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TO BE OR NOT TO BE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INTERCULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN MEXICAN AMERICAN AND CAUCASIAN AMERICAN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

————————————

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Communication Studies

————————————

by

Jessica Helen Vierra

September 2019

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural romantic relationships have increasingly become more common in the United States between Mexican American and Caucasian American males and females. Predominantly, this study investigates how Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans in intercultural romantic relationships visualize conflict in their relationship. The research question: What are the intercultural communication differences in romantic relationships between Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans? Research findings support cultural differences being related to power, cultural gender differences, language barriers, child care, and religion. Although there is a vast amount of research focused on intercultural relationships, it seems there are few studies that have investigated intercultural communication differences between romantic couples. Participants in this study reported intercultural communication differences that involved communication conflict. Themes found in the data where intercultural communication differences occurred are: childcare, power, cultural gender differences, religion, and family influences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my research to my grandmother Lillian Calavan. Thank you, for being my support and editor when it came to completing my research. As well as, the support of my family: Tarena Vierra, Brad Vierra, Desiree Portillo, Ryan Vierra, and Gary Duncan. Without your support I do not think I would have accomplished my goal of providing research to this culture. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The United States is known as a society of diverse cultures. Today, racial diversity continues to rapidly increase, "in fact, the rate of immigrants to the US is over 1.2 million people per year" (Frame, 2004, p. 219). The rise in intercultural romantic relationships nationally has increased due to diverse cultures coming to the United States (Silva, Campbell, & Wright, 2012). Cultures that once were separate and unique are now colliding to create a new culture (i.e. a third culture). A third culture is a collaborated culture created from two separate and distinct cultures. "In 2000, for example, 7.4% of all married couple households and 15% of all opposite-sex unmarried couple households involved partners of different races or origins" (Silva, et al., 2012, p. 857). A substantial percentage when "in 1997, 33% of White Americans reported that they disapproved of intermarriage" and "49% were opposed" (Fu, 2008, p. 784). These findings suggest 18% of the American population approved of intermarriage in 1997. In fact, 15% of opposite-sex unmarried couple households now involving partners of different origins in 2000, it seems "Intercultural marriages in the United States have been steadily increasing" (Silva, et al., 2012, p. 857). Populations of intercultural unions have continually grown, making it vital to conduct research to aid relationships that may be encountering challenges and opportunities unique to intercultural romantic couples. In today's society unions across cultures are

continuing to grow in number, but resources to aid these relationships in conflict are not growing to the extent they need to.

Throughout history, interracial and intercultural romantic relationships have been frowned upon because unlike intracultural relationships, intercultural relationships transcend racial lines. Discrimination is still a reality for intercultural couples, although the Supreme Court overturned anti-miscegenation laws over 40 years ago (*Loving v. Virginia*, 1967) and growing surveys are now claiming that intercultural couples are becoming more accepted with time (Skinner & Hudac, 2017, p. 68). In fact, intercultural couples are becoming more common even with discrimination still being present in American society, but how do these individuals cope with relationship conflict that they are faced with?

According to Troy, Lewish-Smith, & Laurenceau (2006), "by the early 21st century, there were approximately 1.6 million interracial or interethnic marriages, making up 3% of all marriages" (p. 66). Although intercultural couples are becoming more prevalent it is important to note that "across studies, 16%–37% of White Americans admit moderate to strong disapproval of close relatives engaging in interracial romances" (Skinner & Hudac, 2017, p. 68). However, "in one survey, over half of the teenagers [on- Latinx Whites, African Americans, and Latinxs] reported dating someone of another ethnicity in the past. Only 13% would not consider crossing ethnic boundaries" and 50% to 60% of adults were open to dating across cultural divides (Troy et al., 2006, p. 66). "Although interracial marriages have become more frequent, U.S. society has historically

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been less than accepting of these relationships" (Troy et al., 2006, p. 66). Conducting this research allows individuals to further understand the real-life experiences of intercultural relationships and how to communicate in such conflict.

Diversity in America has grown over the last decade in schools, relationships, communities, and more. "Interracial romantic relationships, also referred to as interethnic or intercultural relationships (see Gaines & Agnew, 2003), comprise a growing, yet understudied portion of American society" (Troy et al., 2006, p. 66). Intercultural relationships are defined as a romantic union between two individuals with two different cultural identities. For instance, a Mexican American male and a Caucasian American female would be an intercultural relationship. Whereas, an intracultural relationship is a romantic union between two individuals that identify within the same culture, such as both partners identify as Caucasian American.

Intercultural romantic relationships, specifically between Mexican American and Caucasian Americans, are the focus of this study. There is an abundance of research in interracial, intercultural, and interethnic relationships for Caucasian and African American cultures, however, there is currently limited research in Mexican American and Caucasian American intercultural romantic relationships. An intercultural romantic relationship is defined as the romantic

union between two people of different cultures; intercultural friendships are outside the scope of this research.

This study will use the term intercultural, however, while conducting research it was found that studies utilized the terms intercultural and interracial interchangeably. Interracial romantic relationships are relationships that transcend across race. This study will only utilize the term intercultural, because the terms do not have the same definition or meaning. Issues individuals are faced with in intercultural relationships are different from interracial individuals. People categorized as different racial backgrounds may have similar cultural backgrounds, however, their main difficulties will deal with racism in their community. Whereas, people of the same 'race' might come from very different cultures. For example, suppose you were adopted as an infant by a Mexican family, meaning a family the members of which identify as Mexican-American, and who have the typical life-style features of this culture. Your birth parents are of European stock. When you grew up if you were involved with someone who is a typical WASP culturally, you would deal with the same challenges as a Mexican-American who was not adopted, but a natural born child of Mexican Americans.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural romantic relationships are a union not only between two people, but two cultures, two value-systems, and two communities. It is desirable for "interracial couples to be accepted," perceived, viewed, or embraced as a cultural normality, but it may be a challenge "if problems arise in the relationship" (Potter & Thomas, 2012, p.470). Common factors of conflict in Mexican American and Caucasian American romantic relationships are power, individualism, religion, cultural gender differences, childcare, and language (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017; Buriel & Hurtado-Ortiz, 2000; Frame, 2004; Kane, 2000; Killian, 2002; Neff & Suizzo, 2006). Although research suggests these are clear indicators of conflict in intercultural relationships, this study investigates if there are intercultural communication differences in romantic relationships between Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans caused by identity.

Negy and Snyder's (2000) research suggest there is no significant difference of satisfaction between either type of marriage, culture, or gender, "indicating that monoethnic and interethnic couples do not differ substantially in levels of relationship satisfaction" (par. 22). Satisfaction does not measure how much conflict these individuals encounter. In fact, a person can be completely satisfied with their relationship, but encounter an abundance of conflict. Although there may be different conflicts that occur between two different cultures in

marriages, it does not necessarily follow that one type of relationship is less satisfactory than another. Killian (2002) believed that "couples who consistently deprioritize their differences achieve compliance" and are able to work through conflict (p. 612). Working together is essential to overcome any disagreement or cultural difference in a relationship, however, individuals must understand how to do so.

Negy and Snyder (2000) found that, "interethnic couples were more similar to non-Latinx white couples than they were to Mexican American couples across multiple domains, with Mexican American couples showing slightly higher levels of distress" (par. 1). Possibly, because of identity and cultural differences. Caucasian American and Mexican American relationships are more similar to Caucasian American relationships than Mexican American relationships (Negy & Snyder, 2000). Even when small conflicts arise, their existence should not be taken as evidence that intercultural contact should be avoided (Toosi, Ambady, & Sommers, 2012, p. 20). Intercultural relationships can be successful if the individuals are aware of potential conflicts that can be caused due to identity differences. If there are conflicts unique to cultures within their communication habits this research will encourage understanding conflicts exclusive to intercultural relationships. Mexican American and Caucasian American relationships can be successful, if the individuals in the relationship are aware of the potential conflicts that they may encounter and how to navigate through the potential problems. In order to do this, research needs to answer the following

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questions: what the differences in the communication process that are occurring in intercultural relationships and is conflict communication created from cultural identity differences. How a person identifies can create cultural divides. For instance, a female may remain silent if she is Mexican American compared to a Caucasian American female that might want to speak up in a state of conflict. A person's culture helps create their identity.

<div align="center">Identity</div>

Today, "1 in 40 persons identify himself or herself as multiracial, and this figure could soar to 1 in 5 by the year 2050" (Lee & Bean, 2004, p. 221). Now, with "mixed" relationships becoming more common it is important to understand the diversity and the complexities that an individual experience's from identifying themselves with one racial/cultural group or multiple racial/cultural groups. An "increased racial and ethnic diversity brought about by the new immigration, rising intermarriage, and patterns of multiracial identification may be moving the nation far beyond the traditional and relatively persistent black/white color line" (Lee & Bean, 2004, p. 221). A blurred line of racial categorization is becoming apparent with time; however, researchers are now starting to begin to understand that racial categorizations are not so black and white as it once was (Lee & Bean, 2004).

Complexities of Identity

To understand how a person identifies a person must understand how complex it is to claim your own identity. "All knowledge is constructed," explained

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J. Bennett and what people "ultimately value and believe is what they choose" (as cited in Sparrow, 2008, p. 394). J. Bennet, M. Bennet, and Adler coincide to believe the definition of self to be "marginal" allowing one person to shift from one culture to another, allowing people to choose who they are! Bennet seems to derive the existence of free will from the premise that knowledge is constructed, which is not a valid inference. Knowledge may or may not be constructed, but we might be unable to choose how we construct it, or how we construct our concept of self. Now, with diversity on the rise and bi-ethnic individuals becoming more common, the model of choice is not always exercised. Present researchers, (Anderson, Rueter, & Lee, 2015; Binning, Unzueta, Huo, & Molina, 2009; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Gaither, 2015; Gullickson & Morning, 2011; Lee & Bean, 2004; Reece, 2016; Roberts & Gelman, 2015; Schmitt & Outten, 2012; Soliz, Thorson, & Rittenour, 2009; Tran, Miyake, Martinez-Morales, & Csizmadia, 2016), believe that a person does not have a choice when it comes to identification, in fact, they believe it is chosen for them by their experiences and the people around them. Sparrow posits that "Students often question whether one could really choose to act on one's values, if those values were not recognized in the contexts in which they lived as professionals" (Sparrow, 2008, p. 394). Since culture is rooted in a person (i.e. comes from our experiences), people believe that it is a luxury to the majority. Not everyone agrees that we are free to create our own identities; still leaving people to question who they truly are.

Do We Have a Choice? From 2000 to 2010 the U.S. census concluded that the number of self-identified multiethnic individuals in the United States increased by over a third (Gaither, 2015, p. 114), but yet we are still left with the same classification system that excludes these biracial individuals. "Most multiracial individuals are probably aware of the fact that their racial background consists of more than one racial category" (Binning et al., 2009, p. 36). In Shih and Sanchez (2005) study, they found multiethnic individuals to feel generally positive about being a part of two different racial categories (Gaither, 2015, p. 115). Even though individuals feel positively about being multiethnic there is psychological pressure that they grant themselves and experience socially between racial groups (Gaither, 2015, p. 114). With this pressure being created internally and externally individuals feel a constant need to choose, however, it is hypothesized that this choice is already made for them. Sparrow hypothesized this conclusion and investigated her hypothesis by interviewing 4 multiethnic women and found her hypothesis, of the choice already being made for them, to be supported. This research has a small sample fallacy, but the data collected is important to display how individuals view identity. When Sparrow posits that multiethnic individual's choice of identification is already made for them, she is insinuating that the social experiences, a multiethnic individual experience, distinguishes which group they identify with. For example, a second-generation Mexican American's identity is already created for them by experiences or social

pressures. The same is implied for Caucasian Americans. The choice is made for them by their experiences; forcing them to negotiate their identity.

Negotiation of Identity. Negotiating is not always easy. "People change their identification strategies depending on individual constraints such as attention and cognitive resources, and contextual factors such as situational cues that make a particular social identity more or less salient (Roccas & Brewer, 2002)" (as cited in Cheng & Lee, 2009, p. 53). Identity is a constant negotiation of self-experience and self-thought. Some researchers hypothesize that romantic unions between two cultures should create a third culture unique to the relationship in order to help combat conflict. For an individual, "racial groups and their differences are negotiated and played out within individuals who are multiracial" (Cheng & Lee, 2009, p.63). Experience makes who we are, however, we are faced with negotiating our sense of pride and feelings with what is assigned to us by our society and the experiences we encounter. In Cheng and Lee's study, which utilized 57 self-reported multiracial college students, they found that a person who has negative memories or feelings towards a particular ethnicity are more likely to not identify with such ethnicities. Whereas, if they have a positive feeling towards an ethnicity, they will choose that identity over another.

Time and time again, race-related experiences distinguish who a person is. These experiences plus where a person comes from cause an individual to negotiate who they are. A person is constantly negotiating identity, even as a

person joins a romantic union. "It may be that the potential of experiencing negative responses to one's multiracial background does not deter disclosure because of the adaptive coping strategies and resilience multiracial individuals have been found to display" (Tran, Miyake, Martinez-Morales, & Csizmadia, 2016, p. 34). Tran et al. (2016) found that "Most participants did not anticipate an explicit negative reaction from the communicator following racial disclosure, but some described negative interpersonal consequences of being put into a position of having one's racial identification questioned" (p. 34). Being challenged on traditions that created your identity can create conflict, because we cling to our experiences as the correct way to deal with encounters. Our experiences are often influenced by family and social settings.

Family and Social Construction of Identity. Social and family experiences construct the identity of an individual. Each family creates their own system to help create and nurture individuals. "Many family relationships, however, can be and often are influenced by the various and different social identities of family members" (Soliz, Thorson, & Rittenour, 2009, p. 821). Group disclosure and acceptance is vital to home life when it comes to identification. Often a person sees conflict in intercultural relationships because of lack of acceptance of different approaches to situations.

When "families take a color-blind approach to conversations about racial and ethnic differences by indicating these differences are not relevant to the family" (Anderson, Rueter, & Lee, 2015, p. 291), they are also indicating that their

race or color does not have to define who they are, allowing a third culture to be created. Color does not matter, because they are still loved and a part of the family. They let actions speak louder than color. For instance, "individual family members' communication behaviors may each individually contribute to the family environment, teaching family members what topics are appropriate to discuss" (Anderson et al., 2015, p. 292). That is not to say that there is not an acknowledgement of different ethnicities in the household, because there is acknowledgement of who a person is determines an individual's choice of romantic union, as well.

To say a person is taking a "color blind" approach to family members or significant others is very complex. This term is sometimes considered to be overly broad. To say that a person is color blind may not be the case, because a person's identity is tied to their culture. Experiences in a person's life creates their identity and these experiences are linked to their culture, meaning a person may not be able to fully divide themselves from their culture.

Intercultural Relationships

"Interracial couples have significantly increased in number in the United States" (Field, Kimuna, & Straus, 2013, p. 743). Since interracial couples have become more prevalent it is commonly associated with interracial relationships becoming more accepted. "As of 2000, nearly 6% of all married couples were interracial compared to fewer than 1% in 1970" (Bratter & King, 2008, p. 160).

Although interracial relationships have become more prevalent it does not mean that they are more accepted; they are just more common. Growing literature suggests relationships that cross racial lines still violate societal norms (Bratter & King, 2008, p. 160). Intercultural relationships are far from being the norm and so it is reasonable to expect that these individuals are not widely accepted, this is to say, an intercultural couple is susceptible to stigmatization instead of praise (Vaquera & Kao, 2005, p. 487). However, what is the difference between intercultural dating and intracultural dating? Perspective.

Diversity in America has grown over the last decade in schools, relationships, communities, and more. Two individuals who identify culturally from two backgrounds are considered to be an intercultural couple. "Interracial romantic relationships, also referred to as interethnic or intercultural relationships (Gaines & Agnew, 2003), comprise a growing, yet understudied portion of American society" (Troy et al., 2006, p. 66). A case may arise were an individual is of the same race but is culturally different from their significant other; this is an intercultural relationship. When conducting research on intercultural relationships some researchers use the two terms interchangeable, although, they have two different meanings. For instance, a Mexican-American male and a Caucasian American female would be an interracial relationship. Whereas, an interracial relationship is a romantic union between two individuals that identify within the same culture. A Euro-American male and A Euro-American female would be an interracial relationship. For the purposes of the literature review this

research investigates intercultural relationships, although, the term interracial is present in other research which is being discussed. Intercultural relationships encounter discrimination when displaying affection to each other in public, but why are interracial relationships known as the societal norm when American society is continually growing to a more diverse community?

Intercultural relationships are shaped by the availability of partners available in a society or community (Herman & Campbell, 2012, p. 343). "Some respondents are more willing to date than to marry interracially—but the majority fall into the most extreme categories: either opposed to all forms or willing to consider all forms of interracial relationship" (Herman & Campbell, 2012, p. 344). Intercultural marriages and dating are associated with growing up in a diverse community. "Interracial romances become visible threats to the status quo and potentially activate third-party sanctions meant to dissuade such relationships" (Kreager, 2008, p. 890). Social experiences, such as a social activity between adolescents at school, influence attitudes toward diverse ethnicities and cross-racial dating, but where do these negative attitudes begin?

Relationships are multidimensional. When two people are from two different cultures, this adds another layer or dimension to typically a multidimensional experience in a relationship. "Intercultural relationships are confronted with many unique problems," and although all relationships have their

own fair share of problems, it seems that culture may play a significant role in romantic intercultural relationship conflict (Lauer & Lauer, 2004).

Conflict

Every relationship has conflict; the question is to which degree. Conflict can be disparaging and intimidating. Overall, Mexican-American and Caucasian American individuals differ widely when it comes to culture (Cortes, Larson, & Hample, 2005, p. 114). When a relationship contains differences or conflict, individuals may assume the worst or abandon the relationship, however, individuals can work on their differences. Adapting to arguments or serious disagreements can create an understanding between the two individuals romantically involved creating a healthy communication process and interpersonal relationship.

Conflict is defined in the Oxford dictionary as "a serious disagreement or argument; typically, a protracted one" (Mackinson et. al., 2012, p. 216). Although no relationship is perfect this study will examine conflict significant to intercultural romantic relationships and its connection to cultural differences. For the purpose of this study, conflict is defined as "a series of hostile, critical, rejecting, and inconsiderate interactions between romantic partners" (Mackinson et. al., 2012, p. 216).

Power

One possible conflict that intercultural romantic relationships, specifically Mexican American and Caucasian American relationships may encounter is a

cultural difference in the use of power. Researchers have reported that, "Mexico is classified as collectivistic and large-power distance, and the United States is classified as individualistic and relatively small-power distance" (Oetzel et al., 2003). The struggle for power that may arise is due to both cultures impacting how collectivistic and individualistic people may be in a relationship. When an individual is enculturated in a collectivistic society their way of communicating will be in consideration of the group, such as a family and an interpersonal relationship in what they say they do. Whereas, a person who is enculturated in an individualistic society, will act in a way that benefits themselves. Two individuals who are enculturated in opposing styles such as the collectivistic or individualistic way of communications will most likely manifest differences that could create conflict between them. Underlying the differing cultural ways of communicating includes differing values, attitudes, rules of speaking, and so forth.

The individualistic culture will think in terms that will better themselves, while the collectivistic culture will think about how to help another. A prime example is Caucasians have tendencies of wanting to discuss conflict, whereas, Mexican American's do not want to discuss the conflict (Oetzel et. al., 2003, p. 72). Both approaches to conflict are individuals attempting to save face. By moving forward without discussing conflict, the individual is avoiding frustration and argumentation, which saves face, whereas, an individual that forces someone to discuss the problem is thinking about their individual needs and not

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their partners. They save face by gaining power. The power is gained by forcing someone to communicate when not desired. This example displays how cultural communication differences can result in conflict. Thus, implying that a person's identity collides with another when a person distinguishes the relationship's they are a part of, the culture they come from, and the role they will play in the relationship (Oetzel et. al., 2003, p. 72).

"Perceived power inequality is one aspect of social life that is likely to have a strong influence on authentic self-expression" (Neff & Suizzo, 2006, p. 442). When an individual deters a person from their beliefs, feelings, and choices, the power is granted to that person in the relationship (Neff & Suizzo, 2006). Expressing a person's perceived self in a relationship is vital for success in communication and the balancing of power. Presenting self is the person you portray to the publics image. Whereas, perceived self is the person, a person believes to be in moments of honest and self-examination. In a relationship where one person has most of the power might not be as stable as the other, but still be happy. It is important to note that these internal values, feelings, and choices that some individuals experience, externally and internally, define their identity, and their identity in their relationship. "When individuals feel that they are not able to make their own choices in a relationship, or if they are afraid of repercussions from a more powerful partner, they may be less likely to communicate freely" (Neff & Suizzo, 2006, p. 442). Freedom of perceived self is

important in every interpersonal relationship a person is in. Thus, not sharing a person's feelings and values can truly confine an individual to a box.

Individuals in intercultural romantic relationships may be faced with conflict when one of the individuals believes power should be distributed evenly and another individual believes only one should have the ultimate say. Commonly, this is what we see in Mexican American and Caucasian American relationships (Oetzel et. al., 2003, p. 76). "Individuals who reported having less decision-making power than their partners also tended to report that their relationship styles felt inauthentic" (Neff & Suizzo, 2006, p. 442). Not allowing individuals to have an opinion or say creates silence and a buildup of negative energy, ultimately creating more conflict. This disagreement of distribution of power is rooted from different cultures and cultural gender differences.

Gender Expectations

Historically, it is believed men are about dominance (i.e. make decisions, bread winner) and women are about caring (i.e. take care of children, household, etc.), which is why women tend to take a silent approach to conflict (Rajabi, Mohammadi, Amanallahifar, & Sudani, 2015, p. 285). The roles of a woman and a man are affected by what individuals are taught from a young age, socio-economic class, and culture. Differences in class create conflict in many aspects, from points of views about work, women's roles, and even expectations of children. "Women typically suppress their thoughts and opinions to keep a relationship or to not to lose a romantic partner and intimate relationship, while

men typically use self-closure in order to control the relationship" (Rajabi et. al., 2015, p. 285). Although the silent approach is meant to maintain the relationship an abundance of silence and stress "leads to reduced self-esteem, depression, and loneliness" (Rajabi et al., 2015, p. 285). Now, as more cultural studies are emerging the role some women take in a relationship is due to cultural normality's is clearer. Culture may cause pressure for an individual to conform to culture expectations.

Conflict occurs when a male's expectations of a woman's role in the relationship are violated and vice versa. Expectations individuals have been fashioned from the culture they grow from. It is not always the case that women take the silent approach in relationships, in fact, in American relationships women are seen to be more outspoken and seen as an equal (Kane, 2000). Whereas, traditional Latinx women tend to be silenced (Kane, 2000). "Variations in gendered social arrangements by race/ethnicity compose the context in which racial differences in gender-related attitudes must be understood" (Kane, 2000, p. 421). For instance, a person's mother may take the role of being silent like described above. So, individuals believe that their partner should act in a similar manner, however, this is not always the case which creates conflict. In every relationship there are certain expectations a person anticipates, however, when these expectations are not met, negativity and argumentation are brought into the relationship. At this point of the relationship, individuals decide to

compromise, abandon their cultural differences, or disband their relationship (Kane, 2000).

<u>Childcare</u>

The next area of Mexican American and Caucasian American relationships that may create conflict is how individuals take care of their children. How individuals discipline their children may vary. For instance, one individual may think strict disciplinary actions such as timeouts or spanking is beneficial, were the other individual may think discussing with the child and speaking to the child is more favorable. "The degree to which one parent is authoritarian and the other more permissive may be born of their culture's view of children and child-rearing practices" (Neff & Suizzo, 2006, p. 224). It does not make one person right and the other wrong, however, it does display that how an individual chooses to discipline their child is deeply rooted into where the person came from. Individuals take care of their children based on their individual experiences in their culture, as a child.

In fact, acculturation is a big factor in the organization or mentality of nurturing and taking care of children in the United States (Buriel & Hurtado-Ortiz, 2000, p. 317). Like previously stated, Mexican families are seen to be more collectivistic, where Americans are seen as more individualistic (Oetzel et. al., 2003). Of course, an individual can be Mexican American and not identify as collectivistic, because there can be outliers, but most of the population is in fact collectivistic. It is not surprising that the choice of how-to disciple children is

unique to different cultures. For instance, how a Mexican family and American family discipline their children can vary. Ultimately, disciplinary actions are subjected to who has the power in the relationship because they decide the actions that will be taken when disciplinary actions must be taken.

Religion

Another factor that may lead to conflict in intercultural relationships is differences in religious orientation. Religion is deeply rooted in culture. "Religion and culture is hard to unravel" (Frame, 2004, p. 224). Religion is a big factor in creating a person's individual ethics and how a person treats others. Ethics defines not only right from wrong but also how a person acts and reacts. "Religious orientation has been described as giving authority to the structure of human relations (Rajabi et al., 2015, p. 283). Frame (2004) explains "religion is such a powerful force among a couple that it may influence other aspects of family life such as holiday traditions, food, gender roles, sexuality, and child-rearing" (p. 224). For this reason, it is almost impossible to avoid conflict if there is a disagreement between different religions in an intercultural romantic relationship and hard decisions might need to be made.

Individuals might need to decide to compromise when it comes to religious beliefs or abandon their beliefs, ultimately, leaving behind a part of their culture. The problem with this decision is the influence religion has on other aspects of person's lives. "Religion provides a social system" (Steffen & Merrill, 2011, p. 562). The system in which we interact with groups, people, friends, and family.

Religious affiliation impacts individuals' lives, simply giving up a religious belief does not mean their actions will change. Religious affiliation not only creates how we interact but can "provide connection to the… country of origin" (Steffen & Merrill, 2011, p. 563). It provides a sense of security and truth of whom a person really is and where they come from.

Language Barriers

The final area of conflict that this study may encounter is language barriers. In America, English is considered the primary language, however, Mexican American and Caucasian American relationships often deal with language barriers. For example, one individual might be bilingual and speak Spanish because it is their native tongue; the language they speak in their household. Imagine being in a relationship with an individual and not being able to have a connection with that individual's mother, father, aunts, uncles, and grandparents because Spanish is the only language they speak; it creates a wall between the couple. "In fact, one of the pitfalls in couple communication is the belief that one's partner can be both a mind-reader and accurate interpreter of what is said," however, people spend almost 50%-80% of their time listening and only hear half of what is communicated (Frame, 2004, p. 225). A person cannot mind read when a person cannot fathom what is being said. It is not that individuals are not listening, but they do not comprehend what is being said. After all, it is hard to learn a new language, but not impossible. Not listening and not understanding a language can create unnecessary conflict and stress in Mexican

American and Caucasian American relationships (Frame, 2004). It is important to be conscious and have continuous "awareness of the cultural dimensions of their relationships that may contribute to marital disharmony" (Frame, 2004, p. 225).

Language barriers can cause communication failures when there is a lack of common language. "Language is a medium of exchange through which individuals articulate their internal thoughts, engage in social interactions and initiate, create and maintain social relations" (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017, p. 750). A person can imagine what could occur in engagements where speaking different languages halts the potential connections between a family and a significant other, however, this is a common reality for those that choose to be a part of Mexican American and Caucasian American romantic relationships. Foreign language anxiety is a commonality for individuals in Mexican American and Caucasian American relationships encountering language barriers. Foreign language anxiety "can be described as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017, p. 751). This anxiety can lead to a buildup of tension, anxiety, stress, and even sweaty palms.

Intercultural romantic relationships can be stressful if a person does not navigate through built up tension and anxiety created in a relationship; like all relationships. Stress is created when adjustments to an individual's expectations are violated. Often, when there is an abundance of tension in a relationship partners tend to look for guidance or choose to breakup (Silva et. al., 2012).

Research up to this point has focused on predominantly monocultural relationships allowing more tools at their disposal and an ability to receive guidance, however, "research has not examined the narratives that circulate between interracial partners around their experiences of co-authoring their relationships in a structural context that favors homogamous" and interracial relationships (Killian, 2002, p. 603). Therefore, in this thesis, I will investigate the narratives and explanations of cultural communication differences in intercultural romantic relationships between Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans. To begin this research let us look at two theories that may help explain cultural conflict in relationship communication.

Creating a Third Culture

Third culture children can be described as individuals who are raised in a culture different from their parents' culture. These individuals are often exposed to a large variety of cultures. For this study, third culture will be defined as individuals that combine or exchange cultural influences to create a combination culture. For instance, a Mexican American and Caucasian American that are romantically involved might chose to celebrate Christmas on both Christmas eve and day. This is an example of creating a third culture because they are sharing cultural normalities from both subcultures. It is believed that individuals who create a third culture are "more flexible and better able to cope with change" (Mayberry, 2016, par. 6).

Expectancy Violation Theory

Every person has expectations; it is human nature to expect actions from others. Expectation violation theory tackles the following question, "When unexpected things happen, what determines if we see the event as a surprise or a disappointment, and what do we do in response" (White, n.d., p. 217). Expectation violation theory is defined as an expectation that an individual may hold which is violated due to behavior differing from what is typical or expected (Bevan, 2003, p. 69). For instance, if individuals expect a person to be submissive within their relationship and they challenge this expectation it can cause conflict and result in an expectation violation. "Generally, expectancies can be conceptualized as framing devices that help both to characterize and structure interpersonal interactions and affect consequent information processing, behavior, and perceptions" (Bevan, 2003, p. 69). Our expectations determine how we react to different situations.

Previously it was discussed that expectations can be influenced by situations or context (i.e. coming from a conservative or liberal environment) (Gregory, 2013, p. 218). Situations that can cause violation in expectations can be cultural differences. In fact, Gregory (2013) discusses "expectations may be derived from social norms and regulations or from personal desires or ambitions wholly unrelated to reality or norms (p. 218). Since expectations can be created from personal desires it is vital to understand that within all contexts of marriages

or interpersonal relationships it is crucial to display or reciprocate affection and be aware of expectations a significant other might hold. (Gaines, 1997).

Relational Dialects Theory

Relational dialects theory (RDT) focuses on relationship tensions (i.e. power, language barriers, religion, etc.) that are created through communication interaction (i.e. dialect or nonverbal communication). Intercultural relationships organize two separate individuals around a "dynamic interplay of opposing tendencies" (as cited in Walker, n.d.). When individuals are from separate cultures different internal views continue through an individual's mind creating an internal dialect. The internal dialect of an individual is concerned with: connectedness/ separateness; certainty/ uncertainty; openness/ closedness. The success of an interpersonal relationship is based on both individual's willingness to be certain, connected, and open or vice versa. Each culture has its own cultural normalities. An intercultural relationship can be thought of like a see saw; where the individuals change back and forth between two cultures creating their own culture together. A third culture.

Intercultural relationships are not only concerned with the barrier that can be created internally, but externally. An external dialect is concerned with inclusion, seclusion; conventionality, uniqueness; revelation, and concealment. Successful intercultural relationships focus on inclusion and acceptance of who each other are, however, conflict may still occur, because culture is deeply rooted in who we are. This study will use RDT as a lens to illuminate what

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cultural communication differences (i.e. dialect differences) transpire in relationships. Both Expectancy Violation Theory and RDT will help illuminate the differences that transpire in intercultural relationships. Expectancy violation theory will clarify expectations that can lead to conflict. Whereas, RDT will clarify internal views that may create conflict. Thus, I propose the following research question.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH QUESTION

As the United States population increasingly becomes diverse there is an increased need to understand the intercultural communication differences to improve intercultural relations. "In 1970, interracial marriages accounted for about 0.7 percent of all marriages in the United States; by 1992, this figure had increased to 2.2 percent" (Vaquera & Kao, 2005, p. 484). With interracial marriages continuing to grow it is vital for researchers to understand conflict they may encounter in their relationship due to cultures that might be prevalent in different races such as, Mexican Americans and European Americas. By being able to understand the conflict these individuals encounter it can provide awareness to individuals misinformed about this population and allow researchers to find a way to combat conflict they may encounter in the future. The overall purpose of this research is to investigate the following research question:

RQ1: What are the intercultural communication differences in romantic relationships between Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans?

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Participants

To participate in this study individuals had to identify as being a part of an intercultural romantic couple or ex-couple, where one individual identified culturally, as Caucasian (i.e. Caucasian American, White, American, Caucasian American) and the other individual identified culturally as a second generation Mexican (i.e. Mexican American, Mexican). This study utilized twelve couples/ ex-couples (M=12, F=12) in an effort to reach a point of saturation. A total of five Caucasian American males, seven Caucasian American females, seven Mexican American males, and five Mexican American females were interviewed. There is an abundance of research in interracial and interethnic relationships, however, there is limited research dedicated to Mexican American and Caucasian American romantic relationships. This study was conducted as an effort to shed light on Mexican American and Caucasian Americans perceived role of culture on conflict in a relationship through interviews.

Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth, in person interviews, with intercultural couples or ex-couples that were once romantically involved. Individuals were approached at coffee shops (Starbucks), the university (CSUSB), and the grocery store in an attempt to gather a variety of individuals.

As cited in the article written by Whiting (2008), "interviews are one of the most commonly used methods of data collection" (p. 35). Interviews benefited this study because it allowed the research to convey individuals true lived experiences; allowing individuals to tell their own story. At times, the participants disclosed information which provoked happiness, anger, anxiety, sadness, disappointment, or even grief. As the interviewer, I was supportive and empathetic, because it is "essential to create a positive and supportive environment" (Ashton, 2014, p. 29). Note, that during interviews it was also my job as the interviewer to guide the interview and not to allow participants "to pursue personal agendas and vent their frustrations" (Ashton, 2014, p. 29). Not allowing personal agendas to be pursued allowed relevant information focused on the questions being asked to be recorded and reported.

The couple or ex-couple was interviewed separately to gather data. "Conducting research in conflict environments is a challenge, given their complexity and common attitudes of distrust and suspicion" (Cohen & Arieli, 2011, p. 423). For this purpose, individuals were ensured that their names will would be withheld and that their interview would be conducted separately. They were also assured that what they disclosed would not be repeated to their ex-counterpart, significant other, or outside persons.

The participants' ranged in age from 18-60 with a mean of 29. The purpose of a wide range of ages was to ensure a wide variety of perspectives. Partners were interviewed separately to obtain thoughts, experiences, and

feelings that they had encountered over the duration of their relationships. The atmosphere of the individual interviews was open and safe, allowing participants to express their true feelings. A total of 12 couples or ex-couples, which translates into 24 participants from the middle class, were interviewed in hopes to reach a point of saturation. The purpose of focusing on the middle class is because there are family dynamics that are unique to this social class. Examples of such characteristics are dual house incomes and multiple children. The individual interviews were audiotaped with their permission and field notes were taken during interviews to help identify initial themes. The questions utilized in the interview followed a funnel effect.

In order to gather more participants after the interview was complete individuals were asked if they knew other individuals that are in intercultural romantic relationships and if they may want to participate in this study. If participants were identified, the individuals were encouraged not to share that they have done so with anyone, other than myself. This was an effort to ensure confidentiality. This method is known as snowball sampling. "This is a technique for finding research subjects where one subject gives the researcher the name of another, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on (Cohen & Arieli, 2011, p. 424). Snowball sampling "has unique advantages, utilities, and applications for research conducted in conflict environments" (Cohen & Arieli, 2011, p. 424). Since this research investigated cultures role on conflict in

intercultural romantic relationships; snowball sampling was the strongest option to gather participants.

Data Analysis

This study was conducted by using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the process of coding interviews and identifying initial themes, where "codes are building blocks of analysis" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 61). From these building blocks, themes emerged from the data collected. In this case, themes initially identified dealt with power, religion, childcare, language barriers, etc. Research was not limited to these areas; however, previous literature suggested that conflict in intercultural romantic relationships are rooted from these differences. As interviews were conducted the following themes became prevalent: childcare, power, cultural gender differences, religion, and family influences. The focus of this exploratory study is to identify what topical areas do romantic intercultural couples find themselves engaging in conflict and which ways do they communicatively resolve their conflicts.

Validity/Reliability

After interviews reached a conclusion the data was analyzed and was utilized to create a questionnaire stating the findings/patterns; in order to seek validation from two focus groups with a total of 10 participants. The two focus groups consisted of five people, each identifying either as a Mexican American or Caucasian American. The participants of the focus groups were asked to

complete a questionnaire to agree or disagree and to provide comments to help refine any findings/patterns that were identified. The purpose of the focus groups was to increase the validity of what was reported and found.

Focus groups contained people that were not interviewed and are currently or have been in an intercultural romantic relationship between a second generation Mexican American and a Caucasian American individual. Participants in focus group 1 included M=2, F=3 ; Participants in focus group 2 included M=3 , F=2 . The focus groups agreed with the research findings to be accurate, supporting the data collected. Meaning that the research conducted is reliable in consistency and is valid.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

Twenty participants in intercultural romantic relationships interviewed reported a pattern of conflict related to cultural differences. Four thematic patterns of conflict were found: childcare, power, gender differences, and religion.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

Twenty participants reported intercultural communication differences in their romantic relationship. For some relationships intercultural communication differences were more prevalent than others, but a common theme identified by participants was cultural differences connected to individualism and collectivism. Individualism is defined as performing in a way that benefits one individual or themselves (Lefebvre & Volker, 2013). While, collectivism is defined as performing in a manner that benefits not just an individual, but the immediate majority (i.e. family) (Lefebvre & Volker, 2013). Caucasian American participants (12 of 12) in an intercultural relationship reported to be individualistic; and all Mexican American participants (12 of 12) reported to be collectivistic. Mexican American females (5 of 5) and Mexican American males (7 of 7) interviewed explained a common theme of "thinking about others" and "family." Examples of claims are as follows:

"When I make decisions, I think about everyone that is going to be affected, including my extended family, whereas, my Caucasian American

counterpart does not really have a close relationship with his family like I do" (P13MAf).

"Although both sides of the family are very helpful. I just feel like the bond of a Mexican family is stronger and we discuss issues more often than my Caucasian American" (P4MAf).

"I will sacrifice what I need to for my family" (P2MAf).

"I cannot just make a decision, I have to think about my family too." (P3MAm).

"I live under my families roof so I have to follow their rules. My girlfriend does not always understand this because although she lives under her families household she can do what she wants and I have to consider my parents" (P16MAm).

The statements (P13MAf, P4MAf, P2MAf, P3MAm, P16MAm) demonstrate Mexican American collectivistic culture. Mexican American female participants (5 of 5) reported that their decision-making involves consideration for their family members. In addition, Mexican American males (7 of 7) indicated their collectivistic culture by using the key phrase "considering others" or "thinking of others." The comments are representative of a collectivistic cultural orientation because all the Mexican American participants indicated the importance of family goals rather than their individual goals. All participants stated that they were willing to sacrifice for the greater good of the family even if that meant letting go of their individual goals, an aspect that is vital to collectivistic culture. These

illustrations emphasize the importance of the Mexican American family. Values as a collectivistic culture include consideration of planning for the future, making decisions, and creating solutions together. This contrasts from the pattern of similarities identified in Caucasian American culture, which focuses on the individual rather than the collective. Thus, displaying the pattern of Caucasian American value for individual goals higher than the collective's goal.

Caucasian American males (4 of 5), made comments in reference to their experience of being individualistic. Caucasian American males (P14CAm, P20CAm, P24CAm, P1CAm) expressed their focus to be on self-improvement. After collecting the data, key phrases, such as "best for me" and "focuses on the individual" were identified. These phrases identify participants that focus on themselves rather than the collective. The statement below is representative of the Caucasian American males (4 of 5) interviewed individualistic approach:

> "My girlfriend has so much family. It is a typical Mexican family you can think of cousins, cousins, and more cousins. She has triple of the amount of family members than I do. The majority of them speak a different language then I do and anytime advice is needed they give it. My family is smaller and focuses on the individual and what is best for them. When I make a decision I worry about what is best for me" (P14CAm).

P14CAm's statement displays how Caucasian Americans are concerned with the individual rather than the collective. The other four participants indicated similar comments that displayed a focus on the individual rather than the collective.

Although the statement above is a representation of all the Caucasian American male participants, all five Caucasian American females reported similar individualistic qualities by making similar comments. The statements below is a representation of Caucasian American female participants (5 of 7) that indicated individualistic comments:

"I just do not understand why he cannot do what he wants. He is 21 and still has to follow the rules of his parents. It causes a lot of fights" (P15CAf).

"Parents house their rules creates lots of tension in our relationship, because I think he should be able to do what he wants without consideration of them. He is an adult" (P11CAf).

From the thematic analysis conducted, a pattern was identified, which indicates that there is a clash between cultures. One source of conflict is derived from individualistic and collectivistic ideologies. All Mexican American participants (12 of 12) indicated they thought about how their decisions will affect the collective, whereas, the Caucasian American participants (12 of 12) explained that their concern was with the individual rather than the collective. This pattern is significant to interpersonal intercultural relationships because collectivistic individuals value group orientation, whereas, individualistic individuals value the individual, which could lead to further conflict in the future.

Childcare

Sixteen of 24 participants recounted conflict regarding child care in their intercultural romantic relationships. Sixteen of the 24 participants reported having children eight Mexican American and eight Caucasian American participants. Participants (i.e. dating or married) who had children stated different approaches in disciplining their children was a source of conflict. Some participants came from blended families, but this did not affect the data collected. Blended families are defined as individuals who have children from other individuals that are not present in a relationship (i.e. having a step mom or step dad). Within this study, blended families experienced conflict in the same manner that an unblended family experienced conflict, which is why blended families did not affect the data collected. Participants (6 of 16) which reported having children, also reported having a blended family. Participants mentioned their children to be a source of conflict in discussions:

"Kids trigger a disagreement right away. Kids are the biggest difference we encounter" (P7CAf).

"There are certain rules he wants the kids to follow that sometimes clash with the rules I put into place" (P6CAf).

"He is young... the child is not going to understand when you are talking to him, but he will understand time outs or a spank" (P1CAm).

"Children have to be the biggest issue in our relationship because one of us wants to discipline one way but the other wants to just put them in time outs" (P20CAm).

"We differ when it comes to punishing my child" (P2MAf).

"We fight when it comes to how to talk to our children" (P19MAf).

Themes identified from the data came from participants that disclosed about their children and their significant other. The seven comments above are representative of the 16 other participants who made similar claims. From the data collected it became evident that there was a pattern of similar differences in disciplinary actions because of differences in parenting styles. The corpus of data showed a pattern that parenting styles have been influenced by cultural conditioning.

Participants' (four Mexican American females, four Mexican American males, four Caucasian American females, and four Caucasian American males) expectations of raising their children were reported to derive from their parents' style of raising them. Some participants preferred corporal punishment, verbal punishment, or time outs.

Mexican American participants (9 of 12) exposed a pattern that indicated that they preferred to utilize verbal punishments or time outs. The participants described time outs as a situation where a child would be put in a corner or facing a wall for an amount of time. This is not to say that all Caucasian Americans preferred corporal punishment, but Caucasian American participants (7 of 12) reported utilizing "spanking" as a method to discipline. Participants indicated:

"The child is so small they do not know what we are saying but a soft

spank shows them that what they are doing is not right" (P1CAm).

"Sometimes a little tap might help. I am not suggesting beating your child,

but sometimes a little spank could help for future behavior" (P5CAf).

14 participants reported disciplining their children adds stress to their

relationship, but after communicating angrily (i.e. yelling) they are able to

communicate and come to an agreement on how to deal with the child in the

future. It became apparent within the data that culture affected parenting styles.

However, it seemed to relate to parenting style.

Further, the data suggests that communication conflict occurs when it

comes to communicating about distressing situations involving children, such as,

children not listening or following directions. Participants in intercultural

relationships have different standards when it comes to punishment of their

children. Conflict is created when one of the participants in the relationship is

seen by the other to be too harsh or lenient. Thus, creating distressing situations

for all the participants involved.

<u>Power</u>

Caucasian American males in comparison to Mexican American males

were found to have different power roles within their relationships. In intercultural

romantic relationships power struggles emerged when males identified strongly

as Mexican American; as opposed to a weak or moderate identification of being

Mexican American. Bailey and Oetzel (2004) explained ethnic identity salience is

the degree to which one's cultural background is pronounced in their performance of everyday self (p. 217). The intensity in which a person identified refers to "the degree to which an identity is performed in a situation" as weak, moderate, or strong (Bailey & Oetzel, 2004, p. 217).

Strong ethnic identity salience, in relations to this current exploratory study, is the performance of speaking Spanish at home, following cultural traditions, celebrating holidays important to their culture, and being raised fully immersed in their culture. Moderate ethnic identity salience individuals identify to a lesser degree than strong ethnic identity salience. They described themselves as being immersed in American culture compared to their Mexican roots. For instance, moderate Mexican Americans were still raised in a house where the Mexican culture was expressed, but there was Americanization when it came to Mexican traditions. Cultural customs include speaking Spanish, participating in holidays, such as, Day of the Dead and other Latinx holidays. Individuals who identified as ethnically moderate spoke very little Spanish. Weak ethnic salience individuals are individuals who felt Mexican culture was absent from their household. They spoke no Spanish. Cultural expression of behavior was more Americanized. Americanized traditions include speaking English as their first language, attending American holidays, and a lack of understanding for Latinx culture. Caucasian American females (4 of 7) reported a struggle to balance power in their romantic intercultural relationships. These Caucasian American females described their lack of balance in their intercultural relationship

stemming from a lack of verbal communication. Caucasian American females reported they felt silenced by their significant other. There is a pattern for an imbalance of power that Caucasian American females reported. Examples of these reports are as follows:

"My feelings do not matter. It never matters how I feel; it is always what he wants with no disregard for what I want" (P4CAf).

"We struggle to balance power sometimes because his culture makes him more dominating and I have to remind him that my opinion matters too, which usually helps" (P21CAf).

"Power is something we can differ on, but we try to let each other do what we want, but if there is something he absolutely dislikes I will not do it to compensate him" (P15CAf).

A pattern of power was found to be an issue for Caucasian American females in their relationship. The data collected displays ethnically strong Mexican American males holding most of the power in the relationship. The comments above (P4CAf, P21CAf, P15CAf) show how Caucasian American females report their significant other to not consider their feelings. Whereas, Mexican American males who identified themselves as weak or moderately attached to their Mexican American culture, seemed to give most of their power to their Caucasian American female partners or share the power. In this case, the Caucasian American female felt their feelings were being considered in this relationship.

Mexican American males (3 of 7) reported to have an ethnically weak or moderate connection to their culture. The three Mexican American males reported power to be evenly distributed in their intercultural relationships. The Caucasian American females (3 of 7) in an intercultural relationship with moderate or weak Mexican American males reported to hold most of the power. A pattern was prevalent when it came to power. For instance, Mexican American males (4 of 7) that identified strongly as Mexican American were seen to hold most of the power in the relationship, because of the role they were playing in the relationship. The strong Mexican American male took on the role as the leader in the relationship rather than a partnership. In the examples above, we see the Caucasian American female take the role of a follower. The data suggests Mexican American male participants take the role of a leader, whereas Caucasian American females take the role of a follower which creates a different dynamic compared to a relationship that is created like a partnership. An individual's perception can be affected by family, relationships, and friends. Power is affected by perception, which is why the dynamic of power changes when a Mexican American is strong, moderate, and weak. All participants indicated that the roles they played in their intercultural romantic relationship were influenced from childhood experiences. They learned their role from their family, previous relationships, and friends. Participants explained that their expectations in their relationship was based on their belief of what a relationship should be.

Mexican American females embrace most of the power (i.e. financial, inside chores, decision-making), because in a typical Mexican American romantic relationship they are seen as the monarch of the family. Mexican American females report they are typically dedicated to paying bills, managing finances, and the immediate family (i.e. taking care of the children, doing laundry, cooking, and cleaning). Mexican American females (4 of 5) reported to hold more power or feel like their voice was important in their intercultural romantic relationships. Mexican American female participants made the following statements:

"Power is equal between us because we collaborate when it comes to decisions" (P17MAf).

"My opinion is important" (P19MAf).

"I would say my opinion is more important than his, because he wants to make me happy" (P7MAf).

"Opinion? I make the decisions" (P11MAf).

Overall, Mexican American females (4 of 5) felt valued and held equal or more power than their Caucasian American male romantic partner. The key phrases in the above quotes are "important," "collaboration," and "value." All four participants indicated the importance of feeling valued in their relationship. When participants shared how they felt about power it became evident through their statements how they felt empowered or equal (not suppressed) in their relationship. For instance, the four Mexican American females indicated that their voice was important in their relationship. When a person feels safe to share their

opinions in a relationship the distribution of power comes from both individuals. Overall, participants suggested that the power in the relationship was found to be shared in a romantic union between Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans, however, culture determined how the power was going to be distributed. Power in relationships are affected by many factors, including gender.

Gender Expectations

Intercultural relationships between Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans experience conflict, since their expectations held for gender roles have cultural influences. Both Caucasian American and Mexican American participants reported they have role expectations toward one another. The data collected suggested that all the Mexican American females (5 of 5) felt they had to continue certain cultural gender expectations in their relationship and when their partners interfered with them performing their gender expectations it hurt the Mexican American females' pride. For instance, representative statements from the Mexican American female participants include:

> "It is my job to make sure my man is fed, house is clean, and children are taking care of. If I see him cleaning his own dish I feel like I am not doing my job and it angers me" (P13MAf).

> "I expect the man to supply for the family and yes, there is a role for the female too. I am expected to cook and clean" (P2MAf).

In traditional Mexican American households, all Mexican American participants (12 of 12) reported women are expected to cook, clean, and care for their children and husband. Five Mexican American females clarified that they felt they had to continue their cultural expectations in their intercultural romantic relationship.

Aligning with the pattern found above, Caucasian American females felt they had to follow the cultural expectations of the Latinx culture; meaning they had to cook, clean, and care for the household while the husband was the breadwinner. Caucasian American females (4 out of 7) were seen to encounter conflict. Caucasian American females reported that they expected to be equal to their significant other, which ultimately lead to violations in cultural expectations. In an intercultural romantic relationship, Caucasian American females took on a new role of the maintainer of the household. Examples of claims made include:

"I want my husband to do husband things because I do wife things. You know fix my car and bring the bacon home kind of thing" (P4CAf).

I was raised that a man would fix my car and yes I always knew I was going to take care of my husband but I thought I would be taken care of too" (P11CAf).

The statement above is representative of the three participants identified. These statements indicate how Caucasian American females had to fulfill certain cultural gender expectations such as, "laundry, taking care of kids, and cleaning" (P15CAf). Although two participants indicated this expectation to be a negative

factor in their relationship; the other two participants indicated they did not mind having these cultural expectations, if their significant other was meeting their expectations, as well.

Mexican American males (3 of 7) indicated that they felt their significant others were equal to them in every way, although–they stated that women should take care of their children, clean the house, and cook. Mexican American males (3 of 7) reported conflict would occur when it came to expected duties in the relationship. When communicating about conflict participants indicated that it would turn into an argument rather than a discussion, because of "hot tempers" (P3MAm). Mexican American males (7 of 7) suggested they preferred to be given space before communicating about an issue. Whereas, the Caucasian American counterpart was not always understanding about the space they required creating more tension. Caucasian American females (5 of 7) indicated that they required communication immediately after conflict. Participants indicated that a resolution would be able to occur once both parties were able to compromise. Compromises made include giving space to the issue, but not disregarding their significant others want to communicate.

Caucasian American males (5 of 5) believed they were helping their partner, because they believed the Mexican American females had a lot of responsibilities. These statements include:

> "I just want to help her out if I see she has a lot going on, but sometimes it will make her mad because she thinks it's her job" (P14NAm).

"I want to help where I can and if that means cleaning here and there I do

not mind" (P1NAm).

Caucasian American males reported that miscommunication was primarily the

cause of conflict in their relationship and involved an individual who failed to

communicate their intentions or ideas effectively. The statements (P1CAm &

P14CAm) are representative of miscommunication, because the Caucasian

American males' intentions were to help their significant other, but Mexican

American females felt it was unneeded. This statement is representative of

Mexican American females (3 of 5):

"Help? I have everything under control. He does not need to do anything

besides work and provide" (P13CAf).

The quote above demonstrates the influence of power on gender expectations. A

pattern was found that displays Mexican American female as the monarch of the

family and the house rules relied heavily on the Mexican American female.

Culturally demonstrating collectivism by displaying how Mexican American

females and Caucasian American males work together for their family goals.

Family Influences

Fifteen of twenty-four Participants indicated that family influenced conflict

encountered in their relationships. For Mexican American participants family was

very important to the individual compared to their Caucasian American

counterpart. This is not to say that Caucasian Americans did not appreciate their

family, because they did, however, Caucasian Americans prioritize their

extended family behind their significant other or immediate family. Whereas, Mexican Americans prioritized immediate family to be equal to extended family. For instance, P13CAm is representative of the fifteen participants, which indicated Mexican Americans preferred to go to their extended family for advice when it came to conflict, but Caucasian American participants (12 of 12) wanted the issue to remain between his or her partner:

"Whatever issue we are facing it should stay between us and no one should leave or know what we are going through until we discuss it" (P14, CAm).

Although Caucasian Americans understood that family was important to their significant other it was important to Caucasian Americans to have conflict remain between two individuals rather than the family. Caucasian American participants (12) indicated their family to be important, but that they preferred not to have a close bond like their Mexican American counterpart. It was not because they did not care about their family, but they suggested that their immediate family (I.e. significant other and children) were more important than the collective.

Throughout the interviews it became evident that family dynamics were different, due to culture. Ten participants indicated that the Caucasian American counterpart did not have a bond with their family like the Mexican American did. Mexican American females made claims such as:

"I find it weird that my husband does not have family events like my family does. He does not even like discussing our problems with his family like I do" (P13MAf).

"Birthdays, holidays, baptism's, graduations, and really anytime family wanted to get together compared to my husband that never really sees his family. I maybe have met his family 3 times and occasionally on birthdays" (P17MAf).

Cultural traditions impacted how often individuals communicated with their family. Mexican American participants reported more family events to occurred compared to their Caucasian American. Both ethnic participants indicated Caucasian Americans rarely interacted with their family compared to their significant other. The following statements support this pattern.

"Seeing my family? She thinks it is important" (P14CAm).

"My family? We kind of just do our own thing and come together when it is important, but other than that it is not important. At least as important as the family that I live with. They are my priority" (P2CAf).

"I love my family. Do not get me wrong, but honestly it comes down to my priorities and my immediate family is my priority" (P21CAf).

Caucasian American participants (8 of 12) reported that they wanted to keep the state of conflict between the two of them. On the contrary, Mexican American participants (10 of 12) reported that they seek advice from their elders which upsets their European counterpart. Seeking advice from elders in the Latinx

culture is a normative behavior supported by the data collected. However, Caucasian Americans reported seeking advice to be an invasion of privacy. Caucasian Americans reported to believe that conflicts should remain between individuals and not extended families. Twenty participants reported opinions of family members as a contributor to conflict. It was reported by eighteen participants that Mexican American families seemed to be more willing to share their opinion, although it may not be desired.

An additional aspect of conflict was respect. What is respectable in one culture can vary in another. This is often what you find when Mexican American and Caucasian American cultures collide. Caucasian American participants reported they did not see their behavior as disrespectful, but the Mexican American participant's family members expected more respect, then what they received. For instance:

"My father felt he should have been more respectful by 'greeting' and 'acknowledging' him with a handshake" (P2MAf).

"My dad is the kind of man that like if you're somebody that's like you're dating your daughters every time you see him you need to go up to him and shake his hand until you guys have like a causal relationship …I don't think like the emphasis on like the respect and what it means to go out of your way to do that I don't know if he fully understands that" (P6MAf).

"Our cultures are so different and sometimes my girlfriend is rude not because she wants to be but because there is miscommunication between the two cultures" (P3MAm).

"She does not always understand our traditions, which can create conflict or arguments" (P16MAm).

This situation created conflict, because the Caucasian American participants were not aware that they had communicated inappropriately from the Mexican American perspective. They were not knowledgeable about intercultural communication differences, such as respect. Respect was indicated by Mexican Americans as knowing when to speak, respecting elders, understanding social rules, and shaking elders' hands.

Both ethnic participants (21 of 24) indicated that these culturally diverse romantic unions can be successful, but they must be aware of intercultural communication differences and cultural ways that may occur between them. Different cultural expectations create tension. A common cultural expectation mentioned in interviews was language. Ten participants highlighted the fact that their Caucasian American counterpart was the only Caucasian American at family events and gatherings. For instance, participant 10 indicated that her significant other is:

"The only white person in the family" (P10MAm).

This is a comment which represents (10 of 12) Mexican American participants. Being the only white person in the family can cause problems if individuals don't

focus on inclusion. Individuals can focus on inclusion by interpreting language barriers and explaining cultural expectations. Participants reported that they communicated inclusive behaviors toward their Caucasian American significant others at family gatherings such as translating language barriers, inviting them to gatherings, and communicating with others. For instance, (12 of 12) Mexican American participants were in agreement with the Mexican American participant's statement below.

> "At family parties they always speak Spanish. At first, I felt bad because I know he does not speak Spanish, but as time lead on my family would translate and he began to learn a little Spanish to get by" (P17MAf).
>
> "He did not communicate with my parents because he did not speak their language, but he is getting better. My family sometimes translates for him as well" (P2MAf).
>
> "It feels like my girlfriend is more my family than I am sometimes. It is kind of funny because she doesn't even speak their language. She had to learn" (P3MAm).

This can also be the case for Mexican Americans that are the only "Mexican" in the family. The statements (P17MAm, P2MAf, P3MAm) are representative of the 12 participants that stated not knowing the Spanish language was a barrier in communications.

<u>Religion</u>

Culture and religion tend to go hand in hand. They tend to be intertwined like vines from a jungle, especially when it comes to Mexican American culture. In this study, 18 participants indicated having a different religious faith then their counterpart. Thirteen participants indicated religious differences creating conflict, but were unable to identify a single disagreement, but rather claiming underlying tension. Most individuals (16) indicated they were not strongly religious. All couples (12) indicated they were capable of resolving conflict by compromising when it came to religion. A compromise suggested by 4 participants included attending a different church every other Sunday. For example:

"The first and third week of the month we will go to my church and the other two weeks we will go to his" (P21CAf).

"I take the kids to my church because he is not that religious" (P6CAf).

"I am not that religious so it does not really matter to me what they do" (P16MAm).

Although this sample group indicated that they were willing to compromise it is important to note that individuals who identified strongly with their religion was willing to compromise. Both ethnic participants' religion was identified as a common difference that lead to conflict.

Participant Resolution Advice

The areas of intercultural communication differences found in this study are: childcare, power, gender differences, and religion. However, participants

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disclosed advice for future intercultural relationships. Examples of advice are as follows:

> "The best advice I could give is to be patient. I'm really impatient and I feel like he's the patient one in the relationship. So, it helps a lot and he's really open minded to things. It helps when we are working on our relationship. It balances us out when someone is being understanding" (P19MAf).

> "Be patient and kind" (P2MAf).

> "Communication and compromising is the biggest thing that I've noticed that we could have changed in in the beginning to make everything a lot better. Instead of trying to fix it so much later" (P20CAm).

> "Be able to compromise and communicate" (P1CAm).

> "It's really important just to like respect each other's thoughts and feelings and to understand that not everything you are going to agree on, because I feel like especially nowadays people are like, you have to think the same way in order to be to be together." (P17CAf).

> "I mean, you just have to know, work out your problems. Yeah, I think I would treat it like any other kind of relationship. I mean, it has some differences like hey, like you're going to find out. Like, you're going to have to dance at the parties, there's going to be Mexican music and you know like I my family parties, but there's never dancing and never alcohol" (P18CAm).

"Personally, for me. I do not believe there are any issues when it comes to interracial relationships. I always felt like if it is someone you feel comfortable with then you need to go there. It does not matter if you are Mexican, black, or white. If that is who you are comfortable with then that is who you should be with" (P7CAf).

The advice above displays the importance of patience, navigating conflict resolution, respect, avoiding communication apprehension, and avoiding ethnocentrism. Being patient allows for individuals to communicate and understand another person's point of view. For instance, if both individuals in a relationship are yelling or shouting it creates a negative climate in the relationship and does not allow for much communication or resolution to occur.

P17 is suggesting that respect plays a huge role in romantic unions. Her advice is suggesting that individuals in intercultural relationships should respect each other enough to be who they truly are. In fact, the data suggests it is important that individuals are being their true authentic self when in a relationship, being able to express themselves authentically can create a bond that cannot be broken. "Expression is one of the primary ways in which power inequality impacts close interpersonal relationships" (Neff, & Suizzo, 2006, p. 441). Participants indicated no matter the cultural background compromises and acceptance of values, feelings, and choices should be made out of respect. After all, interpersonal relationships help shape who an individual is.

P18 is suggesting that cultural differences should be embraced while avoiding ethnocentrism. Allow yourself to be immersed in your significant others culture and learn from the differences that arise. Participants indicated the importance of being able to communicate and feel comfortable in a relationship.

Cultural backgrounds are deeply enrooted in who a person is. Therefore, it is not common to break away from cultural expectations. This study suggests, relationships will prosper if individuals make themselves aware of cultural expectations and create a third culture. A third culture is described as a situation, which two individuals come from two different cultures and create a culture together. In fact, participants indicated the importance of creating a third culture by stating:

> "We had to find what works for us and we found communication to be the most helpful. Yes, sometimes we yell and sometimes we argue, but at the end of the day we care for each other and we created our own system" (P13MAf).

> "Culture should not be the reason why a couple is not together, because no matter the type of relationship there is always an obstacle to overcome" (P14CAm).

Intercultural communication differences add another layer to relationships, but individuals can negotiate, creating a third culture together. This third culture allows individuals to blend their uniqueness, both cultural and personal identities. In building a third culture, all the participants indicated that it came from

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compromising, respecting each other, having open communication, the

importance of patience, and embracing each others cultural differences.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

This exploratory study has investigated Mexican American and Caucasian American romantic couples in which their cultural and ethnic background of expectations at times differ, leading to intercultural conflict. This study establishes intercultural conflict on thematic topics in: religion, childcare, gender, family influences, and power. The conflicts reported by participants' in intercultural romantic relationships were not to the extent of hurting and dissolving their romantic union.

Religion was not identified as a pattern that lead to a point of contention. Participants (16 of 24) indicated they were able to reach a point of consensus. Whereas, in Frame (2004) article he explains "religion is such a powerful force among a couple that it may influence other aspects of family life such as holiday traditions, food, gender roles, sexuality, and child-rearing" (p. 224). Participants (16 of 24) indicated conflict to be related to religion, but were able to find a solution.

Child disciplinary actions were reported to add to cultural conflict. Mexican Americans responded to disobedient children with discussion, whereas, Caucasian Americans tend to utilize "spanking" as a punishment. Aligning well with Neff & Suizzo's (2006) research which states, "The degree to which one

parent is authoritarian and the other more permissive may be born of their culture's view of children and child-rearing practices" (p. 224).

Relational Dialects Theory

Relationship tensions (i.e. power, language barriers, childcare, family influences, etc.) are created through communication interaction (i.e. verbal and nonverbal communication). Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans are from separate cultures, which creates different internal views/dialects. Internal dialects include an individual's willingness to be connected or separate; certain or uncertain; open and closed. Mexican American participants displayed a willingness to be connected to their family, which opposed Caucasian American participants individualism (separateness). This became apparent when Mexican Americans went to family for advice and making decisions. Interviews displayed conflict to be associated with the difference in individuals willingness to be connected or separate.

All participants were open to learning about both cultures, however, Mexican Americans were unforthcoming to changing their expectations on gender roles in the relationship. Caucasian Americans were more open to sharing different expected roles compared to Mexican Americans. Findings display conflict to intensify from Caucasian American and European American differences in being open to altering gender expectations.

Mexican American participants expressed uncertainty towards conflict compared to their Caucasian American counterpart, which seemed certain.

Uncertainty was expressed, when Mexican Americans sought guidance from elders and expressed a need for space. Space was needed to give Mexican Americans time to assess the problem. Opposing the Caucasian Americans expectation to communicate about the issue; creating an indirect path to uncertainty for Caucasian Americans. Caucasian Americans expressed they felt uncertain about their future when no communication occurred after intense tension. Whereas, Mexican Americans felt certain about their future when giving conflict space. Although Mexican Americans required space to resolve an issue it does not follow that they were not willing to be open and connected to their significant other; they required their Caucasian American counterpart to respect their conflict resolution differences and allow some time to reflect on the issue.

Expectancy Violation Theory

The research collected suggest that conflict occurred when expectations were violated. Through the lens of Expectancy Violation Theory, this research addresses the question of "when unexpected things happen, what determines if we see the event as a surprise or a disappointment, and what do we do in response" (White, n.d., p. 217). For instance, illumination of expectations was apparent when participants indicated their expected gender role in their relationship. Caucasian Americans and Mexican Americans acted in an unfavorable manner when their expectations were not met. Caucasian Americans indicated unfavorable actions as withdrawing (i.e. not communicating, avoiding) a significant other. Whereas, Mexican American participants indicated

unfavorable actions as not providing space to think about the issue. Mexican American participants indicated that they expected women to cook, clean, and take care of their children. However, this expectation was met with conflict because of their disappointment associated with their expectations for their Caucasian American significant other. Participants who overcame intercultural conflicts reported that they used communication strategies such as compromise. In their compromise, Mexican American females indicated the importance of following their cultural standards. Whereas, European American females were willing to compromise if their significant other was willing to meet their expectations.

Expectations affected resolution of conflict. Mexican American male and female participants were seen to need space before resolving a conflict. Whereas, Caucasian American participants wanted to resolve the conflict immediately, which created a violation in expectations. In both cases individuals were seen to act in an unfavorable manner when it came to resolution of conflict. Caucasian Americans expected to communicate, and Mexican Americans expected space. Space was indicated as space away from the problem (i.e. not talking to their significant other, going for a walk, or enduring a hobby). Participants described this violation of expectations, increased the tension that escalated to conflict between them.

Communication should occur before entering a relationship, in order to terminate unfavorable actions. All participants indicated the importance of

understanding each other. Expectations in a relationship should be communicated in great length before entering in a committed relationship, because this situation can lead to miscommunication, resentment, differences, unfavorable actions, or even conflict. Although expectations might not be met with communication these individuals can possibly overcome cultural differences by collaborating.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

Research (Fu, 2008; Neff & Harter, 2002; Neff & Suizzo, 2006a; Tyrell, Wheeler, Gonzales, Dumka, & Millsap, 2016) suggests there are differences between Mexican American culture (i.e. collectivistic culture) and Caucasian American culture (i.e. individualistic culture). Although in this exploratory study supports the existence of intercultural differences, the participants' interviews illuminate that these two cultures can come together to create a third culture. Participants reported their relationship to be fulfilling and rewarding, although conflicts were inevitable. All participants indicated that conflict could be overwhelming, but can overcome differences if participants are willing to communicate.

Mexican American participants reported a collectivistic approach, which is reflected in their reports of having a high value on family opinions, power, and cultural gender roles. However, Mexican American males often expressed individualism in their interpersonal romantic relationships during conflict, such as, not communicating. Whereas, Caucasian Americans (12 of 12) have a high value

for individualism, and they tend to put a low value on family opinions. Caucasian Americans (12 of 12) preferred to share power and did not have a culture-specific role for gender, however, they were willing to meet their Mexican American partners' expectations.

Family/ Peer Influences

Daddis and Randolph (2010) explained, "Romantic relationships are a normative developmental task of adolescence" (as cited in Rueda, Nagoshi, & Williams, 2014, p. 358). A foundation for this developmental task stems from supportive relationships between parents and children. Participants in this study indicated that the roles they played in their relationship were often learned from their parents as children. Expectations participants held stemmed from their socialization as children. "'Adolescents' cognitive representations of and behavior within dating relationships are learned in part by witnessing parental relationships" (Rueda et al., 2014, p. 360).

Contribution

Individuals who have experienced intercultural romantic conflict will be able to express their concerns in their relationship to a third party without judgement. Thus, desensitizing tension that may have built up in their current relationship. Although this research will allow participants to vent it will also allow knowledge to be distributed to this growing community. Allowing this exploratory study to be conducted allows more knowledge to be readily available to this

inclusive subculture. Although there has been a rise in the Mexican population in the United States there has been limited resources available to this subculture.

Furthermore, this study contributes to individuals in intercultural romantic relationships, by explaining why conflict occurs, as well as, how to deal with such conflict. Overall, Mexican American and Caucasian American individuals differ widely when it comes to culture (Cortes, Larson, & Hample, 2005, p. 114). Although there are differences it does not necessarily follow that individuals in intercultural relationships cannot be satisfied or find a state of harmony. As more research becomes more prevalent in this area of study, models for communication in intercultural relationships will begin to grow.

Limitations

There are many limitations to this study, but it does not take away from the validity of this study. One major limitation is some participants were unwilling to share problems or identify their conflict as "conflict." They preferred to address their conflict as differences. This was nonverbally communicated by participants squirming in their chair, pushing away, or rolling their eyes when it came to a complex question. Participant 8 addressed their concern by stating:

I hate the word conflict. It is such a strong word. I would not identify our arguments as conflict because she is my best friend and I do not think we have problems like other relationships have problems (P8MAm).

A second limitation to this study is some individuals were not comfortable reporting on conflicts significant to their own relationship. They would claim that

they are a private person and feel uncomfortable to share information with a stranger. So, they would choose to be quiet or change the subject as an attempt to pursue personal agendas.

` Another limitation to this study was how complex it was to gather participants. At times individuals would agree to share with me and upon contact they agreed to an interview, however, after talking to their significant other they were no longer willing. A reason for this occurrence may be because of the power in the relationship. If the person with the power did not want to participate the other person was expected to conform to the persons wants. It was also difficult finding both pairs of a relationship when they were no longer together; if they were not on good terms. Future studies should not be concerned with reporting both sides of the story and focus on getting multiple people; even if their other significant other or ex significant other does not want to participate in the study.

Education level is another possible limitation to this study. In this study while conducting interviews the interviewer did not ask for education level. It is unclear the educational status of most participants, but I recommend future studies to include a question regarding educational level.

The last limitation prevalent in this research is how complex it is to identify himself or herself as a culture or ethnicity. To be a participant in this study individuals had to self-identify as being Mexican American or Caucasian American. When a person chooses to identify as Mexican-American it is more

complex than just a claim. A person can identify as Mexican-American, but not be deeply enrooted in the Mexican culture. When approached to participate in the study some individuals defined themselves as "white washed," meaning the Mexican or Latinx beliefs are not deeply instilled in who the person is. Since this study was focused on communication conflict that may arise from culture not being deeply rooted in said culture can affect the data collected, however, this could provide opportunities for further research in identity and how a person chooses to identify. It is a limitation to this study, because if a person is not deeply rooted in their culture then the conflict or differences may not be as prevalent as it would be with a person who is deeply immersed in their Latinx culture.

Future Directions

There is a mass amount of research dedicated to mixed relationships between African Americans and Caucasian Americans, but a further exploration needs to be dedicated to Mexican American and Caucasian American romantic relationships; especially, with Latinx culture increasing in the United States.

Understanding gender roles in today's society is vital. It is important that future researchers account for gender biases that participants might have, as well as, their own. Future researchers might want to consider the differences between female and male participants when it comes to interviews.

During interviews it became apparent that individuals were more concerned with saving face. Participants wanted to present their relationship as a

"perfect" relationship. In order to combat this limitation, future studies should be aware of individuals pursuing personal agendas and try to keep the interview on track.

Blended families are continuing to grow in the United States. Although blended families did not impact the data collected in this study it is important to consider how blended families can influence data. Blended families are unique because they join two families together. For this reason, participants may encounter conflict that is unique to this union. Future researchers may want to consider comparing intercultural blended families to intercultural families.

Researchers might want to consider researching how participants feel about their satisfaction in their intercultural romantic relationship. Although these relationships have reported conflict, this study does not investigate how to overcome conflict. Models can strengthen communication in interpersonal romantic relationships, because it will provide individuals with the opportunity to learn.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In the United States the current dominant cultural norms promote a fairytale vision of "love that emphasize passion and romance while other cultures and ethnic groups may emphasize selflessness (Coates), family, respect (Flores et al., 1998), or other values as essential to experiencing love" (Williams & Hickle, 2011, p. 583). The fairytale version of love fails to see the blood, sweat, and tears that go into a relationship. No relationship has a road without difficulties, and they all have milestones that exist in virtually every relationship. Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans conflict does not limit their happiness in their union. When a relationship is formed across two different cultures these individuals must transcend across conflict barriers to obtain a successful relationship.

"Clearly, conflict is a phenomenon which deserves extensive attention and research," therefore, this study was conducted (Cohen & Arieli, 2011, p. 424). This study discovered from participants' lived experiences who encountered intercultural romantic relationships between Mexican Americans and Caucasian Americans. From this exploratory study, an understanding of conflict that is significant to this subculture has become evident. The research conducted displayed areas of conflict, which were significant to these intercultural romantic unions. As more research becomes prevalent in intercultural romantic

relationships, a surplus of knowledge will be at the disposal of individuals. These true testimonies from individuals and their advice is first of many research articles to come.

APPENDIX

IRB #: IRB-FY2019-45
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Creation Date: 10-8-2018
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Principal Investigator: Jessica Vierra
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