, or something like that. Cuz it's a social-community organization enjoys classic American cars. So it's made a big impression on me. So to me it's been a big deal – it's one of the ways I stay grounded. I think it's augmented [my life]. I think it's made it more multidimensional… it's an interesting social club. I always think of it as kind of the Water Buffalo Lodge on the Flinstones. So it's just like a lodge that the guys do that's fun. You do your family and you do your Lodge thing.

HV58 shared the following about his experience being in a lowrider car club:

> It's always been positive. Comradery. People coming together for a common interest or lifestyle. So it's always been positive. (It's given him)… a sense of belonging… mutual respect. Between people that are… interested or involved in

> the same thing I am. Everybody likes being associated or surrounding themselves with their peers – peole that have like interests… it's a group of my peers which makes me feel comfortable being surrounded by them. I've got friends from all over the world on Instagram because of the lowriding thing.

Seaton et al. (2019) described comradery in terms of individuals working together, helping each other, and building lasting bonds. Whether viewed as a brother- or sisterhood or just a social network, comradery contributed to mental wellness, acceptance, and a sense of belonging. As members of a lowrider car club, Raza have gone from being part of an enclave to a broader, more global community. Their networks are far stretching. They share experiences, expertise, and knowledge with one another. With chapters in multiple states, lowrider car clubs aren't just about representing your community anymore; they are a growing community that crosses gender lines and racial lines. Gross (2011) examined comradery military. While some military refer to each others as "brother in arms," others simply identify eachother as being part of a bigger group that show "preferential" treatment to eachother because they share a unique relationship. Raza in lowrider car clubs identify as being part of a bigger community, but still distinct from their own family.

PB42 described how she sees the comradery amongst lowriders:

> … before it was more… I don't know if it was more like a gang thing, but from what I remember, it was more like competition… everybody had their own. And now I don't see it… you pat each other on the back and you… give everybody props. Like, I love the women, whether they're riding bikes,… or the pin-ups or

whatever. Everybody's like that… everybody tries to support everybody – everybody's events. Like all the car clubs… they support each other a lot now. They help each other out. They all hang out together. It just seems like everybody pulls together in support now. And before, it was more like competition.

Table 4

Theme/Code Frequency

Themes	Frequency Participants	Code	Frequency of Code
Familia	13	Family	161
		Brotherhood/ Sisterhood	8
		Sense of Belonging	16
Pride	11	Being different	11
		Passion	22
		Culture	89
Giving back to the community	10	Providing support	35
		Fundraising	6
		Car Show	87
		Cultural/Community Events	59
Respect	9	Empowerment	3
		Loyalty	10
		Creating Positive Social Change	6
Comradery	6	Friendship	11
		Social Support	35
		Like-Minded	1

Discrepant Findings

This study set out to explore the lived experience of Raza who are members of a lowrider car club. The predominant response expressed by the participants of this study was that their experience was a positive one because they receive many benefits from being part of a club, in contrast with being a solo rider (not belonging to a car club). However, there were some deviations from how their lived experience has positively influenced their lives. Some participants of this study felt it was important to share that they have also had negative experiences. These experiences ranged from feeling like their club was being "run like a gang" to feeling like they didn't have a voice because they were a female. For other participants, living in a rural area limited their selection of car clubs. At times they felt like they were just a number or were only accepted because of what their car added to the club's reputation. Some female participants shared that they have had to work harder to prove themselves and be recognized. Namely, these discrepancies highlighted the importance of needing to do more research with female lowriders and the adversities they experience. Additionally, there is a growing change in the lowrider culture – moving more towards a family-oriented phenomenon rather than just holding strong familial values based on ethnic culture. While there were only two out-of-state participants, both discussed geographical issues that impacted their lived experience compared to car clubs from larger cities.

Challenges in the Female Lowrider Experience

While women have been part of the lowrider community and culture for decades (Bueno, 2010; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011; Zaragoza, 2015d), it has not been without

problems, which most men do not experience. Participants shared instances when they were questioned about their ability and commitment to the lowrider culture. *JX70* shared her experience with a painter who took credit for her car – design and aesthetics – and she described how she was part of two clubs that did not believe she (as a female) deserved to have a voice in club activities and politics. They have been overlooked as car owners – questioned whether their car actually belonged to their husbands or boyfriends. *PB42* described having men look past her at car shows when they ask for the car owner – even after she steps up to them. Men will ask, "who's car is this? Is this your husband's?" They have been challenged regarding their ability to clean or work on their own car. *PB42* stated, "I get out there and I clean it and wash it and I do the white-walls,… you can't just spray it down or whatever… you have to clean the chrome and it takes like two hours to clean it." *CT91* noted, "stuff like… washing it, waxing it, vacuuming, doing all the detail – all the brushing and shining the chrome – I still do all that." And they have been judged as fickle or attention-seeking. *FA41* discussed being told, "oh, girls just do this for fun… you guys don't really know nothing." And now she is the president of her own all-female lowrider car club. More research needs to be conducted to understand better this phenomenon and how women have coped and overcome these obstacles.

A Lodge for Men

Many participants in this study described their car club as being family-oriented. *JS39*, who has been a member of his lowrider car club since 1973, described car clubs as a social outlet for men. He explained that many of them were like that when he first became involved with lowriders. In his lowrider car club, they have been exclusive in

terms of family members and loved ones not being involved in club events, nor were they allowed to attend club meetings. However, this has been changing in the past 10 to 15 years. *SN63, WA37, TC28,* and *JX70* reported that they routinely include family when holding meetings, and having family at events is expected. Including family is a different understanding of family-oriented values initially described by Bright (1994) and Sandoval (2003). Family-oriented values within the lowriding community referred more to the idea that lowriding was multigenerational. Members would hand down the attitudes, practices, and traditions to their younger siblings and children. As it relates back to Raza, family-oriented values also meant that club members took care of their family's needs before their car. Being family-oriented now means including the whole family in all aspects of the lowriding phenomenon, including the building of lowriders, cruising, and showing of cars. Below are two images that demonstrate the differences between car clubs, those that include and do not include family.

Figure 3

Lowrider Car Club that Includes Family

Figure 4

Lowrider Car Club that does not Includes Family

Geographical Challenges

For many, but not all, Los Angeles or California is a mecca for lowriding, primarily because of the popularity and the weather. In most California towns and cities, lowriding practices take place year-round. This has also facilitated the number of ethnocentric car clubs – amongst Raza and other ethnic groups. However, participants in this study have noted that clubs are increasingly becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse. *RD94* explained that while lowriding is often associated with Hispanics and his car club was initially started with primarily all Hispanics (among family and friends), his club has become more ethnically diverse in recent years. This change is due to the lack of Hispanics interested in lowriding in his area and his desire to grow his club and build a reputation, both in Georgia and the greater lowrider community. *CT91* reported that their typical lowrider season is approximately Cinco de Mayo to Halloween due to weather in northern New Mexico. When possible, the rest of the year is utilized for repairs, upgrades, or the building of lowrider cars. This is different than what was described by participants living in California, who hold community events year-round. Focusing

research on individuals in lowrider car clubs residing in different parts of the U.S. or other parts of the world could offer new insights into how the lowriding culture is experienced, challenges, and accommodations.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the data collection and analysis for this study. I discussed the setting for interviews and changes made to the public health emergency across the US. An overview of the participants' demographics was also provided. I then detailed the data collection process and analysis. This was followed by a discussion on the evidence for trustworthiness, the study results, and a summary.

Chapter 5 includes an interpretation of findings and limitations of the study. It also includes recommendations for future studies and implications for social change. A conclusion will then capture the essence of the study.

Chapter 5: Interpretations and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experience of Raza who are members of a lowrider car club. The potential contributions of this study are threefold—its focus on Raza who are members of a lowrider car club, adding to the psychology literature on Raza in lowrider car clubs, and its availability to clinicians working with Raza. My lifelong interest in lowriding has been coupled with my interest in human behavior and why people make particular life choices that ultimately define their identity. Raza have been facing the pressure to acculturate if not assimilate for decades. But despite the pressures, stigmas, negative stereotypes, and misconceptions associated with lowriding, many people have chosen to accept this lifestyle. They also carry it like a badge of honor, wearing their "club gear" and showing or cruising their lowrider any chance they get. This study will help explain the meaning Raza has placed on this subculture, on this lifestyle, and describe the essence of their lived experience.

From the 13 interviews conducted with participants in this study, common themes identified included family/familism, pride, giving back, respect, and comradery. All participants described being a member of a lowrider car club as involving belonging to a family unit or having a brother/sisterhood-type connection with their fellow members and the greater lowrider community. Most participants described pride as relating to a sense of passion for cars, lowriding culture or lifestyle, a means of self-expression, or a reminder to stay humble despite accolades or achievements they may receive. Most participants discussed some form of giving back to their community. These gestures are a

form of demonstrating their solidarity with local leadership for the acceptance, support, and the opportunity to improve the lives of others. Vega (2001) explained how lowriders have been prevented from participating in community events. More communities are now supporting events hosted by lowrider car clubs and associated businesses. Due to the pandemic, car shows were canceled. As communities started to open up again, cruise nights have been allowed to allow the public to socialize outdoors and patronize local businesses. These events are not exclusive to lowriders, but rather encourage the inclusion of hot-rods, as well as all other custom cars, trucks, and motorcycles.

Respect was explained in terms of maintaining a positive self- and group-image, empowering one another, sharing a sense of loyalty to their values, club, and family, and promoting positive social change within the lowrider community as well as globally. Finally, many participants also described their experience as one that has afforded them comradery. Not merely within their club or community, but across the world. They have credited their experience as having opened up new connections, networking capabilities, and opportunities to learn from others. Chavez (2013) described how networking between clubs and members is sometimes referred to as the "homie hook-up." As individuals and clubs develop positive reputations, they are often afforded disounts simply by mentioning someone's name or association. Some may continue to associate lowriding with gang members or thugs cruising in their cars, smoking marijuana and listening to rap. However, Raza's experience is one of a healthy, supportive, legal, and safe means for them to maintain old traditions, embrace new perspectives, and celebrate each other.

In this chapter, I discuss how the findings confirmed, disconfirmed, or expanded the knowledge base within the field of psychology, and interpret them within the context of the theoretical frameworks. I present limitations of the qualitative study, what was modified, as well as what could impact trustworthiness and how future studies could enhance this research direction. I also provide recommendations for future research, implications for positive social change, and concluding remarks about the essence of this study.

Interpretation of Findings

A phenomenological approach was used to explore shared meanings and perceptions Raza hold about their membership in lowrider car clubs. While lowriding has been examined through the lens of other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and art, it has not been viewed through a psychological perspective. The goal of this study was to better understand lived experience involving this phenomenon and how it has influenced Raza life. A sample of both men and women was obtained. Women have been vastly underrepresented in research about lowriders. Participants were also recruited from three different states to explore differences based on geographical location. While most participants were in their 50s, the youngest was 22 years old, and the oldest was 65, which afforded some variability in terms of experience and meaning.

I captured a broad spectrum of ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. Some participants did not have stable employment at the time of their interview. Some held professional jobs. Most identified as Hispanic or Mexican American. Most were married. Seven of the 13 had been members of multiple car clubs but stated they would

not leave their current club and were committed to its identity, values, and objectives. Many participants also spoke about their dislike for club-hoppers while demonstrating compassion and understanding for their unwillingness or inability to commit to a club.

Confirmed

Several findings resonated with the research (Bright, 1994; Ides, 2009; Sandoval, 2003). These findings were explained via five primary themes. One theme that resonated with all 13 participants was familism or the perception that other club members were part of one's family. Despite the lowriding community becoming a global community, participants related that individuals who identified as lowriders and engaged in the lifestyle were viewed as extended family. Sandoval discussed this idea and how lowriders were dedicated to the empowerment and betterment of the lowriding community. To do this, they had to take pride in their own family, their club, and their local community. When those priorities were met, they could and would participate in a multitude of efforts to support other clubs, communities, and causes.

Another finding that confirmed existing research was feelings of respect and pride Raza who were members of lowrider car clubs felt for their family, club, and accomplishments. Bright (1994) reported that these values were closely associated with identity and were consistent among lowriders from three different states. These values became evident in study findings. Participants tried to remain humble and often turned down opportunities if individualized. Participants explained how they would prioritize their family and their club. For example, if offered a chance for a photoshoot, they asked to include other club members. If offered to present their car in a music video, they asked

if they could bring other club members. If traveling for a car show, they would consider their ability to take their family with them. Participants spoke about the fact that 30-40 years ago, this would not have been the case. It was very much a male-dominated community, and competition was paramount both within and across car clubs (Sandoval, 2003). Since competition is no longer a primary objective for many lowriders, pride is focused on creating a positive reputation for their club and family.

Bright (1994) and Sandoval (2003) reported that lowriders make concerted efforts to promote a positive message and image. Study findings demonstrated that creating a good reputation was important to Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs. Having their names and their cars talked about from community to community affords them sense of pride and immortality for their craft, community, and culture (Frost, 2002; Miner, 2014; Penland, 2003; Stienecker, 2010; Tatum, 2011). They accomplish this by giving back to their communities and participating in cultural events such as Cinco de Mayo festivals, community events such as Christmas parades, and fundraisers to help sponsor scholarships for athletes and other school organizations. They also follow strict codes of conduct that preclude them from engaging in any criminal activities, including but not limited to gangs and illicit drug use.

Patrón and Garcia (2016) reported that ethnic-based organizations help encourage individuals to enculturate and hold on to their heritage and cultural norms while remaining open to and adopting values and traditions from other cultural groups. Participating in organizations that support cultural identity empowers individuals to move beyond their perceived means or limits and create opportunities for themselves. For Raza,

being a member of a lowrider car club does just that. They may not be part of a Chicano-only club, but the lowriding culture espouses values and traditions commonly associated with Raza. Being a member of a lowrider car club also helps them build a lowrider that they may not otherwise be able to do alone and express their personal pride and identity through their lowrider. It is through their accomplishments that they also contribute to the positive image of their club.

Disconfirmed

While there are still those older clubs that view lowrider car clubs as the Water Buffalo Lodge on the Flintstones, there are many more lowrider car clubs that promote family inclusion to all or most aspects of their club life. The family-oriented clubs may include, but are not limited to, those that are predominately Raza, gender-specific, or mixed (race or gender). Where at one time, the men would get away away from their family and go hangout with the guys, the growing trend is now to allow the family to attend club meetings, participate in club events, and even engage in the lifestyle alongside lowrider club members. This change is evident at car shows, where family members can be seen sitting under the club tent. They wear club gear or matching shirts the club members wear. You can also see the kids displaying or riding their lowrider bicycles. Younger children may be seen playing with pedal cars designed to look like a lowrider or match a theme represented by a parent's car. At cruises, you see family members and friends sitting along the sidewalks, sometimes even BBQ'ing as a unified group while inviting their clubs to join them in solidarity. I had the opportunity to attend a club meeting held at a club member's house, joined by their family members, from

spouses or significant others to kids. Lastly, and most recently, I was also able to experience this familismo when I was invited to attend a *drive-by cruise* for a local lowrider who was recovering from surgery to remove cancer. Lowriders, family, friends, and community members rallied together and drove by his house flying posters showing love and support, delivering presents and food, and just simply showing him that the lowrider community was there for him. Meanwhile, there are still those clubs that do not allow even kids to attend meetings, and many club activities are for members only. The metaphor given about the Flintstones seems altogether adequate for this, as it represents an antiquated structure for a lowrider car club, especially one that has long been known to be ethnocentric and male-only.

The literature reviewed highlighted the importance of family as a cultural value, a part of ethnic identity, but not necessarily in terms of current practices within the lowrider community. While most participants seemed to identify with similar cultural values and belief systems, they did not necessarily associate lowriding with being Raza, Chicana/o, or any particular ethnic identity. While individually they may have identified with their cultural heritage, the study findings suggested that their membership in a lowrider car club was independent of their ethnic or racial identity. Meaning, the club did not identify itself as ethnocentric but rather inclusive and void of color-lines. And as some participants noted, they (the club) will participate in ethnic/cultural events but more so as a way to support their community, support individual members, and support the celebration of culture/heritage in general. So it is not just Cinco de Mayo or Chicano Park Day that they support or participate in, but they will participate in events such as Arbor

Day, 4th of July, and Veterans' Day. I have had the pleasure now due to this study to participate in two Christmas parades that had no affiliation to cultural traditions. Instead, they were representations of their passion for classic cars—lowrider cars.

Figure 5

Holiday Events

Extend

A limited amount of scholarly research was found about lowriders (Bright, 1994; Calvo, 2011; Chavez, 2013; Sandoval, 2003). Among these studies, none was conducted in the field of psychology. Bright examined the lowriding culture from three different geographical perspectives, based on the zeitgeist of the time (the mid-1980s). Chavez (2013) explored masculinity within the lowriding culture and community, focusing on a male perspective. Sandoval attempted to gain a better understanding of the lowriding experience through the perspective of the lowrider. Still, she examined it within the context of the historical Chicano experience in Los Angeles and the trends in pop-culture at the time.

What all of these studies were missing was the perspective of female lowriders. Both Chavez and Sandoval recommended additional research to explore the changes women are experiencing within the lowriding culture. Lowriding has long been viewed as a male-dominated culture, but as some of the participants in this study noted, this has been changing, and women are getting more recognition. They are no longer just a passenger in their *old man's car*, but they own, design, and maintain their own lowriders. Some are even entering specific niches like hoppers, and some are starting their own car clubs. Women lowriders are also being inducted into regional and national lowrider halls of fame for their lifetime dedication to the lifestyle. This study extends the research by demonstrating that women don't have a cursory role in lowriding but rather an increasingly active role.

Most of these studies also looked at lowriding during a time of many transitions – part due to social media, such as MTV and Lowrider Magazine. Due to popular culture, the over-sexualization of women within the lowriding culture – increased crime associated with big car shows (Super Shows), and increased popularity of lowriding worldwide, resulting in the over-commercialization of the lowriding scene. This study extended the knowledge base on the role of culture within the lowriding experience for Raza, who are members of a lowrider car club. It also increased the understanding of the influence this phenomenon has on their identity and self-image.

For example, what became evident during the interviews was why these individuals became members of lowrider car clubs and embraced a commitment to the lifestyle. For some, it was about family, culture, and legacies. Many participants

discussed the importance of passing on their passion for cars and heritage from one generation to the next. For others, it was an opportunity to be around like-minded people and have a social outlet. And still, some may not have admitted it, but it was an opportunity to demonstrate themselves, shine, and be seen as something more positive. These nuances contribute to the literature and understanding of how identity is developed and influenced by personal experiences, cultural values, and social context.

Theoretical Framework

This study set out to explore the lived experience of Raza as members of a lowrider car club. Three theories guided it: Erikson's identity development theory, Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory and Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory.

Erikson's Theory of Human Development

Erikson's theory (1968) examined how acculturation and enculturation influenced identity. For this study, it was used to differentiate how Raza, who are members of a lowrider car club, view themselves and those around them. Identity and the autonomy to express themselves have been an essential part of Raza, who are members of a lowrider car club (Bright, 1994; Chavez, 2013; Sandoval, 2003). Findings supported the idea that Raza join lowrider car clubs because of their personal goals, desires, and experiences. They hold on to specific aspects of who they are, which are often expressed in their lowrider while embracing select values and attitudes espoused by the club they join or the lowrider community in general. Therefore, they demonstrated experiencing enculturation more often than acculturation, which too often has been the goal of mainstream attitudes.

In essence, lowriding is both a form of resistance and an accepted means of expressing autonomy.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is relevant to this study because it examines ethnic and group identity and the concepts of groupthink and social capital. Study findings demonstrated that Raza who are members of lowrider car clubs not only self-identify with their ethnicity and associated heritage, but they also take on an identity as a lowrider. They may not recognize their lowrider identity as directly tied to their ethnic and cultural heritage, but they embrace the core values that continue to resonate with Raza's historical identity. Both the men and women identified their ethnic culture as an important part of who they are. However, they also identified themselves as part of a brother- or sisterhood that transcends gender, age, race, and socialeconomic status. The comradery they develop within the lowrider community is often guided by the sense of family and belonging they feel within their own chapter and club. It is this bond that serves as a protective factor and a healthy support system for them. It affords them a network of friends and family that helps them build their cars and empowers them to do better and be better. It is often their participation in car shows and fundraisers that truly demonstrates the bonds created within the lowrider community. This bond reflects the core values that Raza is raised with and taught from generation to generation.

Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (2001; 2011) suggests that individuals who adopt or part of a collectivistic culture will put the needs of the group/family before their

own as a means of promoting connectedness, fidelity, and loyalty. While some lowrider car clubs are moving to lifetime memberships, once an individual finds a club that is a good fit for them, they tend to commit to it (as one would commit to their family/marriage; Lopez Pulido & Reyes, 2017; Padilla, 1999; Sandoval, 2014). This study showed that Raza, who are members of a lowrider car club, hold these core values. The findings also reflected pride and respect as core values. While these may sometimes represent individualistic attitudes, the study results supported the idea that these benefitted the club and the greater lowrider community because they served to empower others, positively promote the culture and lifestyle, and united both the club members and their families. Participants discussed the pride they felt competing, but it was incomparable to the pride they felt cruising with their family. Cruising allows them to represent their accomplishments, their club, and their joy of having family share their experiences.

Limitations of the Study

For this study to effectively contribute to the knowledge base in psychology, trustworthiness needed to be established. A limitation of this study was my inability to meet with participants in person due to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19 and the required stay-at-home orders followed by recommended social distancing. This situation prevented me from traveling and it also resulted in the cancelation of most car shows and cruising events that would have otherwise offered additional supporting data. These events were canceled across the US. Another limitation of this study was that many of the individuals who were willing to participate either did not want to use a social

media application, such as Zoom, Team Meetings, video calls on Messenger, or FaceTime. Several were simply not familiar with these applications or did not feel comfortable using them with someone they did not know. One exception was made to the initial criteria for participation in order to meet saturation. Two participants were born in Mexico, but were raised in the U.S. and were the president of their car club.

Transferability of results may also be limited because participants only represented a few states. Having had a wider breadth of participants may have added to the variability in lived experience. However, the responses from the two out of state participants mirrored those from California in many ways. Similarly, the perspective and lived experiences described by the two participants born in Mexico also echosed those of the other participants. Furthermore, while the four women interviewed for this study shared many of the same experiences, there were clear differences within them. Having a larger sample of female participants may also provide a richer and more complete perspective of their lived experience. Lastly, transferability may also be limited towards lowriders who are younger, such as those considered millennials. A larger sample of this age group would be beneficial to understanding how the lowriding experience is changing and how different generations experience this phenomenon.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research were identified after a review of the strengths and weaknesses of this study, as well as the literature presented in Chapter 2. Revisions to Chapter 2 were not needed. My first recommendation would be to expand the scope of this study to include participants of different ethnic groups. A broader

sample of ages is also recommended as the length of time or commitment to this lifestyle may vary with age and, therefore, provided some variability in perspectives. Another demographic that I would suggest expanding is the location of car clubs. As the lowrider community continues to grow and it may no longer be seen as part of the Chicano Movement, the core values have been maintained and adopted by those that engage in this lifestyle. How that is manifested in different parts of the county, and even the world, will be beneficial in demonstrating the benefits of being part of the lowrider community. Durkheim (1951) explained that a protective factor against depression and even suicide is a sense of belonging and acceptance to a greater whole. Being part of the lowrider community allows people to feel like they are part of a bigger cause or purpose. Finally, while conducting interviews by phone was fruitful and allowed participants in this study to speak freely because they were not being observed, conducting in-person interviews provides the interviewer with a glimpse into the person that can only be obtained in vivo. A recommendation would be to complete a follow-up interview session in person. Most participants in this study were willing to meet in person after completing the interview by phone.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The implications of this study for positive social change are significant in terms of what it can contribute to cultural awareness issues among clinicians, as well as validation for lowriders across the country who see this lifestyle as a badge of honor, a means of receiving respect, and a way of paying things forward. Roth et al. (2019) discussed the

implications of the Hispanic population being heterogeneous and the importance of understanding the protective and risk factors associated with different subgroups. Lowriding functions as a protective factor for preventing severe mental health issues through building networks, validation, and pride. Clinicians can benefit from understanding how lowrider car clubs provide the needed support systems, opportunities for empowerment and autonomy, and how they offer a sense of belonging and connectedness that moderates the effects of daily struggles. Additionally, the study results can add to the psychology knowledge base by demonstrating that the lowrider culture, for Raza, represents part of their heritage and an attitude of positivity, acceptance of others, and respect that is empowering.

Findings indicated that Raza strongly benefits from their membership in lowrider car clubs and is purposeful in promoting a positive image. Their propensity to see others as (extended) family and dedication to serving each other and their community is an effective means to coping with economic struggles, disenfranchisement, loss of loved ones, employment, and life's daily challenges. This same support system also helps them rejoice during happy times, such as weddings, christenings, births, and personal triumphs (like taking *best in show* or getting recognized in a magazine or music video). These messages can be conveyed to clinicians and other professionals through conferences, journal or magazine articles, and trainings. By better understanding the benefits of taking part in a lowrider car club, especially one associated with strong cultural values, even if absent of ethnic traditions and aesthetics, mental health professionals and paraprofessionals can gain insight into what the culture of lowriding means to Raza.

During the debriefings, many participants stated that they wanted to participate in this study to help deliver a positive message about lowriding and Raza. They also wanted to send a message to scholars and the general public that lowriders are not gangsters and that members of car clubs generally hold strict codes of conduct, including not being involved in gangs, crimes, and illicit drug use. Many also shared that they are proud of their heritage and their culture (as Raza and as lowriders) and have experienced adversity and discrimination for being Raza. Therefore, they want to be part of an organization that promotes inclusion rather than exclusion within their car clubs and the greater lowrider community. They were also interested in learning about the study findings so that they could share them with their club members, family, and community. Raza are a proud people and as lowriders they finally have a healthy means of expressing their pride, their heritage, and their respect for one another – regardless of race, age, socioeconomic status, club affiliation, or even being a solo-rider.

By discussing and disseminating study findings, it is my hope to contribute and emphasize the continued acceptance of cultural differences within the fellowship of their club members and between car clubs. Positive social change can also be promoted by presenting both the struggle of Raza and the progress they have achieved through their membership in lowrider car clubs. This study demonstrated that how much a person makes is not a determinant of their participation in a car club. While most lowrider car clubs require their members to have a lowrider car (or motorcycle; see Figure), they are not always expected to be show quality. For some members, it takes years, even decades, to achieve the status of a show car. For others, it is the brother- or sisterhood that is more

meaningful to them. The transition of lowriding as a male-dominated community to a more family-oriented community has transformed both the culture and the lifestyle. This is now something being adopted world-wide (Kercher, 2015; Penland, 2003; Tatum, 2011). While there remains an element of competition within the lowriding community, it is not limited to men. Even children are encouraged to participate by building lowrider bikes or pedal cars in order to teach them strong values, as well as pride in self and group and community.

Figure 6

Lowrider Motorcycle

Methodological Implications

Study findings demonstrated the benefit of using this methodological approach with Raza who are members of a lowrider car club. Many participants noted that they enjoyed the interview process because they were asked questions that were different from their typical interviews for magazine or newspaper articles. Perhaps because of their leadership role or their decades of dedication to the lowriding culture and lifestyle,

several participants discussed being interviewed by people from all over the world. But this experience was unique to them because it was about them and not specifically about their car or their club. Future research should utilize a phenomenological approach with a larger and broader sample of participants. More variability in age, length of membership, geographical location, and ethnic identity should be considered. While many clubs are still largely ethnocentric, there are now clubs representing communities of African Americans, Armenians, Pacific Islanders, Japanese, and Native Americans. However, many clubs are also becoming more inclusive. The inclusion of women was important for this study, but researchers may also consider a study of women only. While some car clubs accept women as members, many women are choosing to participate in all-women car clubs. Understanding the significance of these choices can also contribute to the growing literature on the psychology of women. As lowriding continues to grow and spread throughout the country, additional research should focus on recruiting participants from non-border states or states that do not have a large Hispanic population.

Conclusions

When I set out to start this study, I faced my own challenges as a female researcher trying to address male lowriders. It was difficult to identify the female lowriders. What I didn't realize was the growing trend to have families present at car shows and local events. Therefore, it was often difficult for me to approach a group of strangers with my inquiries – unclear who the car owners and club members were – since they were all representing their club with matching apparel. As I became more familiar with the lowriding community and began to meet people, it opened my eyes and mind. I

can now say that I have developed friendships with some of the individuals who helped me navigate the lowrider community.

This once male-dominated phenomenon has since become a family-oriented lifestyle that demonstrates strong ethnocentric cultural values such as family, unity, loyalty, and respect. It is multigenerational and emphasizes the passing-down of values, attitudes, and life lessons. Raza, who are members of a lowrider car club, advocate for community involvement, and empower members to be autonomous and innovative. They offer support to one another during both happy life transitions, such as weddings, christenings, and significant accomplishments, and difficult or troubling times, such as death or funerals, loss of employment, and personal struggles such as addiction, depression, or divorce.

Many of the participants in this study talked about their passion for classic cars and their commitment to this lifestyle. For some, it is significantly tied to their heritage, and for others, it is merely an opportunity to be around others who think like them and enjoy the same things they do – cars, shows, and the chance to experience new things. While many participants in this study denied their lived experience as a member of a lowrider car club changed them, I posit that it has. Perhaps it has not changed their core values, which resonate within their car club or even the lowriding culture as a whole. But participants discussed becoming more outgoing, self-driven, compassionate, or even determined due to their experiences. Participants described experiences that have changed their lives, such as participating in a toy drive for a children's hospital and seeing the excitement in the faces of children whose illness would likely cut their life

short. Others spoke about the negative experiences they had in other car clubs and how that has impacted the choices they now make and their outlook on life – their identity.

I also started this study with the understanding that lowriding was now a phenomenon that traversed the globe. But I did not fully appreciate the extent to which this lifestyle has been embraced by so many other ethnic/cultural groups, both domestic and international. What was once considered part of the Chicano Movement and a form of resistance against colonialism and disenfranchisement experienced by Raza has now taken hold across every continent, except Antarctica.

Building of a lowrider still demonstrates aspects of resistance through the customization of cars, trucks, and motorcycles. It is still an example of rasquachismo as individuals find quick ways of fixing things on the spot just to get to an event. As Raza continues to progress and evolve, their achievements and pride can also be see through their unique designs, us of unconventional materials, or elaborate styles in the paint work, customized parts and body work, or even in the selection of the name given to the car. What seems to resonate with Raza who are members of a lowrider car club is their passion for cars, the brother- or sisterhood they experience, and the loyalty they both give and receive from their club members and the greater lowrider community. The networks they build with other lowriders aid in expanding their view of the world around them encourages them to consider alternative perspectives, and empowers them to test their own limits. Where once it was primarily about competition and having a show car, it is now more about the lifestyle, which includes solo riders and club members. It emphasizes the importance of taking pride and respecting something bigger than yourself, your

community, your family, and your club. For Raza, who are members of a lowrider car club, the phenomenon is about honoring your heritage, celebrating what you have now, and creating positive change for a better tomorrow.

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Appendix A: NIH Office of Extramural Research

Certificate of Completion for Elizabeth G. Ramos

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Elizabeth Ramos** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 08/02/2015

Certification Number: 1807784

Appendix B: Screening Interview Questions

Thank you for your interest in being a part of this research study. I need to inform you that this phone call is being recorded for purposes of accuracy and research integrity.

Are you okay with this call being recorded? YES NO

If you are selected to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign a Consent to Participate form at the start of the initial face-to-face interview.

This screening interview is meant to provide the researcher with enough details about you to select the most appropriate candidates for the research study. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Numerical Code: _____ Primary Contact Phone: _____

Address of residence (for mailing of forms, if preferred):

_____

Email address (for sending forms, if preferred):

_____

1. What is your gender? MALE FEMALE

2. What is your age? _____

3. Are you of Mexican decent? YES NO

4. Are you a member of a lowrider car club? YES NO

5. How long have you been a member of a lowrider car club? _____ years

Do you have any questions at this time?

_____

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

GIVE YOUR BROWN PRIDE A VOICE

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

For a study on the lowriding experience

Culture, Identity, & Pride

Are you a member of a lowrider car club?

Participants must be 18 year of age or older &

Willing to complete an in-person interview

Leave a Voice Message at: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]
Elizabeth G. Ramos, Walden University
IRB Approval #01-17-20-0061915

Appendix D: Invitation to Participate

Date:

Name of Participant
Address

To whom it may concern,

My name is Elizabeth Ramos and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University, pursuing a PhD in Clinical Psychology. I am conducting a study on the lived experience of Raza who are lowrider car club members. There are several studies on what a lowrider car is and how they have evolved over the years. What is not well known, however, are the perceptions and meanings both female and male Raza have about their experiences. This research will provide insight into what these men and women experience as members of a lowrider car club.

I realize that your time is important to you and I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. To participate in this study, I am requesting that you be 18-years or older. You must be of Mexican descent. You must speak, read, and write in English. And you must have at least five years of active participation in a lowrider car club. In order to fully understand your experience we need to meet face-to-face for approximately one hour to complete an interview. This meeting can be held at a location of your choosing. Follow-up discussions may take place over the phone, email, or your preferred choice for communication.

This study has been approved by the Walden University institutional review board (IRB). If you are interested in participating and meet the criteria stated above, please contact me at [redacted]. All the information you provide as part of this study is confidential and will not be used for any other purposes outside of this study.

I would like to thank you in advance for your interest. Although the compensation is only a $5 gift card to Starbucks, your participation may help the primary researcher and other professionals in the mental health field learn more about the perceptions and meanings held about their experiences in a lowrider car club. The information from this study may help professionals and educators, as well as promote greater social awareness of the role lowrider car clubs play amongst individuals and the communities they live in.

Thank you again!

Elizabeth G. Ramos, MS, Primary Researcher
Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology
Y. Zentella, Ph.D., Chairperson
Walden University

Appendix E: Demographics

Today's Date: _____ Time: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Car Club Name: _____

Participant's Name: _____

Sex/Gender: _____ Birth Date: _____

Age: _____ Birth Place: _____

Ethnic Identity: _____

Childhood Family Structure: (check all that apply)

Intact: ☐ Divorced: ☐ Extended Family: ☐ Adopted: ☐

Type of community you grew up in: (check all that apply)

Rural: ☐ City: ☐ Primarily Latino/Mexican: ☐ Diverse: ☐

Type of community you currently live in: (check all that apply)

Rural: ☐ City: ☐ Primarily Latino/Mexican: ☐ Diverse: ☐

Current Family Structure:

Single: ☐ Married/Long-Term Partner: ☐ Separated: ☐

Divorced: ☐ Widowed: ☐

Complete Education Level: Less than High School: ☐ High School/GED: ☐

Vocational: ☐ College: ☐ Graduate School: ☐

Occupation: _____

Annual Income: Less than $29,999: ☐ $30,000 to $44,999: ☐

$45,000 to $59,999: ☐ $60,000 to $74,999: ☐

$75,000 to $99,999: ☐ Over $100,000: ☐

Appendix F: Interview Protocol

Briefing: This interview should take approximately 60 minutes and consists of a series of open-ended questions, please share as much as you are comfortable doing so. The interview will be audio recorded, but all the information you provide will be kept confidential and only available to my research team.

Thank you again for your participation in this study. The focus is on your experiences as a member of a lowrider car club. My interest in this topic is to better understand what it is like to be a member of a lowrider car club through the lens of a person of Mexican descent. I am interested in helping other psychologists and educators understand this experience which may sometimes be misunderstood and overlooked.

1) How do Raza describe their lived experience as members of a lowrider car club?
   a. Can you tell me a little about what it has been like for you as a member of a lowrider car club?
   b. What do you think you have contributed to the club versus what it has provided you?
   c. What changes have you experienced since joining a lowrider car club?
   d. What does it mean to you to be part of a lowrider car club?

2) In what way do Raza who are members of a lowrider car club perceive the role the club culture plays in their lives?
   a. What is your cultural background?
   b. How has your membership in a lowrider car club influenced the way you think about your cultural background?
   c. In contrast, to what extent do you think your cultural background has impacted your membership in a lowrider car club?

3) How does Raza describe their purpose for being in a lowrider car club?
   a. When did you know you wanted to join a lowrider car club?
   b. What are some of the reasons you joined a lowrider car club?
   c. Have you ever changed car clubs or considered changing your car club membership? Why? Or why not?

4) How has being a member of a lowrider car club influenced the lives of Raza?
   a. How would you describe yourself before you joined the lowrider car club?
   b. How has your membership in a lowrider car club impacted your life?
   c. What would you share with others about joining and being a member of a lowrider car club?

Debriefing: Do you have any final comments about your experiences as a member of a lowrider car club? Tell me about your experience during this interview? Was there anything you discovered about yourself or life in lowrider car club? Do you have any questions?

Appendix G: Walden IRB Permission

workflow@laureate.net
Fri 1/17/2020 3:19 PM
To: Elizabeth Ramos
Cc: Yoly Zentella; Jane E. Lyons

Congratulations! Your Walden Institutional Review Board application has been approved. As such, you are approved by Walden University to proceed to the final study stage.

2020.01.17 17:17:17 -06'00'