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The Dating Experiences of Black Women

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by

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ABSTRACT

My thesis centers around Black women's dating and hookup experiences at Loyola Marymount University (LMU). I distributed a survey with 44 questions; five demographic questions and eight factors that include questions revolving around being romantically and/or sexually rejected based on their race/ethnicity. After three weeks of collecting data, my research has revealed patterns involving negative attitudes towards dating apps, admissions of hopelessness in finding an intimate partner, being fetishized by white people, and feelings of betrayal when/if a person of color expressed rejection based on their race/ethnicity. The implementation of feminist theory and feminist scholars such as Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, and bell hooks within this project will reveal the intersectional oppression at play, racial stereotypes of Black women, and the misogyny they face within their own community. Using these frameworks, I explore how these factors affect the Black women here at LMU and what role sexual orientation plays within said factors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Background

An overarching narrative that has permeated dating scenes all over the world is that Black women are undesirable, ugly, and hostile. This idea is even entertained by other Black people, specifically Black men, who have gone out of their way in multiple discourses to reference their animosity towards Black women. Growing up, I was taught these concepts by my own mother; a Black woman who grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood and school system. Because of this, she endured racial discrimination from all avenues and all races, even if they were people of color themselves. If my mother had these kinds of experiences, what are other Black women this day in age facing at institutions that have a predominantly white culture like Loyola Marymount University (LMU)?

The purpose of my research was to find out what the dating experience of Black women who attend LMU as college students is like. I explored how dating experiences differ in terms of sexual orientation, the racial background of the population that surrounds Black women, the race they date, and whether the use of a dating app makes a noticeable difference in their dating life. My research finds that (1) Black women at LMU primarily have negative attitudes towards dating apps but dating apps are better at finding sexual partners than romantic partners, (2) Black women at LMU would be more upset/stressed if people of color rejected sex/dating from them on the basis of their race/ethnicity compared to if white people rejected them, and (3) because of their race/ethnicity, Black women at LMU have felt hopeless about finding intimate partners and they have felt white people fetishize them more than people of color do.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality plays a prominent role in all our lives when attending a private Catholic college campus, such as Loyola Marymount University. A Black woman is going to have vastly different college experiences, or life experiences in general, than that of a Black man or a white woman, solely due to the combination of their identities and how this affects how others perceive them. The term "intersectionality" was coined by a Black woman: Kimberlé Crenshaw, who specifically sought to address how identities intersected and interacted with one another to contribute to the efforts being made "to free Black people of the constraints and conditions that characterize racial subordination" (Crenshaw 166). An intersectional approach to the issues women go through allow Black women to have any negative perceptions placed upon them to be acknowledged, perceptions such as that of the "Jezebel" caricature, which is a stereotype against Black women that marks them as hypersexual and unrestrained (Mgadmi 5). My research explores how their combined identities as a Black person and a woman (along with additional labels such as "queer," "lesbian," and "gay") affect their involvement in dating apps, and what role the "Jezebel" caricature plays in a Black woman's involvement with dating in general, which will ultimately help Black women learn what to expect from the dating sphere in the future.

My study utilizes frameworks of sexual agency, the racial politics of dating, and the production of racialized sexuality amongst Black women. This is based on questions within the survey being distributed for this research that concern what the dating climate for Black women is like at LMU.

Dating at a PWI

Previous feminist works have highlighted the fact that while many women are oppressed by the sexist tyranny that is the patriarchy, "there is much evidence substantiating the reality that

race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that takes precedence over the common experience women share—differences that are rarely transcended." (hooks, *Black Women* 4). The racial status of white women allows for a seamless blend into predominantly white institutions (PWIs), yet when it comes to Black heterosexual women specifically, studies found that "while most of the [Black] women dated or hooked up, their experiences highlighted that the majority of this did not occur at their respective PWIs" (Carver 174). This was due to the white men at the school showing little to no romantic interest towards the Black women, and the Black men at their school had been shown to be "more interested in women of other races" (Carver 174). This is a common theme within the Black community, where Black women are romantically undesired, even when it comes to the men within their own racial community (Carver 174). The intersectional identity of Black women prevents them from being perceived in the same way as white women, as "Black" is typically associated with masculinity and "women" is typically associated with "white." This results in heterosexual men seeking out women who are not Black because they do not associate "Black women" with "femininity."

The lack of interest from these men attending their institutions prompted the Black women within the study to search for other avenues of companionship, which was to engage with dating apps. To consider how a majority of Black women who attend PWIs could possibly perceive dating apps as a "last resort" is to understand the importance of my research question. LMU, while not technically a PWI by definition because a PWI has a 50% or higher admission of white people, has a relatively high admission of those who identify as White, with the ethnicity percentage being 41.2%, an overwhelming percentage in comparison to the rest of the ethnicity breakdown (Loyola Marymount University Diversity Chart). This indicates that LMU

reflects a PWI culture, especially when accounting for the school's primarily white faculty of 69.9%, which indicates that the inner workings of the university are being filtered through primarily white viewpoints (Loyola Marymount University Diversity Chart). Because of LMU's proximity to being a PWI, Black women who attend LMU could be experiencing rejection from white people, just as it was found in the studies conducted by Patricia P. Carver. Therefore, replicating the study will determine whether Carver's findings apply to LMU. The way in which Black women at PWIs experience dating and hookup culture "suggest that Black women are disadvantaged when dating because they are the least desired racial or ethnic group when considering men's preferences" (Carver and Mitchell 1728). This tidbit of information gives us some insight on the dating experience of the average Black woman in the United States and when factoring this in, we now understand that Black women at LMU have probably interacted with this disadvantage when dating, and it is very likely that they will encounter it once more when participating in dating apps.

Lastly, when investigating a Black woman's sexual behavior at a PWI in comparison to a historically Black college/university (HBCU), "research studies on the overwhelming influence of hip-hop and rap on HBCU campuses demonstrates that students and faculty are aware of, and grapple with provocative topics such as the depiction of women in music videos, rap's influence on Black male and female relationships, and misogyny" (Chandler, et al. 857-858). This knowledge is needed to contextualize my research question further in order to highlight the lack of this type of awareness within PWIs. Black women attending a PWI, and in this case LMU, are bound to have different experiences and possibly a different relationship to Black culture which may affect how they will handle their relationship endeavors. Considering Black women at HBCUs are going to be exposed to more hip-hop as well as hip-hop feminism, these women will

also be exposed to the "hip-hop feminist studies [that continue] to tackle Black sexual politics by discussing and challenging the persistence and prevalence of hip-hop 'misogynoir' [the hatred of black women and girls], respectability politics, and compulsory heterosexuality within the music and the culture at large" (Durham et al. 730). In other words, Black women at HBCUs are going to know more about Black sexual politics than Black women at PWIs, and that is going to affect how both groups of women approach dating.

Dating Apps

My research question is also in conversation with scholars such as Evelin Franco who discusses the experiences women have on online dating apps (ODAs). In particular, one Black female blogger who reported some of the negative ODA experiences she had, such as men messaging her "'do you taste like chocolate?' 'I'd love to slap that big juicy booty' and 'do you act black?'" (Franco 101). This marks a particular kind of experience a Black woman could have on a dating app, which is when they are fetishized due to their skin color and African features they might have. These people that ask Black women these kinds of questions imply that they only want to date Black women because they are Black, hoping to fulfill fantasies they have based on their preconceived notions of Black people. In these instances, sexualization of Black women and their bodies in turn exoticizes their existence. Typically, "for a Black woman on dating apps, these biases in vivo can mean that in one moment, she is on edge waiting for the next inappropriate, hypersexualized approach. In the next moment, she is ignored" (Carter 1544). When Black women are viewed through a hypersexualized lens and are approached in this way, they are subjected to being a "Jezebel": a stereotype of Black women that originated from slavery which functions as a way to paint them as sexually aggressive women, allowing White men to be able to justify their sexual assaults against Black women being enslaved (Pilgrim).

What is interesting is that "a long-standing practice of sexual abuse during slavery and beyond convinces many Black women that acting as sexual subjects presupposes the enduring of shame and public embarrassment" (Lee 8), which prompts many Black women to introduce themselves to others as non-sexual subjects. This means that there is a stronger possibility that Black women at LMU attempt to present as non-sexual, however due to the power of the "Jezebel" stereotype, they are still forced to endure sexual comments and advances.

Dating as a Queer Woman

While this paper has been primarily addressing the relationship experiences of Black women who are sexually/romantically interested in men, the experiences of Black queer women and how their involvement on dating apps transpire, especially within the context of a heteropatriarchal society, must also be addressed. Amongst additional surveys of Black lesbians, "for these women, choosing Black women as dating and/or marriage partners is a symbol of racial pride within the larger Black community" (Brooks 40). Initially, many Black queer women are turned away from the idea of dating other Black women due to patriarchal notions that result in these women not bonding with other Black girls at young ages, previous negative experiences growing up with other Black women, and internalized racism (Brooks 40). Feminist scholar Audre Lorde has also highlighted how this could also be due to how Black heterosexual women have treated Black queer women in the past, with "heterosexual Black women often [tending] to ignore or discount the existence and work of Black lesbians" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 120). Black women are already perceived as undesirable in heterosexual circles, and this concept is seemingly bleeding into other dating arenas due to the behavior they have exhibited in order to either not be further ostracized by Black men, and/or not have to "reorder [their] whole concept of social relationships" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 120). Articles referring to these experiences could

explain a plausible phenomenon with the Black queer women community at LMU: maybe they are excluding the idea of dating other Black women, therefore when they are on dating apps, it limits their possible prospects. Black queer women's dating experiences are also affected when they "often try to pass as heterosexual to protect themselves from discrimination, which can create further isolation" (Bradley, "In Search of Community" 30). Having to deny their true identities in order to survive reinforces heteropatriarchal ideals required by the societal pressure to be "straight." This makes it seem as though dating apps are a sole outlet for them to truly participate in dating and hookup culture, considering they can be more expressive when showing interest in a partner. In summary, based on existing literature, the white male patriarchy influences how and who Black queer women date in general, therefore the Black queer women of LMU might be feeling these influences as well.

Interracial Dating

In the realm of interracial dating, Black women can be encouraged to do so due to colorist notions concerning their offspring. Participants in studies on interracial dating have been told by the female matriarchs in her life to date someone of a lighter complexion, with one woman saying: "'You want someone lighter than you so you can have pretty babies. You are already dark enough. Why would you want an ugly baby?'" (Douglas 2). Not having a dark-skinned baby may be just to fulfill Eurocentric beauty standards that the members within a Black woman's family might value due to patriarchal beliefs that indicate otherwise, or this could be because they feel as though if the baby is lighter in complexion and therefore "more attractive," the child will have an easier life and might not be as racially discriminated against as a dark-skinned child would be (Harris). The latter reason is particularly common within the Black community, as most dark-skinned Black people do not want their loved ones to endure the

same treatment that they received throughout their own lives. This goes to show how Black women within the dating scene at LMU could be being influenced by the people in their life to date outside of their race, solely because their family members do not like the idea of these Black women potentially having babies with darker complexions (Douglas 2). Meanwhile, Black women might not be dating with children in mind and they are having to endure these cultural pressures. On the other side of the interracial dating spectrum, there are instances in which members within Black families do not want Black women to date outside of their racial status. Participants within these kinds of studies, some who had been dating white men for multiple years, had members of their family such as their mothers refuse to even acknowledge the existence of the relationship because they "can't believe she brought home a white boy" (Folan 58). These types of attitudes could be due to Black family members feeling as though if the Black women within their familial unit date outside of their race, they are betraying their own race due to the role that White men have played in Black women's lives as the oppressors. They may also want to facilitate the procreation of Black people; therefore they could be encouraging Black people to be romantically involved with solely other Black people. These pressures to only date other Black men might be reflected on the LMU campus, which would prove detrimental to the dating lives of Black women because of previously examined notions of Black men not being as romantically interested in Black women as they are with women of other races. This reduces the amount of dating prospects for Black women, which is what Black women at PWIs report when surveyed (Carver 191). They feel as though they have "insufficient partner options than male students and those at HBCUs," (Stackman et al. 169) and there is a high possibility that Black women at LMU feel the same way due to the high majority of white students demographically. Yet, despite the feelings of limited options, Black women have been reported

as perceiving lighter skin as “more attractive and associated with three themes about dating: (a) positive personality traits, (b) increased value in dating contexts, and (c) sexual appeal to men” (Stephens and Thomas, 291). This is due to societal conditions stemming from slavery and racial oppression, where these things were justified by associating whiteness to being “civilized, virtuous, and beautiful” (Hill 77), therefore anything straying from whiteness automatically becomes less than. These findings ultimately say a lot about how Black women view darker skinned Black men in terms of dating, and due to the dating patterns of Black men, Black women and Black men are becoming less likely to engage in a romantic relationship.

Overall, there are many different facets to the online dating life and regular dating life of a Black woman. From being fetishized by members of other races to the rejection of other Black men, Black women endure many obstacles when pursuing romantic partners that white women do not encounter, despite similar gender identities. But how many of these facets are prevalent amongst the Black women at LMU, and which features previously thought to be within the campus dating culture never appear? How does the online aspect alter certain features of a Black woman's dating experience? This is what my research question seeks to answer, and the literature needed provides us with a possible combination of outcomes.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to find out what the dating experiences of Black women who attend LMU as college students are like. I explored how dating experiences differ in terms of sexual orientation, the racial background of the population that surrounds them, the race they date, and whether the use of a dating app makes a noticeable difference in their dating life. To answer this question, I conducted a survey containing a questionnaire that is compiled from two validated measures, and I asked demographic-based questions for the purposes of the result and

added questions myself to have the questions apply to the participants in varying ways. I began by asking demographic questions such as: “What year are you at LMU?,” “How do you identify in terms of gender identity?,” “What is your racial background?,” etc. These questions were fill-in-the-blank and were used to determine which groups of Black women have similar experiences. One of the validated measures I used is the “Experienced Sexual Racism Scale,” (Bhambhani) where participants were asked items revolving around whether they have had negative experiences in the dating sphere due to their skin color, and they rated how much they relate to certain items on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The measure addressed eight factors, but I used seven. In the original validated measure, these factors were titled: “In-person rejection from White men,” “Online rejection from White men,” “Stress from race/ethnicity-based rejection,” “Abuse and denigration based on race/ethnicity,” “Intimacy-related hopelessness,” “Rejection from Men of Color,” and “Race/ethnicity-based fetishization.” However, because I wanted to survey queer Black women, I edited the survey questions so it accommodated that aspect. Another validated measure I used was the “Attitude toward Looking for Partners via Dating App Scale” (Chan). In regards to this measure, I included it as a factor for the previous measure and I titled it “Attitudes towards Dating Apps.” This measure, and my additions and subtractions to the measure, helped me answer my research question because the survey questions asked participants to identify what certain aspects of their dating life has been like, with specific questions including how they have been treated by white men and men of color. For instance, at one point, they are asked to identify on the scale how much they relate to this statement: “I have been turned down for dates by white men in-person and they told me it was because of my race/ethnicity.” By using a 1 to 7 scale, the way in which Black women will answer this question allowed me to gauge how many of them at LMU have

gone through a situation like this. In terms of the Black queer women who took the survey, the questions will be edited by removing the "men" portion within each question, replacing the word with "person." In order to distribute the survey, I hung up flyers in spaces where students do not have to rush around, such as the library, Starbucks, and the Student Psychological Services office as well as the Student Health Services office. I contacted the president of Sisters in Solidarity (SIS) who then distributed the survey to the Black women in their organization via email.

Chapter Outlines

Based on the results I have of my survey, my first chapter will touch on the strained relationship Black women have with dating apps. In order to do this, I will be analyzing the results from Factor 8 within my survey entitled "Attitude toward Looking for Partners via Dating Apps Scale." I will delve more into how Black women are treated on dating apps and I will slightly include how they are fetishized within the apps and how likely they are to find an intimate partner using the apps. I will also provide possible explanations as to why participants primarily do not see the "good" in dating apps.

My second chapter will analyze Factor 3 from my survey entitled "Stress from race/ethnicity rejection." This chapter will focus on how participants responded when asked a question revolving around whether they would be upset/stressed if white people intimately rejected them in comparison to people of color. I will then use the results to further discuss the hatred and racism other people of color perpetuate against Black women

The third chapter that focuses on Factor 5 ("Intimacy-related hopelessness") and Factor 7 ("Race/ethnicity-based fetishization") will not only examine the struggles Black women face when it comes to their self-perception due to the racism they encounter, but it will also examine the fetishization of Black women that is perpetuated by white men at length. Participants

reported to feel as though white people fetishize them more than people of color do. In addition to that, participants have indicated feelings of hopelessness and loneliness in trying to find intimate partners due to their race/ethnicity, which over time could cause low self-esteem, resulting in potential self-hatred.

Chapter 1: Factor 8 Results

Dating apps, online dating services presented in the form of a mobile phone application, have a huge impact on how couples spark romantic endeavors, as well as sexual ones. After all, "meeting online is the most popular way that couples meet, and the number has increased in recent years" (Graff). A majority of participants who took my survey held a primarily negative attitude towards dating apps. In this chapter, I take a closer look at a section of my survey, entitled "Attitude toward Looking for Partners via Dating Apps Scale." This section asked the participants to rate statements concerning beliefs on dating apps and whether dating apps were a good way to meet romantic/sexual partners, and whether they were better than meeting people face-to-face to find potential romantic/sexual partners.

Dating Apps Having "More Bad Than Good" at Finding Romantic Partners

Most participants found that dating apps were better at finding sexual partners than romantic partners. The first question stated, "I think there is more good than bad in using dating apps to look for romantic partners." Five respondents submitted a 1 indicating that they believe dating apps are bad for finding romantic partners. Along with this, four people submitted a 2, five people submitted a 3, three people submitted a 4, and six people submitted a 5. However, question four within the factor was: "I think there is more good than bad in using dating apps to look for casual sexual partners." Five participants input a 1, two participants voted 2, five participants voted 3, three voted 4, four voted 5, two voted 6, and one voted 7. This would suggest that most Black women at LMU view dating apps as having more bad than good when it comes to romance, and "despite strides toward female empowerment, broader technological, social, political, and economic forces [within dating apps] have largely maintained heteronormative, White, cisgender power relations" (Sobieraj and Humphreys 3). Having Black

women navigate forums that do not respect or recognize their identities is going to prevent them from getting the full benefits out of these formats of dating/intimacy, unlike white, heterosexual, cisgender people would. Furthermore, Tinder, a dating app "considered to be the most popular dating app for iOS and Android with at least 10 million active users a day" (Sumter et. al 67), is fraught with misogynistic encounters. Studies have shown that those who have engaged with Tinder have experienced "deeply gender-conforming practices where men aggressively seek women indiscriminately for sexual encounters" (Sobieraj and Humphreys 9). These men also initiate contact with women through aggressive and misogynistic manners, ultimately providing women users with negative experiences. This misogynistic behavior can be exemplified in the form of objectification, dehumanization, verbal abuse, etcetera. and if these types of men are interacting with the participants of this research in this way, then it makes sense as to why participants answered the way they did.

Intersectional Oppression: Comparing Black Women to White Women

My research utilizes intersectionality as a theoretical framework. While studies "found that young women were more likely to report negative experiences with online dating platforms, including harassment and receiving unsolicited sexually explicit images" (Phan et. al 1), these studies did put more of a focus on white women's experiences than they did Black women's experiences, and if these were the experiences white women were having, then it is reasonable to expect the Black women's experiences to be much worse in terms of racial aggression. We know to expect this because we know Black women "often experience race, class, and gender oppression simultaneously" (Webber 4), whereas white women do experience gendered oppression and can experience class oppression, they do not feel the effects of racial oppression. This intersectional oppression Black women face also contributes to the factor in how "Black

women and girls who go missing receive significantly less media attention compared to white women and girls; consequently, missing cases among Black women remain open for far longer, lowering the odds of a successful outcome" (Alexander and Willie, *An Epidemic of Missing Black Women Has Been Ignored for Too Long*). Both of these points illustrate Black women's position within society, and indicate that the lives of white women are valued more. Black women that recognize this are going to approach dating apps more cautiously and thus would have a certain perspective going into the dating app experience. Scholars like Audre Lorde have even pointed out how "in a patriarchal power system where whiteskin privilege is a major prop, the entrapments used to neutralize Black women and white women are not the same" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 118). While white women can experience sexist discrimination in dating apps, Black women can experience both racism and sexism, leading to more dangerous encounters than a white man would experience. This phenomenon is what Patricia Hill Collins would refer to as "intersecting oppressions," where Collins "[argued] that black women are uniquely situated in that they stand at the focal point where two exceptionally powerful and prevalent systems of oppression come together: race and gender" (*Hypatia* 62). This recognition of the Black women's experience within society allows us to acknowledge that they are more likely to have difficulties within romantic dating due to the intersectional oppression they are forced to endure. Dating apps also promote a standard of dating that focuses on a few personality aspects, with a strong emphasis on physical appearance to where all you have to do is swipe left or right; left indicating your lack of interest in that specific person, or right indicating how you are interested in said person (this is a particular and popular feature of most dating apps, such as Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, etcetera. but not all dating apps operate in this manner). Therefore, heterosexual Black women (and all women) are most likely judged immediately based on appearance, where

men may not be interacting with them due to racist beliefs, racial preferences, etcetera. Heterosexual white women, however, do not face these negative outcomes like Black women do, because in "hookup culture [within] the United States, white and Asian women are stereotyped as feminine, or even hyperfeminine, whereas Black women and other women of color are stereotyped as less feminine and therefore, less attractive" (Hanson 897). While white and Asian women still experience physical-based judgments, albeit in different ways, Black women are more masculinized than they are. This leads men to choose Asian women and white women in dating spheres more than Black women, as Black women are also thought to be "undesirable."

This concept of Black women being less attractive is "a message that is transmitted daily and from multiple external forces or social institutions (e.g., church, government, business industries, media, and family/peer groups)" (Awad, et. al 541). Black women have faced struggles due to their appearance because "systemic racism and white supremacy [playing] a big role in labeling Black women as 'undesirable'" (Bero). White men are not even the only group of men to perceive them as undesirable. As Lorde points out, "sexual hostility against Black women is practiced not only by the white racist society, but implemented within our Black communities as well" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 120). Due to the racial status of Black women, they "often find that they are as isolated on [dating] apps as they were in a bar or at a party" and "their experiences [on dating apps] are shaped by a predictable set of racialized and gendered stereotypes that deprive them of individuality" (Lin, et. al). Those people swiping left and right on a Black woman's profile are only seeing them for their appearance and racial background. In terms of appearance, the Black woman's proximity to whiteness (whether she is wearing her natural hair or straightened hair, whether she has a darker or lighter complexion, whether she has Eurocentric facial features, etcetera) is what is going to determine her "dateability," as "women

of color across all racial groups experience this and are told the more 'white' your features are, the more attractive you'll seem" (Ajose). This issue, combined with colorism (the prejudice/discrimination that concerns favoring a lighter complexion over a darker complexion within a racial/ethnic group) can be added to the plethora of problems Black women face, especially in an online setting, therefore their ability to be able to use online formats to find romantic partners is going to be limited. With these limitations, it is also going to be difficult for Black women to pursue romantic endeavors through apps due to a phenomenon known as "ghosting."

The "Ghosting" Phenomenon

There might also be a disparity between how much good there is on dating apps for romance in comparison to hookups due to the phenomenon known as "ghosting." Ghosting, which is when someone ends an interpersonal relationship with someone else in an abrupt manner without an explanation, is something that commonly occurs on dating apps. Because of potential sexual harassment and/or a looming presence of danger when engaging with online dating, some people, especially women, like to ghost as a means of rejection that can protect their safety and "allow a rejector to end a relationship without engaging in an interaction, which may be protective for would-be-rejectors who fear angry responses or physical harm from the would-be-target" (Freedman et al. 3). While men have the capacity to ghost as well, they are more likely to do so due to not knowing what to say to reject a person, they wanted to avoid hurt feelings, they were no longer interested in the person, etcetera (Freedman et al. 2). For the most part, however, when it comes to being rejected, some scholars have "posed the question of why men and women feel threatened, positing the idea that while men fear ridicule, women fear for their life" (Freedman et al. 10). There is a chance that Black women at LMU feel this fear in a

different and stronger way than white women would, as the sexism they face would also be racialized, leading to an intersectional discrimination they would face. Societal biases and stereotypes perpetuated against Black women suggest that they have a naturally "insatiable appetite for sex" ("The Jezebel Stereotype"), therefore, those that perceive Black women in this way are going to think they are "easy." Because Black women are not a monolith, some are going to not be sexually active in this manner, some are not sexually active at all, some just may not want to have sex on a particular occasion, and so on. Yet, the men that expect Black women to have sex with them may lash out, resulting in racial discrimination and potential violence for these women. In these instances, Black women at LMU may be looking for signs that indicate the men they are engaging with hold these mentalities, making them ghost the men that pose as a threat to them, resulting in a lack of romantic dates being fulfilled. On a lighter note, the participants of this survey may also perceive dating apps as having more bad than good for romantic options because they have been on either side of a ghosting scenario, with them having been ghosted and/or they themselves ghosted another, and communication through dating apps makes it very easy for this to occur.

Dating Apps Makes Finding Sexual Partners Easier Than Finding them Face-To-Face

Most of the subjects found that dating apps are a better avenue to find sexual partners than romantic partners in comparison to finding either kind of partner in a face-to-face scenario. Question 2 stated: "Using dating apps to look for romantic partners is better than meeting potential romantic partners on a face-to-face occasion," resulted in 15 voting 1 (Strongly Disagree), five voting 2, and three voting 4. Question 5, being "Using dating apps to look for casual sexual partners is better than meeting potential casual sexual partners on a face-to-face occasion," resulted in six voting 1, five voting 2, two voting 3, seven voting four, two voting 5,

and one voting 6. This indicates that while Question 2 showed that participants think face-to-face encounters are better for finding romantic partners than dating apps, not all participants think dating apps are entirely useless. Based on Question 5, some participants would say that dating apps can be good for finding casual sexual partners. At the very least, participants believe that dating apps are better at finding sexual partners than romantic partners when compared with the option of finding partners face-to-face. The hookup culture on dating apps is very prominent as it encourages and facilitates promiscuous sexual activity. However, hookup culture has, in part, led to an increase in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and an increase in the testing of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (Bhatnagar and Wan). Yet, studies have found that most college students that use dating apps are on them to find love rather than strictly sexual encounters (Seidman). That being said, certain apps are associated with being able to find sexual partners, and certain apps are associated with being able to find romantic partners. Participants within one study "said Tinder was used for sex and Bumble was used for relationships" and, "despite what users might say on their profiles, the expectation for casual sex dominated normative expectations on Tinder" (Sobieraj and Humphreys 7). Considering these associations, Black women at LMU may have answered the survey questions in a particular manner due to whichever app they have participated on the most. They could have been on Tinder attempting to find a romantic relationship but could only find sexual encounters. Respondents may have also believed that dating apps are better to find sexual partners over a face-to-face interaction due to the ability of being able to "sext" (consensually sending/receiving sexually explicit photographs/messages through a mobile phone) someone before engaging in sex itself. If they "sexted" their potential partner, they would be able to gauge what that person is interested in

sexually, leading to possible and potentially repeated physical encounters that were easier to find in comparison to asking someone face-to-face.

Sexual Harassment on Dating Apps

However, "sexting" can transform into "sexual harassment" if consent is not given prior to sending explicit content. Studies found that "sexual harassment when using dating apps is prevalent and ranges between 57 and 88.8%, with two populations being at higher risk: women and individuals who identify as a sexual minority" (Gewirtz-Meydan et. al 752). Surveys have also discovered that "45% of men and 39% of women have experienced some form of online harassment; however, women were more likely to encounter more sexualized forms of harassment" (Anderson and Vogels). The sexualized stereotypes perpetuated against Black women, such as the Jezebel, is the reason why Black women receive more of this kind of treatment compared to their white counterparts. According to the study "A Qualitative Exploration of Jezebel Stereotype Endorsement and Sexual Behaviors Among Black College Women," the Jezebel stereotype serves as "an ideological tool that deems Black women's bodies and sexual experiences as less worthy of autonomy" (Leath, et. al 276). The stereotype is a "prevalent image of Black women in mainstream media" to the point where some young Black women were critical of these depictions and were worried about how Black women as a whole would be affected by it, but young Black women still endorsed the stereotype more than older Black women above 55 years old did (Leath, et. al 248). Going back to my research, the young Black women who attend LMU could be a) being perceived as hypersexual beings, therefore they are having an easier time finding sexual partners rather than romantic partners and/or b) they are engaging in risky sexual behaviors due to being influenced by media portrayals of the Jezebel stereotype (West 287). However, when Black women are perceived with "Jezebel"

qualities, thus the idea that they are more sexual than women from other racial groups, this can lead to a greater risk of sexual harassment and sexual assault happening to them (Leath, et. al 276). According to bell hooks, this is because of how "Black women have always been seen by the white public as sexually permissive, as available and eager for the sexual assaults of any man, Black or white" (hooks, *Ain't I A Woman* 52). One study that "varied the race of a rape victim in a hypothetical vignette" depicted a Black woman as a victim, which led to "participants [rating] the rape as being more acceptable" (Willis 213). It insinuates that if an individual is more promiscuous than the average woman, then you do not need to ask for their consent. The damage these stereotypes do influences people's behaviors and beliefs, ultimately contributing to a rape culture that then allows more people to put their own sexualized portrayal of Black women in their heads onto the Black woman depicted on their Tinder profile, thus reinforcing the already-held belief, and the cycle continues. This could contribute to the results within this factor, where Black women who are sexualized then report negative attitudes towards dating apps because of harassment by people that dehumanize and objectify Black women as a whole.

Lack of Safety on Dating Apps

It is no surprise that dating apps have been generally thought of as better for finding sexual partners, especially in today's culture that glorifies "one-night stands" and "booty calls." However, these types of encounters can make women of color question their safety, and "when you combine stereotypes, aggressions, and sexual harassment from total strangers online, it is no surprise that many women of color report feeling unsafe on dating apps" (Holt). Not only this, but certain Black women have been known to go missing after having encounters with online dates, such as Asia Maynard, Brenda Rawls, and Lauren Smith-Fields (Ardrey). All of these women are people who went on dates with people they met online and were last seen with those

same people, dying under "mysterious" circumstances (Ardrey). Stories like these are why 78% of Black women do not feel safe in America, and "34% don't feel safe on dating apps" (Benbow). Specifically, 66% of Generation Z aged women have reported not feeling safe on mainstream dating apps, which has to influence how the Black women who took the survey interpret dating themselves (Fong). Participants of my survey could feel that dating apps, where you can pretend to be anyone and lie about anything, are not as trustworthy as face-to-face interactions, where you have that person's body language, vocal tone, mannerisms, etcetera. to paint yourself a better picture as to who that person is. The existence of that person and them being real is also confirmed in face-to-face interactions, as well as seeing what they truly look like, as "roughly seven-in-ten online daters believe it is very common for those who use these platforms to lie to try to appear more desirable" (Anderson, et. al).

Dating Apps Are The Best Way to Find Sexual Partners

Most participants believe that dating apps are the best route to looking for casual sexual partners, rather than romantic partners. Question 3 stated "Using dating apps is the best way to look for a romantic partner these days," with 12 voting 1 (Strongly Disagree), four voting 2, three voting 3, three voting 4, and one voting 5. Question 6 stated "Using dating apps is the best way to look for a casual sexual partner these days," with five voting 1, two voting 2, two voting 3, four voting 4, four voting 5, five voting 6, and one voting 7. These results indicate that respondents primarily do not believe dating apps are the best method for finding romantic partners, but more are willing to agree that dating apps are the best for finding sexual partners. With men having been established as those who are more sexually aggressive and inquiring than women (Sobieraj and Humphreys 9), they also "generally outnumber women on the apps, sometimes two to one" (Hafera) College-aged men also report how 80% of them "using dating

apps are looking for casual encounters versus 55% of female students, and, moreover, there is evidence that our sexual behavior is shaped by the peers around us… so the more your peers seek hookups, the more likely you are to seek them as well" (Mintz). There is a chance that these heterosexual Black women are engaging with men who do not want to pursue a romantic relationship like they might. They then may go along with ideas of hooking up, thereby leading them to believe that dating apps are for trying to find sexual partners rather than romantic ones. This would be why respondents submitted the answers the way they did. In these instances, they are interacting with men that are not pursuing a romantic commitment and these men just want to have sex, resulting in more casual sexual encounters than romantic ones. While some participants still disagreed that dating apps are not the best way to find a sexual partner, this does not imply that they were not able to find sexual partners. Rather, it could imply that participants did not manage to find sexual partners they deem as "good," or of good quality.

Queer Black Women and Dating Apps

While most of the sections within this chapter have been focused on Black women who are attracted to the opposite gender, much can be said about the queer Black women who took this survey and had this identity going into the dating app portion of it. Out of the many different identities that took the survey, and the ones that completed all the questions, there were six people that identified as "bisexual," two that identified as either "no label" or "unlabeled," one who identified as "queer," and one who identified as "bisexual/pan." Five of those who are "bisexual" submitted low scores from 1-3 within the factor, one "bisexual" rated the questions with scores 4 and higher, indicating that most Black women who attend LMU and identify under the label of "bisexual" do not see any value in dating apps for finding romantic or sexual partners. The person who identifies as "queer" rated the first four questions, regarding dating

apps being good for finding romantic/sexual partners, with scores ranging from 1-3, then rated questions five and six, regarding how dating apps are better for finding these kinds of partners than face-to-face, with "4," indicating that they do not think dating apps are good for finding romantic/sexual partners, but they hold more of a neutral stance on whether dating apps are better than being in a face-to-face scenario. One person who had "no label" rated lower on the first three questions, then higher with scores of 5-6 for the last three questions, suggesting that they think dating apps are not good at finding romantic partners but dating apps are relatively good at finding sexual partners. Based on these findings, it seems as though a majority of Black women at LMU who took my survey who identify under the "bisexual" label, or something adjacent to that, agree with the consensus that dating apps are better at finding sexual partners than they are for finding romantic partners. This could have something to do with how "bisexuals are often stigmatized by straight people and the queer community, according to a 2011 survey by the LGBT Advisory Committee. Around 47 percent of people would not date someone who is bisexual, while 19 percent were undecided, according to a survey by Adam and Eve, a sex toy company" (H. Palmer). This stigmatization would still exist in online formats, possibly more so, considering all engagement is behind a screen, therefore people are less likely to be cordial in their interactions. However, when it comes to queer Black women overall and the beliefs they hold about dating apps, other surveys find that "online dating is especially popular among certain groups – particularly younger adults and those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)" (Anderson et al.). Online dating is so popular in LGBT circles because "sexual minority women have a strong history of using a variety of technology-mediated platforms to connect and create community" (Smith 1). If this is the case for the general public, then why do Black women at LMU who identify as queer have more negative mindsets when it comes to dating apps? Despite

their status as queer, this may have something to do with their racial identity, which will be focused on more in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Factor 3 Results

As people navigate dating spaces, they often must ask themselves one question: "is this person romantically/sexually interested in me?" Unfortunately for Black women, they are forced to ask two questions, with the former question being asked second to "is this person romantically/sexually interested in Black women at all?" To ask if a potential dating/sexual partner has a racial preference is part of the standard procedure Black women endure, because after all, "men assign disproportionately greater importance to how a woman looks rather her personal qualities in dating contexts" and "phenotypic traits serve as an important symbolic tool used to evaluate racial/ethnic minority women's physical attractiveness" (Stephens and Thomas 291). However, Factor 3 entitled "Stress from race/ethnicity rejection" within my survey revealed some of the attitudes Black women at LMU have towards people who would not be interested in them due to their race/ethnicity. This factor asked participants if they have been or would be upset and/or stressed if a white person or a person of color rejected sex and dating from them on the basis of race/ethnicity. Overall, participants were more likely to be upset/stressed if people of color were to reject dating/having sex with them, and they were more likely to not be upset/stressed if white people were to reject them. This chapter will explore possible reasons as to why the participants responded in this way, such as they expect white people to not be intimately interested in them due to stereotypes and historical dynamics, they are expecting solidarity from other people of color, and they especially would be upset/stressed if a Black person rejected them due to their shared racial identities.

Black Women's Attitudes Towards White Men

When asked about rejection based on race/ethnicity by white people in terms of sex, the 34 participants that addressed this factor had varying answers: 13 participants leaned towards

"disagreeing," meaning they have not been nor would they be upset or stressed if a white person rejected them for sex solely based on their race/ethnicity. Two were neutral, and 19 leaned towards "agreeing" that they have been and/or would be upset or stressed at this kind of situation. The results were similar for another question in regard to "dating" rather than sex.

The results indicate that the Black women who go to LMU have been or would be relatively likely to be upset and/or stressed that a white person rejected them sexually because of their race/ethnicity, however, there is also a chance that some of them have not or would not be upset and/or stressed at that outcome. This could be due to Black women not expecting white men to be interested in them. After all, "research also shows that black women are overwhelmingly excluded as interracial dating partners, with one study showing that white men excluded black women as dating options at 93%" (Slatton). Not only that, but most Black women are also aware that the stereotypes perpetuated against them (such as the Sapphire, the angry Black woman, the Mammy, etc.) have been created by white men, and they are aware that there are white men who allow the continuation of the stereotypes to this day (Rosenthal and Lobel 17). These stereotypes were a product of slavery, as "the forced sexual victimization of African female slaves led to the promulgation of many distorted stereotypes, created by white society in an attempt to reconcile the contradiction of this maltreatment and the espoused values of a Christian democracy" (Greene 241). Furthermore, "historically, dominant and influential white men have constructed Black female bodies in raced, gendered, and classed terms. This construction of Black female bodies has been that of sexual licentiousness, natural immorality, disease, animalism, prostitution, and masculinity; the opposite of hegemonic, white, femininity" (Slatton). Because white people began to view Black women as animalistic and out of control sexually rather than understand that they were sexually exploited and they are victimized. This

may influence Black women's perception/experience and provide more of a reasoning as to why Black women would believe that white men do not want to be with them to begin with. In fact, it is the persistence of these negative stereotypes that bring about more rejections towards Black women to begin with (Flores 269).

Black women may not even have white men on their dating radar due to how others would perceive them if they were to pursue white men, especially those within their own racial group. For example, one study found that Black men believe "Black women who date whites do it for instrumental reasons: to gain social mobility" and they "questioned Black women's intentions in dating white men [because] they believed that some Black women were attracted to white men for their social and economic resources" (Flores 274). This coincides with the "gold digger" stereotype that is maintained against Black women. The study also found that "white men believed that Black women dating white men were more sexually promiscuous" (Flores 281). This is another example of a stereotype being used against Black women, as white men fetishize Black women through the stereotype of "the Sapphire."

Patricia Hill Collins argues "in the United States, naturalized hierarchies of gender and age are interwoven with corresponding racial hierarchies, regardless of whether racial hierarchies are justified with reference to biological, genetic differences or to immutable cultural differences" (Collins, *Hypatia* 65). These hierarchies have a profound effect on how white men and Black women perceive each other. The hierarchy that benefits white men, gives them the advantage, sustains a patriarchal society, and upholds white supremacy does not encourage Black women to become intimate with them. Rather, it would deter them from pursuing white men. In addition to that, when Black women were enslaved, white men would sexually assault them because they were "free of the fear that an overriding emotional attachment or sexual demand

would follow" (P. Palmer 156). This would affect Black women due to the phenomenon known as "Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome" (PTSS), which is a term that describes the "multigenerational trauma and injustices experienced by African Americans — from the dawn of slavery to the recent deaths of Black citizens at the hands of police" (Hinton). PTSS is known to have effects on Black people, such as not being able to concentrate on things and being easily startled, seeming emotionally numb and having feelings of hopelessness/depression, and specifically "avoiding certain places, people, or activities and events that may remind the individual of the trauma or experience" (Hinton). This could be a factor in certain Black women not only not being upset/stressed that white people do not want to date or have sex with them because of their race/ethnicity, but also probably not considering them as a dating/sexual possibility whatsoever. They would be avoiding white men altogether because of the torture their ancestors endured by other white men, as the PTSS would be physically affecting them due to over 300 years of trauma that includes being beaten, captured, sold, shipped, experimented on, raped, etc.

Black Queer Women with White People

Black queer women also provided mixed results regarding whether they would be upset/stressed if a white person were to reject dating/having sex with them solely based on their race/ethnicity. It would make sense for Black queer women to not be upset or stressed that other white queer women do not want them, considering that research has suggested that Black lesbians "who had been in relationships with White lesbians reported more frequent experiences of discrimination that influenced their later decision to seek a Black lesbian partner for their next love relationship" (Mays et al. 1-2). Racism can have a profound effect on the romantic decisions Black lesbians make, as they are more likely to not even consider white lesbians as an option

(Mays et al. 9). This can be caused by many factors, such as experiencing racism at the hands of other white women (so they have that negative association), assuming that white women would not want to date them so they do not even attempt to approach them, and, in some cases, not wanting to be thought of as "politically incorrect" or seen as "betraying the Black sisterhood" if they were to date a white woman (Wilson and Russell, 134). An interracial lesbian couple also faces a unique challenge that heterosexual interracial relationships do not have to encounter: they are "more publicly visible, as a couple, than two women of the same ethnic group" (Greene 138). In fact, "Black lesbians who choose to [center] their erotic experiences around other Black women for ideological reasons are openly hostile to interracial lesbian relationships" and they "feel that the Black woman in an interracial relationship is not prioritizing race and wasting her time by sleeping with the enemy" (Blackman 191). This leads both parties to wonder if they are betraying their racial allegiances. Black queer women at LMU may be considering this factor as well. After all, they would recognize that any potential white partner they could have may come into contact with the realities of racism. In this scenario, the Black women would most likely have developed and maintained strategies of coping when addressing racism, preparing themselves psychologically in the process. However, a white partner may have never had to do that kind of thing or face that type of situation before, resulting in a failing of noticing microaggressions and other forms of racism. This would then lead to the response that the Black woman has to the racism possibly being seen as an overreaction by their white partner, or it may lead to the white partner taking on a more protective role that the Black woman does not need or want and may even consider to be patronizing. Black queer women would probably want to avoid white queer women for these very reasons.

Black queer women also have to be conscious of their three core identities: being Black, being queer, and being a woman. In fact, "sexuality was one of the emphases in early work by African-American women because Black lesbians were at the forefront in raising the issue of intersectionality" (Collins, *Hypatia* 79). In addition to that, Audre Lorde, being a Black lesbian feminist herself, spoke on how she felt that she was "constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of [herself] and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 120). This is what other Black queer women experience as well, especially if they are to participate in an interracial relationship. If they do this, then they retain their identity as "queer," yet they stand to lose their identity as "Black" and are seen as trying to reap the rewards of their white partner's privilege. This is because queerness is primarily associated with whiteness due to "many narratives of the queer experience [being] white normative (coming out the closet and sexual identities)… these narratives were created from a white European lens that did not include the experience of queer people of color; this white normativity further centers whiteness in the queer community" (Bradley, "The Experiences of Black Queer Women in College" 25). Studies have also found that "white privilege shaped the representations of women of color in a particular way that promoted their exclusion from white LBQ spaces and broader society" (Logie and Rwigema 174). Logie and Rwigema's findings also indicated that "LBQ women of color experience intersectional stigma (e.g., homophobia, racism, sexism) on a daily basis" and "by representing queerness as white, LBQ women of color were rendered invisible in both queer and racialized communities" (Logie and Rwigema 1).

When taking into account the college setting as a factor in the dating lives of Black queer women attending LMU, we have established LMU to reflect a PWI culture due to its 41.2% of white students in attendance and a white school faculty of 69.9% (Loyola Marymount University

Diversity Chart). Therefore, we can argue that while Black queer women who attend LMU "may be able to explore their sexual orientation more easily than those at historically black colleges and institutions," they still "might have to deal with racism, homophobia, and sexism while still focusing on academics" (Bradley, "In Search of Community" 26) In addition to that, Black queer women who go to LMU could have difficulty "finding support and community difficult because of the lack of practical understanding of how race, gender and homophobia impacts their experiences" (Bradley, "In Search of Community" 26). They would be dealing with all this strife, which would make them more likely to date someone who is going through the same or relatively the same problems. Otherwise, a Black queer woman student at LMU would have to explain what they go through, which would only add to the strife they already endure if they are not able to verbalize their experiences or they simply just want to be romantically/sexually involved with someone who "gets" them.

Black and white women are also compared and contrasted to each other in the eyes of a patriarchal system, as white women are associated with hyperfemininity and the closer you are to whiteness indicates the closer you are to being feminine, and Blackness is notoriously associated with masculinity (Buckley 9). Consistently being compared to a group of women who benefit from a society that prioritizes white privilege over equality could only serve to further deter Black women from dating them or seeking them out to date to begin with. It would also create the same expectation as discovered with white men earlier in this chapter due to a racial divide. In other words, it would create this assumption in the minds of Black queer women where they would automatically believe that white women would reject them because of their race/ethnicity. Therefore, they are not as upset/stressed as they probably should be, because it is just something that they expected.

Black Women's Attitudes Towards People of Color

When 34 people were asked about rejection based on race/ethnicity by people of color in terms of sex, the participants had varying answers: five participants leaned towards "disagreeing," therefore they have not been nor would they be upset or stressed if a person of color rejected them for sex solely based on their race/ethnicity, three were neutral, and 26 leaned towards "agreeing" that they have been and/or would be upset or stressed at this kind of situation. Again, these results were similar for the following question, in regards to "dating." In comparison to the previous questions involving white people, these results are a lot less mixed, and the majority of participants have been/would be upset/stressed if a person of color rejected them for sex and/or dating specifically because of their race/ethnicity. People of color, in this context, will be defined as "people who are not white." But, to analyze why Black women at LMU would be upset/stressed by the rejection of people of color but not white people, we will have to separately analyze Black women's relationship to non-Black people of color, and Black women's relationship to Black men.

Black Women with Latino/Asian Men

The reason that Black women at LMU answered in this manner could be due to how they perceive non-Black people of color. While many Black women recognize that they encounter a specific kind of racial discrimination, most understand that Latino men and Asian men also experience racial discrimination, just in different formats. They understand this because they themselves endure multiple sides of oppression: one side being Black, and the other of being a woman. Patricia Hill Collins describes intersectional oppression and how "oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 18). There is also this understanding that "people of color have

been cast in monolithic characterizations that homogenize diverse populations into subordinate racial groups" (Lei 158), therefore Black women recognize that they share these kinds of experiences alongside other people of color. And yet, based on certain studies, not all marginalized groups understand this concept or acknowledge the discriminatory systems put in place.

With regard to Latino men, studies show they have a tendency to mainly engage in endogamous relationships, as "the prevalence of endogamous relationships among Latinos reflect learned 'disciplined preferences' where Latinos internalize perceptions of whites and Blacks as incompatible partners and experience heightened residential segregation" (Garcia 811). Garcia argues "Latinos support endogamy to distance themselves from Blacks, thus accruing racial privilege and reproducing the racial hierarchy" (Garcia 811). Despite the discrimination Latino men endure, they still do not seek Black women romantically/sexually because of how they perceive Black people as "lesser than" (Garcia 811). This is their attempt at "winning" the racial hierarchy system. In addition to that, while Latina women experience pressures to stay within their race more frequently, Latino men are "still subtly encouraged by their parents to form relationships with other Latinos and not to venture outside their race… the messages that parents convey to Latino men may influence them not to become romantically involved with Blacks" (Morales 329). If Latino men are exhibiting these particular behaviors and thought processes to the Black women that attend LMU, then this would make sense as to why Black women would be upset/stressed at these occurrences.

In the case of Asian men, Spell writes that there is "evidence of racial preference among Internet daters [that] reveals that Asian men and Black women are excluded from dating markets" (174). Asian men are also notoriously hyper feminized, whereas Black women are

notoriously hyper masculinized. Despite these commonalities, "research finds that black women and Asian men are much less likely than their same-race counterparts (i.e., black men and Asian women) to be coupled with a different-race partner" (Balistreri et al. 6). While this does not directly imply any negative attitudes held by Asian men towards Black women, research has found that "Asians have similar dating preferences to Whites in that they frequently distance themselves from Hispanics and Blacks. Like Whites, they found that more than 94% of Asians did not indicate a willingness to date African Americans" (Tsunokai et al. 799). If this is the primarily held view of Asian men, participants may have encountered people of color like this who are not willing to date or become sexually involved with Black women. Participants in my study might become upset/stressed if Asian men have/were to reject them especially if they recognize how similarly Black women and Asian men are discriminated against, because it could be seen as a kind of betrayal.

Black Women with Black Men

Black women at LMU who participated in the survey could have had Black men in mind when they answered the questions regarding whether they would be upset/stressed if people of color rejected them. They would feel especially betrayed in this case because of their shared racial identities. After all, both groups were torn from their homeland and forced to be enslaved, both have perceptions placed upon them of being too "aggressive," and both are capable of being widely perceived as "ghetto," "thug-like," and just generally "lesser than." Despite these similarities, Black men have shown that they hold weaker same race preferences in comparison to other groups (Mendelsohn et al. 13). It is also both Black men and non-Black men that do not date Black women because they are considered too angry, too strong, and/or too emasculating (Silva) This is when Black men turn to interracial dating, which would explain why "research

has documented that Black women represent the strongest opposition toward interracial dating and marriage, based on qualitative research with Black men-white women interracial couples," and Black women also reportedly view this kind of interracial relationship as one of the main causes as to why there are no available Black men to date (Childs 545). If participants hold these same views, this would make sense as to why they would have negative feelings towards a rejection.

Black Queer Women with People of Color

Black queer women responded to rejection from people of color similarly to how Black heterosexual women did. They differ from their heterosexual counterparts in that "unlike Black heterosexuals whose sexuality placed them squarely within the visible bounds of black civil society, several gays and lesbians struggled to find communities that celebrated both their blackness and lesbian/gay sexuality" (Steinbugler 1703). However, in this scenario the participants addressed, Black queer women (who are potentially seeking other women) would be rejected by people of color who are relatively in the same boat as them: they are associated with three distinct identities that they use to navigate the world (gender, sexuality, and racialization). They would most likely be upset/stressed due to feelings of solidarity. What they also have in common is how underrepresented they are, as "the media images of lesbians in American films are usually dominated by White women" (Greene 127). In the case of Black and Latina women, their lives both challenge ideas of womanhood, not just solely within a white, patriarchal society but also within the communities of Black people and Latinx people. Research shows that "social conservatism regarding gender roles and homosexuality pervades all Black ideologies, but Black nationalists have been the most outspoken and explicit in the promotion of traditional and unequal sex roles for Black men and women" (Asencio and Battle 4). Asencio and Battle go on

to argue "this attitude has led to conceptualizations of Black lesbians as undermining 'racial solidarity' and procreative responsibilities (i.e., motherhood) … the same has been found in Latina/o ethnic and national discourses where womanhood (and manhood) is firmly entrenched within heterosexuality and reproduction" (4). Having these experiences in common would make it all the more disheartening if Latina women were to reject Black women. As for queer women of color in general, they "often feel that they are required to identify either with their race or with their sexual orientation in order to fit into a culture" (Bridges et al. 115). This would allow them to connect with each other in any other scenario, but Black queer women are still just as undesired in the dating sphere as Black heterosexual women.

If women are already underappreciated and devalued within society, then for Black heterosexual women, "this is amplified with Black men's allegiance to heterosexism, misogynoir, and any claim to the privileges of the patriarchy they cling to, adding another level to the subordination of Black women" (Fu'Qua). And if this is how Black heterosexual women are being treated, then it is even more difficult for Black queer women, where their queerness has the potential to disrupt Black nationhood and unity (Fu'Qua). Audre Lorde has spoken on this, as she has said: "But let anyone, particularly a Black man, accuse a straight Black woman of being a Black lesbian, and right away that sister becomes immobilized, as if that is the most horrible thing she could be, and must at all costs be proven false. That is homophobia" (Lorde, *Freedom Organizing Series #3* 5). Because Black queer women at LMU most likely have experienced these attitudes and beliefs, one would think that they would not be as upset/stressed at a rejection from another Black queer woman as they reported. You would think that they would be as upset/stressed as they reported if a white queer woman rejected them. And yet, "Black lesbians, similar to the general population, are exposed to negative stereotypes of Black women that they

must overcome to see Black women as potential romantic partners" (Brooks 39). This is especially the case for those who have grown up in predominantly white neighborhoods and/or are attending institutions that are predominantly white.

Overall, Black women at LMU and their mixed responses regarding whether or not they would be upset/stressed that a white person rejected them makes sense when you consider how they are most likely already assuming that white people would have a problem with their race. These Black women are probably also considering the trials and tribulations they have been put through due to other white people in their past experiences, and therefore they do not wish to become intimately involved with them. It also makes sense that Black women would be upset/stressed if people of color rejected them because those people would be discriminating against them in a society that has whiteness built into its foundation, therefore these Black women participants are expecting an amount of solidarity and togetherness that they would not be receiving.

Chapter 3: Factor 5 and Factor 7 Results

I have discussed what Black women at LMU think about dating apps, and we touched on how Black women at LMU would feel if white people and/or people of color rejected them based on their race/ethnicity. What we have not addressed is how those feelings have contributed to their self-perception, and how fetishization factors into their dating lives. This last chapter will primarily focus on the results of two factors within my survey: Factor 5 entitled "Intimacy-related hopelessness" and Factor 7 entitled "Race/ethnicity-based fetishization."

Factor 5 Results: "Intimacy-related hopelessness"

Factor 5 prompted the participants with four questions as statements they were asked to rate from 1 to 7, with over 30 participants responding. The first question was "I have felt hopeless about finding intimate partners because of my race/ethnicity," where 18 responses leaned towards "Strongly Agree," and only 9 leaned towards "Strongly Disagree." These findings indicate that there are Black women at LMU who attribute/have attributed their race/ethnicity to the reason as to why they cannot find intimate partners. This could be due to a multitude of factors. To begin with, many Black college students already believe they do not belong amongst their peers in a college-setting, as they experience the "Imposter Phenomenon" (IP) (Lige et al. 346). IP is the perception that you are repeatedly displaying an incompetent intelligence and behavior despite evidence contradicting otherwise, and "this feeling of fraudulency has been associated with anxiety, depression, excessive worry, fear of negative evaluation, poorer mental health, and diminished self-esteem" (Lige et al. 347). If Black women at LMU are already running into these feelings because of the environment they are in, then they might be starting off in a negative headspace and point of self-perception as they are

participating in the dating scene. This would also explain why "young Black women in college who have not yet developed a healthy, internally based, positive definition of womanhood may make detrimental dating decisions" (Henry). The decisions they have made may then influence not only how they will approach their next intimate prospects, but it would also continue to influence their dating beliefs and attitudes, resulting in outlooks that further reflect a more hopeless viewpoint. In addition to that, as we have discussed prior to this chapter, Black women are categorized as "undesirable" in romantic/sexual settings due to how their race intersects with their gender. The term "Black" is associated with "masculinity," and Black women are forced into this category because of how "Black women are often less likely to be associated with the concept of a 'typical woman' and are viewed as more similar to Black men than to White women" (Coles). The "Sapphire" stereotype does not help dispel the association, as it constructs Black women as both masculine and emasculating. In addition to this, "Black women [are] often portrayed by male actors in films, deriding Black women as violations of dominant beauty ideals and femininity" (Kwate 2). Even in the film industry, portrayals of Black women are masculinized.

Therefore, when male actors portray Black women in television shows and films, they are teaching audiences to view Black women in this light, leading to men creating racial preferences that most likely exclude Black women—making it more difficult for Black women to find intimate partners and feel hopeless as more and more time passes. And when it comes to the films that Black women do get to be a part of, they are "stereotyped into portraying specific types of characters and are not often allowed to appear in roles outside of the widely held narratives society holds about Black women" (Evans 5) Consistently putting Black women in roles such as struggling single mothers, maids, or "sassy" characters perpetuates this idea that all

Black women act in either one of three ways. Circulating these ideas within prominent media teaches nonblack folks at early ages that Black women act and behave in particular ways, which encourages them to not seek out Black women in dating spheres. This could explain why Black women at LMU have felt/are feeling hopeless, considering the student population of LMU is primarily white. When we also consider LMU and its PWI culture as a factor, we learn of how "researchers also suggest that when students are unable to form close, intimate, or romantic relationships at PWIs, it can affect their socialization, sense of belonging, and self-esteem" (Carver and Mitchell 1728). This could possibly be a reason as to why participants agreed/strongly agreed with the prompt. And yet, approximately one-third of participants disagreed with the prompt, which might be perplexing given how Black women are treated due to their intersecting identities. However, studies show that "[Black] women who are college graduates have more liberal views about the female role and are more likely to identify themselves as Masculine and Undifferentiated" (Binion 487). This could potentially explain the attitudes of the third and fourth years (juniors and seniors) at LMU that disagreed within the survey.

If being perceived as masculine is making it so the love lives of Black women are more difficult to navigate, then these women that are comfortable identifying with masculinity are not going to think their race/ethnicity is the issue within their dating lives. If they have issues within their dating lives, they may attribute it more to who they are personality-wise rather than their appearance. While four upperclassmen did disagree with the statement "I have felt hopeless about finding intimate partners because of my race/ethnicity," 11 agreed. Although, only four lowerclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) agreed with the prompt, and seven disagreed. Because more upperclassmen agreed with the statement and more lowerclassmen disagreed with

the statement, the argument can be made that more upperclassmen feel this hopelessness due to their race/ethnicity. They have been in the dating scene for a longer period of time and college has given them the freedom to date that high school may have not provided. Thus, lowerclassmen are newer to the dating scene and do not have much dating experience, potentially resulting in more optimistic attitudes, especially at a school that reflects a PWI culture. Lastly, another reason as to why some participants disagreed with the prompt could be due to the "strong Black woman" trope that is used against them. This trope is derived from slavery, when "Black women were deemed strong enough to work in the fields alongside men, but were also expected to care for the master's wife and children" (White 4). It essentially characterizes all Black women as strong, independent, caregivers who are supposed to carry the world on their shoulders whilst simultaneously taking it in stride. Many Black women are instilled with these values at early ages, along with being taught how to hide their struggles and emotions, how to be self-reliant, and how to make sacrifices for the sake of other people (White 3). Participants that have been taught these values are bound to hide their emotions, so much so that they may not realize they have some feelings of hopelessness surrounding their dating life. They would not realize this because they would have been bottling their emotions up as they have been trained to do within their upbringing.

The second question was "Sometimes it seems like no matter what I do, I cannot seem to find sexual partners, because of my race/ethnicity," with 15 being the majority and leaning towards "Strongly Disagree," and 10 with "Strongly Agree." The stereotype of the "Jezebel" comes into play with this prompt, with the portrayal of Black women being that they are "governed by their libido" and "hypersexual … with unlimited bestial passions" (Mgadmi 5). As discussed in previous chapters, this was a tactical portrayal that started during times of slavery in

order for white men to sexually assault enslaved Black women and not be at blame for doing so. Feminist scholar bell hooks, who we will explore further later in the chapter, touches on the history of this stereotype as she writes: "The designation of all black women as sexually depraved, immoral, and loose had its roots in the slave system. White women and men justified the sexual exploitation of enslaved black women by arguing that they were the initiators of sexual relationships with men" (hooks, *Ain't I A Woman* 77). However, evidence suggests that "contrary to feeling threatened by the hypersexualized nature of the Jezebel stereotype, some young Black women may feel a sense of empowerment from images of other women embracing and expressing their sexuality and that sexualized media may promote feelings of sexual agency and control over their bodies" (Leath et al. 246-247). The language of the question itself, i.e. "no matter what I do," indicates that their sexual lives are not within their control, and yet, many participants disagreed with this.

This type of attitude towards sex and being perceived as "sexy" could contribute to how participants answered this question, with the majority possibly not believing their race/ethnicity is playing a negative role in their sexual endeavors because they would believe it is doing the opposite, due to how they feel they have control over their bodies and their sex lives. In addition to these findings, participants who identified as "straight"/heterosexual were more likely to submit answers closer to "Strongly Disagree" than "Strongly Agree," and participants who identified with a label that falls under the umbrella term "queer" submitted answers closer to "Strongly Agree." This means that Black queer women are already facing adversity in this area, as the college "hookup" scene is "a profoundly gendered and heteronormative sexual field" (Rupp et al. 213) therefore not only are Black heterosexual women going to have more positive sexual experiences than their queer counterparts, but Black queer women are also going to

encounter people who invalidate their intersecting identities and/or discriminate against them because of that.

The third question was “Sometimes it seems like no matter what I do, I cannot seem to find dating partners, because of my race/ethnicity.” Surprisingly, 13 people submitted a response reflecting “Strongly Disagree,” while 12 submitted a response similar to “Strongly Agree.” This indicates that while some Black women at LMU think they are not finding dating partners because of their race/ethnicity, there are just as many other Black women at LMU that have/have previously found dating partners and their race/ethnicity did not deter them from doing so. This might imply that those who submitted answers resembling “Strongly Disagree” are currently in relationships, were in relationships that they found were relatively easy to find, and/or they simply just do not believe their race/ethnicity had anything to do with their dating lives. In addition to that, there is a possibility that some of the young, Black women students at LMU are not fully aware of the oppressive societal conditions they are placed under, and “these women may have little or no knowledge regarding the circumstances of their devalued status, nor the appropriate coping skills to survive the negative effects of their devaluation” (Henry).

Furthermore, because the survey only asked participants of their ethnicity and it does not their ethnicity in relation to colorism, there may be a discrepancy in the answers based on the skin tone of the participants, where participants with lighter complexions could have submitted answers of “Strongly Disagree.” Those with lighter complexions answering in this fashion makes sense when you consider how Black men have a “long-standing preference for light-skinned mates” (Hill 80). This is also the case when it comes to white men, as they “perceive light-skinned African Americans favorably and dark-skinned African Americans unfavorably” (Uzogara et al. 201). In general, it is the Black women with lighter complexions that are

purposefully selected over those with darker complexions for movies, television, music videos, and advertisements, and "a light-skinned Black woman's high desirability stems from her physical similarity to the white standard of beauty" (Neal and Wilson 328). Black women with lighter complexions might not claim that they are having racial difficulties with dating because of the privileges they have that those with darker complexions do not. Overall, while it would be preposterous to assume all participants who voted closer to "Strongly Disagree" are either of a lighter complexion and/or they do not fully understand how they are marginalized in America, these are just two of many probable reasons as to why a participant might disagree with the statement to begin with. As for the participants who answered with "Strongly Agree," we know from previous chapters that Black women struggle with dating due to how they can be stereotypically perceived and how much pressure they are put under to follow Eurocentric beauty standards (Allison and Ralston 500). Some do try to adhere to the rules of the Eurocentric beauty standards and emulate whiteness so they can "be perceived by others as feminine and attractive … through the use of skin bleaches, hair dyes, and straightening combs" (Hill 80). Black women at LMU who answered in this fashion are most likely aware of their placement within the socially constructed racial hierarchy they are forced into.

If they venture out of their own race within the dating scene and attempt to pursue white people, then they are encountering white men who "prefer nonblack women over Black women" and "express greater willingness to partner with Asian and Hispanic women than Black women" (Allison and Ralston 500), and they are also encountering white women that raise their risk of rejection "based on race/ethnicity, exposure to racism, or may pressure women to minimize their own African-American culture" (Mays et al. 2). If they decide they want to only date the men within their own race, then that will prove to be a challenge over time because "many Black men

are incarcerated, married, gay, or dating interracially, [therefore] Black women do not have many options" (Henry). However, if Black women who attend LMU were intimately seeking other Black women to date, then that could be another reason as to why they submitted "Strongly Disagree," because in this scenario, they are dating people who have similar lived experiences.

Lastly, the fourth question was "I have sometimes had the thought that I will be alone forever, because of the color of my skin," where 16 leaned towards "Strongly Disagree" and 13 leaned towards "Strongly Agree." Once again, there is a chance that those with lighter complexions disagreed with this, due to possibly not experiencing as much discrimination as those with darker complexions do, especially within dating and hookup culture. While the majority disagreed with this statement, an alarming number of participants agreed with it. This could be caused by many factors, such as the PWI culture LMU has, as "navigating through predominately white institutions that have historically created conditions that trigger or exacerbate symptoms damming to the sense of worth can be exhaustive" (Middleton and Owens 33). Because there are more white students attending LMU than there are Black students, the Black students become minoritized.

As I have established prior in the chapter, white men and women are less likely to date interracially and if they are to do so, they are more likely to pursue other races of women before they become intimately involved with Black women. Thus, these Black women at LMU are frequently in an environment that is brimming with potentially available men that are most likely not interested in them, which could result in the Black women coming to the conclusion that they will not be able to be intimate with anyone because of their race/ethnicity. Furthermore, the Black women of LMU that did agree with the prompt could also be experiencing racial microaggressions, which are "argued as being more harmful to the self-esteem of African

American women enrolled in higher education than their racial counterparts due to their dual minority status" (Alexander and Hermann, *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 34). If Black women at LMU are being confronted with multiple microaggressions over time from multiple people, then that could be another element that is contributing to their damaged self-esteem/self-worth because of how people are highlighting their racial status and making them believe as though they are the odd ones out.

Factor 7 Results: "Race/ethnicity-based fetishization"

As we move on to Factor 7, I will be primarily comparing the results of the questions to Caren M. Holmes' article "The Colonial Roots of the Racial Fetishization of Black Women." This factor prompted the participants with four questions, with over 20 participants responding; however, I will be focusing on two specific questions in this factor. The first question was "White sexual partners have been interested in me solely because of my race/ethnicity, they pay little to no attention to my other personal characteristics," where 10 participants gave answers that were closer to "Strongly Disagree," and 7 participants did the same for "Strongly Agree." Fetishization, as we briefly touched on in a previous chapter, is "the act of making someone an object of sexual desire based on some aspect of their identity" (Asare). Within this factor, the "aspect of their identity" that is being fetishized is their race/ethnicity, and it is commonly known for people to state that they have a racial "preference," which can be harmful to have and act upon. For example, if a White person says that they have a preference for Black women, they would typically value any Black woman solely on their physical characteristics and they would be perceived through a stereotypical lens, allowing for the Black woman in question to be dehumanized. While the majority may argue that they feel as though white people they have

been sexually involved with have not just been interested in them because of their race/ethnicity, there can be multiple reasons as to why this is the case.

Based on the results of the survey, those that identified as "queer" or as a label that falls under the LGBTQ+ community were more likely to disagree with the prompt than agree. Research centering around queer dating apps has revealed that "white women interested in women tend to exhibit less race-based preferences in responding to other users than do white men interested in men" (Stacey and Forbes 374). Therefore, there is a good chance that Black women students at LMU that romantically pursue other women are not feeling like they are being fetishized because white women are not doing so to begin with. As for the participants who identified as "straight" or "heterosexual," these participants may not have had white sexual partners to begin with, they may have been fetishized by the white sexual partner but not realized it, and/or as Holmes claims, they may "perceive racial fetishization as an empowering and respectful form of glorifying Black female bodies" (Holmes 8). If the latter is the case, then they would be less likely to recognize the negative aspects of fetishization and more likely to romanticize it, therefore not technically seeing it as "fetishization."

This concept is in agreement with an earlier point made in this chapter in regard to the "Jezebel" stereotype and how some Black women found themselves reclaiming a sense of sexual agency. With that being said, the 7 participants who agreed with the prompt have probably experienced what Holmes would deem as an aspect of the "white supremacist patriarchal agenda to control and exploit the bodies of Black women" (Holmes 7). Fetishization has its roots in slavery too, as "the historical impact of slavery and a patriarchal social structure contributed to a sociocultural milieu whereby the sexual objectification of African American women is rife" (Avery 9). This is why American media is riddled with this concept of Black women as

promiscuous. If nonblack people were to only consume this kind of media, they would be under the impression that Black women are "easy" and willing/able to have sex with them at a moment's notice. Holmes makes a point of commenting on how this concept is perpetuated as she writes: "Black female bodies and Black sexual practices are essentialized and fetishized as a continuation of their exploitation within the American imperialist narrative. This idea is reflected in popular music, pornography, advertisements, and other popular media" (Holmes 7). Considering Black women are fetishized and exploited so frequently within everyday entertainment, it is no wonder that participants felt they were only being romantically pursued for their race/ethnicity.

Music, such as rap and hip-hop, has a tendency to include misogynistic and objectifying lyrics, typically spoken or sung by Black men. According to Holmes, these songs depicting Black women as sexual by nature are fueling an existing rape culture that permeates American culture, resulting in the validation of sexual violence against Black women (Holmes 8). However, these types of songs also not only spread the damaging narrative that Black women are inherently sexual, but it also poses a problem for Black women who want to sexually engage with other people on a consistent basis. They might feel pressure to represent their community, therefore they would not have the freedom of being as sexually active as they would prefer. Bringing Holmes' research forth and examining it in relation to my research is significant because to learn about the history of fetishization towards Black women in general is to recognize these pieces of media as harmful and to recognize how they have the capacity to affect Black women who attend LMU. Overall, because Black women are hypersexualized and their bodies are commodified, people from nonblack racial groups would seek out Black women specifically for sexual encounters (Carver and Mitchell 1738). This is most likely the issue that

participants who agreed with the statement were having, as their racial identity is the only aspect of them that is being acknowledged, resulting in participants being objectified and treated as a tool for pleasure rather than a person.

The third question in the factor was "White people have been interested in me for dating solely because of my race/ethnicity, they pay little to no attention to my other personal characteristics," with 8 people leaning towards "Strongly Disagree" and 9 people leaning towards "Strongly Agree." Regarding this question, more participants agreed than disagreed, which indicates that more Black women at LMU who participated in the survey felt more fetishized in their dating lives by white people rather than in their sexual lives. This could imply that participants are simply dating more than they are "hooking up," but this could also imply that Black women at LMU are pursuing other white people romantically, despite possible signs of that white person fetishizing them. If the latter is the case, this is understandable because of how Black women can potentially view themselves. If they exist in a society that repeatedly reminds them that they are not intimately desired in many different spheres most of the time, that is bound to take a heavy toll on their self-esteem and self-confidence.

This can conjure internalized racism, which is "the process of adopting other peoples' stereotypical beliefs about oneself or the community in which a person belongs" (Cotton 4). While internalized racism is not limited to these factors, it typically comes with colorism, a belief in stereotyping, low self-esteem, and self-hatred. Participants who engage with internalized racism due to how they perceive themselves and how they might have been raised could be more likely to pursue relationships with white people who fetishize them because the fetishization is initially masked as "love" and "appreciation"—something that a Black woman who deals with internalized racism would look forward to and not view as racism or

objectification. This is further supported by studies that claim that “unrecognition of fetishization may lead to the internalization of biases and racism by the perpetrators and also by those who are being fetishized, leading towards self-hatred or negative self image” (Chang).

Altogether, Factor 5 revealed that while many Black women students at LMU have felt hopeless about finding intimate partners because of their race/ethnicity, the majority also felt that they could still find sexual partners regardless of their race/ethnicity. They were more likely to think they could find sexual partners than dating partners, and almost half of participants have had the thought that their race/ethnicity is what will result in them being alone. Most participants also denied having experienced racial fetishization from white people, yet those who agreed need to be looked into further, as “it is important to investigate the relationship between racial fetishism and the mental well-being of [women of color] because of people of color’s vulnerability to mental health problems” (Mirahmadi et al. 74).

Conclusion

To summarize my thesis, Chapter 1 concentrated on Factor 8 of the survey, entitled "Attitude toward Looking for Partners via Dating Apps Scale." These results revealed that most participants felt dating apps have more "bad than good" for finding romantic partners in comparison to sexual partners. Based on my research, I found that this is most likely due to the negative experiences, harassment, and racial/gender discrimination Black women experience when seeking romance on apps. This is typically due to the intersectional oppression (racism and sexism) that tends to occur within dating apps for Black women users, whereas white women do not experience the same kind of oppression. I discussed stereotypes like the "Jezebel" (a stereotype against Black women that marks them as hypersexual and unrestrained whilst simultaneously robbing them of their autonomy) and how it affects how Black women navigate the world of dating apps, and it increases their risk of harassment through the apps and the possibility of being fetishized. Participants felt dating apps were better for finding casual sexual partners than romantic partners, compared to meeting people face-to-face, thus indicating that apps facilitate hookup culture more easily. Lastly, queer Black women participants also had somewhat negative attitudes, possibly due to racial discrimination compounding issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community on the apps.

Chapter 2 centered around Factor 3 of the survey entitled "Stress from race/ethnicity rejection," which asked participants if they have been or would be upset and/or stressed if a white person or a person of color rejected sex and dating from them on the basis of race/ethnicity. Participants indicated that they have been or would be relatively likely to be upset and/or stressed that a white person rejected them sexually and romantically because of their

race/ethnicity, however, some of them would not be upset and/or stressed at that outcome. I found that this suggests that Black women at LMU may assume white people are already not going to be intimately interested, so they may not be surprised if this were the case. The majority of participants reported they would be upset/stressed if they were to be rejected by people of color, suggesting that they expect some form of solidarity, especially by Black men, considering their similar race-based experiences. Because of these results, the chapter mainly analyzed white people's and people of color's attitudes towards Black women and how Black women could be perceiving and/or internalizing those attitudes. Despite Black women's expectations towards Black men, my research revealed how Black men tend to participate in the facilitation of stereotypes against Black women and how Black men tend to pursue interracial relationships rather than relationships with Black women. When taking other sexual orientations into consideration, Black queer women responded in a similar fashion, and this could be due to them expecting more acceptance from queer women of color due to shared intersectional identities, but still facing rejection rooted in anti-Black racism within their own communities.

Chapter 3 discusses the results of Factor 5 entitled "Intimacy-related hopelessness" and Factor 7 entitled "Race/ethnicity-based fetishization" and explores how race/ethnicity impacts Black women's self-perception and experiences with intimacy and fetishization at LMU. Factor 5 showed most participants felt hopeless about finding intimate partners due to their race/ethnicity. They also believed they could find sexual partners regardless of race, but were less optimistic about finding dating partners. Almost half had thought they might be alone forever because of their skin color. These results agree with the articles and studies I discovered in my research, where stereotypes of Black women as masculine/unfeminine and detrimental media portrayals are some of the main reasons as to why Black women are perceived as undesirable. In addition to

that, Black women also lack dating options among Black men when they are attending an environment that reflects a predominantly white institution/PWI-culture (such as LMU). Within Factor 7, some participants felt fetishized by white sexual/dating partners who were only interested due to their race. This had me look more into fetishization and write about how it has roots in colonialism, slavery, and objectification of Black women's bodies. Those participants that indicated they have not felt like they have been objectified in this way could be due to how they view fetishization as empowering initially before recognizing the negative impacts. Overall, Chapter 3 explores concepts like colorism, internalized racism, and how these influence Black women's experiences and self-perception in intimacy whilst drawing from scholars like bell hooks to analyze the historical context and present-day manifestations of fetishizing Black women.

Limitations

There are currently not enough studies revolving around the racial dating dynamics within queer communities. Attempting to discuss how Latine, Asian, and Black queer people interact with other Black queer people in the context of this study was a difficult task because of the lack of research on these interactions. In addition to that, more research could be done involving this thesis with the use of focus groups to better understand why participants answered the way that they did. I do provide multiple different perspectives regarding why respondents *could* have answered in the manner they did, but focus groups and/or interviews of the Black women students at LMU may provide clearer answers. Whether or not those answers would agree with the research discussed in this thesis is unclear.

Personal Account

I decided to research the dating experiences of Black women at LMU for multiple reasons. Firstly, as a biracial Black woman on LMU's campus who grew up in a predominantly white community, I was interested to know how Black women would answer the survey, considering how the attendance is primarily made up of white people. It was also interesting to note how LMU technically does not count as a PWI, despite its similar comparisons. I wanted to see how a PWI-culture factors into Black women's dating lives as well. Secondly, my mother would tell me of her love life as a darker skinned Black woman, and her experiences made me interested in exploring further. I wanted to know why my mother experienced not just racism and sexism from white people and other racial groups, but from within her own racial community as well. At the time, it made no sense to me as to why Black men were perpetuating the most misogyny towards her and using racialized stereotypes against her that were also being used against them. These were the same men that went out of their way to date outside of their race and then proceed to brag about doing so. My mother would tell me of these men, and I would be flabbergasted; how could the men who face similar racial discrimination show so much contempt and hatred for her and other Black women in general? She grew up experiencing this while attending a Catholic high school in the 1980s, so I also wanted to see how her experience differed from Black women who are attending a Catholic college in the 2020s. Needless to say, they differ greatly. Thirdly, I appreciated the excuse to research the Black woman's position in society. Not only had I learned of things I had never heard of before, such as Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome and the Imposter Phenomenon, but I also wanted my research to factually prove how many trials and tribulations Black women experience. The experiences Black women endure, especially those with darker skin tones, are consistently dismissed and discredited. I wanted my thesis to bring up anything resembling these experiences for nonblack people who are

either fully unaware of what Black women go through, somewhat aware but have much to learn, and/or do not believe Black women have it as difficult in life as they think they do. I now have enough material to debate those who deny Black women's experiences.

I originally was under the impression that Black women would respond in a way that reflected my experiences as well as my initial research, and yet, most respondents submitted answers that took me by surprise. Most of them felt as though white people and people of color did not reject them on the basis of their race/ethnicity. Most of them also felt like they had not been fetishized by either group and they could have also responded in unexpected ways due to different interpretations of the questions being asked of them. For example, as I was distributing my survey across campus (via my flyers with a QR code that would take you directly to the survey and an Instagram page dedicated to my survey), I was frequenting an app called "Fizz," where students who attend a certain college can hold private discussions and post on news feeds about what is going on at their school. On "Fizz," I found that people were discussing the contents of my survey. One user even wrote: "Wow" with a screenshot of one of the statements to rate within the survey. The statement in question was "I have been turned down for sex by a white person(s) in-person and I suspect it was because of my race/ethnicity." On the screenshot was another caption that said "Wtf". Based on the comments underneath the post, some people thought that the statement was asking them if they have ever verbally asked for sex to a white person at random, without knowing them prior. Considering the number of users that held this assumption, this leads me to believe that some respondents of this study must have interpreted the question in this manner, leading to results I was not expecting.

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