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Exploring the Dating Experiences of Biracial Women

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Abstract

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by

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MA, California State University, Sacramento, 2008

BS, California State University, Stanislaus, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

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Abstract

Census data highlight swiftly changing demographics in the United States with over 9

million people self-identifying as multiracial. Scholars agree that the multiracial

population has been historically understudied, and that this population may have differing

experiences from the majority and other minorities. The purpose of this study was to gain

a better understanding of the dating experiences of women who self-identify as Latina

and Caucasian. This study was grounded in literature pertaining to the unique experiences

of multiracial individuals, with emphasis on biracial relationship experiences, family

influence on biracial identity and experiences, and the history of biracial identity theory

development. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis to guide the study, eight

biracial women were interviewed. From these interviews, data were gathered that

highlighted the dating experiences of biracial women, the unique dating challenges they

faced, and how biracial women perceived family influence on their dating experiences.

Key findings include a deeper understanding of the fluidity of biracial self-identity,

descriptors that are used to describe the physical appearance of biracial women by dating

partners, and the ways in which families influence dating partner selection. While this

study contributed to narrowing the gap in the literature it is recommended that further

research focus on the unique experiences of biracial individuals. Understanding these

unique experiences may not only assist mental health practitioners in gaining a deeper

understanding of an understudied population, but also serves to better inform society

about culture and diversity issues in general. A deeper understanding of diversity and

greater cultural awareness are steps toward positive social change through culturally

informed practice and policy implementation.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation, this achievement, to my mother. Nancy Callaway was one of the kindest, bravest, and most generous women. I had the unique privilege of calling her "Mom", and "friend". Her love and support got me through most of this journey, and honoring her memory pushed me through to the finish line. I would also like to honor my father, Tim Callaway, who through example, taught his children the value of hard work and accomplishing set goals. Lastly, I would like to honor my husband who offered his continued support, love, and understanding while I spent countless hours working on this project. Glenn Higgins…you are my rock. I want to emphasize that this was not a solo journey, and it could not have been done without the endless support of my committee, my family, my mentor, and my furry companions.

Acknowledgments

I would like to offer a huge thank you to the members of my committee. Dr. Susan Rarick has shown me tremendous support as I slowly made my way through the twists and turns of this journey. Her never-ending support, her guidance, and her incredible editing skills made this project possible. I will never stop being grateful that she didn't give up on me. I also want to thank Dr. Susana Verdinelli for all her guidance regarding my methodology. She was always there with helpful resources when I felt like pulling my hair out and she helped make my project better. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Chet Lesniak who was my very first professor on this doctoral journey. He was quite inspiring during my foundations course, and it seemed fitting that he was there to witness the completion of my degree.

To the biracial women who made this study possible, thank you for trusting me with your stories. Your willingness to explore these topics will serve to further the understanding of a population of people who have been largely unnoticed in academic research. Your participation in my journey toward a better of understanding of what it means to be biracial will not be forgotten.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the dating experiences of women who self-identify as biracial, specifically, Latina and Caucasian. As two cultures with varying beliefs, customs, and group experiences, individuals who straddle both cultures may have differing dating experiences from individuals who identify with a single culture. Further, this study sought to explore the familial influences on the selection of dating partners by biracial women. For example, is the minority culture parent more likely to encourage biracial female offspring to select dating partners from the minority culture, or vice versa?

The goal of this study was two-fold. The first goal was that the research would serve to start bridging the current gap in literature regarding the lived experiences of biracial individuals. The second goal was to provide a deeper understanding of human experiences and human behavior, from the perspective of the biracial person. Striving to achieve these goals assists in empowering a historically understudied and understood population.

The social change implication of this study was an overall increased awareness of issues of culture and diversity. Increasing understanding of cultural diversity can lead to the breakdown of cultural barriers, greater human connection, more positive interactions, and more informed leadership and legislation. Demonstrating respect and understanding of differences between and within cultures facilitates the move toward a more healthy and peaceful society.

In this chapter, I discuss the background and foundations of this study. I present the problem statement and address the research gaps in the current literature. I briefly discuss the conceptual framework which guided this study and provided relevant definitions. Finally, I discuss the assumptions, limitations, and the significance of the proposed research.

Background

Despite rapidly changing Census data over the last 30 years, which illustrates a growing population of mixed-race individuals, research in psychology has yet to adequately capture the experiences of individuals who belong to multiple cultures. According to the Census Bureau (2011), almost 3% of individuals living in the United States self-identified as mixed-race. In California, where 37% of individuals identified as White alone (not of Hispanic origin) and 39% identified as Hispanic or Latino, it is expected that the number of mixed-race individuals will continue to grow over time. Currently, almost 4% of Californians self-identify as two or more races, which is a full percent higher than the national average. Researchers in psychology agree that mixed-race individuals are an understudied segment of a population that is rapidly growing (Harris et al., 2018; McGrath et al., 2016; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). According to Harris et al. (2018), college campuses have seen a 97% increase in students who self-identify as multiracial. However, when reviewing the literature, the authors found that less than 1% of academic research focused on multiraciality. This study served to address this research gap.

While current research surrounding the experiences of biracial individuals has been minimal, what has been done suggests that more focus is needed to promote a greater and clearer understanding of biracialness. For example, Nuttgens (2010) found that the experiences of the biracial individual fit poorly with conventional theory and research in this area. Specifically, through narrative inquiry, Nuttgens found that unlike much of the research on biracial identity theory—which paints a very bleak picture—the biracial experience can be positive and rewarding. Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) explored racial identity, dating practices, and therapeutic needs of biracial women. From this work, the authors found that one of the greatest challenges that biracial women face is the dilemma of whom to date and ultimately, marry. Research indicated that dating and marriage choices could be particularly difficult due to strong allegiances to either one or both of their racial heritages. However, the authors recommended further research in this area was needed to fully understand the scope of the problem.

Problem Statement

Many scholars agree that biracial individuals are an understudied population (Harris et al., 2018; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). This is especially problematic for mental health practitioners as mixed-race marriages have continued to become more common in North America, and thus the biracial population has increased at rapid rates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Biracial individuals may face unique challenges or have differing experiences from those of the majority culture. Integrating families where more than one culture is represented,

especially cultures with differing world views, languages, customs, may be enriching as well as present unique challenges for the biracial individual.

Nuttgens (2010) pointed out that little research in psychology has focused on understanding how straddling two or more cultures may affect the experiences of the biracial individual, including dating and marital experiences. Choosing a dating partner is often a precursor to marriage and to building a family. Roberts-Clark et al. (2004) posited that gaining a clearer understanding of what role familial influences might have on the biracial individuals' dating experiences could prove helpful in psychotherapy. When individuals belong to two cultures, they may feel strong allegiance to both of their ethnic heritages making choices such as selecting a dating partner challenges. Heffernan et al. (2019) discovered that similarly to conventional theories regarding mate preferences, biracial individuals are also more likely to pair with a partner who resembles one of their parent's ethnic identity. This study will potentially assist psychotherapists in gaining a broader understanding of the experiences of biracial individuals.

Understanding these unique experiences may also promote positive social change by assisting not only mental health practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of a historically understudied population, but to also better inform society in general. Deeper understanding and greater cultural awareness are steps toward more informed practice and policy implementation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the dating experiences of biracial women, specifically women who self-identify as both Latina and

Caucasian. To achieve this purpose, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was applied to explore the phenomenon of dating. Through the use of in-depth interviews, the unique dating challenges that biracial women may face was explored as well as gathering information regarding familial influence on dating partner selection. Gaining a better understanding of the unique experiences of this population serves to address the gap in the literature identified by many researchers (Harris et al., 2018; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011), better prepare psychotherapists when working with this population, and overall provides a deeper cultural awareness of biracialness.

Research Questions

This qualitative research study addressed the following research questions through the application of IPA:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the dating experiences of biracial women?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the dating challenges experienced by biracial women?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do biracial women perceive family influence on their dating experiences?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

In qualitative research, researchers may choose to provide a theoretical lens or perspective in which to guide and shape the project, rather than the reliance upon a specific theory or orientation (Creswell, 2014). My study utilized a conceptual framework which included biracial identity formation models and emergent themes in

literature relevant to the biracial experience. I primarily grounded my study in literature pertaining to the unique experiences of multiracial individuals (Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011; Nuttgens, 2010; Shih & Sanchez, 2009), with emphasis on biracial relationship experiences, family influence of biracial identity and experiences, and the history of biracial identity theory development. While little research has focused on the specific phenomenon of dating as a biracial individual (Heffernan et al., 2019; Roberts-Clarke et al., 2004) this study attempted to generate research which could further illuminate this specific population's experiences. The conceptual framework for this IPA study is discussed in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative research study focused on the dating experiences of biracial women, exploring the challenges they may face and the familial influence on dating partner selection. As little research has focused on this phenomenon (Heffernan et al., 2019; Roberts-Clarke et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011), the qualitative approach was chosen as it allowed themes to emerge from the data collected (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, IPA was utilized as this study focused on the phenomenon of dating.

Miville et al. (2005) used a phenomenological methodology while exploring the racial identity themes of multiracial individuals. The authors posited that this approach was most appropriate as it allowed the researchers to explore the meaning of racial identity as the phenomenon. For my research study, the focus was on the dating experiences of biracial women as the shared phenomenon.

In-depth interviews were used. Eight participants were recruited using referral, opportunity, and snowball strategies. Participants self-identified as both Latina and Caucasian, were over the age of 18, and had experienced dating. These parameters were put in place to find participants who share similarities, to make the research questions more relevant to a particular group (Smith et al., 2009). By focusing on participants of specific gender, culture, and age, the lived experiences of the phenomenon of dating was most relevant to this particular sample of participants.

Operational Definitions

The following key terms were used throughout the research study:

Biracial, *multi-racial*, and *mixed-race*: all terms that generally refer to individuals who identify with two or more racial heritages. Many scholars (Roberts-Clarke et al., 2004; Root, 1992; Sanchez & Bonam, 2009) are observed to use the terms interchangeably in their research.

Caucasian: a term historically used to describe people coded by society as White or of European decent (Westby, 2020). While this term is being phased out in favor of better descriptors it should be noted that this term is prevalent in the literature and participants often referred to themselves in this way.

Latino/a: terms derived from American Spanish to refer to individuals originating from or having a heritage related to Latin America (Comas-Diaz, 2001; Helm, 2019. Per rules of the Spanish language, Latino refers to males and Latina to females.

It should be noted that the term *Hispanic* is often used interchangeably with the term *Latino*, to refer to Spanish speaking people (Comas-Diaz, 2001). Borak et al. (2004)

pointed out that this term is used inconsistently and often, incorrectly. The use of the term Hispanic may be misleading as it includes reference to individuals deriving from Spain and excludes Brazilians, whose native language is Portuguese (Comas-Diaz, 2001). For the purposes of this study, the term *Latino* was utilized in an attempt to most correctly refer to individuals with Latin American heritage.

White: a term generally used to refer to people coded by society as individuals with light colored skin (Westby, 2020).

Assumptions

There was one glaring assumption made in this study which could not easily be mitigated and that was the reliance on the self-report of racial status by the participants. The assumption was made that if participants reported that they met the demographic criteria laid out that they were in fact of Latino and Caucasian ethnicity. Attempts were not made to verify racial status as this would be a time consuming and if not, impossible endeavor. A second assumption was one of honesty and reliance upon participants to as accurately as they were able to describe both their racial statuses and experiences pertaining to the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study focused on the dating experiences of biracial women, specifically those who self-identified as Latina and Caucasian. In order to make the research questions more relevant to a particular group (Smith et al., 2009), other demographic criteria included identifying as a woman, and being over the age of 18. While making these choices may reduce transferability, the scope of this study was to

explore the shared dating experiences of Latina and Caucasian women. This topic was meant to bring attention to what little is known about the experiences of biracial women, especially when it comes to dating, and narrow the literature gap in this area. The results of this study may lead to a better understanding of how straddling two cultures influences and shapes one's experiences.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it does not transfer to all biracial women. The issue of transferability was previously mentioned above, as this study narrows the focus to explore the dating experiences of women who self-identify as Latina and Caucasian. Another potential limitation may be the use of technology such as Skype or Zoom to conduct interviews, as social distancing was still in effect due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The use of such technology may have affected rapport building and comfortability between the participant and the researcher.

Significance

This study is unique as it explored the phenomenon of dating amongst women who self-identify as Latina and Caucasian. As dating is typically a precursor to major life events, such as marriage and family choices, this research has the potential to aid mental health practitioners in the therapeutic setting. By having a deeper understanding of biracial women's' experiences, mental health practitioners will be able to deliver more culturally informed services. The exploration of the experiences of biracial women also serves as a contribution to cultural diversity literature, as many scholars have agreed that

biracial individuals are a historically understudied population (Harris et al., 2018; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011).

Cultural diversity can encompass individuals of different race, ethnicity, religion, education level, socioeconomic status, ability, and more (Adler & Elmhorst, 2010). Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) discussed the importance of mental health practitioners becoming culturally competent and learning an array of strategies for working with clients from various cultural backgrounds. As mental health practitioners continue to learn more about specific populations, such as biracial women, there is greater chance to aid these populations in the therapeutic setting, which can contribute toward positive social change.

<p align="center">**Summary**</p>

This chapter discussed the research study from the conceptual framework to the potential impact this work can make toward narrowing the literature gap and providing deeper insight into the dating experiences of biracial women. Specifically, women who identified as both Latina and Caucasian were interviewed, to highlight a growing segment of the biracial population. Scholars have identified biracial individuals as a historically understudied group, and this work serves to address that concern. The next chapter provides an in-depth literature review of what is currently known about biracial identity development, biracial experiences, and other emergent themes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In 2010, Census data revealed a swiftly changing ethnic and racial demographic in the United States. Specifically, over the span of 30 years, the minority population (individuals who self-identify as anything other than "White") increased by 16%. Also, over 9 million people, almost 3% of the total population, self-identified as mixed-race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Despite these rapidly changing statistics, research has yet to fully capture the experiences of mixed-race or biracial individuals. In fact, Harris et al. (2018), posited that less than 1% of academic research has focused on multiraciality in the last 10 years. Many scholars agree that these individuals are an understudied segment of a growing population (Harris et al., 2018; McGrath et al., 2016; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011).

This lack of focus on a budding population may prove challenging for mental health practitioners as little is known about biracial experiences (Nuttgens, 2010). As mixed-race marriages have continued to become more common in North America, and thus the biracial (mixed-race) population has increased at rapid rates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), a better understanding of these individuals is needed for effective psychotherapy.

Nuttgens (2010) pointed out that little research in psychology has focused on understanding how straddling two or more cultures may affect the experiences of the biracial individual, including common experiences such as dating and seeking marriage partners. Understanding these unique experiences may promote positive social change by

assisting mental health practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of a historically understudied population.

To address the literature gap identified by McGrath et al. (2016), Nuttgens (2010), Roberts-Clark et al. (2004), and Salahuddin and O'Brien (2011), this study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the dating experiences of biracial women, specifically the challenges biracial women may face in choosing a marriage partner and the influence that family has on that decision. The result of this work contributes to the literature regarding biracialness, and toward a deeper understanding of the biracial experience by the mental health community.

While there are a number of ways that the term *race* can be operationalized (Shih & Sanchez, 2009) the term *multiracial* generally refers to individuals who identify with two or more racial heritages, based upon socially constructed racial criteria. Cauce et al. (1992) operationalized the term biracial by virtue of each parent's monoracial status. Many scholars (Roberts-Clarke et al., 2004; Root, 1992; Sanchez & Bonam, 2009) are observed to use both terms, *biracial* and *multiracial*, interchangeably. For the purposes of this study, in congruence with current research, both *biracial* and *multiracial* were utilized in describing individuals who derive from more than one racial background.

The following comprehensive literature review presented in this chapter provided the framework, or theoretical lens, which guided this project. The chapter begins with an overview of how the literature review regarding biracial individuals and dating practices was conducted. Following, an in-depth review of the literature is provided, concentrating on the most current research surrounding the experiences of the biracial individual.

Specifically, I explored biracial identity theories, what is known about the experiences of biracial individuals, and familial influence on dating practices. Lastly, I provided an evaluation of the literature, discussing the gaps and exploring areas of interest.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted this literature review by examining and evaluating research surrounding biracial experiences and dating practices. I obtained this literature primarily through academic on-line libraries, using specific search strategies to locate information regarding the experiences of biracial individuals. Primary search engines included EBSCO Research Databases of PyschArticles, PsycINFO, and ProQuest. The search engine, Google Scholar, was also used. When accessing these search engines, I chose to utilize the "peer-reviewed" option, in effort to ensure the most quality research for my literature review.

When reviewing literature pertaining to the experiences of biracial individuals, search terms included *biracial dating practices, biracial experiences, biracial, biracial theories, biracial identity, biracial therapy, biracial families, biracial familial influences, multiracial, multiracial experiences, multiracial dating, multiracial theories, multiracial therapy, multiracial families, and multiracial familial influences.* As discussed by Heffernan et al. (2019), McGrath et al. (2016), Nuttgens (2010), Roberts-Clark et al. (2004), and Salahuddin and O'Brien (2011), there is a gap in the literature pertaining to the dating experiences of biracial individuals. While I did find a wealth of information pertaining to biracial identity development, which is pertinent, what little is known about biracial dating experiences was sparse and somewhat dated. Also, it should be noted that

many of my data inquiries resulted in research surrounding interracial dating, when individuals of different races date one another, rather than the specific dating experiences of the biracial individual.

Another strategy which was implemented was to review the references cited by authors who have explored biracial dating practices. This procedure included reviewing the pertinent works which were the basis of relevant studies found during my literature search. This led me not only to other valuable on-line resources, but also to relevant texts, such as Root (1992), one of the earlier academics to explore multiracial experiences. This lengthy, in-depth process brought me to the understanding that these research findings, or lack thereof, further cement the need for research focus in this area.

Conceptual Framework

In qualitative research, it is common for researchers to provide a theoretical lens or perspective with which to guide the project, rather than the reliance upon a specific theoretical orientation (Creswell, 2014). By utilizing a conceptual framework, the consideration of previously established theories such as biracial identity theory (Poston, 1990) and emergent themes in cultural literature such as positive regard for multiracial status (Cauce et al., 1992), enhanced social functioning, and greater resilience and adaptability (Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011) will all be incorporated to provide the foundation of this research. This study was primarily grounded in literature pertaining to the unique experiences of multiracial individuals (Nuttgens, 2010; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011; Shih & Sanchez, 2009). While little research has focused on the specific phenomenon of dating as a biracial individual (Heffernan et al., 2019; Roberts-Clarke et

al., 2004) this research attempted to generate data which will further illuminate this specific population's experiences.

History of Biracial Identity Theory Development

In an effort to understand individuals who derive from two racial backgrounds, early researchers focused on creating and/or adapting theories of identity development (Poston, 1990). Poston posited that the attempts to understand identity development, in general, stemmed largely from the great emphasis placed on Erik Erikson's (1963) stages of development and the idea that one of the major tasks of adolescence was to establish an independent identity. As biracial populations continued to grow, early researchers began addressing how biracial identity development was similar and/or different to the identity development process of monoracial individuals.

Thornton and Wason (1995) categorized the research approaches of early racial identity theories as one of three: (a) the problem approach, (b) the equivalent approach, and (c) the variant approach. The authors noted that these early racial identity theories were primarily based on studies including individuals with one Black parent and one White parent. The "problem approach" to creating multiracial theories of development included the basic tenant that being multiracial was a negative experience in a racially divided society. These theories often focused on isolation from peers, rejection, and the stigma associated with one's multiracial status. For example, the marginal man theory presented by Park (1928), posited that the mental state of mixed-race individuals would be marked by turmoil deriving from a deeply racist society. Stonequist (1937) later expanded on this theory, explaining that the racial conflicts of society were internalized

by the mixed-race individual, creating a struggle of self-acceptance. The author suggested that human nature predicted that the multiracial individual would gravitate toward the group occupying that higher status, but that rejection might ensue.

As multiracial populations continued to grow, theories that may be categorized as "equivalent" (Thornton & Wason, 1995) emerged. Equivalency was rooted in the era of Civil Rights and the Black Power movement, during a time in which researchers worked under the assumption that mixed-race people (individuals who were both Black and White) were part of the Black population. According to Rockquemore et al. (2009), during this time, therapeutic models were developed to aid the mixed-race individual in understanding his/her Black racial identity. Brusma et al. posited that the most well-known conceptual model of Black identity was William Cross's (1978) Nigrescence model. Cross (1978) described the development of racial identity development as the process of becoming Black. His model included five steps, which were labeled: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment.

During the 1980s, researchers began focusing on the mixed-race population as a group distinct from any single racial group (Rockquemore et al, 2009). Research began to focus on how a "biracial or "mixed-racial" identity was consciously constructed and how it could be a positive experience. The "variant approach" approach was born from the use of incorporating interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the experience of deriving from multiple racial ancestries, cultural experiences, and geographical location. Gibbs and Hines (1992) reflected on the one-drop rule, the idea that any person with any Black

heritage was considered Black, and how mixed-race individuals were challenging this concept and seeking other ways to label themselves. The resulting model for biracial adolescents included five major areas of conflict during identity development, including: conflicts about dual racial heritage, conflicts about social marginality, conflicts about sexuality and impulse management, conflicts about autonomy from parents, and conflicts about educational and career aspirations.

Another significant research study which explored biracial identity development utilized doll-play in racial conceptualization in children (Jacobs, 1992). Utilizing 36 hand-painted dolls that represented both male and female gender, a variety of age groups, and a variety of skin and hair colors, biracial children were asked to perform a variety of tasks. Each biracial child was engaged in several different matching tasks such as to match a girl doll with her brother doll, or to pick the doll that looked most like themselves. Other activities included story telling from free-play, preference play, family identification, preferences for likes/dislikes, and constancy of racial identity (i.e. the biracial child's thoughts on what he or she would look like as they grew older). From this research, Jacob identified three stages biracial children experience, including:

- Stage I, Pre-Color Constancy: Play and Experimentation with Color
- Stage II, Post-Color Constancy: Biracial Label and Racial Ambivalence
- Stage III, Biracial Identity

In Stage I, Jacob (1992) reported that the child was flexible with skin color. This was demonstrated by the child's choices for a variety of colored family members. Although the biracial child most often identified his or her own skin color correctly, he or

she might change the skin colors of other members of the family. As the biracial child

progressed to Stage II, he/she demonstrated that skin color is stable and constant. The

child began to see him/herself as biracial, or as being both "colors", and adjusted the rest

of his/her family's colors accordingly. In Stage III, Jacob posited that biracial children,

between the ages of 8-12, began to learn that race is not determined by skin color but by

parentage.

Biracial Identity Development Model

Rockquemore et al. (2009) stated that the most cited identity theory for mixed-

race individuals was developed by W. C. Poston (1990). Poston's biracial identity

development model (BIDM) focused on the unique aspects of the experiences of biracial

individuals living within the United States. Poston presented his model as a "new and

positive model" which addressed many of the limitations of previous models.

The BIDM consists of five steps, including: Personal identity, choice of group

categorization, enmeshment and denial, appreciation, and integration (Poston, 1990). The

first stage, personal identity, happens early on as the young person begins developing a

sense of self. At this stage, membership to any ethnic group is a relatively new concept,

and the child's identity is primarily based on self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. The

second step, choice of group categorization, is often a time of crisis or alienation for the

multiracial individual. Poston posited that family, peer groups, or society may be pushing

the multiracial individual to actively choose a racial identity, either multiracial or mono-

racial. Factors that might influence the multiracial individual during this decision-making

process include economic status, social support, and personal traits. The third stage,

enmeshment and denial, is best represented by the feelings of guilt and anger the multiracial individual may feel at having to choose a racial identity. This may include feelings of disloyalty toward one or more parents, or heritages. The fourth stage, appreciation, is characterized by the feelings of acceptance and appreciation the multiracial individual begins to feel about his/her multiracial status. Lastly, the integration stage may be described as the experience of accepting and valuing all his/her racial identities. It is at this stage that the multiracial individual develops a secure, integrated concept of self-identity.

Poston's (1990) BIDM was applied in many studies which explored the experiences of biracial individuals (Mawhinney& Petchauer, 2013; Miville et al., 2005; Renn, 2003). Miville et al. explored essential themes of racial identity development in a qualitative study including 10 multiracial adults. Findings from this study were congruent with Poston's BIDM, particularly the integration stage. Through in-depth interviews, Miville et al. found that participants developed a biracial or multiracial identity status on their own terms which best suited their own needs.

However, Mawhinney and Petchauer (2013) challenged the linear stages of BIDM, in favor of the ecological approach (Rockquemore & Laszoloffy, 2005). Rockquemore and Laszoloffy (2005) presented the continuum of biracial identity model (COBI), which rather than operating on a continuum, fluctuated over time and within situational moments depending on the individual's experiences and/or connections to his/her environment. Mawhinney and Petchauer utilized an autoethnography approach to exploring biracial identity development. The participant's experiences were found to

more closely align with COBI than the more frequently cited BIDM. Renn (2003) also

rejected the BIDM continuum and posited that this type of model failed to fully capture

the complexity of multiracial identity development. Instead, Renn utilized a theory of

identity formation presented by Root (1996) which relies of the individual's ability to be

comfortable with a self-definition of racial identity, in, across, or between racial

categories.

      While Poston's (1990) BIDM may be the most frequently cited model regarding

biracial identity development (Rockquemore et al., 2009) other developmental models

cited above (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Root, 1992) focus more on fully capturing

the experience of the biracial individual rather than a "one size fits all" approach. Shih

and Sanchez (2005) pointed out that few of these models have been tested by empirical

research. However, each of these models contributes valuable understanding and meaning

with regard to the biracial experience and in developing the framework for the current

study.

Family Influences on Biracial Identity

      Root (1992) postulated that little researched has focused on the various factors

that may influence biracial identity development, specifically parental or family

influence. Kerwin et al. (1993) performed a qualitative study to further investigate

identity development in biracial children by interviewing both the biracial child

(identifying as Black and White) and his/her parents. Results from semistructured

interviews indicated that within these families, issues surrounding racial identification

labels and preparation for anticipated discrimination emerged as important issues. Most

participants in this study favored the "Biracial" identity label, while some also used "Black and White" as an identity label. All participants reported feeling comfortable speaking openly about racial issues within the household. Other themes which emerged of interest to the participants included friendships and relationships, religious affiliation, and school experiences. Kerwin et al. suggested that further research was needed to investigate this "neglected" area of study in order to better inform interventions and strategies applied by mental health professionals.

To better understand how communication influences biracial identity development, Newsome (2001) utilized an open-ended survey instrument with 72 biracial high school students. Specifically, Newsome explored the types of communication messages sent between parents and their biracial child/children. Later, these messages were coded into six categories: comfortable, acceptance, happiness, annoyance, incompleteness, and disinterest and then subdivided into confirming or disconfirming messages. Most participants reported being encouraged to embrace both their majority and minority racial groups and that generally, parents gave confirming messages regarding biracial identity status. Newsome argued that it is through language that racial identification can occur, and that parental and family influence is paramount in this experience.

Also interested in furthering the understanding of the influences of the family on biracial identity development, Collins (2000) interviewed 15 biracial individuals who identified as Japanese and American. While Kerwin et al. (1993) and Newsome (2001) found that generally parents were supportive of their child's "biracial" identity, most of

the participants in this study reported being categorized by their parents as monoracial.

Only one out of the fifteen participants reported that his parents were supportive of his

biracial identity status, while all of the other participants shared stories of assimilation

into the mainstream (American) culture. Collins pointed out that these findings indicate

that further research is needed to better understand not only biracial individuals who

identify as Japanese and American, but for biracial individuals of other cultural mixes as

well.

Ingram and Chaudhary (2014) also questioned the influence parents had on self-

identity development in biracial children. Utilizing a mixed methods approach, the

authors explored racial identity in 201 mixed-race respondents. The research indicated

that within this sample, 44% of participants identified as biracial, 39% identified as

having a fluid racial identity, 12% did not associate with any race, and 5% only identified

with one race. Ingram and Chaudhary also utilized an open-ended question which asked

participants to write in what they wished their parents had done differently. The top five

themes which emerged from the data included: 1) Had known more/taught more about

cultural heritage, 2) Learn to speak a second language, 3) They did a good job raising me,

4) Nothing, and 5) Told me how to deal with my race. Other findings indicated that 86%

of participants reported that their parents/guardians encouraged them to accept their

biracial identity, and that about half of parents/guardians prepared them to deal with

possible discrimination.

Heffernan et al. (2019) tested conventional psychodynamic theory regarding mate

preferences and parental similarity. The authors cited a variety of theories, including

mere exposure and *familiarity*, which ultimately suggested that people choose mates who are similar to their parents. To determine if these theories were applicable to multiracial individuals, Heffernan et al. conducted a quantitative study of over 70,000 participants through internet surveys. The results indicated that over 80% of the time, multiracial individuals were more likely to be paired with a partner who resembles one of their parent's ethnic identities. There was also evidence indicating that 52.2% of the time a multiracial, female participant was more likely to be partnered with someone who matches her father's ethnic identity. Similarly, 54.3 % of the time a multiracial, male participant was more likely to be paired with someone who matches his mother's ethnic identity.

Emergent Themes in Biracial Identity Research

Early research surrounding biracial identity development often predicted negative outcomes regarding identity development and social functioning. Thornton and Wason (1995) categorized this era of research as the "problems approach" as generally the research was couched in assumptions that biracial individuals would face greater challenges and have more negative experiences than mono-racial individuals. Albuja et al. (2019) and Franco et al. (2016) found that many biracial individuals continue to struggle with racial identity invalidation. However, many studies have demonstrated positive outcomes surrounding multiracial status, such as enhanced social functioning, greater resilience, and increased adaptability (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006; Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Skinner et al., 2020).

Albuja et al. (2019) examined the psychophysiological responses to racial identity denial in biracial individuals in a controlled setting. The authors posited that negative effects occur when biracial individuals are denied group membership to groups that they self-identify. An example to illustrate the concept was that of a biracial, Asian American individual. This individual may be denied racial identity membership by Caucasian Americans who may only recognize the physical attributes of Asian culture. Results indicated that when exposed to racial identity denial messages, participants experienced greater stress and slower reduction of cortisol than when exposed to identity-relevant messages.

Franco et al. (2016) also found that biracial individuals struggled with racial identity invalidation. The researchers described racial identity invalidation as the occurrence of the biracial individual being placed by others into racial categories that they do not identify with. Through qualitative inquiry, the researchers found that these instances most often occurred in school settings. The two most common types of racial identity invalidation that the participants faced were invalidation due to their physical appearance not matching particular racial profiles and behavior which did not fit with preconceived racial stereotypes.

Skinner et al. (2020) studied stereotypes that are often associated with various biracial groups. Findings indicated that regardless of the biracial group, most were thought to be more physically attractive than monoracial individuals. The authors also found that regardless of the specific biracial group, a common stereotype is one of not belonging or fitting in with mainstream culture. Skinner et al. also found little evidence

supporting the hypodescent theory; the idea that the multiracial individual's status was thought to be similar to his/her lower status monoracial parent's group. Lastly, the authors found that stereotypes that are commonly associated with specific races are different from the stereotypes associated with overlapping biracial groups. For example, in comparing White, Hispanic, and biracial (White/Hispanic) stereotypes, Skinner et al. found little overlap. The top two stereotypes associated with White individuals were *privileged* and *racist*. The top two stereotypes associated with Hispanic individuals were *illegal immigrant* and *hard working*. The top two stereotypes associated with biracial individuals who identify as White and Hispanic were *positive physical appearance* and *specific food preferences*.

However, many researchers have found that straddling two or more cultures may also have positive benefits on biracial individuals. Utilizing the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Campbell and Eggerling-Boeck (2006) examined the psychological well-being of multiracial adolescents. The multiracial individuals were compared to their monoracial peers in five areas: depressional, suicidal tendencies, social acceptance, feelings of closeness to fellow students, and participation levels in extracurricular activities. Findings indicated no consistent evidence to suggest that multiracial adolescents face more difficulties in the identified areas in adolescence that monoracial individuals. The exception to these findings were multiracial adolescents who identified as Caucasian and American Indian. The authors suggested that further investigation into this phenomenon might draw stronger conclusions but that this finding

indicates that multiracial groups should be studied individually, rather than being lumped all together.

After performing a meta-analysis of quantitative and qualitative research regarding psychological outcomes in multiracial populations, Shih and Sanchez (2005) found that non-clinical samples of multiracial individuals are as well-adjusted as monoracial peers in most areas of development. The authors suggested that findings from earlier research, which typically predicted outcomes that were psychologically detrimental, may be due to the clinical status of the multiracial individuals studied. In reviewing studies that sampled non-clinical multiracial populations, Shih and Sanchez found little evidence to indicate the multiracial individuals were more unhappy or dissatisfied than their monoracial counterparts.

Nuttgens (2010) also found that the experiences of the biracial individual fit poorly with conventional theory and research. Through narrative inquiry, Nuttgens found that unlike much of the existing research on biracial identity theory—which painted a very bleak picture—the biracial experience was often positive and rewarding. Also, Nuttgens posited that race and ethnicity may have varying degrees of importance in the lives of biracial individuals and that preeminence should not be assumed.

Previous research (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006; Nuttgens, 2010; Shih & Sanchez, 2005) and proposed models of biracial identity development (Jacobs, 1992; Poston, 1990; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Root, 1992) provided the conceptual framework to further explore the experiences of biracial individuals. Numerous researchers have indicated that the biracial population is sorely understudied and is

expected to continue to grow in numbers (McGrath et al., 2016; Nuttgens, 2010; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). Roberts-Clark et al. (2004) specifically stated that further research is needed to understand the dating experiences of biracial women. Couched in previous research regarding what is known about the experiences of biracial individuals, this study explored the dating experiences of biracial women, specifically the challenges biracial women may face in choosing a marriage partner and the influence that family has on that decision.

Biracial Relationship Experiences

Bonam and Shih (2009) explored the comfort levels of multiracial individuals with intimate interracial relationships. The authors hypothesized in this quantitative study that biracial individuals would feel more comfortable with intimate interracial relationships than White, monoracial individuals. To explore this phenomenon, the authors conducted two studies. The first study found that multiracial individuals did indeed express higher comfort levels with intimate interracial relationships than did monoracial individuals. The second study found that the individual's beliefs about race—viewing race as a social construction—influenced the differences in comfort levels in intimate interracial relationships. Individuals who viewed race as a social construction were generally more comfortable with intimate interracial relationships. Based on these findings, Bonam and Shih concluded that multiracial individuals feel more comfortable than monoracial individuals with interracial relationships, including interracial marriage and adopting a child of a different race.

Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) explored some of the challenges that biracial women face with regard to choosing a significant other. The researchers conducted a qualitative study which included eight biracial women, ages 23 to 56. A convenience sample was used, utilizing the social networks of both researchers. To be eligible for this study, all recruited participants had to be adult females, with biological parents who had distinct racial identities from each other. The method for data retrieval included a demographic survey as well as 11 essay questions. The essay questions focused on the role of race in choosing a romantic partner, the familial and social environment in which the participant was raised, and biracial identity issues in psychotherapy.

Utilizing a grounded theory approach, Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) identified five themes in the data: social worldview as a way of framing experiences and dating practices, familial influence on dating practices, power and preference in dating, positive and negative aspects of dating as a biracial woman, and psychotherapeutic issues. Generally, the participants reported that their unique racial status had allowed them to become more open-minded in their interactions with others. Based on these findings, Roberts-Clarke et al. suggested that the greatest influence on the identity formation of biracial women was the influence of family members. Family members greatly influenced which race was dominant in the participant's upbringing, which in turn also influenced later dating experiences. The authors posited that the findings from this study portrayed a more positive outlook on the experience of being biracial than previously reported in early research studies.

To explore the effects of racial ambiguity upon romantic relationship formation, James and Tucker (2003) examined the conceptual framework of race. For the purposes of the research, the authors described racial ambiguity as an individual who does not fit into a dominant-race category. The authors argue that racial coding can influence intimate relationships and that racial classification often sets boundaries of eligibility for partnering. Two conceptual frameworks that James and Tucker utilized in examining how racial ambiguity may affect relationship formation are perspectives on mate selection and perceived similarity. The authors posited that a number of theoretical perspectives emphasize the idea of perceived similarity and that this is a key factor in mate selection. To conclude, James and Tucker discussed how an individual presents him/herself racially can also influence the outcome of an intimate relationship.

In an attempt to further the understanding of how multiraciality is received by monoracial individuals in the scholarly community, Curington et al. (2015) explored dating communications in an on-line forum. The authors argued that the multiracial population is understudied and that it has been empirically neglected in the literature. Specifically, Curington et al. examined how multiracial individuals are positioned in the racial hierarchies in on-line dating communities by examining how monoracial daters responded to multiracial daters. Using quantitative analysis, the authors tested four hypotheses, including: hypodescent, multiracial in-betweenness, White equivalence, and multiracial dividend effect.

Hypodescent, often referred to as the one-drop rule, refers to the automatic assignment of the multiracial individual to the racial group considered less dominant or

superior in society. For this study, hypodescent was considered to occur if a monoracial individual treated a multiracial individual (of White and minority decent) the same as a monoracial individual of any minority decent. The authors explained how the use of the term "hypodescent" may have qualitatively different implications depending on perspective. For example, much of the research regarding the theory of hypodescent theory derives from a "White gaze", whereas this research uses the theory to signal inclusion, rather than the exclusion of racially mixed daters. However, Curington et al. found no support for this hypothesis and concluded that White/multiracial individuals are treated differently than their monoracial minority counterparts, which may be attributed to the media's portrayal of multiracial as "exotic".

The authors also tested the theory of racial in-betweenness. This theory stems from the skin-tone discrimination research of Hunter (2002, 2007) and Rondilla and Spickard (2007), which explored the idea that lighter skin tone may afford minorities higher racial status. Curington et al. (2015) stated that in-betweenness would be shown to occur if White/minority daters were treated below White status, but above the status of other multiracial minorities. Results indicated that there was evidence for the in-betweenness effect, as monoracial White women were shown to prefer Asian/White, Hispanic-White, and Black-White multiracial men over other minority males. Evidence from this study also illustrated that while White men were most likely to respond to communications sent from White monoracial women over any other monoracial minority, when multiracial individuals were included, White men showed preference to Asian-White multiracial women. Another finding that provided support for the in-

betweenness effect was that White men tended to show preference for Black-White multiracial women over Black monoracial women.

The third hypothesis that Curington et al. (2015) tested was that of white equivalence. White equivalence, which may be described as the counter-theory to the one drop rule, refers to the idea that some White/minority multiracial individuals are afforded the racial status given to White individuals rather than that afforded to multiracial status. For example, research from Lee and Bean (2010) demonstrated how Asian/White and Hispanic/White couples are more likely than Black interracial couples to identify offspring as White only, rather than multiracial. In this study, the authors posited that White equivalence occurred if monoracial daters responded to communication from White-minority daters in the same way they did White daters. Results from this study of on-line daters demonstrated that White equivalence did occur, as White men were more likely to respond to message from White only or Asian-White and Hispanic-White females, over monoracial minority women and Black-White multiracial women.

Lastly, Curington et al. (2015) tested the multiracial dividend effect. Differing greatly from the first three theories, the multiracial dividend effect suggests that multiracial daters will be preferred above White and non-White monoracial individuals. The authors cited evidence (Romo, 2011; Root, 2004) which suggested that minority women are often sexualized and exoticized by White and minority men alike. Curington et al. found evidence supporting the multiracial dividend effect in their study, specifically that White men were most likely to respond to messages from Asian-White multiracial women over other monoracial minority women.

A limitation of this study, as discussed by Curington et al. (2015), includes reliance upon daters' self-identification of racial status. Another limitation is that levels of attractiveness can not be accounted for, and for the purposes of this study analysis is based solely upon racial identification. The authors call for further study on the experiences of multiracial individuals using a broad range of methodological approaches in order to gain a deeper understanding into an understudied population.

Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, researchers (McGrath et al., 2016; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011) agreed that there is insufficient exploration and understanding of biracial experiences. Evolving research in biracial identity development seeks to better understand how biracial individuals experience and conceptualize the phenomena of straddling two cultures (Mawhinney & Petchauer, 2013; Miville et al., 2005; Poston, 1990). However, Shih and Sanchez (2005) pointed out that few of these studies have been replicated.

In order to better understand the dating experiences of biracial individuals, several exploratory studies have been conducted. James and Tucker (2003) explored the effects of racial ambiguity on initial relationship formation. Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) sought to better understand the challenges faced by biracial women when choosing who to date and/or marry. Bonam and Shih (2009) examined the comfort levels of multiracial individuals engaging in interracial relationships. Curington et al. (2015) studied how multiraciality was received by mono-racial, on-line daters. Each of these studies contributed to what is currently known about the dating experiences of biracial

individuals; however, as each of these researchers has concluded, further exploration is needed to gain a deeper understanding of this understudied population.

This qualitative study is meant to further understand an area of inquiry presented by Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) and fill a gap in the literature pertaining to the dating experiences of biracial women and what influences their families may have on those experiences. Specifically, a phenomenological design was utilized to explore the shared experiences of biracial women. Results from this exploration may aid mental health practitioners in having a greater understanding of an understudied, vastly growing population.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Census Bureau (2011) data illustrate a changing demographic in the United States, with a rapidly increasing mixed-race population. Straddling two cultures presents the unique experience of being socialized into one or more set of cultural norms, expectations, advantages and disadvantages, and circumstances (Cauce et al., 1992). Biracial individuals may also have differing experiences with identity development, such as how they see themselves and identify racially, and how they are perceived by others (Jacobs, 1992). Another consideration is that parents of biracial children may need to come to terms with their own cultural differences when raising a mixed-race child. Factors such as parenting styles, family structure, career, and dating expectations may differ across cultures. Despite coverage illustrating these changing racial demographics, many scholars agree that biracial individuals continue to be an understudied segment of the population (Harris et al., 2018; McGrath et al., 2016; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). To address this gap in the literature, the design of this qualitative study explored the lived experiences of biracial women as they navigate dating and family expectations.

The focus of this chapter is to provide a rationale for the use of interpretative phenomenology as a research design in addressing the research questions, the role of the researcher, methodology, and procedures for recruitment. In addition, the procedures for analysis and interpretation of the data are discussed, as well as the procedures to ensure trustworthiness of the results. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

The central research question at the focus of this phenomenological study explored the following: What are the dating experiences of biracial women? In California, Census (2010) data reveal rapidly changing demographics, specifically with regard to the increase of individuals who identify as Latino or Hispanic. Currently, almost 40% of the population in California identify as Latino or Hispanic. Statistics provided by the Pew Research Center, which provides analyses of Census data, reveal that one in six newlyweds reported marrying someone of a different race or ethnicity. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that the increase in biracial individuals born will continue to rise.

The changing demographics in the state of California provided the rationale for this study to narrow the focus from biracial women in general, to specifically women who self-identify as both Latina and Caucasian. Mental health providers in California are likely to provide services to this specific segment of the biracial population at some point, making the experiences of Latina-Caucasian biracial women relevant to clinical and therapeutic practice.

Within the overarching research question, the following additional questions were explored:

Research Question 2: What are the unique dating challenges experienced by biracial women?

Research Question 3: How do biracial women perceive family influence on their dating experiences?

While Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) conducted a qualitative study that investigated the dating experiences of biracial women and what participants believed to be their psychotherapeutic needs the authors concluded that further investigation regarding the relationship between family influence on choice of dating partners was necessary. Harris et al. (2018) and Nuttgens (2010) made the case for exploring specific cultural mixtures in biracial individuals, as each culture brings its own rich history and context. Harris et al. argued that biracial individuals are not a monolithic group. In addition, Samuels (2009) stated that restricting the focus to specific mixtures of culture heritages can provide information that is uniquely informed. Originating within the discipline of psychology, interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) is often applied in order to better understand transitional periods in the individual's life (Smith et al., 2009). The transition from adolescence to adulthood and the experiences of dating fall within this scope making it a great fit for the phenomenon of interest in this study.

Qualitative Research Approach

The research design framework utilized in a study is determined by the question the researcher is asking and how that question might best be answered (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Creswell (2014) explained that the quantitative approach to research is utilized when testing a hypothesis through statistical analysis, while qualitative research seeks to explore, explain, or understand a given phenomenon. In this case, the research question—what are the dating experiences of biracial women? — was seeking to explore the phenomenon of dating. In addition, Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) described how minimal research has focused on the dating experiences of biracial women

and suggested that more information on the subject be gathered. At this stage in the exploration of the dating experiences of biracial women, there is more opportunity for research to be gathered than there is for data to be tested.

Maxwell (2012) explained that qualitative research is often used to generate information which might later contribute to new theories, in an effort to better understand a phenomenon of interest. In this case, multiple researchers have discussed how having a better understanding of the experiences of biracial individuals might aid in policy development, educational outcomes, and therapeutic outcomes (McGrath et al., 2016; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011).

Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis

IPA was designed to explore topics that might be considered ambiguous, complicated, and emotionally laden (Smith et al., 2009). The primary aim of IPA is to explore how individuals are making sense of their own experiences and what meaning those experiences hold for them. Rather than attempt to produce an impartial viewpoint, IPA is concerned with the participant's perception of an event or experience. IPA combines phenomenological and hermeneutical inquiries, uncovering meanings and intentions that may otherwise be undiscovered. IPA also relies on idiography, the in-depth analysis of single cases (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). By utilizing a small sample size, the researcher is afforded the opportunity to deeply explore and understand any differences or similarities of the shared phenomenon. An idiographic approach allows the researcher the opportunity to examine participants' experiences within their unique contexts, without the concern of generalizing the results to other populations.

Smith et al. (2009) explained that IPA data construction utilizes semistructured interviews, which may take on a more conversational approach with the participant. While interview schedules are created, they may be modified in response to the dialogue as it occurs organically. This flexibility allows IPA to be more personal and to gather information that may be otherwise difficult to obtain, such as experiences related to ethnicity or culture. However, while the procedures inherent to IPA may provide the flexibility to allow for data to be collected organically in interview, IPA is not without structure.

Role of the Researcher

When utilizing the qualitative approach, the role and responsibility of the researcher is to explore and interpret the impact the phenomenon of interest has on the participant's lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the dating experiences of the participants was explored. IPA emphasizes the role of the researcher in "taking in" participants' experiences and "trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 57). In other words, the researcher plays a dual role which is similar and dissimilar to that of the participant (Smith et al., 2009). In one way, the researcher is similar to the participant, drawing on human experiences to make sense of the phenomenon. However, the researcher is dissimilar from the participant as he/she must make sense of the phenomenon through a lens which belongs to another and is reported as the participant has experienced it. The researcher is to discover what the experience is like for the participant and what sense the participant is making of the experience.

As IPA is typically utilized to explore sensitive, personal experiences, another critical role of the researcher is to develop rapport with the participant, as the findings of the study depend largely on the comfortability of the participant in sharing this type of information (Smith et al., 2009). The development of rapport begins upon initial contact and throughout the research process as the researcher conducts interviews. Additional tasks of the researcher include collecting and recording the data, transcribing the interviews, and performing data analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Methodology

The purpose of this IPA was to gather information surrounding the phenomenon of dating from Hispanic-Caucasian biracial women. A phenomenological approach was the most appropriate research method to capture the essence of an experience through the lens of those who have lived through it (Smith et al., 2009). Having discussed IPA and justifications for applying this research method to address the research questions, other various methodological choices are outlined to promote transparency and coherence in this study. The following sections outline research procedures and justifications for these selections.

Participant Selection

When utilizing an IPA, participants are selected purposefully, rather than through probability methods (Smith et al., 2009). To address the research questions in this study, participants were found through referral, opportunities, and snowballing. *Referral* refers to finding participants from various gatekeepers, while *opportunities* refers to finding participants from one's own contacts. Utilizing a *snowball* approach refers to finding

participants based on the referrals from other participants in the study. The sample for this study was homogeneous with regard to some socio-demographic factors, such as gender, culture, and age. For this study, only female participants who self-identified as both Latina and Caucasian, were over the age of 18, and who have experienced dating were recruited. According to Smith et al., when applying IPA to research, the researcher strives to find participants who share similarities in order the make the research question more relevant to a particular group. By focusing on participants of specific gender, culture, and age, the lived experiences of the phenomenon of dating were most relevant to this particular sample of participants.

As discussed by Creswell (2014), when conducting qualitative research through purposeful sampling, the researcher wants to stop collecting data when the themes or categories have been saturated. Saturation refers to a stopping point, when gathering fresh information no longer leads to new insights pertaining to the research question. Creswell noted that while the number of participants needed to obtain saturation may vary from study to study, when applying a phenomenological approach, typically three to ten participants should be recruited. For this study, the goal initially was to recruit a minimum of ten participants, with the idea that further participants could be recruited if saturation had not been achieved. However, upon the completion of the eighth interview, I felt saturation had been achieved. At this point, I was not seeing new insights or new themes emerging from the data.

Informed Consent

Prior to interview, the selected participants were provided a written informed consent document. The informed consent document made evident to the participants what to expect from the interview, protection of their privacy, and future publishing information (Smith et al., 2009). The informed consent document included information such as identification of the researcher, sponsoring institution, purpose of the research, benefits and risks of participation, guarantee of confidentiality, assurance that the participant may withdraw at any time, and the provision of contact information if questions arise (Creswell, 2014). This document was drafted based on the ethical expectations of both the American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct document and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University.

After the Informed Consent document was reviewed with participants, all questions answered, and the document signed, the interview proceeded. The informed consent document was stored securely, and participants were provided with a copy should they need to review the document at any time.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected for this study through the use of in-depth interviews which provided rich, narrative descriptions of the dating experiences of biracial women. The in-depth interviews were guided by an interview schedule (Appendix A). The use of an interview schedule provided the interviewer with some structure to ensure that pertinent questions were asked, but with the flexibility to also allow the interview to be somewhat

participant led (Smith et al., 2009). The interview schedule also allowed the researcher to

consider complex questions and sensitive topics in advance, and to consider the specific

wording of questions posed. According to Smith et al., interview data that are suited for

analysis require the interviewer to be deeply attuned and engaged during the interview

and asking relevant follow up questions.

Interviews were expected to last one to two hours; however, most interviews

lasted about 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded in Zoom and then later

transcribed. Ideally, the interviews would have been held in a quiet, private setting

preferred by the interviewee. This could have included a quiet, local space, such as a park

or college campus. However, due to social distancing restrictions surrounding the

Coronavirus pandemic, interviews were held out of necessity on the web platform, Zoom.

Prior to the start of the interview, the interviewee was made aware of what to expect,

such as the expected length of the interview, the nature of the questions, and the informed

consent document. Time was spent establishing rapport with the interviewee, to establish

trust and comfortability (Smith et al., 2009). Participants were reminded that there were

no right or wrong answers to the questions and that the purpose of the interview was to

learn from how they have made sense of their own experiences pertaining dating.

After the interview, data were transcribed verbatim. Computer software assisted

in this process. Transcribed data were reviewed by the researcher to ensure accuracy. As

discussed by Smith et al. (2009), IPA requires that the transcript include all of the words

that are spoken by both the interviewer and the interviewee. The transcribed notes

included notable non-verbal utterances, such as significant pauses or laughter. To help

ensure the validity and accuracy of the data transcription, interviewees were provided a copy of the transcription and asked to express any concerns regarding accuracy within one week.

Data Analysis

Once the data were transcribed, the next step was to make sense of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2014). In general, phenomenological research identifies significant statements and generates meaning within the data. While IPA is flexible, reflective, and interpretive, the analytic focus remains on the participants' attempts to make sense of their own lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

According to Smith et al. (2009), when utilizing IPA, this process begins by reading and re-reading the transcripts and immersing oneself into the data. Creswell (2014) and Smith et al. (2009) recommended keeping a journal to track initial connections and impressions. Once familiarized with the data, I began to make a variety of notes in my research journal which had a clear phenomenological focus. In my organization of my impressions, I implemented a journal as suggested as well as made notes in the margins of the interview transcripts. In this study, the focus was on the dating experiences of biracial women. I strived to make sense of what these experiences were like and what the experiences meant to the participants. Smith et al. recommend making notes about the general content, language use, and explored concepts. This recommendation was implemented.

Smith et al. also suggested that deconstruction is a useful strategy for occasional use. Deconstruction, or de-contextualization, is the process of taking pieces of the data

out of context and focusing on the particular use of language. The researcher might take a segment of what a participant has said and read it backwards to get a better feel for the words used. Smith et al. postulated that this process may help the researcher avoid over-simplifying what the participant means. Deconstruction was applied minimally to the data in this study as it did not feel particularly helpful in gaining a better understanding of what the participant was actually saying.

Finally, emergent themes were identified from both the transcripts and the body of notes which were created. Once all of the cases were thoroughly analyzed, I began to look for patterns and recurrent themes across all of the data. Smith et al. postulated that one of the greatest attributes of IPA is it allows for the representation of the uniqueness of each individual case but also for the shared higher order qualities.

Completion of Participation

After participating in the research process, each interviewee was sent a thank you card for their time and contribution to the project. Interviewees were reminded how these findings will be used and were provided their interview transcript for review, to ensure accuracy within the transcription. Participants were invited to share any concerns regarding the transcriptions within one week of receiving, to provide the researcher time to make corrections.

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Issues of Trustworthiness

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Similarly, to quantitative research, qualitative research is meant to adhere to specific principles and procedures to ensure the quality of the results. While the concepts are similar across methodologies, the processes differ. Creswell (2014) explained that to

ensure qualitative validity the researcher must check for the accuracy of the results by employing certain procedures. Shenton (2004) summarized the qualitative procedures presented by Guba (1981) that ensure trustworthiness of the data. As discussed by the authors, when conducting quantitative research internal validity is addressed but in qualitative research credibility is sought. Quantitative researchers refer to external validity and generalizability, while qualitative researchers explore transferability. Quantitative research addresses reliability and qualitative research addresses dependability. Guba's final comparison is that quantitative research focuses on objectivity, while qualitative research explores confirmability.

Credibility

In qualitative research, the consideration of credibility seeks to link the findings of the study with reality (Creswell, 2014). Shenton discussed the importance of the researcher employing tactics designed to help ensure honesty in participants (2004). For the purposes of this research study, it was made clear to participants at multiple times that they could back out of the study at any time if they so wished. Participants were not coerced or pressured to participate. I was seeking only those who had a genuine interest in contributing to the study. Also, I focused on establishing rapport with participants from the first point of contact in the hopes that they will feel comfortable in discussing personal experiences. Clients were encouraged to answer questions openly, and I indicated to them that there were no correct or incorrect responses.

Another strategy in enhancing the credibility of a qualitative study is to employ triangulation (Shenton, 2004). For this study, triangulation occurred by utilizing and

comparing multiple data sources. While there is little current research exploring the dating experiences of biracial women, Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) conducted a qualitative study of similar nature. The themes identified in the Roberts-Clarke et al. study were compared to the themes that emerged in this study. Commonalities found across various data sources assisted in giving credence to the findings of the study accurately representing reality.

Transferability

While qualitative exploration often pertains to a specific population and is not often generalizable to other groups, the qualitative researcher can ensure transferability (Shenton, 2004). To do so, I clearly outlined the framework of the study in this chapter. I have also discussed the criteria to participate in the study and how participants were selected. This was done in an effort to allow future researchers to replicate this process with a wider population.

Dependability

To address dependability, I have thoroughly reviewed the way that this study was conducted in this chapter so that future researchers may duplicate the study if desired to potentially test for similar results. These efforts included descriptions of the population, providing the interview protocol and which questions were asked, as well as a description of how the interviews were coded. Shenton (2004) also argued that by providing such in-depth coverage of the process to the reader, the reader is afforded the opportunity to evaluate research practices.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, it is vital that the researcher remain objective and take precautions against personal bias (Shenton, 2004). In doing so, the likelihood that the research study findings are the result of participant experiences, rather than potential researcher bias, improves. To address confirmability, I took detailed notes in my research journal to create an audit trail. Specifically, I recorded the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I also tracked my rationale for coding decisions that were made. For example, I explored my own biases to better understand and explain why I might have placed a specific statement in one category over another.

Quality IPA Research

Smith et al. (2009) presented the principles of Yardley (2000) for ensuring the quality of IPA. These principles included: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. Yardley suggested that demonstrating sensitivity to context involved understanding the socio-cultural climate of the population being studied and reviewing the existing literature. Demonstrating commitment and rigour occurs by the degree of attentiveness shown to the participants and the care with which the analysis of the data is carried out. Transparency and coherence refer to how clearly the stages of the process are described to the reader and the degree of fit between the research question and the results. Lastly, impact and importance refer to the idea that the results are useful and meaningful in some way. In this study, I closely adhered to Yardley's recommendations.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to beginning any research study, it is of great importance to consider the code of ethics of one's professional association (Creswell, 2014). One of the core principles suggested by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) is beneficence and nonmaleficence, or, in other words, do good and do no harm. To ensure that this professional commitment was upheld, various ethical considerations were put into place.

First, approval was sought from my dissertation committee members regarding the research intent. Following that approval, an application to conduct this research was submitted to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. No recruitment efforts or data collection occurred until University approval was granted. Adhering to these protocols ensured that the procedures for this study were in-line with current ethical research standards.

Second, participants were provided with an informed consent document prior to starting the interview. This document communicated to the participants the purpose and nature of the study, and their rights as participants. Participants were made aware that at any time should they feel uncomfortable with the nature of the study they could withdraw their consent. Any information already obtained would not have been used should this have occurred.

Third, efforts were made to allow participants to remain anonymous. The raw data that were collected was assigned a case number, rather than linked to the participant's name. Participants were assured that their names would not be attached to the study to

protect their privacy. Only the researcher, committee, and IRB has access to the names of the participants.

Lastly, Creswell (2014) discussed the importance of storing and protecting data collected. Now that the data has been analyzed, it will be stored for five years and then discarded appropriately, per APA regulation. Data collection procedures for this study included the use of interviewer notes which were transcribed and stored electronically, along with the digital recordings of the interview. Once transcribed, electronic copies of the interviews were stored on a password protected computer and backed up on a password protected flash drive.

Limitations

Qualitative research purposefully seeks to describe a specific group or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014) and often includes a much smaller sample size than quantitative research. In this case, the research study intentionally focused on a specific group of women who self-identified as both Latina and Caucasian and were over 18 years of age. While qualitative research is not concerned with generalizability, the results revealed a rich, in-depth description of the experiences of the intended population. As stated by Smith et al. (2012), one of the goals of IPA is to provide a detailed account of an individual's experience. Given the complexity of human experiences, the authors suggest that IPA studies benefit from a concentrated focus on a specific group of individuals.

Another limitation of qualitative research often noted is that the research quality is heavily dependent upon the skills of the researcher (Hunt, 2011). The researcher must

take great care to ensure that personal biases or preconceived notions do not influence the outcome of the study. In addition, the researcher must commit to rigorous attentiveness to the participant during data collection, ensuring that the participant's experiences are being accurately depicted (Smith et al., 2013)

Lastly, it was expected that identifying participants that met the criteria for this study would prove challenging. Creswell (2014) discussed saturation, which refers to the point at which the researcher stops collecting data. Data collection stops becoming necessary when the categories or themes have been exhausted, or when new data no longer provides fresh insights. Creswell identified the general range of participants in a phenomenological study to be between three and ten. Smith et al. (2013) recommend that three to six participants are needed to reach the point of saturation in an IPA study. The goal of this study was to recruit a minimum of ten participants to determine if saturation had been met and the research questions thoroughly addressed. I felt that saturation was met after the eighth interview.

Summary

In this chapter, the decision to apply the IPA methodology to this research study was discussed and a rationale provided. Other aspects of the methodology were outlined as well, including data collection procedures and the plan for data analysis. Lastly, issues of trustworthiness were reviewed, and ethical considerations and limitations identified. Having outlined the methodological framework for this research, Chapter 4 will focus on the analysis of data collection, coding, and a description of the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I present the results of this qualitive, interpretive phenomenological analysis research study. The purpose of this study was to better understand the unique dating experiences of biracial women, in an effort to better equip mental health professionals in working with an understudied population and to address a gap in the literature pertaining to the experiences of this demographic. I address the setting, participant demographics, data collection procedures, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, the results, and will conclude with a chapter summary. The following research questions guided the interview process:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the dating experiences of biracial women?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the dating challenges experienced by biracial women?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do biracial women perceive family influence on their dating experiences?

Study Setting

After receiving the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval notification (Approval number 08-05-20-0316209) with an expiration date of August 4, 2021, I was authorized by Walden University to proceed with data collection for this study. Prior to IRB approval, it was thought that data collection would take place via face-to-face interviews. However, during the IRB approval process, a global pandemic began due to the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2. Practitioners of many disciplines began to explore alternative ways to administer services to minimize the spread of the virus (CDC, 2019).

Virtual platforms such as Skype and Zoom met this aim and became prominent in

education and health services. In 2017, Woodyatt et al. found that on-line focus groups

yielded a greater depth of information pertaining to sensitive topics versus information

obtained in traditional face-to-face focus groups. The authors posited that the on-line

setting benefits participants with regard to convenience and comfortability. For this

study, it was decided that the use of Zoom, a two-way, simultaneous video

communications platform, as well as telephone interviews, would be offered to

participants as alternative modes of interview. Each of the eight participants in this study

chose to engage in the interview process via Zoom.

Prior to recruiting participants, I determined how I would organize confidential

data separately from the corresponding transcription of each participant's interview. A

spreadsheet on a password protected computer was created to store the participant's

name, assigned participant number, contact information, date of signature obtained

expressing consent, and the date of when the interview took place. Throughout the study,

instead of referring to the participants by name they will be referred to as Participant 1,

Participant 2, and so forth.

The use of social media was utilized to find participants. Using the IRB approved

social media invitation, eight participants were recruited from the social media platform

Facebook. Each of the recruited participants voluntarily responded to the social media

invitation. Respondents were then screened to ensure that they met eligibility criteria:

self-identifying as female, being 18 years of age or older, having experienced dating, and

being of mixed-race decent (specifically, one parent of Latino origin and one parent who

identified as Caucasian). Participants who met the criteria for this study were then emailed an electronic copy of the Walden University approved consent form. After reviewing the consent form, participants responded via email with "I consent", indicating agreement to the boundaries of the study. None of the participants had questions about the consent form. The participants and I then selected a date and time to conduct the interview. I conducted a total of eight interviews via Zoom, which lasted on average, 45 minutes. All of the participants were offered a 10-dollar electronic gift card as a thank you for their participation, though two of the participants declined this offer. None of the participants indicated that they were dissatisfied with the conditions of the study, and each requested a copy of the results when the study is finalized.

Demographics

Demographic data from the participants are detailed in Table 1. Each of the eight female participants met the inclusion criteria of being 18 years or older, having dating experiences, and being of mixed-race decent (specifically, one parent of Latino origin and one parent who is Caucasian). The participants' ages ranged from 21 to 53 years, with a median age of 33.6 years. Current geographical locations varied across the United States, as did the specific racial make-up of each participant.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Location	Mother's Race	Father's Race
P1	31	California	Caucasian	Mexican
P2	30	California	Caucasian	Mexican
P3	53	California	Chilean	Caucasian
P4	25	Nevada	Salvadorian	Caucasian
P5	26	California	Caucasian	Peruvian
P6	47	California	Caucasian	Mexican
P7	36	Washington	Mexican	Caucasian
P8	21	Illinois	Mexican	Caucasian

Note. Location refers to the current location of the participant's residence at the time of the interview.

Data Collection

The data collection process for this study lasted ten weeks from August 12, 2020, through October 6, 2020. After each participant communicated consent, dates and times of the interviews were coordinated. Each of the interviews occurred as scheduled and ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length. All eight interviews occurred on the Zoom platform and were recorded for the purpose of transcription. During each interview, I was located in the privacy of my home office. Participants were encouraged to find a quiet, private space to ensure confidentially on their end.

Number of Participants

A total of 10 participants responded to the social media invitation, and eight of these individuals met the inclusion criteria and were invited to participate in the study. I

felt comfortable with a sample size of eight participants as Smith et al. (2012) suggested

that between three and six participants are a reasonable sample size for a project utilizing

IPA. Each of the eight individuals that met the inclusion criteria accepted and participated

in semi-structured interviews. All eight participants opted to participate via the online

platform, Zoom. Each participant completed all of the prepared interview questions as

well as follow up questions. Data were analyzed from all eight participants in this study.

Location, Frequency, and Duration of Data Collection

Data collection only occurred during the scheduled interviews via Zoom with

each participant. Each interview was scheduled at a time convenient for the participant's

schedule. While I was located in my private home office, each participant was located in

a place of her choosing. Participants were encouraged to choose a location which

afforded privacy so that each participant felt comfortable discussing sensitive

information. All but one participant chose an indoor location.

IRB approval was granted to collect data over the duration of one year. However,

participants were recruited and interviewed during an eight-week time frame. The data

analysis time frame was lengthier spanning over a total of twelve weeks to complete the

transcription and coding processes.

Participants were advised that interviews would likely last from 30-60 minutes.

Each of the interviews did last between the advised time frame with the average interview

lasting around 45 minutes. All of the participants were asked the same questions from the

Interview Schedule (Appendix A), though the use of semi-structured interviews also

allowed for follow up questions.

Recording of Data

       The interviews took place in the online platform, Zoom Pro. As recommended by Hill et al. (2021), I asked participants in advance if they were familiar with the program. Each participant indicated familiarity with Zoom and was able to access the interview via the link which was provided via email. By using the Zoom Pro version of this platform, participants were required to utilize a password sent to them for access. Participants were also asked for consent for the recording option to be enabled, allowing me to review the interviews multiple times for research and transcription purposes.

       The recorded interview which is stored on the Zoom platform was then reviewed and transcribed in a Microsoft Word document. These transcript documents are stored on a password protected computer accessible only to me. This computer is kept in a private, locked office. The transcripts were printed for coding purposes and will remain in a locked file cabinet for a period of five years and will then be destroyed. Every precaution was taken to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Variations and Unusual Circumstances

       There were only two variations from the data collection plan presented in the methodology section in Chapter 3. The first variation was mentioned as a possibility. This variation included the use of the Zoom platform as the medium for the interview. This decision was made in an effort to observe social distancing during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. Every precaution was taken to ensure the protection and confidentiality of the data. This variation was approved by IRB prior to data collection.

The second variation from the data collection plan is that the interview transcriptions were not emailed to the participants in a timely manner. I had planned to employ this strategy to ensure accuracy of the transcripts. While not detailed in Chapter 3, I had intended to complete this process within two weeks of the interview. However, I came down with the Covid illness shortly after completing the interviews and was unwell for some time. I emailed participants copies of their individual transcripts roughly five weeks after their completed interview. None of the participants indicated any dissatisfaction with their transcription or required changes to be made.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed using the principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis, discussed by Smith et al. (2012). Data were collected through interviews conducted via Zoom, guided by an interview schedule. The interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy in the transcription process, and transcriptions were checked for accuracy by myself and the participants. Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel were used to organize and manage the data.

The first step of data analysis involved reading and re-reading the data (Smith et al., 2012). During this step, the participant becomes the focus of analysis. I reviewed the audio recording of the interview, the transcript of the interview, and notes and observations I made during and after the interview. I paid special attention to patterns, specifically when the participant shifted from general explanations to more meaningful, personal explanations.

During the second step of data analysis, I began to take vast amounts of notes which examined content and language use (Smith et al., 2012). Through close analysis, I recorded any notes or thoughts that seemed relevant. I utilized descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments in my notes. As I read each transcript, I considered what was important to the participant, and how she was making meaning of her experiences. The result was a detailed, comprehensive set of notes and comments on each transcript.

Next, I began to explore emergent themes (Smith et al., 2012). I analyzed my various comments and summarized what was important into concise statements. The themes that emerged represented each participant's original words and my interpretations of those words. Smith et al. described this strategy as a "synergistic process of description and interpretation" (p. 92). I felt the emergent themes reflected an understanding of each participant's experiences.

Smith et al. (2012) next outlined the strategy for searching for connections across emergent themes. I organized the themes chronologically and then looked for ways to group them into clusters. Using abstraction, which is a form of identifying patterns between themes, I organized the themes into super-ordinate themes. The super-ordinate themes aligned well with the research questions. I also applied numeration, which refers to exploring the frequency with which an emergent theme is supported.

Steps five and six outlined by Smith et al. (2012) included repeating this process with each data set and looking for connections across sets. I repeated this process of identifying emergent and super-ordinate themes in each of the eight data sets. Next, I looked for themes that reoccurred with the most frequency across the eight sets. Smith et

al. (2012) explained that there is no set rule to determine what counts as reoccurrence; the researcher might choose to include a super-ordinate theme if it reoccurs in a third or in half of the cases. For this study, I chose to include super-ordinate themes which occurred in a minimum of half of the data sets.

Emergent Themes

Three super-ordinate themes emerged from analysis of the interview transcripts. The super-ordinate themes aligned with the research questions. These themes included: dating experiences, dating challenges, and family perception. From these three super-ordinate themes, 12 subthemes emerged (Table 2).

Table 2

Super-ordinate Themes and Subthemes

Dating Experiences	Dating Challenges	Family Perception
Expectations	Nonacceptance	Sibling differences
Value preferences	Racism	Retaining culture
Descriptors	Disapproval	Religion
Racial identity fluidity	Judgement	
Uncertainty		

The first super-ordinate theme pertains to dating experiences. This theme is used to describe the personal dating encounters that biracial women discussed during the interviews that did not describe something challenging or were related to family

influence. This super-ordinate theme is comprised of five subthemes: expectations, value preferences, descriptors, racial identity fluidity, and uncertainty.

The second super-ordinate theme pertains to dating challenges. This theme is used to describe the difficulties biracial women faced or experienced in dating situations. This super-ordinate theme is comprised of four subthemes: nonacceptance, racism, disapproval, and judgment.

The third super-ordinate theme pertains to family perception. This theme is used to describe the thoughts and feelings imposed on biracial women by their families, pertaining to dating and selecting a marriage partner. This super-ordinate theme is comprised of three subthemes: sibling differences, retaining culture, and religion.

Each of these super-ordinate themes and subthemes will be further unpacked in the results section of this chapter.

Discrepant information

While much of the data coalesced, one discrepancy stood out. Creswell (2014) discussed the importance of sharing negative or discrepant information with the reader to provide a realistic and valid account of the data. While most of the participants described experiences of hearing messages from family which supported marrying within the minority culture, Participant 6 described a different message. Participant 6 shared that, "My grandmother was very protective of us as well. When she was growing up, she had a lot of racism toward her. She really wanted us to be whitewashed in a way." Participant Six goes on to say, "She [grandmother] wanted to protect us. She even said 'Don't marry

anyone darker than me'". She wanted to save us from the troubles she had. This finding was not corroborated by the other participants.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Data collection and data analysis in qualitative research should be approached with the same rigor applied to quantitative research methods (Creswell, 2007). Prior to conducting this study, I thoroughly researched the standards of quality associated with this type of qualitive research. As a participant-oriented research method, IPA requires the researcher to be in constant self-reflection to achieve a meaningful understanding of participant experiences (Smith et al., 2012). To gain an accurate understanding of the dating experiences of biracial women, I maintained a journal throughout the process to reflect on my bias, connections, and perceptions. This was done to ensure the credibility of narrative inquiry.

Credibility

The credibility of this research project was considered at each stage of the study. Credibility was demonstrated in four ways. First, time was spent employing strategies designed to ensure honesty and comfortability in participants (Shenton, 2004). Participants were not pressured to participate and only those that expressed a genuine interest and met the inclusion criteria were interviewed. At the start of each interview, I spent time establishing rapport with each participant by asking them general demographic information. Participants were also made aware that they could exit the study at any time or choose to pass on any question they preferred not to answer.

Second, credibility was enhanced through triangulation of the data. Triangulation occurs by comparing multiple data sources (Creswell, 2007). The super-ordinate themes were compared to similar qualitative research conducted by Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004). Commonalities across these studies were found. For example, Roberts-Clarke et al. also found that biracial participants did not feel that family and peer groups exerted overt pressure on them to date a partner of a particular race. Participants in this study also expressed racial preferences with regard to dating. One example was to not date partners from a particular race. Another finding which was replicated from the Roberts-Clarke et al. study was the experience of biracial women being told by men that they were uniquely beautiful.

Third, credibility was enhanced by utilizing reflexive journaling (Shenton, 2004). Throughout this process, I maintained a journal of my thoughts: connections made, potential biases, and conclusions drawn. This practice helped me to maintain my own awareness of my role within this phenomenological study.

Lastly, to enhance the credibility of this study, once transcribed, the participants were sent a copy of their interview transcript. This allowed each participant to review her own transcript for accuracy and point out any discrepancies found.

Transferability

In an effort to allow future researchers to replicate the processes carried out in this study, I have clearly outlined the framework of this study. I have discussed inclusion criteria, how participants were selected, how the interviews were conducted, and the research analysis procedures. Also, to support the identification of the super-ordinate

themes and subthemes, exact phrases and quotes from the participants are used in the results section of this chapter. This allows the reader to judge the transferability of the findings (Shenton, 2004). Lastly, I was diligent throughout each interview to ask follow up questions in an effort to clarify participant perspectives. These efforts assisted in providing a rich and detailed account of the participants' dating experiences, further promoting the transferability of this research study.

Dependability

Shenton (2004) posited that by providing in-depth descriptions of the research processes the reader is afforded the opportunity to evaluate the dependability of the findings. To enhance dependability, I clearly described and adhered to each step outlined by Smith et al. (2012) in coding the interview transcripts. Creswell (2007) pointed out that the more consistent the researcher is during each stage of the research process, the more dependable the findings. By strictly adhering to the research procedures, I have increased the likelihood that another scholar can duplicate this study and obtain similar results.

Confirmability

Shenton (2004) discussed the importance of taking precautions against research bias. To remain aware of potential bias, I maintained a journal throughout the duration of the research process. This helped me to be aware of my own thoughts and conclusions that I might be drawing prematurely. I recorded these thoughts and revisited them often, to ensure that the findings were the result of participant experiences. I also tracked my own rationale for coding decisions that I made regarding emergent themes. By being self-

reflective at each stage of the research process, I increased the likelihood of minimizing researcher bias, enhancing confirmability.

Results

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of dating as experienced by biracial women. Eight interviews were conducted with women who identified specifically as both Caucasian and Latina. The interviews were guided by the Interview Schedule (Appendix B) which consisted of inquiries designed to support the research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the dating experiences of biracial women?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the dating challenges experienced by biracial women?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do biracial women perceive family influence on their dating experiences?

Ultimately, the discussion which resulted from these research questions led to the emergence of three super-ordinate themes: dating experiences, dating challenges, and family perception.

Super-ordinate Themes and Sub Themes

During the coding process, it became clear the super-ordinate themes which emerged aligned closely with the research questions. The three super-ordinate themes are: dating experiences, dating challenges, and family perceptions. The reader will note that each super-ordinate theme reflects each of the research questions.

Super-Ordinate Theme 1: Dating Experiences

Many of the participants shared similar dating experiences during the interview process. While these various experiences were clustered together as sub themes the overarching theme was that the experiences pertained to dating, in general, and not to dating challenges or family influence. When describing their dating experiences, the following subthemes emerged from the data: expectations, value preferences, descriptors, racial identity fluidity, and uncertainty.

Subtheme 1.1: Expectations. During the interviews, almost all of the participants discussed the expectations of Latina women they encountered from dating partners. This subtheme appeared in the data a total of eight times. These expectations pertained largely to personality traits and behaviors and were described by some of the participants as "stereotypes of Mexican women". In some cases, participants expressed a positive association with these expectations. However, in many instances participants expressed frustration with the expectation they experienced from a dating partner. For example, Participant 4 shared, "There were a set of expectations, since I am Hispanic. Like, that I would do more things around the house. And that I would be more submissive too." Participant 5 mentioned, "There are a lot of stereotypes and expectations you are a homemaker." Participant 7 discussed some of the specific stereotypes that dating partners have referenced, such as "Mexican women being very fiery." She also said, "There's perspectives that are out there from the media and movies and stuff like that. Oh my gosh, like the Chola type." She goes on to say, "There is this extreme perspective of that type of Mexican woman. Maybe they're a bit harder, but not all Mexican women are, you know, a gangster."

Subtheme 1.2: Value Preferences. During the interviews, most of the participants discussed values. This refers to ideals or customs which they find meaningful. This subtheme emerged in the data nine times. Many of the participants expressed their preference for values they felt were linked to their minority culture, which encouraged them to date members of this culture. Some expressed a desire to choose a marriage partner who will support promoting these values in future families. For example, Participant 1 stated, "A lot of the things that I have learned come from my Mexican side of the family. I will have to find a man to marry that is open to me teaching my kids the Mexican traditions and values." Participant 2 shared, "I value the family orientation and family dynamics of Hispanic people. And, I look for that in a partner. I want a big family and to be around family." Participant 3 stated, "I gravitate more toward that side of the family. On my Latin side, family always comes first." Participant 7 shared, "Brown families are just so fun. I feel that connection there when I am hanging out with family. I value a tight-knit, supportive family, you know? That makes me happy."

From these interviews, it was clear that many of the values that participants wished to retain are associated with their minority culture. Each of the participants who discussed values mentioned an orientation toward family as being important to them.

Subtheme 1.3: Descriptors. During the interviews, many of the participants shared experiences highlighting the various descriptive labels they had been given from dating partners regarding their multiracial status. Some of these descriptors included the terms: unique, intriguing, and exotic. This subtheme emerged in the data 12 times, and it

should be noted that six out of eight participants reported being called "exotic" at some point in her dating experience. Participant 2, in describing her belief as to what some of her dating partners were seeking stated, "They want something different. A little swirl to the vanilla." Participant 5 shared, "I actually get called exotic in my day-to-day life quite a bit. It always happens at gas stations." Participant 6 described being told that "I have a unique look" and that, "I am 'intriguing' to men. They want to know my ethnicity." Participant 7 expressed that these statements can be disconcerting, saying, "And it feels like they don't really like me for me, you know? They say I am 'exotic'. And it's like, they just like these physical things about me."

In general, participants appeared to use the word "exotic" in reference to how dating partners referred to a combination of physical attributes, including skin, hair, and eye color, and body type. Participants described how dating partners were often curious, or intrigued, wanting to have a better sense of racial identity as it was often not obvious to them.

Subtheme 1.4: Racial identity fluidity. During the interviews, most of the participants described various circumstances which influenced how they described their racial identity to others over their lifetime. Some of these circumstances included describing their racial identities differently at different times in their lives as a protection mechanism, out of fear of judgment from peers, as a way to blend in socially at school, or in an effort to please family or friends. These reflections are congruent with Poston's (1990) theory of biracial identity development. Poston postulated that young adults often feel pressure to identify with one racial group or another during the "choice of group

categorization" stage. This pressure often derives from group status, social support factors, and personal factors such as personality traits and cultural knowledge. For example, Participant 1 shared, "I was given the choice to have a Sweet 16 party or a Quinceanera, and I chose a Sweet 16 party. Because at that point in my life, I didn't really want to associate with being Mexican. Because it seemed to be during that time that it was nothing but Mexicans and Black people that were trouble. At home, I was trying to be as Americanized as can be." Participant 1 also shared, "but at school, I was 'Mexican'. I hung out with Mexicans because I felt safe with them. As I got older, I would say 'yeah, I'm biracial' and would say that I have two races, my White race and the Mexican race." In this part of her narrative, Participant 1 explained how she identified differently with regard to race at home and at school. At school, she felt safer identifying as Mexican as this afforded her a certain level of protection. Using Poston's (1990) model, a biracial individual often makes choices like these based on status factors. In this case, Participant 1 felt that she needed to identify with one part of her racial identity due to the demographics at her school and race relations.

Participant 1 also shared that at this point in her life, she describes herself as biracial. She now tells others, "I'm biracial. I have two races. I have the White race, and I have the Mexican race." Using Poston's (1990) model of biracial identity development, Participant 1 has integrated her multiple ethnic identities, accepting her multicultural existence.

When asked how she self-identified racially, Participant 2 stated "It's evolved. Yeah. I used to be ashamed. I used to say I'm White, because I look White. But now I

have more pride in my race and know where my family is from. So now, I mainly identify as Mexican. And sometimes I clarify that I'm half White and half Mexican." When applying Poston's BIDM (1990), Participant 2 may be at the appreciation stage. This stage is categorized as recognizing and appreciating both ethnic identities but still mostly identifying with one or the other.

When Participant 3 was asked how she self-identified racially, she shared, "Well, this is kind of a, this is a strange thing." She goes on to describe how she identified as Hispanic for a period of 25 years while married to a Hispanic man but how that changed after her divorce. Participant 3 stated, "I look Caucasian. And at that time period living with my husband. You know, speaking Spanish all the time. And being with my husband's family, I considered myself Hispanic too." She later shared, "Now, of course, I'm with my Caucasian husband. And he only speaks English. And he doesn't have any Latin background. And I'm not going to Mexico and things like that. It's like I've lived both my races. It's kind of weird." Using Poston's (1990) model, Participant 3 does not appear to have integrated both her ethnic identities and in fact, views living out each of her ethnic identities at separate time periods in her life. Participant 3 went on to say, "My identity has shifted. I would say now that I am Caucasian."

Participant 4 said "I answer them Hispanic now" when asked how she self-identified racially. She explained, "When I was younger, I grew up in [name of town], so everyone is White pretty much. And if you are anything other than White you are looked at differently." Participant 4 also shared, "I think as I got older, I realized- especially when I went to college- that it was more acceptable. I mean, it's always been acceptable,

but I think being in that kind of environment, I realized that there were more people who identified similarly as me. Who had two different races." Participant 4's experiences reflect movement through the stages identified by Poston (1990) as she navigated her own acceptance of her racial identity status.

Subtheme 1.5: Uncertainty. During the interviews it was reported with great frequency that the participants shared the experience of others being uncertain as to what race they were. This confusion or uncertainty emerged often in the preliminary stages of dating, when the participant was getting to know someone new. Participant 7 shared that when she first meets a man, "He'll ask, well what are you? You know, what are you mixed with?"

Participant 1 shared a similar experience, noting that this uncertainty from dating partners led to some frustration for her. She said, "Guys will ask you 'what are you, what are you mixed with?' or say something like 'oh, you are exotic', things like that. And it kind of bothered me at first. Because I was like, 'well you know I just see you as a human, how come you don't see me that way or why is that even important?'".

In general, participants seemed frustrated with this reaction to the ambiguity of their racial status by others. Many described the necessity for a conversation about racial identity which they felt unique to their multiracial position. Participant 1's response highlighted her need for acceptance of herself from others simply as a person, rather than as a particular racial status.

Super-Ordinate Theme 2: Dating Challenges

During the interviews one of the overarching themes that emerged from the data is dating challenges. Dating challenges refers to any difficulties that participants faced in dating situations. When describing their dating challenges, the following subthemes emerged from the data: nonacceptance, racism, disapproval, and judgement.

Subtheme 2.1: Nonacceptance. Over half of the participants reported experiencing nonacceptance from dating partners regarding how they self-identify racially. Nonacceptance was often expressed as disbelief, disapproval, or denial of racial identity. Some of the participants described feelings of rejection or isolation related to nonacceptance.

When describing a negative dating experience, Participant 6 shared, "Some people don't see me as White enough. And others don't see me as Mexican enough. And sometimes, it makes me feel like, where do I fit in? That type of thing." Later in the interview when discussing her experiences dating White men, Participant 6 stated, "So, for me, I do notice color, but I don't care. I don't know if it comes down to that I'm not White enough for the majority of White men, but I've noticed White men don't take an interest in me."

When asked about dating challenges, Participant 2 shared, "Guys finding out that I'm Mexican. But I look White. And maybe I'm not Latina enough for some people, I guess." When asked to further elaborate, Participant 2 said, "So, when I tell them my name or tell them that I'm Mexican it's always 'well, you don't look it', how am I supposed to look more Mexican?". Participant 2 goes on to say, "I can dye my hair dark,

but my eyebrows are blond. I can't really change a whole lot about myself that way. But I don't really feel like I need to because one day I'll be accepted for how and who I am."

Participant 8 discussed the dating challenges she has faced regarding racial status. She shared, "I feel like a lot of men would say this- that you are not fully one or the other. You just never know how people perceive you or if they accept you." Later, Participant 8 shared, "I've had people walk up to me in train stations or whatever and just start speaking Spanish to me, not knowing what I am. And then others think 'oh, she's just another basic White girl' or what not." She also stated, "I would say that people who are Hispanic don't really perceive you as being Hispanic, because you're White too, and you're not full blooded. Same with Whites."

Participant 5 shared that she often received messages of nonacceptance regarding her biracial status. She said, "From full Mexican men and their families, I was expected to be more Hispanic. Less Caucasian." When asked to elaborate, Participant 5 explained, "I don't speak Spanish. I don't eat a lot of their foods. I don't dress like them." She also shared, "I'm very different… I don't know the word. My sister calls me 'whitewashed' but I don't know if that's a good thing to say."

Messages of non-acceptance often contribute to a biracial person's perception of themselves. Poston (1990) discussed a stage in biracial identity development referred to as enmeshment/denial. This stage is characterized by the confusion the biracial individual feels about being unable to clearly and fully express his/her racial background. This confusion stems in part from a lack of acceptance from one or more racial groups. Most of the participants who reported experiencing non-acceptance from dating partners

regarding their multiracial identity shared that this affected them in a negative way or made them feel "less than" at some point in their lives. However, it appears that most of the participants were able to move past this place of non-acceptance and integrate their multiple racial backgrounds.

Subtheme 2.2: Racism. Many of the participants described the challenge of encountering racism while dating as biracial women. These encounters were with potential dating partners, family or friends, or virtual strangers who observed them on dates. Two participants shared that racism appeared more prevalent in areas with fewer minorities.

While discussing dating challenges, Participant 1 shared that she often encountered racism due to her preference for dating Black men. She shared, "Since I do mostly date Black men the issue now is that I am a 'nigger lover', things like that are said." Participant 1 goes on to say, "It's hard to connect to White guys. It's hard to connect with Mexican guys. I feel like I have more connection with Black men because of feeling oppressed by White people."

Participant 3 described how she only experienced racism and dating in some of the areas she has lived. "When we lived in [name of city] there were so many mixes, it wasn't a big deal. It wasn't the same as some other places." She also shared, "There were times when I was with [name of Mexican man] where we would get White males, Caucasian males that would stare us down…they didn't like us together".

When discussing dating challenges, Participant 8 relayed racism she has experienced from family of her majority culture. She shared, "Some of my family is very

conservative. They see what's happening at the border and are just like 'send them all back!' or stuff like that." Participant 8 described how she never felt this racism was directed toward her but that it "makes bringing home a Mexican man a little weird".

Subtheme 2.3: Disapproval. Participants described the challenge of facing disapproval from others when perceived to be dating outside their race. This disapproval came from strangers who did not know the participant or the participant's dating partner. All of the participants described this experience as receiving disapproving looks from others while out in public with their dating partner.

When Participant 1 discussed disapproval as a dating challenge, she said, "It's always been a thing. Other women hating on me because I've dated Black men, that kind of thing." When asked to elaborate she shared, "Like Black women. I think it's because they feel that the White woman in me is dating a Black man. Or, you know, that we are going to create more mixed babies."

Participant 3 shared a similar experience with disapproval which occurred when others would assume that she had no Latin heritage. She stated, "So we would get like, stared down by Latino women or Latino men. It was kind of funny. They make you feel like you're stealing their race or something."

Participant 6 also described disapproval from others. "You definitely get a lot of looks, but not just from White people. When dating Black men, I would get a lot of looks from Black women." Participant 6 goes on to describe that, "depending on people's point of view, it's hard enough to find a good man. And some people feel that race needs to stay within race. They won't date outside their race and they don't want you to either."

Subtheme 2.4: Judgement. During the interviews several of the participants described feeling judged by the Hispanic parents or families of various dating partners. These judgments were often related to the ability to speak Spanish, prepare Spanish foods, or practice various traditions.

Participant 5 described some of the thoughts she experienced prior to meeting a dating partner's parents. She stated, "There's always that little thing in the back of your mind when you go to meet the parents for the first time. It's like, 'oh boy, am I Hispanic enough for these Hispanic parents?' If they are Hispanic, of course." Participant 5 also added, "I always worry that I'm not Hispanic enough for them and I'll be judged."

When asked about dating challenges, Participant 4 answered, "I think I get some judgment from my partner's parents if you know what I mean". When asked to elaborate she responded, "There is this whole expectation from Hispanics and my Spanish isn't very good. So, I think I get judgements sometimes. Because 'oh well, you are Hispanic so you should know Spanish'. But my mom didn't teach me. She didn't teach me how to cook traditional dishes either."

Participant 8 also mentioned judgment while discussing dating challenges. She shared, "I feel like when I met my ex's family, the one who was Mexican, I was kind of judged for not being more a part of the culture." She later elaborated, "Sometimes their family assumes that I know things when I don't, such as knowing specific traditions that their family does in Mexico or something like that." Participant 8 adds "It feels very judgmental. I just respond with 'oh, I didn't know, I didn't know that' because I wasn't brought up with it, you know?".

While most of the participants described facing judgmental thinking from the families of people they dated, there also seemed to be a determination to not let these types of interactions control them or who they chose to date. Participant 4 described experiencing judgments from her partners' families but went on to say, "I just let it roll off me. I am who I am."

Super-Ordinate Theme 3: Family Perceptions

The last overarching theme that emerged from the data is family perception. Family perception refers to how the biracial participant perceives the thoughts, experiences, and expectations from her family members. When describing family perceptions, the following subthemes emerged from the data: sibling differences, retaining culture, and religious preferences.

Subtheme 3.1: Sibling Differences. Many of the participants perceived differences in dating experiences between themselves and those of their full-blooded siblings. These differences were often attributed to looking physically different with regard to race, despite sharing the same parents. When discussing her sister, Participant 3 shared "I'm not kidding you. People completely go by looks." When asked to elaborate she said, "It's like, if you look like it then you are. But I'll tell you one thing that was interesting is that my sister had very different experiences than me. She looked Latin, and people always expected her to speak Spanish." Participant 3 further explained that even within their own family, she and her sister were treated differently in this regard. She described how harshly her sister, who looked fully Latina, was treated if she

mispronounced Spanish words, while her family rarely criticized her for the same inability.

Participant 5 shared, "my sister and I had very different experiences. She looks Mexican and only ever dated Mexicans. Now she's married to a full Mexican, and they have a little baby boy." When asked to elaborate, she said "My sister is who she is. She looks different than me, and she likes to please our parents. She never went out to look for anything else or expect anything else. And she was comfortable with that." Here, Participant 5 is sharing her belief that her sister's life shaped up very differently than her own based on the differences in their physical appearance.

Participant 6 also discussed differences between herself and her siblings. She shared, "I have an older brother and an older sister. My brother is dark and identifies as Mexican. My sister is much lighter and always says she White. She mostly dated White men; whereas, I was too dark for them."

In almost all of the interviews the idea of how "light" or "dark" a person is was a feature of conversation. By comparing their own experiences to those of their siblings, many of the participants in this study felt that physical appearance plays a role in shaping experiences with others. While this has the potential to be a divisive element amongst siblings, most of the participants in this study reported feeling close to family.

Subtheme 3.2: Retaining Culture. During the interviews, many of the participants described how they perceived their minority family members as preferring them to retain their minority culture. Participants described these conversations as being held in a serious way but sometimes in a joking manner as well. When discussing her

grandparents, Participant 2 shared, "My sister and I are the first generation to be born half White. Being old-fashioned Mexicans of course they want their grandchildren to marry within their race and to save the culture, but really, my grandparents just want us to be happy."

Participant 4 also mentioned her grandparents when discussing her family. She states, "My grandma is like super religious and super all about her culture." She shared, "So, I feel a little pressure there. But I know that she would like for me to date someone from church. Someone from El Salvador. She's mentioned that multiple times. Raise little El Salvadorian babies."

When discussing retaining her culture, Participant 5 stated "There was definitely pressure there. It was always 'you should end up with a guy who speaks Spanish and can take care of you' and things like that. But I am the opposite of that. I am the one to take charge and not have someone like that next to me." Participant 5 also laughed when she shared, "I remember my dad saying specifically 'you are like me, I don't think you can be with a Mexican man'. He was basically saying that I'm too dominant. Not like my mom and sister."

Participant 7 mentioned her sister when discussing her family's preference that she retain her minority culture. She shared, "My sister always made fun of me in a good, funny sense. She would say 'you keep dating all these tall, White, skinny guys'. I think she wishes I would find a cute Mexican guy though because her husband is amazing." Participant 7 also shared "she's more into the culture than me. But she wants that for me too."

Most of the participants in this study felt that it was important to their minority family members that they retain the minority culture. However, many of the participants expressed that while they respect their family's wishes, that they do not let this influence their choice of dating partners. Participant 2 shared, "I don't really let my family dictate who I talk to or who I am with. Because ultimately, it's my decision. I didn't pick their spouses or their partners and so they have no right to choose mine."

Subtheme 3.3: Religion. During the interviews, many participants shared perceptions of family pressure to date someone who shared similar religious beliefs. Participant 3 shared that while her mom was open to her dating a person of any race, "my mom would push! She would say 'make sure they are Catholic, so you have the same background.' I mean, that's not a big pool of people to pick from." Participant 5 also discussed her mother's preference that she date someone of the same religious beliefs. She shared, "When I was dating my Caucasian boyfriend, I remember my mom saying, 'I don't understand how you think it is going to work.' We were talking about religion at that point, not race."

Participant 7 shared, "A lot of races are associated with religious backgrounds. And sometimes those can be a really big barrier, you know, when you are playing the end game." She also shared, "My grandfather sat me down when I was like 14 or something. He made this spiel about how I should marry a good white Jewish boy because they take care of their wives. He was basically your old World War II veteran that lived in the Midwest."

While many of the participants reported receiving pressure from family to date someone who shared the same religious beliefs, none of the participants reported this being a consideration for them when selecting a dating partner. However, many of the participants did report seeking partners with similar values.

Addressing the Research Questions

The data collected from these eight interviews provided a wealth of information pertaining to the dating experiences of women who self-identify with two or more races. Each interview shed light on the overarching question of this study: What are the dating experiences of biracial women? The stories that were shared in response to this overarching question led to the emergence of three super-ordinate themes and 12 sub-themes. In sharing their stories about dating, participants discussed their experiences, the challenges they faced, and the perceived influence of their family members.

The first research question of this study explored the dating experiences of biracial women. Participant responses to this question led to the development of several subthemes, including expectations, value preferences, descriptors, racial identity fluidity, and uncertainty. Most of the participants described the various expectations held by dating partners associated with racial identity. For example, several of the participants shared that dating partners often associated the ability to cook traditional foods and keep a clean house with their Latina racial identity. Many of the participants also described their desire to take values which they associated with Latino culture, such as family closeness, into their future marriages. Almost all the participants reported being subject to various descriptors, the most common being "exotic" and "unique". Another theme

which emerged from participant responses to this research question included the idea that racial identity might be fluid over one's lifetime. For example, many of the participants shared that when they were young, they self-identified racially with whichever race was perceived as more socially accepted in their area of residence. However, over time, they shifted to identifying racially in the way that felt most true and accurate to them. Finally, in response to the first research question, the theme of uncertainty emerged. Many participants reported facing much uncertainty from dating partners as they attempted to categorize them racially. Almost all of the participants reported the experience of being faced with the question, "what are you?".

The second research question of this study explored the challenges in dating that biracial women experienced. Participant responses to this question led to the development of several subthemes, including nonacceptance, racism, disapproval, and judgement. During the interviews many of the participants described the experience of nonacceptance from dating partners. This often sounded something like, "you aren't Latina enough" or "you aren't White enough". Participants also described various experiences of racism toward them and their dating partners when they were perceived as a mixed-race couple. Another dating challenge which emerged from the data was the perceived disapproval that biracial women felt from other minority women. This was described as a perception that other minority women felt that the participant may be "stealing" men from a specific racial group. Lastly, the theme of judgement emerged from the data linked to this research question. Participants described the challenge of feeling that the families of their dating partners were making judgments about them. Most

of these judgements pertained to the participant's ability to speak Spanish fluently, prepare traditional foods, or level of engagement in various cultural traditions.

The third research question of this study explored how biracial women perceived family influence pertaining to dating experiences. Participant responses to this question led to the development of several subthemes, including sibling differences, retaining culture, and religion. Of the participants who reported having full-blooded siblings, almost every one of them described perceiving the dating experiences of their siblings as different from their own. These differences were thought to derive from each sibling looking physically different from one another with regard to race. For example, many of the participants reported their siblings as looking "more Latina" than themselves, stating that these differences in physical attributes affected dating experiences. Participant responses to this research question also led to the emergence of the subtheme retaining culture. Many of the participants perceived their families as preferring they retain cultural customs and traditions from their Latina side. Participants also reported experiences of family members encouraging them to choose dating partners who shared similar religious beliefs.

Summary

The research questions in this study led to the culmination of a rich body of data pertaining to the dating experiences of biracial women. This chapter explored the super-ordinate themes and subthemes which reflected participant dating experiences, challenges, and perceptions of family influence. The use of IPA was also discussed, and the reader provided with a step-by-step overview of the research process.

In an effort to accurately portray the dating experiences of each of these biracial women, direct quotes were utilized throughout this chapter. By including participants' own words, it was my hope that a sense of genuineness and authenticity was promoted in this study. The themes that emerged in this serve to address gaps in the literature identified in Chapter 2 which prompted this research. In the final chapter, the results of this study are interpreted, limitations discussed, recommendations made, and the overall significance of this work explored.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Biracial people are an understudied population (Harris et al., 2018; McGrath et al., 2016; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clark et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). After conducting a thorough literature review, I found that there was a gap in the literature pertaining to the dating experiences of biracial women. As a lifetime resident of the state of California, I have watched the makeup of this state's population evolve. As almost 40% of Californians identify as Hispanic or Latino (Census Bureau, 2011), it is expected that the multiracial population will continue to grow. Currently, the number of multiracial individuals living in California is a full percent higher than other states in the country. This makes it particularly important for mental health professionals working in California to have an understanding of the experience of being biracial. To explore the dating experiences of biracial women a qualitative research design was utilized to address the research questions.

From the rich body of data obtained through the interview process, three themes emerged. These themes are dating experiences, dating challenges, and perceived family influence. Dating experiences were further organized into subthemes, including: expectations, value preferences, descriptors, racial identity fluidity, and uncertainty. Dating challenges were organized into subthemes nonacceptance, racism, disapproval, and judgement. Family influence was organized into subthemes sibling differences, retaining culture, and religion. In this chapter, I will interpret these findings as they relate

to the existing body of literature as well as discuss limitations and recommendations for future areas of study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings from this qualitative study are congruent with what is currently known about biracial experiences. The insight gleaned from biracial women about dating experiences also serves to fill an existing gap in the literature and extends what is currently known. By comparing the findings from this study to what is currently known about biracial dating experiences, future directions for research and practice can best be informed. In this section, I will review the themes which emerged from the data and connect them to the current literature.

Biracial Identity Development

While this research focused on the dating experiences of biracial women, the data yielded findings congruent with Poston's (1990) BIDM. This five-step model attempts to describe the phases of identity development, including: personal identity, choice of group categorization, enmeshment and denial, appreciation, and integration.

During the interviews, participants were asked how they self-identified with regard to race. In most of the interviews, participants shared not only how they currently self-identified but how they self-identified at different points throughout their lifetime. This commonality across the data led to the emergence of subtheme *racial identity fluidity,* which is the idea that racial identity may change or evolve throughout the lifespan. This finding is congruent with the stages described in Poston's BIDM (1990). Specifically, in the third stage Poston described how various elements influence the

biracial individual including economic status, social support, and personal traits. During her interview, Participant 1 shared that she would change how she self-identified racially depending on what area she lived in. She said, "At this one high school, where a lot of my family members were, they were typical Mexican looking. And so I hung out with them because I felt safe with them. But everyone associated us as gang members." Participant 1 goes on to share how when she moved to a "nicer, White area", she felt safe telling others that she was mixed-race. These findings are congruent with Poston's theory that economic status and social support can influence identity development throughout the lifespan. While this example highlights the stage of Poston's model referred to as *Choice of Group Categorization*, the results of this study indicated that most of the participants reached the *Integration* stage. Poston describes this stage as the point in their lives where biracial individuals have fully accepted their biracial status and have embraced their integrated identity.

Franco et al. (2016, 2021) also explored biracial identity development and racial identity invalidation. Racial identity invalidation is described by the researchers as others placing the biracial individual into categories which he/she does not identify with. Racial identity invalidation is shown to have negative effects on the individual, including negative affect, a decrease in self-esteem, and resentment toward to perpetrator. This research is congruent with the findings of this study and is reflected by subthemes *uncertainty* and *nonacceptance*. The subtheme *uncertainty* evolved to illustrate the confusion that potential dating partners often displayed surrounding the racial identity of the participants. During data collection, many of the participants expressed frustration

with potential dating partners making assumptions about racial identity or guessing at

racial identity incorrectly. Participant 5 discussed an invalidating experience where a

potential dating partner continued to guess at her race, causing her feelings of discomfort.

She shared that this was a common occurrence in her life when first meeting someone

and that it often led to negative feelings and feelings of confrontation. She said, "The

main question I would get was basically, what am I?" and she described how she would

then have to educate the person on what it meant to be Peruvian. She also described how

invalidating it felt to hear people say that they felt being Mexican and Peruvian were the

same thing. Many of the participants in this study described similar circumstances which

were a source of frustration for them, often necessitating a discussion about race and

culture with people whom they did not yet know well.

The subtheme *nonacceptance* emerged to describe a dating challenge that most of

the participants experienced. Nonacceptance was often expressed in the form of

disbelief, disapproval, or outright denial of belonging to a particular racial group. This

often came in the form of a statements such as, "you are whitewashed" or "you are too

Mexican". These experiences are congruent with Franco et al.'s (2016, 2021) work

around racial identity invalidation and the negative implications associated with denial of

racial group categorization. Participants described feeling frustrated and "less than" when

hearing these sorts of statements from dating partners.

Stereotypes

While scholars agree that there is a gap in the literature pertaining to the

experiences of biracial individuals, some research has focused on stereotypes associated

with being biracial (Curington et al., 2015; Skinner et al., 2020). The findings from this study pertaining to stereotypes were categorized into two subthemes: Expectations and Descriptors. *Expectations* referred to the stereotypes that dating partners held about what a biracial woman's qualities and skills should be, such as the ability to cook certain foods. *Descriptors* referred to the descriptive labels or stereotypes that dating partners often gave to biracial women regarding physical appearance, such as the label "exotic". The justification for utilizing these categories, rather than the blanket term "stereotype", was an effort to be as specific as possible about the findings from this study.

Skinner et al. (2020) examined stereotypes associated with various biracial groups. Regardless of race mix, Skinner found that biracial individuals were thought to be more attractive than monoracial individuals. Similarly, Curington et al. (2015) found that biracial individuals were thought to be more attractive than their monoracial counterparts in a study which explored on-line dating. These findings are congruent with the results of this study, where most of the participants shared that dating partners frequently commented on their physical appearance in a positive way. In the current study, these findings were represented by the subtheme titled *descriptors* which included the various ways dating partners described the biracial woman's physical appearance, such as "exotic" or "intriguing".

Skinner et al. (2020) also explored other stereotypes of specific race mixtures. Findings included the top two stereotypes of Hispanic individuals to be *illegal immigrant* and *hard working*. The top two stereotypes associated with White individuals were *privileged* and *racist*. According to Skinner et al., the stereotypes associated with biracial

individuals who self-identified as White and Hispanic were *positive physical appearance* and *specific food preferences*. These findings were confirmed in this study. The congruency of positive physical appearance as a stereotype was discussed above. The data in this study also illustrated that the stereotype of specific food preferences found by Skinner at al. was applicable. Several participants in this study shared that dating partners often believed that they preferred and were proficient at cooking food from their minority culture.

Skinner at al. (2020) found that a common stereotype associated with Hispanic individuals was that they spoke English poorly. This study revealed a related finding pertaining to the ability to speak the Spanish language proficiently. Many of the biracial participants in this study reported encountering expectations that they be able to speak Spanish fluently. However, many of these participants reported Spanish being their second language.

Experiences of Discrimination

Research shows that multiracial populations face a different kind of discrimination than other populations; discrimination from their own family members who have different racial backgrounds (Franco et al., 2020; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). This type of discrimination often has a negative impact on the biracial person, including depressive symptoms, a lack of social connections, and lower self-esteem (Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011). As discussed earlier, the biracial population also faces racial identity invalidation (Franco et al., 2016, 2020). These research findings are congruent with the results of this study.

In an effort to allow the subthemes to emerge based on use of language from the participants (Smith et al., 2009), the results of this section were organized into *racism*, *disapproval*, and *judgment*. Many of the participants in this study discussed experiencing racism directed at themselves and dating partners from both family members and strangers while out in public. These stories included racist jokes from family members and publicly made comments or acts by strangers. While racism does not always have a negative impact on self-esteem (Franco et al, 2020), research indicates that when it comes from family members the potential is greater. Unlike monoracial individuals, biracial people may differ in racial background from nuclear family members. Being the target of racist remarks by family may lead to family discord as well.

The participants of this study also shared what they referred to as *disapproval* for dating outside of their perceived racial categories. For example, Participant 3 shared how she was on the receiving end of disapproving looks while out with Latino men. While she is biracial, and half Latina, she described how she looks Caucasian. Based on appearance alone, she described how complete strangers would give her looks of disapproval for dating outside of her perceived racial category. Two of the participants also shared similar experiences when dating Black men and receiving looks of disapproval from others.

Participants also shared experiences of *judgement* from the minority parents of dating parents. These judgements surrounded the participant's involvement with the minority culture. For example, Participant 8 shared feeling judged for not being more

involved with specific Mexican traditions. Participants also discussed judgments related to the ability to speak fluent Spanish and cook traditional Spanish foods.

All of these experiences speak to discrimination, both by family and by strangers, that biracial women face. These sorts of interactions undermine one's sense of identity and wellbeing. As discussed by Franco et al. (2020) and Shih and Sanchez (2005), experiencing racism by family members can be detrimental to mental health, leading to depression and lower self-esteem. While issues of race and discrimination may be viewed as a larger societal issue, this is also an issue within the home. Having a better understanding of how biracial women may experience discrimination and racism has the potential to guide mental health professionals toward more effective intervention.

Family Influence on Dating Partner Selection

Heffernan et al. (2019) tested conventional psychodynamic theory regarding mate preferences and parental similarity. The authors cited research which indicated that often, people choose romantic partners who are similar to their parents. Testing this idea, Heffernan et al. found that over 80% of the time, multiracial individuals were more likely to be paired with a romantic partner who resembles one of their parent's ethnic identities.

While this study did not set out to validate these findings, the findings are nevertheless congruent. Of the eight participants, only one shared that she chooses not to date men represented by either of her racial identities, and therefore, her parents' racial identities. While she expressed pride in her biracial status, Participant 1 stated, "It's really hard for me to date White people. And I have tried. And then with Mexicans. It's hard for me to date them too." Participant 1 went on to share challenging associations with both

races and that ultimately, "I feel like I have more of a connection with Black men…".

Participant 1 explained that she felt a strong connection to Black culture and shared sense

of oppression, which made her feel more comfortable in relationships with Black men.

Heffernan et al. (2019) research was also validated in other ways from the results

of this study. Most of the participants shared that certain values they associated with

their parents, family, and minority culture, were values that they wished to find in a

dating partner. In this study, these results were referred to as *value preferences*. Some of

these values included orientation toward family, commitment, dependability, reliability,

and loyalty. Many of the participants shared how they associated these values with their

minority culture. Two of the participants specifically pointed out that their majority

culture, White culture, was often less family oriented and that this was undesirable to

them. This finding highlights a difference in orientation toward family between White

and Hispanic cultures.

Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) found that a multiracial woman's family had a large

influence on who she chose as a dating partner. Findings from this study indicated that

family members, such as parents and grandparents, often determined which race was

most prominently featured in a multiracial woman's upbringing. The authors posited that

this familial influence impacted later dating experiences. When a specific race was

emphasized in a family, findings indicated that biracial women often chose dating

partners within this race.

The data from this study are congruent with findings from Roberts-Clarke et al.

(2004). Many of the participants shared that their minority side was often emphasized in

their upbringing. Some expressed that parents and/or grandparents encouraged them to choose a dating partner of a specific race, oftentimes their minority race. These experiences were reflected in emergent subthemes *retaining culture* and *religion*. Participants described conversations with various family members about choosing dating partners who would encourage cultural retention and/or the religion the participant had grown up with. Participants described how culture was important to both parents and grandparents. While there was some mention of preserving traditions, beliefs, etc., most of the participants touched on the feelings of connectedness that their culture brought them. Participant 2 also shared, "Being old fashioned Mexicans of course they wanted their children to marry within the race, but my grandparents really just want us to be happy." This sentiment was echoed by other participants who also felt that while some family preferred them to seek out dating partners within their minority culture that overall, their family wanted to see them happy in their chosen unions.

Differences in Sibling Experiences

Throughout this study, the lack of research into the unique experiences of the biracial population has been discussed. Little is known about what it is like to grow up in a multicultural family where siblings may look dramatically different from one another with regard to race. In a case study by Hurd (2012), the identity development and assimilation of three biracial siblings was explored. While Hurd focused mostly on one case in this study, the author provided a short reflection on how experiences can vary between siblings due to lighter and darker skin tones. This limited research is congruent with the findings of this study. Many of the participants discussed how their dating

experiences differed dramatically than those of their siblings. Some of the participants attributed these differences to a difference in how each sibling was visually perceived racially. For example, Participant 3 shared that her sister "looked Latin" and that she was often on the receiving end of criticism due to her lack of proficiency in speaking Spanish. This participant described the unfairness of this situation, which she attributed to her appearing more Caucasian than her sister. Participant 5 shared that she believed that her sister's experiences were largely shaped by looking more "Mexican" than she did. She discussed how her sister only dated Mexican men, while she dated men from various racial backgrounds. While more research is needed to better understand this phenomenon, it is clear that siblings in multiracial families may have differing experiences in part due to a differing racial appearance.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative study did not rely upon a specific theoretical orientation but was instead guided by a conceptual framework. By utilizing a conceptual framework, consideration of previously established theories and emergent themes in the literature guided this project (Creswell, 2014). This study was grounded primarily in literature pertaining to the unique experiences of multiracial individuals (Albuja et al., 2019; Franco et al, 2016; Nuttgens, 2010; Roberts-Clarke et al., 2004; Salahuddin & O'Brien, 2011; Shih & Sanchez, 2009; Skinner et al., 2020). The development of the research questions and the interview schedule were based on this conceptual framework.

The work of Nuttgens (2010), Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004), and Skinner et al. (2020) largely shaped the development of the first research question: What are the dating

experiences of biracial women? Nuttgens (2010) and Roberts-Clarke et al. posited that many biracial individuals had positive experiences which was contrary to previously held beliefs about the difficult nature of straddling two cultures. While the focus of this study was not whether experiences were positive or negative, generally participants reported a positive outlook regarding their multiracial status and their experiences. Skinner et al. explored stereotypes as part of the biracial experience. Results of this study found that biracial women often did encounter stereotypes as part of their dating experience.

Research conducted by Albuja et al. (2019), Franco et al. (2016), and Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) largely contributed to the development of the second research question: What are the unique dating challenges experienced by biracial women? Both Albuja et al. and Franco et al. found that one challenge that biracial individuals faced was being placed by others into categories that they do not identify with. During the interviews, participants reported facing this as a dating challenge as dating partners were often confused by their multiracial status. While Robert-Clarke et al. found that generally biracial women have positive experiences it was recommended that future research explore dating challenges in an effort to better inform mental health professionals. This recommendation largely shaped the direction of this study.

Lastly, Roberts-Clarke et al. (2004) influenced the development of the final research question: How do biracial women perceive family influence on their dating experiences? Roberts-Clarke et al. posited that families often had great influence on which race was emphasized in a household and that this in turn, later affected the dating experiences of biracial women. Most of the participants in this study reported that

grandparents, parents, and siblings often made known their preferences with regard to race and dating. While some participants shared that family influence did shape their dating experiences and preferences, some shared that opinions held by family did not hold any weight in matters of dating.

Limitations of the Study

While there are limitations to any research design, I employed the principles Yardley (2000) presented for producing meaningful qualitative research. Yardley's principles included sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. However, there are still some notable limitations of this study that might inform future research projects regarding the dating experiences of biracial women. In Chapter 1, I outlined my concerns as transferability of the results, and the limitations of using the Zoom platform for interviews.

First, this study was designed to explore the dating experiences of a very specific racial mix of biracial women. With this goal in mind, the transferability of the research results is limited. While this research represents biracial women, who self-identify as Latina and Caucasian, the results may not represent other racial mixes. In addition, the geographical location of the participants was fairly homogeneous with only three of the participants living outside of California. As geographical location may influence experiences, the results of this study may not be generalizable to Latina and Caucasian women living in other areas. While IPA allows for theoretical transferability (Smith et al., 2009), the findings of this study are limited to the specific population interviewed.

Second, the data collection phase of this research occurred during a global pandemic making it unsafe to meet participants face-to-face for interviews. However, practitioners across many disciplines had already explored alternative ways of delivering services and gathering health information (CDC, 2019; Woodyatt, Finneran, & Stephenson; 2017). This research paved the way for conducting interviews for this study on-line via Zoom. One of my initial concerns was that it might prove difficult to establish rapport with participants using Zoom. Smith et al. (2009) stressed the importance of spending time with interviewees establishing rapport, and I was unclear how successfully this might be achieved using the on-line platform. I was pleasantly surprised, however, that by the time data collection occurred, participants appeared well-versed using Zoom technology. Establishing rapport with participants on Zoom mirrored the in-person experience and felt similarly effective. Participants appeared comfortable sharing their experiences during the interviews. Each participant answered all the interview questions.

Third, the results are potentially limited as they are based on self-reporting by the participants. The nature of IPA research is subjective and based on how participants express their lived experiences with the phenomenon. Various elements could influence participant responses such as memory lapses or the desire to provide socially acceptable answers.

Last, researcher bias may be a limitation of this study. As a person living in the diverse state of California, I have many friends and acquaintances who identify as Latina and Caucasian. Prior to conducting this study, I had been exposed to stories about experiences of biracial women. However, in an effort to mitigate any potential bias this

may have created within me, I engaged in reflexive journaling throughout the research process. I maintained a journal of my thoughts, connections I drew, seeking to understand my own personal bias in the study. This practice helped me to remain aware of my role as the researcher in this study.

Recommendations

The experiences of biracial individuals continues to be a relevant area of study in a state where racial demographics are rapidly changing (Census Bureau, 2011). However, further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the dating experiences of biracial women. While this study contributed to narrowing the gap in the literature identified by Harris et al. (2018), McGrath et al. (2016), Nuttgens (2010), Roberts-Clark et al. (2004), and Salahuddin and O'Brien (2011), further investigation is still needed. As previously discussed, this study was limited given the fact that only biracial women who self-identified as Latina and Caucasian were interviewed. It is also recommended that future research expands geographical location as this may influence the results. While this study explored how biracial women perceived family influence with regard to dating experiences it is not well understood the impact specific race mixtures may have in this area. More research is also needed to better understand how siblings in multiracial families may experience dating differently due to variations in physical appearance. Lastly, a deeper understanding of how racism influences the dating experiences of biracial women in necessary as these issues often negatively impact mental health. These are topics worthy of further investigation. When some of these themes have been further

explored, quantitative analysis might be applied to test any theories which surface regarding the dating experiences of biracial women.

Implications

In a nation that becomes more racially diverse each year, the social change implication of this study is an overall increased awareness of issues of culture and diversity. Having a better understanding of diversity has the potential to promote positive social change across all levels. For the individual, having a stronger understanding of diversity may increase empathy and awareness. At the organizational level, having an increased understanding of culture and diversity may promote inclusiveness and creative thinking. At a societal level, the impact of greater cultural awareness may be manifold with the benefit of informing future policy.

While the purpose of this research study was to gain a better understanding of the dating experiences of women who self-identify as Latina and Caucasian, the goals were that this research would serve to narrow the gap in the literature and provide a deeper understanding of human experiences from the perspective of the biracial individual. As dating is a precursor to major life events such as marriage and child-rearing, this knowledge may potentially benefit mental health practitioners who work with this population. A deeper understanding of the unique experiences of biracial women may allow practitioners to deliver more culturally informed services.

Finally, the conceptual framework for this study was a useful lens through which to view the dating experiences of biracial women. Current literature views the experiences of biracial individuals in a positive way, with the idea that straddling two or

more cultures can lead to greater resiliency and positive experiences. The findings of this study were congruent with what is currently known about the experiences of biracial women. Future research on the dating experiences of biracial women might also employ this conceptual framework as a useful tool for situating the results within the literature.

Conclusion

This study provided a deeper understanding of the unique dating experiences of biracial women. The data from participant interviews furthered what is known about dating experiences, dating challenges, and how biracial women perceive family influence on dating choices. The implications of this work were discussed as well as recommendations for future exploration.

The overall purpose of this study was to empower biracial women, allowing them to share their experiences in their own words in an effort to provide a deeper understanding of diversity and cultural issues. By giving biracial women a platform in which to speak about their own experiences, a historically understudied population might be better understood within society. With this knowledge, mental health professionals may be better suited to tailor interventions to meet the specific needs of biracial women in therapy.

In the spirit of better understanding the experiences of biracial women from their point of view and in their own words, I will now close with impactful statements made by the participants of this study. While the following statements were not used in the results section, these statements highlight the experience of being a biracial woman in America.

Participant 1- When people ask me "what am I?" at first, I am like what do you mean, what am I? I am a girl. I get tired of answering these questions about color. That is all they think when they see me. Why isn't it like, "what's your grade point average?" or something like that.

Participant 2- I look for a partner with similar values. With my family if someone needs something, no one hesitates to help. There is eagerness to be caring and compassionate for your family. Always willing to lend a helping hand is important to me.

Participant 3- I speak Spanish but I don't look like I can speak Spanish. So, people will say racist things in front of me about White people because they don't think that I can understand. You tend to learn peoples' true colors.

Participant 4- My experience of being part of a mixed-race family was very positive. It taught me to be accepting towards everybody. I learned a lot about both cultures and to not be judgmental about it. I think a lot of people don't understand the differences between cultures. They don't understand why people of different cultures do what they do. So, growing up with my mom being Hispanic and my dad being white, I was able to see both sides.

Participant 5- I get a lot of pressure in some ways, like I am supposed to be more involved with my culture. People expect you to be more involved when you say that you are biracial but that isn't always the case. I mean, everybody grows up differently. There are a lot of stereotypes.

Participant 6- When we moved to [name of town] that was definitely a culture shock. I realized at that time that I was different because I was surrounded by nothing but White people. And I did feel like a bit of an outcast, I just never understood why. I just knew that I looked different than everybody else. You had all your blonde, blue-eyed girls. Every once in a while, you would see someone brown skin, but most everybody was White.

Participant 7- The one thing that I really notice about dating is that I'm cautious. I am very cautious, especially in this climate, this atmosphere we have right now. Truthfully, I'm scared of racist people, and I don't want to deal with it.

Participant 8- Being part of a mixed-race family feels like you're living two lives sometimes. My parents divorced so that probably influenced it. I would go to my mom's house and my mom's family were Hispanic. I mean, for Christmases we'd have tamales. In my dad's family it is very white, almost country southern. You know, conservative White people. I didn't really know how to acknowledge it very well.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Code assigned to interviewee: _____   Date of interview: _____

Please tell me a little bit about yourself (age, marital status, number of children, education level, career type, etc.):

- What are your parents' racial identities?
- How do you identify racially?
- If you have siblings, how do they identify racially?
- What was your experience of being a member of a mixed-race family?
- What messages did you hear about biracial people growing up?

Research Q1: What are the dating experiences of biracial women?

- How has your biracial identity influenced your dating experiences?
- What role does race play when selecting a dating partner?
- What has been rewarding about dating as a biracial woman?
- What has been your experience with racism and dating as a biracial woman?

Research Q2: What are the unique dating challenges experienced by biracial women?

- What challenges have you faced dating as a biracial woman?
- What negative perceptions have you encountered dating as a biracial woman?
- What dating conflicts have you experienced as a biracial woman?

Research Q3: What are the influences that families have on biracial women's dating experiences?

- What are the conversations your parents had with you about race and dating?
- What are the conversations your grandparents had with you about race and dating?

- What are the conversations other family members had with you about race and dating?

- What pressure have you experienced to date someone from a particular race?

Closing

Is there anything else you would like to share about your dating experiences?