

ABSTRACT

MITCHELL, SONJA TRANESE. Perceptions of Parental Intimate Relationships and their Affects on the Experience of Romantic Relationship Development Among African American Emerging Adults. (Under the direction of Kimberly Allen, Andrew Behnke, and Susan Jakes).

The quality of romantic relationships that parents maintain has an impact on their children. Although there is strong evidence that shows that parental couple relationships influence relationship development among African American emerging adults, there is a deficit of research that seeks to understand the experiences and influences of parental relationships. This phenomenological study identifies how African American emerging adults experience and find meaning from their parental romantic relationships. Results suggest that African American emerging adults develop both positive and negative perceptions about romantic relationships from their parents, which affect the way these adults perceive, develop, and maintain their own romantic unions. This study also suggests that African American emerging adults find similar experiences in their relationship quality, mate choice, and/or personal or mate characteristics and personality traits as their parents.

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Perceptions of Parental Intimate Relationships and their Affects on the Experience of
Romantic Relationship Development Among African American Emerging Adults

by
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my loving family and friends. To my mother Danita, and sisters Chloe' and Princess, thank you for your love, support, and wisdom. Your guidance and encouragement throughout my life has helped mold me into the woman, sister, and daughter I am today. To Kristin, Callie, Mike, and Megan, thank you so much for your support, motivation, and understanding throughout my undergraduate and graduate years. I am blessed and honored to have you all as my closest friends, and am beyond thankful for your ability to inspire me daily. As we all grow as family and friends, may we bless each other with everlasting love, and may our bonds never be broken.

BIOGRAPHY

Born September, 1989 in Charlotte, North Carolina, Sonja grew up with a passion for helping and motivating others. As early as a middle school student, she expressed to her mother her interest in becoming an advisor and counselor in her community. As she grew into a young adult, she often times found herself being a listening ear and lending words of encouragement to her close friends. She took her first psychology class at Harding University High School in Charlotte, NC. Learning about the history and special topics in the field of psychology further sparked Sonja's desires to develop a career in counseling.

In 2007, Sonja began her undergraduate career in psychology at Hampton University, a private, historically Black university in Hampton, VA. Enrolling in various classes that covered an array of topics in the field of psychology helped Sonja gain knowledge in different areas that she could possibly study. It was not until she enrolled in marriage, family, and relationship classes that Sonja found her true passion. Gaining knowledge about the aspects of family, relationship development, and marriage inspired her to advocate for healthy relationships in marriage, families, and couples in the African American community. As a mentor and tutor to African American youth, Sonja was able to take the knowledge she learned in class and utilize it with her students in order to encourage positive relationship development among young girls.

Her academic achievements at Hampton University allowed her to graduate Cum Laude, as well as a member of the International Honors Society of Psychology, Psi Chi, in May 2011. From there, Sonja directly enrolled into graduate school at North Carolina State

University as a Master's of Science student in the Family Life and Youth Development program. Sonja worked alongside two of her professors, Dr. Kimberly Allen and Dr. Andrew Behnke, in the Healthy Relationships and Marriage Education Training (HRMET) program. As the Program Manager at N.C. State University, she was able to plan, coordinate, and train at 10 healthy relationships trainings for a variety of family life and child well-being professionals, extension agents, social workers, and parent educators. With her Master's degree, Sonja hopes to continue building a professional career in promoting the stability of families, marriages, and couples; and eventually accomplish her goal of obtaining her doctorate degree in marriage and family therapy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	5
A. 2.1 Introduction.....	5
B. 2.2 Relationship Quality in African American Couples	6
1. Marriage Stability in the African American Community	6
2. Cohabitation and Single Parenthood in the African American Community	11
C. 2.3 Romantic Relationships among Emerging Adults	15
1. Intimate Relationship Violence in African American Emerging Adults	16
D. 2.4 Social Learning Theory and the Perception of Parental Intimate Relationships	18
E. 2.5 Research Questions	21
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY	22
A. 3.1 Introduction.....	22
B. 3.2 Methods and Participants	22
C. 3.3 Data Collection.....	26
D. 3.4 Interview Instrument.....	27
E. 3.5 Methodology Analysis.....	28
1. The Researcher.....	28
2. Methodology	31
3. Data Analysis.....	32
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS.....	34
A. 4.1 Introduction.....	34
B. 4.2 Composite Description of Sample.....	34
C. 4.3 Participant Descriptions	40
1. Participant 1 Description.....	40
a. Textural Description for Participant 1.....	40
b. Structural Description for Participant 1	44
c. Textural-Structural Description for Participant 1	46
2. Participant 2 Description.....	47
a. Textural Description for Participant 2.....	47
b. Structural Description for Participant 2	52
c. Textural-Structural Description for Participant 2	55
3. Participant 3 Description.....	57
a. Textural Description for Participant 3.....	57
b. Structural Description for Participant 3	59
c. Textural-Structural Description for Participant 3	60
4. Participant 4 Description.....	62
a. Textural Description for Participant 4.....	62
b. Structural Description for Participant 4	65

c. Textural-Structural Description for Participant 4	66
5. Participant 5 Description.....	67
a. Textural Description for Participant 5.....	67
b. Structural Description for Participant 5	73
c. Textural-Structural Description for Participant 5	74
6. Participant 6 Description.....	75
a. Textural Description for Participant 6.....	75
b. Structural Description for Participant 6	78
c. Textural-Structural Description for Participant 6	78
7. Composite Textural Description of all Participants.....	80
8. Composite Structural Description of all Participants.....	87
9. Composite Textural-Structural Description of all Participants.....	89
10. Credibility	93
D. 4.4 Discussion of Findings.....	93
1. Perceived Quality of Parental Couple Relationships and African American Emerging Adults' Ability to Develop and Maintain Relationships.....	95
2. Modeled and Learned Behaviors Pertaining to Personality Traits, Mate Choice, and Relationship Quality	100
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, & IMPLICATIONS	105
A. 5.1 Introduction.....	105
B. 5.2 Conclusions	105
C. 5.3 Limitations to Study.....	106
D. 5.4 Implications.....	108
1. Implications for Future Research.....	108
2. Implications for Parents	109
3. Implications for Emerging Adults	109
REFEREENCES	111
APPENDICIES	120
APPENDIX A. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL.....	121
APPENDIX B. TELEPHONE CONTACT SCRIPT	122
APPENDIX C. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM	125
APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION EMAIL	127
APPENDIX E. GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	128
APPENDIX F. PARTICIPANT TEXTURAL THEME QUOTES.....	130

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Terminology and Definitions.....	5
Table 3.1 Participant Demographics.....	25
Table 3.2 Textural & Structural Definitions.....	32
Table 4.1 Textural Themes Identified in the Data for Participants.....	36
Table 4.2 Structural Themes Identified in the Data for Participants	38
Table 4.3 Participant Responses to Closing Statement.....	92
Table 4.4 Parental Characteristics Participants Desire in Themselves, Mates, and/or Relationships.....	102

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The building blocks of healthy adult relationships begin to form in early childhood, with more than 80% of first romantic relationships occurring during adolescent stages (Gregoire, 2009). As early as age 9, adolescents begin to develop a sense of longing, physical attraction, and commitment as they conceptualize romance (Karney, Beckett, Collins, & Shaw, 2007). As adolescents develop romantic relationships, they experience potentially life-altering consequences such as changes in emotional health, social and academic competence, and self-esteem. Adolescents are especially prone to experiencing a heightened sensitivity to understanding their emotions and self-esteem in social relationships such as romantic unions (Cook, Buehler, & Blair, 2012). Emerging adults acquire perceptions of romantic relationships through these early experimentations as adolescents, but more importantly through observed experiences of their parent's couple relationships (Hardie & Lucas, 2010).

Young adults experience high rates of parental marital instability through observations; including divorce and/or separation, breakups, and remarriage among their parents growing up (Sassler, Cunningham, & Litcher, 2009). Obstacles in romantic relationships such as divorce and marital distress are direct correlations to negative emotional, physical, behavioral, and social outcomes for couples and their children (Masarik et al., 2012). The quality of romantic unions maintained by parents has an impact on children. Most often, children may strive to base their relationships on similar values or opposing beliefs (Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2002).

Recent research suggests that emerging adults tend to mimic positive parental romantic relationships, while observed negative relationships affect emerging adult's ability to develop and maintain romantic unions (Underwood & Rosen, 2011). For example: adolescents and young adults who experienced parental divorce or separation may experience instability and low satisfaction in their own romantic relationships as emerging adults, whereas young adults who experience parental remarriage or a healthy parental couple relationship are likely to have favorable behavioral outcomes and relationship satisfaction (Sassler et al., 2009). Regardless of conscious or unconscious realization, the romantic relationships parents build and maintain play a significant role in how their children conduct their own romantic relationships. This role may promote learning to form healthy, effective relationships or promote negative, unhealthy unions. Such relationships may also serve as prototypes of chosen mates and models for emerging adults' romantic relationships (Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2002).

The role that parents play in relation to developing and maintaining healthy relationships is especially important in the African American community, as many of today's families are run by single and/or teenage parents who are or will be developing and maintaining romantic relationships while parenting (Underwood & Rosen, 2011). Sixty-seven percent of African American youth live in single-parent households, and less than half of African American adults are married (Parent, Jones, Forehand, Cuellar, & Shoulberg, 2013). Only 46% of African American adults are reared from two-parent households where parents/guardians are married (Phillips, Wilmoth, & Marks, 2012). Although adolescent pregnancy and childbearing rates among African Americans have been on the decline, research shows that

African Americans are still more likely than their counterparts (e.g., White Americans and Asian Americans) to experience teen pregnancy (Barr, Simons, Simons, Gibbons, & Gerrard, 2012; Dallas, 2013). Other correlations include repeated pregnancies within the first 2 years of being parents, as well as becoming pregnant or giving birth to children from different partners than their first born (Barr et al., 2012).

With 76% of African American households being run by single and teenage parents, it is common to question what examples parents are setting for their adolescents and youth, and what messages these youth are receiving when it comes to developing and maintaining healthy romantic relationships. With such a high risk of developing negative, conflict-oriented relationships, it is important to understand how lived experiences shape emerging adults' perception of romantic unions (Masarik et al., 2012).

In order for African American emerging adults to develop and maintain positive and healthy romantic relationships, they must first identify what perceptions they have of relationships, how they developed these perceptions, and how these perceptions are applied in their personal relationship experiences (Towner, Dolcini, & Harper, 2012; Sassler, Cunningham, & Litcher, 2009). Awareness of this perception may become beneficial as participants grow to or already have children of their own; realizing that their relationship choices could affect the way their children do or will conduct and maintain intimate relationships. Moreover, this realization will assist in the development of more positive, healthy emerging adult romantic relationships, which could foster healthy marriages, improve child well-being, and strengthen families in the African American community (African American Healthy Marriage Initiative, 2012).

This research aims to add to the field of relationship studies by offering insight on how perceived parental intimate relationships affect the experience of romantic relationships among African American emerging adults through themes and descriptions. In addition, this research also seeks to identify themes on how emerging African American adults find meaning in the romantic relationships of their parents through quality, relationship obstacles, mate choice, personality traits, and/or characteristics. This study will outline the literature about relationship quality among African American couples, developing romantic relationships in emerging African American adults, and understanding the experience of their parent's couple relationships and what meaning they give those experiences in their own romantic relationships.

With the lack of existing research that identifies potential themes of this topic, this study will examine the participants' personal experience and perception of their parent's romantic relationships, and question whether parental experiences in romantic relationships shape the relationship formation in African American emerging adults. The research will help participants become aware of their relationship choices and decisions, which may have been influenced by the quality of intimate relationship(s) observed from their parents/guardians.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This review presents current literature on the development and quality of African American couple relationships. The review looks at research and literature on the following topics to examine the influences that parental romantic relationships may have on emerging African American adults: relationship satisfaction in the African American community, relationship development in emerging African American adults, young adult's perception of romantic relationships, and social learning theory.

Table 2.1

Terminology and Definitions

Terminology	Definition
Emerging Adult	Developmental period from late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18-25 (Arnett, 2000).
Relationship Quality	The degree to which couples report their relationship standards or beliefs to be fulfilled (Vangelisti, 2012).
Intimate Relationship(s)	An interpersonal relationship involving physical and/or emotional intimacy (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006).

Note: All definitions were retrieved from reviewed literature, as cited at the end of all definitions.

2.2 Relationship Quality in African American Couples

Relationship quality can be referred to as the degree to which couples report their relationship standards or beliefs to be fulfilled (Vangelisti, 2012). Relationship factors that determine the degree of quality and satisfaction consist of the level of emotional and sexual satisfaction, commitment, and trust (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Sexual satisfaction is said to be higher in couples who have a strong emotional and intimate bond in a committed relationship (Waite & Joyner, 2004). Quality of romantic relationships can also be measured by a couple's ability to endure vulnerabilities, stressful events, and adapt to their environment (Cutrona, Russell, Burzette, Wesner, & Bryant, 2011). A couple's ability to interact effectively, regardless of stressful life events, influences a couple's likelihood to endure vulnerabilities, which creates a strong relationship bond. The manner in which couples handle vulnerabilities and stressful life events illustrates their adaptive processes; including the way both individuals function and implement conflict resolution in their relationship.

The following section is a review of the literature on marriage and relationship satisfaction among African American couples. This section identifies factors that strengthen or decrease the quality of African American relationships. In consideration to non-married African American adults, the literature also reviews single parenthood and cohabitation and its relationship to developing and maintaining couple relationships.

Factors that Promote or Impede Marriage Stability in the African American Community

Marriage stability in the African American community is an important union that not only promotes love and unity, but also advocates for the strengthening of Black families (African American Healthy Marriage Initiative, 2012). Marriage in the African American

community has been on the decline as African Americans are found to divorce within the first ten years of marriage, and marry less frequently than White Americans (Banks, 2011). This decline in marriage prompts the question of what it takes to endure marriage in the African American community. The ability to endure marriage in the African American community and increase marital satisfaction can be influenced by three factors: individual characteristics, interpersonal patterns, and social and economic factors (Phillips, Wilmonth, & Marks, 2012).

A person's individual ability to endure a romantic relationship such as a marriage is determined by their personal attributes and characteristics (Marks et al., 2008). Mental, emotional, and physical health of an individual influences their ability to maintain positive relationship quality in their marriage as well. A study conducted by Burzette, Cutrona, Guyll, and Russell (2010) indicates that poor emotional health and high levels of hostility in individuals leads to lower levels of relationship quality. However, people who identify themselves as warm and supportive with low levels of hostility report to have higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Differences and similarities are particularly important in relationship satisfaction and success. Partners in African American marriages who have differences in desired relationship standards and/or relationship beliefs are at high risk for marital dissolution and/or low relationship satisfaction (Marks, Phillips, & Wilmonth, 2012). More specifically, differences in religion/spirituality, desired number of children and parenting beliefs, sexual intimacy, financial values, and levels of independence in marriage divide African American couples. Overcoming these differences requires personal change and compromise, in which

individuals show a willingness to change for their relationship(s) (Clarkwest, 2007). Jackson, Lincoln, and Taylor (2008) report a higher level of marriage satisfaction in African American women who were able to work with their spouse on individual growth and compromise for the betterment of their relationship. African American marriages that have high levels of positive couple agreement, especially agreement in communication styles, finances, and intimacy, have a stronger emotional bond and higher level of relationship satisfaction (Allen & Olsen, 2001).

Regardless of similarities and difference, all relationships require give and take. Successful relationships in African American marriages must include the give and take of interpersonal resources such as romance, love, and esteem between partners (Gaines et al. 1999). The exchange of interpersonal resources between partners is based upon the couple's ability to reciprocate one another's gestures towards romance, love and esteem. Reciprocation of these resources allows clarification on couple identity and depletes uncertainty of the relationship (Vangelisti, 2012). African American couples that are unable to exchange and reciprocate interpersonal resources are more likely to suffer from self-uncertainty, partner-uncertainty, and relationship-uncertainty.

Self-uncertainty in individuals occurs when a partner perceives that he/she is unable to account for or explain their own relationship attitudes and behaviors (Vangelisti, 2012). Partners often question how certain they are about the importance of their marriage to themselves (Knobloch, 2008). Partner-uncertainty occurs when individuals are unable to predict or perceive their partner's attitude or behaviors in their relationship. Partners question how involved their mate is in the relationships and its importance to their partner. Finally, in

relationship-uncertainty, both persons question the status of their relationship and the bond they share with their partner. Partners question how certain they are about who they are as a couple and struggle to define their relationship.

Relationship uncertainty is associated with the level of marital quality and satisfaction. Theiss and Soloman (2006) indicated that miscommunication about relationship identity and relationship importance can negatively affect the couple's ability to exchange and reciprocate interpersonal resources. Therefore, African American couples who are uncertain about the identity of themselves in their relationship, and the relationship as whole, experience lower levels of marital quality and satisfaction than couples who are able to effectively reciprocate love, romance, and esteem in their marriage (Gaines et al. 1999).

Of course having certainty in the relationship is often contingent on having certainty in other life arenas such as employment and job security. Couples that face money issues tend to have more troubled relationships than financially secure couples (Bryant et al., 2008). Marriage satisfaction is particularly determined by socioeconomic factors in the African American community (Phillips et al., 2012). Low socioeconomic status (SES) in the African American community consists of factors such as low education, higher poverty rates, poor health, and inequality in wealth and quality of life (American Psychological Association, 2012). These inequalities in society limit African Americans' economic opportunities to advance in human capital, which limits their ability to acquire higher-wage jobs for more financial stability in the household (Clarkwest, 2006).

Financial instability causes significant stressors, which affects marital satisfaction among African American couples (Clarkwest, 2006). Not surprisingly, African American

females reported lower satisfaction in marriages that include financial strain and low household income. These stressors impede the couple's ability to communicate effectively, and problem solve for the betterment of their relationship. Couples who report low communication skills and conflict management in marriages report significantly lower levels of satisfaction in the home.

Though socioeconomic stressors can weigh heavily on a couple, African American couples are often able to find support from socioeconomic stressors through religion/spirituality (Durodoye, 1997). Religious involvement has been found to increase the level of satisfaction and marriage stability within African American couples, and even the possibility of both biological parents in the home if children are present (Cutrona, et al, 2011). African Americans often use religion and spirituality to advocate for marriage and healthy relationships in the Black community (Durodoye, 1997). Religion and church attendance can be associated with commitment and family and relationship stability, resulting in enhanced promotion of marriage and relationship satisfaction among African American couples, especially those with children.

Finchman, Ajayi, and Beach (2011) conducted a study indicating that African American couples from both urban and rural areas of the United States explore spiritual/religious involvement when seeking guidance to promote relationship satisfaction. The researchers concluded that spirituality can be associated with a couple's ability and tendencies to forgive, mediate conflict, and fight for relationship preservation. These factors are more consistent in couples that share the same religion or sense of spirituality, as sharing

common morals allowed for a greater sense of agreement/common interests among these couples.

The literature reveals that marital and relationship satisfaction among African American adults can be affected by a couple's ability to sustain through vulnerabilities and stress, adapt to life changes, have skills for conflict management, maintain spiritual connections and financial/economic stability (Cutrona et al, 2011; Bryant et al, 2008). African American relationship satisfaction can also be affected by more specific economic circumstances such as household income, financial strain, and relationship hardship; along with relationship characteristics such as the length in time of the union and relationship history (Bryant et al, 2008).

Cohabitation and Single Parenthood in the African American Community

Cohabitation has been found to be more prevalent in the African American community when compared to other races (Liu & Reczek, 2012). In fact, sixty-five percent of African American couples have cohabitated as a precursor or alternative to marriage (Liu & Reczek, 2012; Gregoire, 2009). Research suggests that participants in long-term relationships, those lasting more than one year, often want to illustrate their commitment to each other by moving in together. (Underwood & Rosen, 2010).

Cohabitation is more often found in young African American couples, especially those who are first-time teen parents. Young parents often utilize cohabitation as a precursor to marriage, as well as an expression of family independence (Gregoire, 2009). Young parents often report a desire to cohabitate in order to increase the likelihood of two-parent

involvement with their child, but also because of the financial benefits of sharing resources under one roof.

Young couples also often choose to cohabitate to further establish an identity of independence as an adult. When young parents cohabit, they are separating themselves from their families by moving into a home of their own (Underwood & Rosen, 2011). In late adolescence, romantic relationships develop strong emotional bonds that mimic adult relationships. Participating in cohabitated unions can serve as a sense of couple identity. Separation from the parental home into a home of their own could qualify as a step into adulthood, forcing the couple to maintain a sense of responsibility and commitment to something other than themselves.

Older adults are more likely to use cohabitation as an alternative to marriage (Hardie & Lucas, 2010). Although not legally married, couples (especially parents) who cohabitate may enjoy benefits from living under the same household, such as sharing of limited economic resources, having emotional support, social connections enhancement, companionship, financial stability, and aid with child care (Gregoire, 2009). Low-income African American mothers are more likely to cohabit and report lower levels of relationship quality and stability due to financial strain and lack of commitment (Hardie & Lucas, 2010).

Though lower levels of relationship quality is more susceptible in such unions, low-income African American mothers have been found to be more accepting of using cohabitated unions as an alternative to marriage (Liu & Reczek, 2012). These mothers are seeking immediate financial and emotional stability for their home, therefore they are more accepting that their relationship may not lead to marriage. As long as their partners are able

to provide some sort of stability for their household, they are willing to cohabit. Whether intentional or not, the rate of marriage in the African American community is lower as a result of the cohabitation tendencies (Liu & Reczek, 2012; Hardie & Lucas, 2010).

Although the goal of cohabitation might be to strengthen the financial and emotional stability of the home for themselves and their children, this is not the usual outcome. Without legal bind, African American males (especially emerging adult males) that cohabit with single mothers are more prone to exit the cohabitated union between the first one to two years due to lack of commitment and family resources (Eshbaugh, 2008). Their absence in the home forces already unwed mothers into single parenthood.

Although many single moms report a desire to be married or in a committed relationship, single mothers experience various challenges when dating as parents. One of the most prominent challenges they face is the availability of financially stable, eligible Black men in the African American community (Uecker & Stokes, 2008). Single mothers who are actively pursuing the dating field for committed relationships are looking for mates who can provide financial and emotional stability (Raley, 1996). Unfortunately, non-employment due to low human capital among African American men has disabled them from being able to provide financially. Over 12.5% of African American men in the United States are currently unemployed (this does not include incarcerated men) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). African American single mothers are more likely to remain single with the lack of financially stable Black men, as they are reluctant to date outside of the African American community (Uecker & Stokes, 2008).

There is also a lack of datable black men in the community due to high incarceration rates. More than one in four black men can expect to spend time in prison (Schumacher, 2008). Black men between the ages of 18-29 are incarcerated nine times more than their Hispanic and White counterparts (Mechoulan, 2011). One million of the total 2.3 million (43%) incarcerated persons are African American (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2013). One in nine (11%) of these incarcerated persons are African American men between the ages of 20-34. 32% of African American males aged 20–29 are under some form of criminal justice supervision whether imprisoned, jailed, on parole or probation (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2013). This greatly decreases the amount of eligible black men for single mothers to date. The amount of incarcerated African American men lowers male to female ratios in the African American community.

King, Massoglia, and Remster (2011) report that high levels of incarcerated black men decrease African American women's chances of developing and maintaining emotional and romantic relationships specifically in the black community. African American single moms, especially low-income mothers, are less likely to report relationship satisfaction due to the lack of eligible black men. Financial instability and lack of human capital, along with high levels of incarcerated black men increases levels of financial distress and emotional adjustment problems in African American women, which inhibits their perception and ability to access eligible black men in her community (Raley, 1996; King, Massoglia, & Remster, 2011).

2.3 Romantic Relationships among Emerging Adults

As younger adolescents emphasize physical attraction in relationships, older adolescents and emerging adults grow to value intimacy and commitment. As youth move from middle school to high school and on to college, beliefs about the qualities that are important for successful romantic relationships evolve. As a result, more romantic relationships among young and emerging adults are being developed based upon these beliefs (Karney et al., 2007). Karney and colleagues (2007) found that Black adolescents report longer lasting relationships (lasting up to a year or longer) than white, Hispanic, and Asian adolescents. These relationships are often characterized by emotional involvement including expressions such as love, public displays of affection, and the exchanging of gifts. Ultimately, these adolescents endorse the ideas of healthy relationships and goals leading to healthy, happy marriages and seek to behave in such ways that constitute and illustrate these ideas and goals.

Shulman, Davila and Shachar-Shapira (2010) found that during late adolescents, based upon experiences in young adolescent stages, youth develop the capacity to become heavily and steadily involved in long-term romantic relationships. In later adolescent stages, emerging adults are more so attracted to intimate and committed relationships triggered by maturation, sexuality, and romance. Romantic attraction such as beauty is fairly important to young adults when developing romantic relationships (Ajmal & Kobab, 2012). Whereas, emerging adults tend to find security in relationship stability and trust when they develop romantic unions. More intimate, steady, and intense relationships are commonly found in mature emerging adults resulting in a higher competence level of passion, intimacy, and

commitment (Bryant, Conger, Cui, & Elder, 2000). Romantic competence can also be associated with age and sexual behavior among emerging adults (Shulman et al., 2010). During earlier adolescent stages, youth are more likely to experiment with sexual behavior due to a lower sense of relationship competence. As these adults develop and mature, emerging adults in stable and intimate relationships are more likely to be sexually involved in a more stable, non-experimental way (Cui & Fincham, 2010).

Along with age and sexual behavior, length of healthy emerging adult's romantic relationships can also be determined by romantic competence and couple maturation (Shulman et al., 2010). Highly/more competent emerging adults have been found to have longer lasting relationships than those less competent couples. Romantically competent couples are expected to have mutually intimate and rewarding relationships, as they are determined to be more sensitive to the needs of their partner (Blair, Buehler, & Cook, 2013). Their ability to balance the needs of themselves and their partner allows for less superficial and short-lived relationships.

Intimate Relationship Violence in African American Emerging Adults

Adolescent dating violence is becoming a high health risk in the public health field (Decker, Houston, Martin, Mmari, 2011). One in four African American young and emerging adults suffer from intimate relationship violence (Lander, Lei, & Simmons, 2012). Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to any physical, sexual, verbal, and/or emotional abuse of one partner from the other that takes place within intimate relationships (Decker et al., 2011; Taft, Bryant-Davis, Woodward, Tilman, & Torres, 2009).

Between 12% and 59% of African American high school students have experienced abuse whether physical, verbal, or emotional in their romantic relationships (Black & Weisz, 2003). African American females are said to be more susceptible to intimate partner violence because of mate choice and vulnerability. African American males are more prone to be the aggressor in their intimate relationship due to displaced anger and the need to control (Landor et al., 2012).

Teen parents in the African American community often experience relationship violence that is influenced by the stressors of pregnancy and immaturity (Gee & Leaman, 2008). Adolescents who experience unplanned teen pregnancy are four times more likely to experience intimate partner violence than planned teen pregnancies and non-teen parent adolescents. Postpartum stress in teen mothers after the birth of their child increases their probability of being the aggressor of violence in their intimate relationship (Mitchell, 2010).

African American emerging adults who regularly partake in drug and alcohol use are also likely to experience intimate partner violence (Wupperman, et al, 2009). According to Wupperman et al., (2009) alcohol-dependent emerging adult males report to having at least one domestic-violence arrest. Domestic-violence arrests of alcohol-dependent females for violence against male partners often times go unreported. However, according to Hampton, Magarian, and Oliver (2009) 59% of female adolescents report backlash of violent outburst on male partners while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

These statistics of violence in African American young and emerging adult relationships have a direct correlation to African American youth's ability to develop and maintain healthy, non-violent relationships (Landor et al., 2012). Although the literature

reveals that African American female adolescents were found to be susceptible to IPV due to mate choice and vulnerability, it is recognized that these two factors can be associated with victim blaming. This study recognizes that IPV in the African American community among adolescents can be associated with cultural factors that allow and permit relationship violence. However, insight on these factors are not provided or discussed in this research. With many intimate partner violence cases going unnoticed or unreported, it is urgent to instill the importance of maintaining healthy romantic relationships as it relates to positive growth and development.

2.4 Social Learning Theory and the Perception of Parental Intimate Relationships in Emerging Adults

The social learning theory suggests that behavior can be learned through observing the actions of others (Bandura, 1977). Drawing from the social learning theory, it has been said that emerging adults' self-efficacy beliefs and perceptions can be derived from their role models, who are typically their parents (Basuil & Casper, 2012). Cui and Fincham (2010) used the social learning theory to suggest that in addition to learned behaviors, emerging adults are more likely to develop their attitudes towards marriage and divorce by observing their parent's marriage and divorce. As a result, young/emerging adults may indeed acquire their behavior in romantic relationships from observing marital interactions between their parents.

As children, observing parents' behaviors during conflict is likely to shape their conflict behaviors in romantic relationships as emerging adults (Willoughby, 2012). When observing negative relationships and marriages between parents, emerging adults are more

likely to develop negative views of marriage, and see divorce as a convenient source of ending problematic, unstable marriages. These views and attitudes toward marriage and divorce are likely to have a negative effect on emerging adults' ability to maintain healthy, positive, and committed romantic relationships of their own (Zimmer-Gembeck, Madsen, & Hanisch, 2011). In result, emerging adults may be more likely to quickly leave or end less satisfying relationships rather than work on and maintain the relationship. In contrast, emerging adults who have the desire to maintain healthy relationships may be more willing to work on developing stability and satisfaction in their relationships in order to avoid similar negative experiences as their parents (Crouter, Kan, McHale, 2008).

Trotter (2010) suggests that potential marriages, especially among college-aged adults, are at risk for dissolution due to the lack of healthy examples displayed by parental intimate relationships. A decline in marriage rates and an increase in single-parent homes have left young adults with a possible negative outlook on romantic relationships and marriage. In a study of 238 unmarried African American college students, 74% of participants indicated that relationships they observed of their parents had an influence on their views of romantic relationships, including their own personal intimate relationships (Trotter, 2010). Of these participants, 82% of participants from non-divorced/two-parent homes reported more positive influences from their parents in regards to intimate relationships, whereas 58% of participants from divorced/single-parent homes reported more negative influences.

Steinberg, Davila, and Fincham (2006) determined that female perceptions on marital expectations and romantic experiences are based upon parental relationship quality and

conflict. Researchers studied how unhappy or dissatisfied participants predicted they would be in future romantic relationships based upon their observed experiences of parental relationships and conflict. Marital expectations may shape the outcome and satisfaction of emerging adults' future romantic relationships, especially among emerging female adults (Auslander, Rosenthal, Short, & Succop, 2009).

Women with rejection expectations often display rejecting responses in their romantic relationships, in which these responses influence how emerging adults think, feel, and behave in romantic relationships (Auslander et al., 2009). Higher levels of marital conflict and instability in parental relationships can be associated with negative perceptions of marriage and expectations of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in romantic relationships and marriage among young female adults (Simon & Furman, 2010). Pessimistic feelings of future romantic relationships and involvement in risky romantic experiences were shown to be associated with participants' inability to feel close to their parents.

Applying the social learning theory to the influences that parental romantic relationships have on emerging adults' relationships suggest that emerging adults can learn certain behaviors through observation of their parents (Basuil & Casper, 2012). The literature and studies on the effects of parental intimate relationships on emerging adults all conclude that children who observe negative, unstable relationships are more susceptible to illustrating these same negative aspects in their adult relationships. Whereas, children who observe positive, healthy parental romantic relationships are more likely to illustrate positive aspects in their own relationships (Cui & Fincham, 2010; Trotter, 2010).

Despite these theories, emerging adults who desire to build and maintain healthy relationships, even if their parents were unable to sustain healthy, stable relationships, are still very likely to hold positive romantic relationships in attempt to avoid repetition of observed negative behaviors from parents (Zimmer-Gembeck, Madsen, & Hanisch, 2011).

2.5 Research Questions

There is a need for more research, and a specific need for a richer understanding of the experience of African American emerging adults in relationship development. Although there is strong evidence that shows that parental couple relationships can influence relationship development among emerging adults, there is a deficit of research that seeks to understand the experiences and influences emerging adults receive from observing parental relationships. The proposed study does just that.

This research study examines the perceptions of the quality of parental romantic relationships, and its effect on the choices, decisions, mate selection, and quality of intimate relationships among emerging African American adults through the following research questions:

1. How does the experience of parental/guardian intimate relationships affect African American emerging adults' ability to develop and maintain healthy romantic relationships of their own?
2. How do African American emerging adults find meaning in the romantic relationships of their parents'/guardians' whether in quality, mate selection, and/or personal or mate characteristics and personality traits?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how perceived parental intimate relationships affect the experience of romantic relationships among emerging African American adults. Through a phenomenological study, the research is seeking to identify how emerging African American adults find meaning from the relationships of their parents whether in quality, mate selection, personality, characteristics. According to Creswell (1994), phenomenological studies examine human experiences through detailed descriptions of the people being studied. Understanding lived experiences of participants marks phenomenology as a philosophy, involving studying a small number of participants through prolonged engagement to identify and develop patterns and relationships of meaning (1994). When conducting qualitative research a minimum of five basic steps are to be conducted: (1) collection of verbal data, (2) reading of the data, (3) breaking of the data into some kind of parts, (4) organization and expression of the data from a disciplinary perspective, and (5) synthesis or summary of the data for purposes of communication to the scholarly community (Giorgi, 1997).

3.2 Methods and Participants

Methods for this study were reviewed and approved by the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board (IRB#: 3098). Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants for this study. Snowball sampling is a technique where the researcher recruits a small group of participants that relate to the research question (Bryman, 2012). This small

group then suggests other participants who have had experiences or characteristics that directly relate to the study. These participants will also suggest other participants for the study and so on. Participants were recruited through an online announcement sent out via email from contacts the researcher had at the following historically Black universities: Hampton University, Morehouse University, and North Carolina Central University (Appendix A). These contacts had access to the emails of currently enrolled and alumni students at each university. Participants who received the recruitment email were allowed to suggest other potential participants who related to this study.

Of the 20 students contacted via email, 10 students signed up to be contacted with further information about the study. It is common for researchers to send potential participants a copy of the interview protocol before the interview takes place so they know what they will be asked, and to prepare to reflect on their experiences that relate to the topic of investigation (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Here participants were contacted by phone, in which the researcher provided detailed information on the purpose of the study, the manner in which interviews would be conducted, the signing of consent forms, and the dates, times, and locations of where the interviews would take place (see Appendix B-D). Of the 10 students contacted via phone, 9 students were signed up as participants for this study; 6 participants were actually interviewed for this study.

The study consisted of four African American females and two males, between the ages of 18 and 24. These participants included two college graduates, two graduate students, one undergraduate student, and one high school graduate. Six over-the-phone interviews were conducted, each lasting between forty-five minutes to an hour. Though the interviews

were unstructured, guiding questions (Appendix E) were used in order to retrieve dialogue on specific topics.

Participants shared perceived experiences of their parental romantic relationships from childhood to emerging adulthood, as well as, experiences with their own romantic relationships from young to emerging adulthood. The interviews ended with the researcher informing the participants on the next process of the study and were informed that they may be contacted for clarity of information if need be. Participants were then asked to provide their business or home address, if and only if they wished to receive a thank you card and small gift basket for participating in the study. Table 3.1 illustrates participant demographics for all six persons in the study.

Table 3.1
Participant Demographics

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sex	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female
Age	24	23	24	24	18	24
Sexual Preference	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual
Number of Children	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education	College Graduate	Graduate Student	College Graduate	College Student	High School Graduate	Graduate Student
Current Relationship Status	Currently in romantic relationship but not married	Currently in romantic relationship but not married Cohabiting with current mate	Not in romantic relationship nor dating	Currently in romantic relationship but not married Cohabiting with current mate	Currently in romantic relationship but not married	Currently Dating
Current Parental Relationship Status	Parents divorced	Parents divorced Mother Cohabiting with current Mate	Parents married	Parents married	Parents divorced	Parents married

3.3 Data Collection

Scheduled interview dates took place throughout the months of April and May 2013. In phenomenological studies, collection of verbal data may be collected by straightforward description, interview, or a combination of the two (Giorgi, 1997). Participants were given a choice to have their interview conducted over the phone or face-to-face at the home of the subject. Participants who were not located in the Raleigh/Durham, NC area were encouraged to participate in over-the-phone interviews as researcher had limited abilities to travel outside of the Raleigh/Durham area to conduct face-to-face interviews.

All participants chose to participate in an interview conducted over the phone. Despite the potential for bias, phone interviews are quite common for researchers (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Phone interviews allow for participation of subjects from any geographic region, as there is no requirement of travel from the participant or the researcher. Also, phone interviews could allow for more anonymity of participants, as names and descriptions of participants are not always identified (or necessary) for an over-the-phone interview (2009). When conducting phone interviews, researchers should take detailed notes of an interview. Response bias may be reduced in the absence of face-to-face interaction and expressions; phone anonymity may enable participants to be more open in their responses.

Interviews were conducted over forty-five minutes to an hour. Subjects were placed on speaker so that the researcher could record their interview with the voice recorder. The recording was started immediately once the subject answered the phone. A brief overview of the study and what is expected from the participant was given to start off the interview. A digital voice recorder was used to record participant's answers as they were interviewed.

With these participants (over-the-phone) the researcher was sure to also be located in a private location in order to ensure the confidentiality of participating subjects.

3.4 Interview Instrument

A series of unstructured interview questions were asked (Appendix E) to measure the participant's perception of the quality of their parental current or past intimate relationships; as well as, the participant's perception of the quality of their personal intimate relationships and their ability to relate these experiences back to that of their parent's. Questions used to collect data were guided interview questions formed by the researcher to provoke participants to open up about their parental and personal intimate relationships. Interview questions are generally formed to be broad and open-ended, giving the subject opportunity to express their viewpoint extensively (Giorgi, 1997).

Questions such as "tell me about your parents current intimate relationship" and "what was your parent's intimate relationship like when you were growing up?" aimed to provide insight on the participant's experience of their parental's intimate relationships. Participants were then asked to describe the quality of their parent's intimate relationships from their point of view. In order to reveal perceptions of the participant's personal relationships, subjects were asked questions such as "tell me about your experience with romantic relationships" and "talk to me about the quality of your current or past relationships". Participants were encouraged to think about how their personal intimate relationships contained similar qualities of their parent's intimate relationships by answering questions such as "tell me about a time where you found yourself looking for or dating someone with characteristics of one or both of your parents" and "what characteristics of one

or both of your parents do you look for or want in a partner?” Participants were encouraged to answer questions with the most honest and thorough response, in hopes that subjects would reveal similarities among their parents intimate relationships and their personal intimate relationships that they had not thought of before.

3.5 Methodology Analysis

The researcher and research process will be described in this section. The qualitative methodological approach used for this study was Moustakas’s version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen phenomenological analysis for qualitative studies. Data for individual participants and the group will be analyzed using both textural and structural themes.

The Researcher

In the phenomenological approach, the researcher makes systematic efforts to set aside their own prejudgments of the phenomenon being investigated in order to keep a nonbiased conscious throughout the study (Moustakas, 1994). This is better known as the Epoche process, in which the researcher remains free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon obtained from prior experiences or studies. Moustakas (1994) directly describes Epoche as the Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or to stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things. The rest of this section will explain the researcher’s association with the topic under study and her use of the Epoche process.

The researcher has had personal experiences with developing intimate relationships and dealing with the perceptions of romantic relationships she has gained from observed experiences of her parents. Though she did not grow up in a two-parent home, she was aware

of the relationship her mother maintained with her father. As young as ages 18 and 19, her parents cohabitated with one another right out of high school. For ten years her parents partook in an on-again-off-again relationship that was tainted by her father's infidelity and birth of children outside their relationship; as well as her mother's lack of trust. Her parents eventually separated from their ten-year cohabitation, transitioning the researcher into a single parent home at the age of four.

With her parents separating at such a young age, the researcher was then unable to fully comprehend the effect that fatherlessness would have on her and her siblings. It was not until she was a young adult that she began to experience resentment from her father's absence. The researcher was developing romantic relationships in young adulthood and realized that she knew very little about how she should be treated by the opposite-sex. She felt as though it was her father's responsibility to enlighten her on the appropriate behaviors of the opposite-sex when dating, but his absence impeded all communication and parent-child connections between the two.

As she began to develop romantic relationships in emerging adulthood, she realized that she was experiencing similar relationship obstacles her mom suffered from with her father. The researcher's first committed, long-term relationship consisted of verbal and emotional abuse, as well as infidelity and the need for control. She stayed in this relationship for four years (from age 17-21) before finally finding the courage to end the union and move on. Growing up she watched her mother struggle financially and emotionally with being a single parent. It was also hard for her mother to hide her loneliness and desire for a successful relationship. In return, the researcher realized that the absence of her father caused

her to seek validation in an unhealthy relationship because she was afraid of suffering from the same loneliness and desire for companionship as her mother.

Now that she is an emerging adult, the researcher has mended her relationship with her father. In spite of her experiences from her past relationship and other unsuccessful encounters, the researcher has been able to learn from her lived experiences and use these lessons to maintain a positive perception of romantic relationships, as she believes that she will be able to develop a healthy relationship of her own soon enough.

The researcher's interest in this study stems from her own lived experiences with perceiving the quality of her parental couple relationship and applying these perceptions to her own romantic unions. Often times, researchers seek to find clarity on sensitive topics that have taken place in their lives (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2007). It is not uncommon for researcher's personal experiences to influence topics of qualitative research. Self-disclosure in data analysis has even helped researchers validate participants' stories; and also shows a sense of respect to participants and their experiences.

Despite the lived experiences of the researcher, it was important that she remained open to the experiences of the participants in the study. In order to remain unbiased and with a clear mind, the researcher practiced the process of *Epoche* by identifying and listing preconceived ideas of developing and maintaining intimate relationships among African American emerging adults; as well as perceived obstacles and experiences African American emerging adults may observe from parental romantic relationships, based on her own personal experiences. The researcher then recorded notes and important points during and

after each interview, to ensure that the focus was strictly on that of the experiences of the participants during data collection and analysis.

Methodology

This study sought to bring insight to how parental intimate relationships affect the perceptions and quality of intimate relationships among emerging African American adults. The researcher used Moustakas's model of phenomenological studies, as well as, Moustakas's (1994) version of Stevick-Colaissi-Keen's model of phenomenological analysis for qualitative studies to complete the data collection and analysis process.

Moustakas's (1994) model uses textural and structural descriptions to analyze data. Textural descriptions are those that are apparent and include verbatim examples from the participant, whereas structural descriptions are those that are initially non-apparent, but are discovered through analysis by the researcher. The researcher recorded verbatim transcripts for each participant. These transcripts were then coded and reviewed for themes. Many of the participant's data included similar codes and themes; only a few themes were actually specific to individual participants. The following section contains descriptions of each individual participant, along with structural and textural descriptions, including verbatim examples pulled from each participant's interview.

Table 3.2

Textural and Structural Description Definitions

Terminology	Definition
Textural Description	Description of the lived experiences of the participant from the verbatim transcribed interview. Lived experiences of the participant are described for each textural theme identified.
Structural Description	Description of the underlying dynamics found in the data that account for how participants experienced lived situations. Underlying dynamics of the participant's lived experiences are described for each structural theme identified.

Note: Definitions were adapted from Moustakas (1994)

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began with the researcher listening to the interviews verbatim, while recording her reaction to the expressed experiences of the participants. The researcher reviewed the notes written for each interview, in which noticeable themes began to emerge. The researcher then listened to the verbatim transcripts again, while reviewing her documented notes to confirm and further identify themes in the data. The recorded sessions were transcribed by the researcher alone and peer reviewed to ensure validity. A Norfolk State University graduate student and peer to the researcher, peer reviewed the transcribed interviews over a two-week process to check for accuracy. Themes in the data were identified for individual participants and the group. The researcher found 37 codes, which were clustered into five themes. Finally, structural and textural themes were identified for

individual participants and for the group. The following section introduces the seven participants of this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS & DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapters I-II introduced the background and importance of the study, as well as a review of related literature of African American families and emerging adult romantic relationships. Chapter III provided a description of the proposed methodology. In this chapter, data collection and analysis will be presented for this study. The research is seeking to identify how the experience of parental intimate relationships affect African American emerging adults' ability to develop and maintain healthy romantic relationships. It is also seeking to find insight on how African American emerging adults find meaning in the romantic relationships of their parents whether in quality, mate selection, and/or personal or mate characteristics and personality traits.

4.2 Composite Description of the Sample

The sample for this study consisted of six African American emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 24; four females, and two males. The sample consisted of two college graduates, two graduate students, one undergraduate student, and one high school graduate. Participants were located in a variety of rural and suburban areas in Virginia and in North Carolina. Five of these participants were currently in romantic relationships but not married, and one participant was single and currently not dating. The sample did consist of one couple, but participants were interviewed at separate times on different dates. These participants were the only cohabitating couple in the study. None of the participants in this study were had children.

Three participants grew up in a single-parent home, resulting from parental marriage dissolution during the participant's adolescent years. Whereas, three participants grew up in a two-parent household, with their parents currently still married. All participants revealed that they began dating at a young age; some expressed having their first date as early as middle school. All female participants admitted to participating in at least one unhealthy, emotionally and verbally abusive relationship in high school as a young adult. The following section consists of participants descriptions and themes for each of the six participants in this study. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide brief descriptions and quotes of the findings for the textural and structural themes found in the research; including which participants identify with what themes.

Table 4.1
Textural Themes Identified in the Data For Participants

Textural Themes	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Perception of Quality of Parental Couple Relationships	Positive perception of parental couple relationship as adolescent until parental marriage dissolution. Parents only speak if it pertains to the participant.	Very positive perception of parental couple relationship as adolescent. Parental marital dissolution as young adult. Mother currently in a new, cohabitating relationship.	Positive perception of parents marriage. Parents currently still married; loving home. Parents still intimate with one another.	Very positive perception of parents marriage. Parents still currently married; very loving home. Parents always putting family and God first.	Very negative perception of parent's marriage. Father was drug addict and alcoholic. Parents had abusive relationship; much turmoil in home.	Rocky perception of parent's marriage. Parents have loving marriage but suffer from heavy arguments. Father functioning alcoholic.
Perception of Quality of Relationships with Parents	Closer relationship with mother than father. Suffered from fatherlessness as a child.	Closer relationship with mother than father. Considers mother her best friend.			Father was negative role model. Exposed participant to his infidelity, drug use, and violence as a adolescent and young adult.	

Table 4.1 Continued

Reaction to Parent's Split	Very angry when parents divorced. Trouble with behavior and academics in school.				Emotionally numb when parents split (revealed no emotion).	
Parental Household Demographics	Went from two-parent home to single-parent home. Financial instability after parental marital dissolution.	Mother was breadwinner in home; father was unemployed. Went from two-parent home to single-parent home			Mother breadwinner in the home. Went from two-parent home to single-parent home	Mother is currently breadwinner in home; father is unemployed.
Perception of Quality of Personal Relationships in Emerging Adulthood/Intimate Partner Violence	Negative perception in young adulthood; Positive perception in emerging adulthood; currently in romantic relationship.	Negative perception in young adulthood. In abusive union as young adult. Positive perception in emerging adulthood; currently in romantic relationship.	Negative perception in young adulthood. In abusive union as young adult. Negative perception in emerging adulthood; not currently dating.	Negative perception in young adulthood. Positive perception in emerging adulthood; currently in romantic relationship.	Negative perception in young adulthood. In abusive union as young adult. Positive perception in emerging adulthood; currently in romantic relationship.	Negative perception in young adulthood. In abusive union as young adult. In-between perception of in emerging adulthood; currently dating.

Table 4.2
Structural Themes Identified in the Data For Participants

Structural Themes	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Perceived Affects from Experiences of Parental Couple Relationship(s)	* “Yea communication, I had trouble with that...being able to let your partner know how you feel.”				* “Even now the relationship my mom and my dad had in front of me, it definitely effects my relationships that I have with you know my significant other in my life.”	
Percieved Parental Influence			* “I know my parents have both told me to look for certain things in a guy...like how does he treat his mom...things like that”	* “My parents actually said have fun, and I can see that having fun and laughter is the key to a good relationship...”	* “The person who has really given me advice between my parents is my mom.”	

Table 4.2 Continued

Relationships with Others	* “Oh wow, she [mate] basically reminds me of my mom right now...which is a good thing for the most part...I haven’t really seen no bad in it really.	* “I think in my past relationships I was always looking for people because I was drawn to their potential...whereas now I think I’m finally with someone that is striving to grow and want some of the very same things.”	* “So I’ve never gotten like the full...like full fledged I’m dating someone and we’re in to each other, let’s see where this goes deal.”			
Percieved Self-Growth	* “But my mom finally knocked some sense in me...it got better like...my attitude got better.”	* “But in this relationship I am really learning to compromise...”				
Giving to Others		* I just want to help people and make people happy...”				
Percieved Commonalities with Parents		* “My mom likes being in charge and in control...I’m a control freak...”				* “...a lot of times now I see my mom just nag...I don’t know if I took after that but I nagged a lot.”

4.4 Participant Descriptions

Textural Description for Participant 1

Participant 1's textural description is constructed from his experiences and verbatim, transcribed interviews as per the Moustakas (1994) approach to analysis. Participant 1 grew up in a two-parent home for the first few years of his life, but quickly found himself transitioning into a single-parent home upon the departure of his father. He ultimately grew up in a fatherless home, struggling to find his own identity as a man. The first theme that emerged with participant 1 was his perception of the quality of his parental couple relationships. As a young adolescent he perceived the quality of parental relationship to be positive. "Oh they had a great relationship, I remember them being happy." As he described his parent's relationship during the interview, he spoke in an excited voice, often times laughing at his statements as he was reminiscing about what he could remember. But as his adolescent years continued, his parent's couple relationship took a turn. "Oh they had a great relationship...until things got rocky." My dad cheated on my mom."

The participant was exposed to the obstacles his parents had in their relationship such as infidelity, heated arguments, divorce, and even recalls the day his dad walked out of his life. "They was arguing all the time so, he just packed his stuff and never came back. My mom was so upset that she took the stuff he didn't pack and gave it away to Goodwill. She even got his car towed out of the driveway!" Even still, while recalling these moments the participant still spoke in joyful tone, almost as if he was praising his mother for her actions. Though his parents split after their nine-year marriage, they are still able to

remain respectable to one another for the sake of co-parenting. “Their relationship now is probably hmm...when it comes to me it’s great. They get a long when they are just talking about something that pertains to me. Anything other than me they don’t speak.”

Though his parent’s are able to have an effective co-parenting relationship, the participant was greatly affected by the absence of his father. This led to the second textural theme of the participant’s reaction to his parent’s split. As a young child, he didn’t understand or comprehend his parent’s separation. He became angry and suffered from behavior changes. “I had a lot of anger built up in me...I was letting it out the wrong ways, on the wrong people.” “I just wanted to be mad.” Not knowing who to blame for his parent’s separation, the participant picked his mom as his first target. “Uh...being rude to my mom...blaming her for everything...it was real rough.” The split began to affect his ability to concentrate in school, he began to fail classes, and even as an elementary student, he was held back a grade. “When my dad left, my grades dropped. Uh I was going through a lot of stuff in school.” He eventually learned not to blame his mother, but still had a hard time coping with his father’s absence.

Fatherlessness took a toll on the participant’s ability to further develop and maintain a relationship with his father. In the third theme, perception of quality of relationship with parents, the participant described the struggles he had with his dad being out of the home. “I didn’t speak to him for like a year.” “I didn’t have anybody to put me in my place like a father should when I was acting out...like my mom disciplined me but not like it would’ve been from my dad.” The participant was missing his dad, and needed his dad’s direction. The negligence from his father pushed him closer to the women in his family, while also

forcing him to be the man of his household. “I am a lot closer with my mom than my dad. I was in a house surrounded by strong women...my mom and my older sisters raised me.” As a young adult the participant began to mend the relationship with his father, but it was a slow process. Even now as an emerging adult he still feels the affect of his father’s absence. “Like me and my dad speak now...but not like that...like we have a relationship, it’s just not as close as my mom.” “You know dads are supposed to teach their sons life lessons on how to be a man...I didn’t have that...I learned on my own, I’m still learning.”

The issue of fatherlessness actually trickled into the remainder of the themes for the participant. His father’s absence from the home changed his household demographics growing up, deeming his mother as a single parent with three children. Parental household demographics was the next identified textural theme. The participant described how he and his family were financially poor after his father left. “When my dad left, we was on the verge of being poor...” His mother had to begin working two jobs to support the family, but even her double income was sometimes not enough. “When he left, my mom was the only one working. “ “But when my dad left, it got hard to pay bills you know...we would stay at my grandma’s or my aunt’s house when the power got shut off...you know stuff like that.” Once again, even recalling those experiences the participant spoke in a joyful tone. “We got by though for real, but we aint live no lavish life that’s for sure...I mean growing up we didn’t...now we good!”

The final theme identified, perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence, really describes the participant’s experiences and beliefs of romantic relationships, considering the obstacles he observed from his parents.

Growing into a young adult, the participant was afraid of developing and maintaining romantic relationships because of the marital dissolution he witnessed with his parents. “Like right now, discussing marriage and stuff I was afraid to be in a deep relationship. But now I see the beauty of it...but at first I was like hmm no I’m good...I’ll just be like my dad and have multiple friends, but I see that’s not the way to go.” He is currently in a romantic relationship, and has been for four years, but he has not always conducted himself as the best mate.

Dealing with the fear of being in a romantic relationship while struggling to maintain one lead to him making poor choices. “When we first got together it was kind of rough cus...I was just going through so much...we didn’t know how to communicate that well...and I wasn’t rude but...ok I was rude.” “I was a good guy but at the same time I had a lot of anger in me...so I use to be mean to her and be rude.” The participant battled with being committed to a monogamous relationship, while also still dealing with the anger he developed from his father’s absence. At some point, the man he had grown into as an emerging adult in college, reminded him a lot of his father. But with the influence of both of his parents, he was able to adjust his attitude, which altered his perception of romantic relationships for the better. “My mom and my dad put some fire up under me, that really took a toll and it really got me on the right path.” “Oh I hear it every day, basically, just don’t be rude and disrespectful because you don’t want nobody to do that to your sisters and your little nieces.”

The participants admits to learning from the experiences that his mom and dad had in their relationship, which has lead to a positive change in his own relationship. “That’s

when I really understood it, and learned from it...learned from what I seen with my mom and dad...and also stuff I see around my sisters.” Unlike before, he now perceives his relationship to be of good quality. “Oh it’s great, uh we get along...she’s a sweetheart and she’s very caring...” “I can say we’re on a good level, and could be getting on the verge of marriage...well not on the verge of marriage, but seeing here as a mother of my children and a wife.”

Structural Description for Participant 1

Individual structural descriptions describe the underlying dynamics of the participant’s experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher reflects on the experiences shared by the participant and constructs structures, which describe the hidden meaning behind the identified textural themes. Three structures were identified for participant 1: perceived affects from experiences of parental couple relationship, self-growth, and relationships with others. Participant one’s structured themes seem to overlap one another, as the same experiences can be described by more than one structure.

Observing his participant’s couple relationship had positive and negative affects on him throughout his life. His parent’s divorce as a child caused him to be angry and resentful. Bringing his anger into his relationship(s) caused him to suffer from some of the same obstacles as his parents. “Yea communication, I had trouble with that...being able to let your partner know how you feel.” Though this may be true, the participant actually gained more positive outcomes from the experiences he observed. With maturity and developing a closer relationship to his parents, he was able to take the negatives that he saw with his parents and use them as life lessons when developing his own relationships. “My dad is not a good

communicator...he always spoke over my mom, that's one thing I do not want to do." "It also helped me be a better compromiser...for the both of us because I don't want to do that...like I don't want to be like my dad when it comes to that."

Self-growth is also displayed through his ability to overcome his anger from his parent's divorce. The participant's struggle with his behavior changed after his parent's marital dissolution. Struggling with behavior and grades as a student, more than likely brought on more frustration and stress, causing him to point the blame of his anger towards someone beside himself. But with the support and discipline from his mother, he was able to adjust his negative attitude, resulting in more positive behavior and perception of relationships. "I couldn't be mad at my mom for standing up for herself you know...that's what I would want my sisters and little nieces to do." "But my mom finally knocked some sense in me...it got better like...my attitude got better."

His relationship with others was also affected by the observed experiences of his parents and his self-growth. Building a closer relationship with his mother has spilled over into his current romantic relationship. The participant's current mate actually shares some of the same strong characteristics that his mother exhibited as a parent. "Oh wow, she [mate] basically reminds me of my mom right now...which is a good thing for the most part...I haven't really seen no bad in it really. She [mate] is kind of strict...she wants to know where I'm at, at all times. She reminds me of my mom with some of the stuff she do...just certain advice she gives me...she just cares for me, so that reminds me of her [mom] a lot." The participant also described characteristics of his mother that he would look for in a mate. "Uh intelligent...just love, like she has love for a lot of people you know, and really care, so those

are two, yea.” Ultimately, the participant uses his personal growth to maintain a healthy relationship with his current mate. “Communication is key...the key to all relationships...so I’ve learned how to communicate better.” “In a relationship...I don’t want to overstep anyone and think I’m greater than anyone ever...we both should have an opinion and try to work to compromise on things...”

Textural-Structural Description for Participant 1

Adolescent children who experience parental divorce are known to suffer from behavior changes and a decline in academic excellence (Masarik et al., 2012). This was portrayed in the textural themes for the participant. Both textural and structural descriptions show that life as an adolescent and young adult for participant 1 was indeed difficult, but not foreign to the obstacles that many African American males experience due to fatherlessness.

His parents were not able to maintain a healthy couple relationship, but they were somehow eventually able to co-parent for the sake of the participant. With the participant’s broken relationship with his father growing up, he was often times unable to provide insight on his father’s life after the divorce. The participant’s mother, however, took the role of both parents emotionally and financially. “She [mom] did the best she can, but it was a rough time when my dad left...it was rough on her.”

Still, with the help of both parents, the participant was able to develop a positive perception of romantic relationships. Though he has admitted to not being the perfect mate his mom taught him to be, he has been able to maintain his current relationship. “I still make some bad decisions when it comes to our relationship because I’m still learning, but I’m young...I have time to get it right.” At the end of the interview the participant was asked to

give his response on the following statement: It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parent due to exposure and/or experience. Tell me how you feel about this statement. The participant responded as follows:

“Oh that’s really...that’s true! From the good parts of the relationship, not the bad you know...so I try to you know mimic my parents...not mimic but what I saw that worked, I want to be...you know have that with my partner...and how we care for each other. Just get along you know, and maybe have kids one day. So yea, the stuff I saw with them...the good stuff...I would love to have that. It could be a good thing but could also be a bad thing as well, but on my end it was always a good thing...whatever floats your boat (laughs)!”

His response to the above statement shows that the participant has managed to look past the negatives and recognize the positives that came out of his parent’s relationship. He has shown that he has and is willing to incorporate positives of his parent’s relationship into in his own relationship. “...The good stuff...I would love to have that.” He also has shown that he is willing to maintain a healthy relationship based upon advice given by his parents, such as maintaining healthy communication in his relationship and developing a positive attitude.

Textural Description for Participant 2

Participant 2 grew up in a small, rural town in Virginia. As an adolescent, she was raised in a loving two-parent home. In the first theme, perception of quality of parental couple relationships, she described her parents as having a positive relationship while she was growing up. “Well when I was growing up my parents were, what I thought, happily married.” At the time of her birth, her parents were moving into a new home, and her father

had even adopted the participant's older sister to make their family complete. "They were moving into a new house. My dad adopted my sister as his own child so he had really opened up to try to make the whole relationship thing work." From the participant's perspective, her experiences with her family growing were nothing less than perfect. "In the beginning, I can even speak on before I was born, my parent's relationship was very high quality...they were very much in love. I mean my parents, they interacted with each other. We [family] went traveling, um we did a lot of things together."

Growing up as a child, the participant did not recall any detrimental obstacles that her parents suffered; they seemed to have what she described as a normal marriage. "Um I mean they did fight a couple times but what couple did not fight?' However, as the participant grew into a young adult, the quality of her parent's couple relationship decreased. "It wasn't until I turned a teenager that I kinda noticed that there was some distance between my parents." Her parents were growing apart, and lacking the ability to come together to meet common ground. "Um they were barely communicating, and there was tension in the house. My mother was growing and my dad was stagnant where he was..." The participant's mother was growing as a professional in her career and education, excelling over her father in a sense, who worked in an auto glass repair company.

Her parents tried to maintain the relationship the best they could, but fueling arguments about finances and work ethic separated the couple even more. "They were cordial in the after work setting, like when my mom wanted to come home and relax, her and my dad could kinda mesh on that end...when they were out partying, having a good time, they could mesh

on that end. But when it came to like paying bills, and going to work every day, the kind of grown up side about it, they kind of bumped heads on that a lot.”

As her parents struggled to maintain peace in the home, the participant was exposed to even more distance between her parents. “So towards the end of their relationship it was very low quality...they were even sleeping in separate beds.” Eventually, her parents divorced when the participant was a high school student. “Well my parents are currently divorced...they divorced when I was sixteen.” The participant did not express much distress when speaking about her parent’s marital dissolution. She expressed how observing her parent’s arguing, prepared her for their separation; she knew their relationship was slowly coming to an end. “Sad to say I kind of knew divorce was coming...but I didn’t know it was going to come in the way that it did...they were fighting a lot more. I feel like my mother just wasn’t very happy and my dad was kind of oblivious.” Though the participant did not share any experiences of emotional distress upon her parent’s divorce, she did mention that coping with their separation took time and understanding. “It took me a long time to realize that it wasn’t nobodies fault that my parents split up, like it wasn’t my mom’s fault or my dad’s fault...they just really grew apart and that happens.”

Perception of quality of relationship with her parents was the second theme identified. Though she did not spend much time sharing her experiences here, the participant acknowledged that she was able to maintain a relationship with her father, but recognizes having a closer bond with her mother. “I have a closer relationship with my mother than my dad. I know she is my mother, but at the end of the day she is also my friend.” The participant communicates with her mother on a daily basis, whereas with her father, on a

month-to-month basis. “I only talk to my dad like once a month, once every few months sometimes even...its not like frequent or on a regular basis, no.”

The third theme focused on the participant’s household demographics before and after her parent’s divorce. Before her parent’s marital dissolution, her father was laid off of his job at the auto glass company after five years. As a result, her mother became the sole financial provider in the home. “Kinda noticed that after my dad had got laid off in 2001, um it put a lot of strain on my mom to take care of the bills, and do things like they were supposed to be done...just to keep a float.” “As my mother grew and started to be the bread winner of the household, really the only person bringing in the income...I think that bothered my dad.”

The participant’s mother is currently in a romantic relationship, but has not re-married. Her mother and her mate have been cohabitating with one another since the early stages of their relationship. “My mom and her boyfriend have been living together since I was about eighteen...so that’s about four or five years now.” Though the couple is cohabitating, her mother is still the primary breadwinner in her home. “He stays with my mother but it’s her house...he doesn’t help her with anything for real except fixing something you know stuff like that. He doesn’t pay any bills there though.”

In the final theme, the participant provided thorough descriptions of her perceptions of the quality of her personal romantic relationships in emerging adulthood, which included the sub-theme of intimate partner violence. She remembers developing dating relationships with boys at a young age. “I started dating, well what I thought was dating at a very young age...I started dating boys when I was little little. I had like a little neighborhood boy who I use to call my boyfriend when I was like five.” The participant did not recall participating in any

significant romantic relationships until she was a high school student. “It wasn’t until I hit high school where I had my first real relationship” She shared how she experienced heart break early on when her mate at the time ended the relationship over an issue as small as her changing the color of her hair.

The participant revealed that she participated in a verbally abusive relationship as a young adult. “During our relationship we had a lot of dramatic points...it wasn’t until the end of our relationship that I realized that I was in a very...not physically abusive, but verbally abusive relationship.” “He use to call me stupid and dumb.” The smallest situations would anger her mate, causing him to start pointless arguments where he would belittle and demean her. “One time we got in an argument over molded strawberries...he was mad because I told him I don’t want to buy these they got mold on them...and he got mad, he was like...you too good for molded strawberries? ...We got into this big knock out, drag out fight...he was slamming doors in my face...it was just really dramatic.”

Though she was suffering from verbal and emotional abuse, she was still there to support her mate and the relationship. “I was always there to rescue him.” Her mate came from a different background and grew up with his own familial problems, which was more than likely the source of his anger and rage. “I think the main issue was I was country, but I came from a pretty good family, my mother was making pretty good money...and he came from the hood, like he didn’t know his father. He lived with his grandma and he was always getting tossed back and forth from his grandmother to his mother because nobody wanted to keep him for long periods of time.”

Participating in such an unhealthy relationship affected the participant's mental, emotional, and physical health. "I remember another situation where I was sitting on my back deck and I was ready to pull my hair out, I wasn't sleeping because I was depressed from being verbally abused." As a college student, the participant was finally able to break away from the relationship, realizing that her mate was only going to hold her back. "I think it bothered him that I was in school...I was in college and I was doing things with my life..." As an emerging adult she is able to understand why she stayed in such a detrimental relationship. "I feel like I fell in love with the potential of who I thought he could be, but not who he actually was...and it wasn't until the end when I saw him for who he actually really was." "Now when I look back on it, it was just so many situations and red flags in my face that were telling me that I need to leave him alone...it took me a long time to get my sanity back from that relationship."

Structural Description for Participant 2

There was an underlying theme of giving to others when analyzing the lived experiences of participant 2. Though she suffered from an abusive relationship, she was still willing to give all that she had emotionally to make her mate a better person—"...in my mind I was trying to bring him along. I was always there to rescue him." Her sense of giving is also portrayed in her other aspects of her life—"I just want to help people and make people happy...that's why I want to be a counselor, working with people."

Her description of her current relationship showed that she shares some of the same experiences as her mother does in her current relationship. The second structure, perceived commonalities with parent, shows that P2 shares common characteristics as her mother not

only as an individual but in her relationships as well. The parental household demographics theme in the textural description express how the participant's mother is currently cohabitating with her mate and is also the breadwinner of her home. The participant is too currently cohabitating with her boyfriend and has the higher income of the two—
“...sometimes it can be very tiring...you know the process of us living together and you know trying to work things out.” “I make more money than him, like I already graduated college, and he is still in undergrad so I pay the rent and he helps me with the smaller bills.”

She shares similarities of her personality with her mother that affects her current relationship. She describes her mother as being independent—“My mom likes being in charge and in control...she likes being independent and do things on her own...and I think she likes that.” The participant shares this common sense of independence and control with her mother. “Um, I’m a control freak, I like everything to be done my way...” “One thing I’ll never compromise on is, if I know I’m right, I’m right so there’s no ifs, ands, or buts about it.”

The participant recognizes her strong sense of independence and control could negatively affect her relationship. This brought up her third structure of self-growth. She has been able to make changes to her attitude for the sake of her relationship. “But in this relationship I am really learning to compromise. I have to remember that in this relationship I have to learn to kinda give in to certain things and you know try to compromise on certain things.”

The lived experiences she was exposed to with her parent's divorce shaped her perceptions of how she goes about looking for a mate and the type of romantic relationship she wants for herself. Her last structure identified was relationship with others. This structure

is based upon the parental influences that her parents have on her perception of romantic relationships. She was able to identify a time where she was actually searching for a mate that reminded her of her father. “I think before I was kind of searching for a relationship...someone who kind of reminded me of my dad.” “One thing I can say is, most of the build of the guys I date reminds me of my dad, which is so funny.”

During her unhealthy relationship with her ex, she realized he resembled her father in similar ways that caused the demise of her parent’s marriage. “I realized that my ex was really like my dad, um he was set in his ways...he never strived to do better or exceed my expectations...and thinking that I was gonna be the breadwinner and he was just gonna reap all the benefits.” Her previous mate and her father both refused to utilize opportunities for self-growth, which played a huge factor in maintaining their relationship. “Its ok to have someone that kind of reminds me of my dad, but not someone who is just like my dad...not saying that I don’t like my dad or love my dad because I do, but I wouldn’t want to be in the same situations as my mom and my dad were.”

Now as an emerging adult, the participant is able to use the lived experiences and advice from her mom to maintain a healthy relationship with her current mate. “I think in my past relationships I was always looking for people because I was drawn to their potential, but they never lived up to their potential, whereas now I think I’m finally with someone that is striving to grow and want some of the very same things.” Her mother has shared the following advice with her on dating:

“But my mom told me, she said “when you find someone, find someone that you can grow with not someone that you just like right now...find someone that when you’re

growing to the next years of your life, they're growing with you to those next years"...and that really explained a lot to me about what happened to my parents."

Textural-Structural Description for Participant 2

The textural descriptions that emerged from the data for participant 2 were perception of quality of parental couple relationships, perception of quality of relationship with parents, parental household demographics, and perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence. Structural themes consisted of giving, self-growth, perceived commonalities with parents, and relationship to others. The lived experiences for the participant have led to victory for her as an emerging adult. Though she was a victim of verbal and emotional abuse, she was able to rise above her obstacles of her previous relationship. The participant was able to learn one of her biggest lessons in life; her relationship taught her what she wants and deserves out of a romantic relationship, but most of all it showed her what she definitely does not want, need, or deserve from a mate.

Although she was a witness to her parent's marital dissolution, she was still able to pull positive qualities from her parents, and their relationship in which she utilizes in her current relationship today. "Initially my parents worked because my dad helped my mom chill out...that's what [P2 boyfriend's name] does for me." The commonalities with parent(s) structure in the structural description described similar experiences and characteristics she shares with her mother. Further analyzing the participant's current relationship in comparison to her mother's current relationship, it is shown that the participant strives to mimic the positive qualities found in her mother's relationship, in order to maintain a healthy union of her own. "My mom's current relationship and my relationship are kind of similar...he

mellows her out but still keeps her on her toes, and my boyfriend does the same for me.”

“The fact that she [participant’s mom] kind of does things with him [mom’s boyfriend] even if she doesn’t want to things with him...because sometimes my boyfriend will want to do things with me and I don’t want to do them and I can tell that he kind of gets upset...I need to work on that.”

At the end of the interview the participant was asked to give her response on the following statement: It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parents due to exposure and/or experience. Tell me how you feel about this statement.

Participant 2 responded as follows:

“I feel that that statement is a 100% true, and I don’t even think that its something you do on purpose...it just happens and when I look back on it I’m like wow that was really close to that situation or wow he’s really similar to my dad...because that’s all you know about relationships, you don’t know anything but what you see. But like I said I don’t think its something people walk around trying to do, it just happens, and then you look back on it like wow!”

Her response to the statement is indicative of the lived experiences she shared during her interview. Through her response, the participant realizes that she not only had to live through her own experiences to teach her life lessons about developing romantic relationships and mate choice, but these lived experiences also helped her understand and cope with the separation of her parents. She has learned the importance of developing and maintaining healthy romantic relationships, and is incorporating personal lessons and observations of her parental couple relationship(s) as a visual and platform for her current union.

Textural Description for Participant 3

There were only two identified themes for participant three: (1) perception of quality of parental couple relationships and (2) perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence. As further described in the first theme, P3 perceived her experiences growing up in a two-parent home to be fairly positive, and therefore did not reveal an array of similar lived experiences as other interview participants. Raised in a two-parent home, participant three grew up in a middle class family in Virginia. In the first theme, the participant expresses her perception of her parental couple relationship as a child. “My parents are married...they’ve been married a little over 20 years. Growing up my parents had a...overall I would say a good relationship.” Growing up, the participant witnessed various loving encounters among her parents. Her parents were proud of their relationship and always displayed affection towards one another that suggested that they were very committed to their relationship. “They cared and you new they cared...the pet names, the gestures towards love and kindness. It wasn’t like a oh those two are married...it was like a oh those two are married and you can tell.”

Even though participant three did witness some parental obstacles among her parents such as argument and disagreements, she recalls these instances to be small and non-detrimental to her parent’s relationship. “There were arguments, but there was never anything to the point where they were on the verge of separating. Arguments would be over like a basic money issue that should’ve been taken care of but somebody wouldn’t for whatever reason.” Witnessing these small disputes actually allowed the participants to

gain a new found respect for her parents as a couple. "...There wasn't anything more than like a little spat in the house that wasn't over and done with a few hours later. It never hindered anything, if anything I appreciate the fact that they were able to talk about it and get over it."

As an emerging adult, P3 still has a positive perception of her parent's current couple relationship. "They're still, I'm pretty sure, sexually intimate. They are both very giving, and nurturing, and providing." The participant has not experienced any significant detrimental experiences that have altered her perceived quality of her parent's couple relationship. Though the participant was not extremely revealing about her perception of her parent's couple relationship, she was able to open up a little more about the perception of her own romantic relationships in the second theme.

P3 reveals that she has not had the best experiences in her own romantic relationships in theme two (perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence). She has found herself in several dating encounters that only lead to empty relationships and heartbreak. "I have seriously dated and just casually dated, you know, a decent amount of people. I haven't had the best of luck. I've dated people who weren't really serious about dating or didn't know what they wanted."

P3 had her first experience with a long-term relationship as a high school student. "My first serious relationship, um, was two and a half years long." She admits that this relationship was of negative quality as she suffered from verbal and emotional abuse. "It wasn't a positive relationship in any sense like it was very controlling on his behalf...it was very mean and abusive on his behalf verbally wise." Though she was not willing to

share specific encounters of this relationship, she acknowledged that the once she realized how unhealthy the relationship had become, she was able to remove herself from under her boyfriend's control. "Granted at that moment I thought I was live head over hills in love...I can sit back now and say that it was just puppy love. If anything, it made me realize what I never want." Participant three is currently single and did not provide much insight on her lived experiences dating as an emerging adult. She did mention that she is currently casually dating and keeping an open mind when meeting new people.

Structural Description for Participant 3

In her search of a healthy romantic relationship, the participant has been able to find support in her parents, defining her first structural theme of perceived parental influence. Her parents have been able to share some helpful advice with the participant in what to look for in a mate, and conducting herself as a mate. "My mother is very like southern in her ways...you gotta know how to clean, you gotta be able to do these things...you gotta find a guy that's got goals for himself you know." "I know my parents have both told me to look for certain things in a guy...like how does he treat his mom, how does he treat his sister, you know things like that."

Participant's final theme is relationships with others. She did not reveal any positive lived experiences pertaining to her romantic relationships. This does not mean that she has not encountered positive experiences when dating, but it is obvious that any positive lived experiences she has encountered have not been of enough significant meaning for her to share. Specific side effects of suffering from emotional and verbal abuse in her first romantic

relationship are unknown, but it safe to assume that the participant has since had much difficulty in maintaining positive romantic relationships.

Textural-Structural Description for Participant 3

Only two themes were revealed from participants three's interview: (1) perception of quality of parental couple relationships and (2) perception of quality of personal relationship in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence; structural themes only included perceived parental influence and relationship with others. Participant three's reluctance to provide thorough details of her lived experiences suggested to me that she was not much of a revealing person when it came to discussing such an intimate topic. When interviewing her, it was clear that the participant has had some unsuccessful experiences in relationships that have left her somewhat somber. "...So I've never gotten like the full...like full fledge I'm dating someone and we're in to each other, let's see where this goes deal." With such opposite perceptions of her romantic relationships compared to her parent's couple relationship, P3 was only able to relate to her parent's couple relationship when it came to similar relationship obstacles.

The participant mentioned that her parent's had small arguments over finances, in which her father was the root of this struggle. Though she professed her father to be a hard worker, he sometimes had trouble with budgeting. Noticing this similar financial obstacle in her some of her previous relationships, the participant realized that many of her past mates shared this same trait with her father. "My dad is very good provider and he means well but sometimes he does things that like make absolutely no sense...I found myself dating guys

who may have struggles financially or weren't good decision makers...I found myself sometimes dating guys that does things he does.”

As positive of a perception the participant has of her parent's relationship, it is expected that she would want to exemplify similar healthy characteristics in her own unions. Although the participant acknowledges her father's financial flaw, she still sees him as a positive male role model, and hopes to find a mate with similar characteristics of her father who can provide her with a healthy relationship such as her parents'. “I need someone who would be caring...but just like you know, just understanding...he will go over the top and work a few jobs, my dads that type of person, so I definitely just want that type of person. My parents are really open, they can laugh and joke about simple things, they still sit up late at night and watch TV and just talk...like I want that.”

At the end of the interview the participant was asked to give her response on the following statement: It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parents due to exposure and/or experience. Tell me how you feel about this statement.

Participant 3 responded as follows:

“I honestly, whole heartedly agree with it. I feel like you know, if your parents are the quote unquote all American family or whether they're a family that works extremely hard and they have struggled but made sure it happened, you know you like go for that. That's what you know, and that's what you've seen, and that's what you're exposed to and its like embedded in you and you go and do the same thing. But at the same time, like I don't want to contradict it like, if you know if your parents were in

an abusive relationship then you may be like, ok I never want that. But you usually just go for what you know and like what you see...I definitely agree with that.”

The participant’s response to the statement brought on an interesting realization when looking back at her shared experiences. She states in her response that people “usually just go for what you know”, suggesting that people often use learned behaviors from observed experiences of their parental couple relationship in their own unions. But if this is indeed true and applicable to the participant, it is peculiar that the participant has not been able to develop or maintain a healthy, long-term romantic relationship of her own; given her perception of the quality of her parent’s couple relationship. The participant’s vagueness actually revealed some possible underlying causes of her inability to develop successful relationships in the past. It is possible that the participant has fallen victim to poor decision making when it comes to mate choice; or that she has limited herself to casual dating encounters that provide little to no opportunity for her to develop and maintain a romantic relationship with a worthy partner. There were not enough solid expressed experiences to reveal the actual factors that could have been the cause of P3’s unsuccessful relationships.

Textural Description for Participant 4

Participant four was eager to express how much of a loving home he was raised in. Growing up in a middle class family in the city of Virginia Beach, the participant was raised in a two-parent home as an only child. He describes his parent’s romantic relationship to be the best relationship he has experienced in his life. “My parents have the most beautiful relationship, uh intimate and romantic relationship I’ve ever seen in my life. My parents have been together for a sum of 32 years...they’ve been married for at least 25 of those years.” His

parents always displayed affection in front of him, and continuously expressed the importance of family time. “When I was a child, all I saw growing up you know was nothing but affection, like they always included me in every activity that they did. Everything that they did was family oriented and family based.”

The participant remembers having fun with his parents and watching his parents have fun with one another; building a very tight bond within their family. “Just observing, you know just sitting back and looking at it, my parents always loved to have fun, they loved to laugh.” Like any couple, his parent’s did encounter relationship obstacles, but nothing past small arguments or disagreements. “To be truthful, I honestly don’t think it was any serious obstacles. Like my parents argued about stupid stuff like who remembered what. I honestly think it worked out for the better because it strengthened their ability to work things out...problem solve.”

Though his parents did suffer from small disputes here and there, the participant perceived his parent’s couple relationship to be of high quality while growing up. He maintains this same perception of his parent’s couple relationship as an emerging adult. “They have been loving each other hard from day one, like my parents have never talked of divorce. They’ve struggled but they’ve never had anything to the point where they’d not want to see each other or be with each other every day.” His parents are able to maintain a healthy relationship by committing themselves to one another and their marriage, and also incorporating spirituality in their union. “Like you know, they have a remarkable relationship, its strong, its faith based you know. They ultimately believe in a higher power,

you know, like God. So you know Jesus and religion is very much the basis of my parent's relationship."

The last theme identified while interviewing participant four is the perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence. As a young adult, the participant was seeking love and companionship, but was unsuccessful because of poor mate choice. "When I first started dating, I think I was looking for love in uh, in all the wrong companions to be honest. I thought you know that I had to have like you know the most popular person." Due to his poor mate choice, the participant found himself in several different relationships with partners who were unfaithful and unappreciative. "One thing with one of my previous girlfriends is that she ended up being you know a little bit promiscuous. She didn't have the same core values that I had, and the same core values I was raised on. I also got myself involved with someone without any manners, or any appreciation values."

Learning from his experiences with relationships in young adulthood, the participant is now able to take pride in the success of his current romantic relationship as an emerging adult. The participant is currently in a two-year, cohabitating relationship with his mate. "...The girlfriend I have now, she's sweet, she's caring, she actually holds me down in a sense." The participant realizes that his current relationship with his mate is different from any relationship he has had before, which makes it a success. "I think I was looking for someone that is everything I thought I wanted that is not what I have now...if that makes any sense."

In his current relationship, his mate is the breadwinner of the household. With his mate being a college graduate, and him a currently enrolled student, he does not have the

same opportunities of employment as his partner. However, this does not hinder their relationship, as he is able to match his mate's financial support with emotional support. "She makes more money than I do, and it's not about money but she's actually able to provide more than I am. She understands my sense of you know, not being well endowed right now with the monetary sense of being with her, but I give her the things that money can not buy you feel me...like just being romantic, spontaneous, sweet, and caring."

Overall, the participant perceives his current relationship to be of very high quality. He is the happiest that he has ever been in any relationship, and is very appreciative of his union. "She's nurturing to my sensitive needs and sensitive points of view. I can't see myself being with anyone else, I ultimately love her from the bottom of my heart."

Structural Description for Participant 4

The most prominent structural theme that emerged for participant four is perceived parental influence. Observing such a positive and healthy relationship from his parents allowed the participant to maintain an overall positive perception of romantic relationships. He appreciates his parent's commitment to their marriage and strives to model himself after their relationship. "They also strive to make each other happy, you know, on a day-to-day basis...happier than they've ever been before. It's just a really good relationship that I actually try to model myself after."

The participant is able to use these positive lived experiences, along with parental advice to maintain a healthy relationship with his current mate. "I think by looking at my parent's relationship, and analyzing the true definition of love from looking at my parents, I initially sought what I saw my father saw in my mother." "My parents actually said have fun,

and I can see that having fun and laughter is the key to a good relationship...my parents always told me to be extremely courteous because you know you ultimately have to be with the person you are with.”

Textural-Structural Theme for Participant 4

Two themes were revealed from participant four's interview: (1) perception of quality of parental couple relationships and (2) perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence; with only one structural theme of perceived parental influence identified in the data. It is very clear from participant four's lived experiences that he has had the privilege of growing up in a loving two-parent household, with a perfect example of a healthy romantic relationship.

With this example, the participant has been able to develop and maintain a healthy romantic relationship with his current partner. His desire to model his parent's couple relationship influenced his ability to make better decisions when choosing a mate. His current mate in many ways reflects the love and support that he gained from his parents growing, as she shares similar characteristics with his mother. “Her mannerisms are a lot like my mother and its kind of scary to say that. Its very comfortable to be with her because in a sad sense she reminds me of my mother...she's caring but sarcastic at the same time just like my mother would be. She pushes and motivates me like my mother would motivate my father.”

He appreciates the longevity of his parent's relationship and hopes to have many years of love in his current relationship. “Definitely the longevity of their relationship is one of the few characteristics I want to have in this relationship.” The participant did not recall sharing the same obstacles as his parents in any of his relationships, but he did however

suffer from similar obstacles of his previous mate's parental couple relationship in his past union. "Not that my parents have gone through, but that the other person I've been talking to...like some of the things that their parents were going through in their relationship at the time, we would go through in our relationship."

At the end of the interview the participant was asked to give her response on the following statement: It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parents due to exposure and/or experience. Tell me how you feel about this statement.

Participant 4 responded as follows:

"I actually agree with that statement because if you think about it, our parents relationship is the first thing that we see and what we know is love. Either its gonna be a bad mirror or its gonna be a good mirror, but that's ultimately what we have to judge on what a relationship is, how to conduct a relationship...and how to deal with the aspects of like problems and things that are going on in a relationship. And how we see them interact and react with each other."

The participant's response coincided with his shared lived experiences of how he conducts his romantic relationships. He continuously expressed his desire to model his parent's couple relationship, which he obviously views as a good mirror of love. The participant ended his interview by stating the following: "You know what they say, little girls marry their fathers, and little boys marry their mothers."

Textural Description for Participant 5

Participant five grew up in a dysfunctional and abusive home as an adolescent. In the first identified theme, perception of quality of parental couple relationships, the participant

identified her parent's couple relationship to be full of turmoil and pain. Her father suffered from a drug addiction, which inhibited his ability to maintain a healthy marriage with the participant's mother. "...Um my mom and dad's relationship was pretty bad, considering that he as a drug addict and stuff. It wasn't good I mean." Her father's addiction caused him to be in and out of the home. He would roam the streets going on drug binges for days, and would only return home to bathe or when he needed food and money. Though her father suffered from a drug addiction, the participant's mother remained in the marriage hoping to one day mend her relationship with her husband and create a loving environment in the home. "It was definitely a negative relationship. It was an in and out type of situation. To me it seemed as if she was trynna create a romantic type of environment when she could...just so she could hold on to whatever little bit she thought she had left with my dad."

The participant recalls how her father's drug abuse negatively affected her mother. While struggling to deal with her husband's illness, she was also suffering from mental, emotional, and physical abuse. The participant's father often times picked arguments with her mother if she was unwilling to provide him with money, shelter, food, and/or sex. "I wouldn't say it was a romantic type of relationship. It was some good moments but for the most part it was negative. She [mom] was hindered by it...mentally, emotionally, physically, everything."

After years of the participant's father choosing drugs over the well being of his family, he was sent to prison for five years relieving the participant's mother from the mayhem that he had caused. During these five years, the participant's mother filed for divorce and moved her children into a new home across town. Participant five recalls a

significant emotional change in her mother upon her parents divorce. “I feel like since she’s divorced him she’s different now...she’s not in the same mind state that she was in before. I feel like it helped her because she knows not to go back, or deal with situations she’s dealt with when she as with my dad.”

After years of dating and rebuilding her self-esteem, the participant’s mother is currently a newlywed. Having only been married for a few months now, the participant perceives her mother’s second marriage as very positive and loving. “I think the quality of their relationship is very good...very loving. They’re married, it’s at a good start.” Her mother’s current husband treats her with respect, embraces her past, and strives to maintain a healthy marriage. “He really takes pride in making her happy. He’s very engaged with my mom...both of them are very accepting of one another.” “It’s their second time getting married, so its not like all of the big high hopes when they first got married because they’ve already been through this already so they know what to expect.”

The second theme identified in the data for participant five is the perception of quality of relationship with parents. The participant was raised in a two-parent home the majority of her adolescent and young adult life. But the severity of her father’s addiction kept the participant from developing a positive father-daughter relationship. “It was like my dad was very selfish so it was all about him. He made sure that he fed his habit and his addiction without thinking of his family.” The participant had hands-on experiences with the pain that he brought to his marriage, as he often times flaunted his infidelity around her. “I’ve experienced the cheating...that my dad had did. He would actually bring me around some of the females that he would be cheating on my mom with.” The participant also had hands-on

experiences when observing the abuse her father shelled out to her mom, further inhibiting the participant's desire to maintain a healthy relationship with her dad. "I've experienced everything under the sun really with the relationship that I dealt with with my dad and my mom growing up. I've experienced abuse...and when I say abuse I mean physically, verbally, and mentally."

The participant did not convey much emotion when her parent's divorced. The third theme identified for participant five was reaction to parent's split. With all of the negative and detrimental experiences she was exposed to in her parent's marriage, the participant became emotionally numb towards her father. Therefore, when her parent's finally divorced, she felt little to no emotion. "I didn't really feel anything when they split because my dad was already in and out." "Well I was happy when my mom said that she was finally filing for divorce because that meant that my dad wouldn't have any more rights to come in the house. But yea, I was just happy that my mom finally did something to take action you know...I mean it took long enough."

In the fourth theme, parental household demographics, the participant shared her lived experiences of financial issues in her household growing up. "My dad came in and out of the house as he pleased...I pretty much referred to my mom as a single parent." Trying to financially support her children and a drug addict, the participant's mother struggled to maintain financially. "When she [mom] was still in the relationship with my dad, she was definitely hindered by it financially...yea we struggled a bit, like my mom worked two jobs." "One job she worked was at night so she would be gone, and it would just be me and my little bother there ya know."

Anytime that the participant's mother was unwilling to provide her father with money, he would he would steal things out of the home; sometimes even breaking in to the home when the participant's mom shut him out. "My dad stole from us a lot when he would be high so we did a lot of replacing things, well not a lot, but replacing necessities...important things. Which pissed me off because we were already low on funds." Often times the participant was unable to enjoy gifts given to her on holidays such as her birthday and Christmas due to her father's continuous theft. "Like I remember one time when I came home and my stereo that I had gotten for Christmas was gone and I was so pissed...I asked my mom if I could get another one and she pretty much told me no because we had to pay bills. So it was like keep the lights on or buy me a new stereo and I know she wasn't having that."

The fifth and final theme discusses the participant's perception of personal relationships in emerging adulthood with the sub-theme of intimate partner violence. The participant began developing romantic relationships at a young age, and was constantly involved with someone. "I think from the start I've always had a boyfriend...like even as small as kindergarten...I think my first serious relationship was when I was in the eighth grade." As a high school student, the participant was involved in a long-term relationship, lasting for six years. Her partner at the time caused her much heartache, as his infidelity became very prominent in the relationship. "...I've of course dealt with cheating in my last relationship that I was in for six years. I think that's the relationship that I went through the most because I was 15 going into this relationship...15 going on 16, and ended the relationship when I was turning 22."

For six years the participant grew up with her partner, making mistakes and learning from them as they went on. “So I went through experiences from a child...pre-teen mind state, all the way to an adult mind state. So I pretty much grew up with this person while I was dating him and we went through the most.” Heartbroken from the continuous cheating that her partner did, she finally broke up with her mate as an emerging adult. Not ready to put her heart into another serious relationship at the time the participant casually dated for a year after her break up. She is now, however, in another romantic relationship as an emerging adult.

The participant does not have to deal with infidelity in this relationship, but she has had to learn to cope with dating an older man with a young child. “My current relationship is quite difficult. It’s a relationship where both ends are having to sacrifice and work hard to make this relationship work. On my part because I’ve never been in a relationship with a guy with a child before.” Dating a father has been tough on the participant because she has had difficulty with bonding with her mate’s daughter. Her partner also practices different parenting techniques that she is use to, which has made interacting with her mate’s daughter extremely tough. “This is my first relationship where I’m dealing with that and it is taking a lot of out of me. I’m seeing in myself that I am capable of doing these things but it was a learning process, it still is.” Even though the participant has been slow in getting use to dating a parent, she perceives her relationship to be of good quality as they work to maintain their union. “I would say overall the relationship is good, but it took a lot for us to be good.”

Structural Description for Participant 5

Participant five unfortunately suffered from great turmoil as an adolescent with one parent suffering from a drug addiction and the other suffering from abuse. As a result, the first structural theme for participant five is perceived affects from experiences of parental couple relationships. The participant did not share any positive lived experiences when observing her mother and father's marriage. She only remembers her father's drug abuse and the pain he caused as an addict. Living in such a home with so many negative encounters caused her to become emotionally guarded. She has had difficulties in trusting the opposite sex therefore, she is very cautious when developing romantic relationships. "Even now the relationship my mom and my dad had in front of me, it definitely effects my relationships that I have with you know my significant other in my life."

The second and final structural theme for participant five is perceived parental influence. The emotional disconnection she has with her father has pushed her to be closer to her mom. Even with the lived experiences her mother has faced in her marriage, she has still been able to be emotional supportive to the participant. "The person who has really given me advice between my parents is my mom." The participant's mother uses her own experiences from her marriage to provide the participant with relationship advice. "I feel like the advice she's gives me has definitely helped me in certain situations dealing with my current relationships." Realizing that the participant can become very emotionally disengaged, the participant's mother has encouraged her to voice herself in her relationship. "One of the things she has always told me is that I definitely need to voice when I have a problem with something because your mate can not read your mind."

Textural-Structural Description for Participant 5

Participant five has suffered from significant negative lived experiences through her adolescent and young adult years. As an emerging adult, she had difficulty with opening up emotionally in romantic relationships because of the abuse she observed in her parent's couple relationship. Though she has grown to be more outspoken and emotionally available to the others, she is still somewhat reserved. "I come to her [mom] here and there, I'm not the type to give my mom or my dad information about my relationship. I'm kinda secret about that because I don't want to involve parents to make relationships worse."

The participant desires some of the same relationship qualities as her mom when seeking a partner. "I know like with my mom, I pulled feeling comforted because was she definitely alone a lot throughout the relationship with my dad...so I look at it like I need somebody to comfort me if I feel alone." Although she did not identify any relationship qualities in her parent's couple relationship that she would like to model in her own relationship(s), she did however mention some characteristics of her parents that she would like to have in a mate. "I would say with my mom her being understanding, and with my dad him being a business person, knowing how to make a dollar...being able to provide and make money."

At the end of the interview the participant was asked to give her response on the following statement: It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parents due to exposure and/or experience. Tell me how you feel about this statement.

Participant 5 responded as follows:

“I feel like, it definitely could play a part because if that’s what you grow up seeing and that your use to, it wouldn’t be odd for it to be repeated. I feel like if you’re lacking something from your parents...I’m sure somewhere down the line something will take place, either the exact same or something similar to it. So I mean...I don’t disagree with the statement.”

The participant’s response indicates that the lacking emotional connection and loving relationship with her father has caused her to suffer from other negative experiences in her life; which could be the cause of her emotional guard. Overall, the participant does agree that lived experiences observed from parental couple relationship’s can have some influence of a person’s ability to develop and maintain romantic relationships of their own.

Textural Description for Participant 6

Participant six was raised in two-parent home in a rural town in North Carolina. Growing up her parent’s marriage was a bit hot and cold. The participant shares her lived experiences of observing her parent’s relationship in the first textural theme of perception of quality of parental couple relationships. The participant was an only child, raised on her father’s mini farm. She remembers an interesting couple relationship among her parents, given that that they had both a loving and tense marriage at the same time. “My parents are married...both of my parents were loving...they had a loving marriage. But they also argued, uh a lot so I remember them arguing a lot. Their relationship I would say was a little bit touchy.”

This touchy relationship was a result of the participant’s father’s urge to drink. “My dad has a...he drinks a lot so I would say that was something that kind of hindered their

relationship.” Her parents often times argued about her father’s inability to turn away from his bottle. The participant refers to her father as a functioning alcoholic because of his ability to drink on a daily basis and efficiently achieve whatever plans he has for the day. The participant’s mother ultimately had to learn to put up with her husbands drinking in order to keep the peace in the home. Therefore, the participant perceived her parent’s relationship quality to be positive, as she appreciated their ability to problem solve. “Um I would describe it as positive...besides the arguing it was high, it was positive.”

As an emerging adult, she perceives her parent’s relationship quality to be on the decline. It is no doubt that they love each other, but they seem to always fall victim to bickering arguments on a regular basis, much more than before. “It’s gotten worse, I would say its negative. They argue more now and there’s less communication between the two.” The participant’s father is significantly older than her mom, with her mother being in her fifties, and her father being in his late seventies. “I don’t know if its because my father is significantly older than my mom, that might have something to do with it.” The age difference has contributed to a lack of understanding, inhibiting the couple to be able to relate with one another at such different points in their lives physically; causing the participant to perceive their current couple relationship as negative and unstable.

In the second theme, parental household demographics, the participant shares that she grew up in a financially stable home. “I grew up in a stable household.” Her mother was a teacher at the local high school, and her father made income by mowing and caring for neighbor’s lawns. Eventually her father’s age prohibited him from being as efficient in lawn care as he had been in the past. His health forced him to slow down on his yard work, which

depleted the amount of income he was bringing in. Currently as a teacher, the participant's mother is the breadwinner in the home. "My mom basically now makes all the money and that's kinda a stress factor on her." Her mother finds herself currently being the caregiver and financial provider in the relationship, rather than being taken care of. "...Because my dad in the long run is not able to take care of her, she's taking care of him."

The final theme for participant six was the perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence. The participant was reluctant to share memories of a physically abusive and controlling relationship she suffered from as an emerging adult, but she did share a significant relationship experience in her emerging adulthood. Participant six met her latest boyfriend as a college student. The relationship was everything that she had hoped for, but her own insecurities caused her to sabotage her relationship. "My last relationship was kind of just head strong, over the hills type. In the relationship it started off as good, but then I feel that I became a nagging girlfriend."

The participant admitted to being genuinely happy in the relationship and loving. But for some reason she was unable to give herself completely to her mate, and therefore used bickering as a way out. "At the beginning, I was a very loving girlfriend...I was committed. I was just happy all the time, but then my insecurities un kind of kicked in, and then I was questioning all the time and I began to nag...then eventually we kind of just stopped talking and our relationship went down hill." It was not revealed what the cause of these insecurities were for the participant, but she is currently in an on again off again relationship with this same partner. She is currently working on her ability to let the relationship flow.

Structural Description for Participant 6

The only structural theme identified from the data for participant six is perceived commonalities with parents. The participant grew up watching her parents constantly argue over various situations. Therefore, through observing this obstacles she picked up a trait from her mother that has caused the demise of her most significant relationship; nagging. "...I don't know if that's because a lot of times now I see my mom just nag, and she nags and nags. And I don't know if I took after that but I nagged a lot." One can assume that the participant believes this is an appropriate way to conduct a relationship, or conduct herself as a mate. If she is displeased, she has observed through her parent's couple relationship to voice her opinion. But voicing herself repetitively like her mom does has only caused her to suffer from petty arguments and disagreements just as her parents do.

Textural-Structural Description for Participant 6

Participant six has not had to endure any severe lived experiences when it pertains to romantic relationships. Her father does suffer from alcohol abuse, but both the participant and her mother have learned to accept his addiction. The participant's does encourage her to not accept some of the things she has in her marriage, and provides the participant with relationship advice. "My mom always told me to make sure that I find someone who can take care of me, not saying that I need to depend upon a man to take care of me, but he needs to be able to take care of me financially and emotionally."

The participant admits to dating someone whose birthday was very close to her fathers. This relationship was short-lived as her inability to accept his personality and communication issues ended the relationship. "I was dating someone whose birthday was

actually he day after my dad's and they're the same sign, and we didn't mesh too well.”

Though the participant did not mention that she wanted to model any significant characteristics of her parent's couple relationship, she does want to acquire some of their personal characteristics for herself when dating. “I would take from my mom...I guess her strong will. I don't think I would take too much from my dad besides maybe his eye for detail maybe.”

At the end of the interview the participant was asked to give her response on the following statement: It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parents due to exposure and/or experience. Tell me how you feel about this statement.

Participant 6 responded as follows:

“I kinda agree with that, um because like I said...little things I remember from being a little girl, my parents loved each other, but they also fought and they argued. So I think I took that...my relationships, sometimes I feel as if my relationships if I'm in one, if they're going good for too long and we're both happy for too long then I need to do something to upset that because I don't like it. I feel like we need to fight about something, we need to argue. I feel as if my relationship is not exciting and I think that's something wrong with that and I should just enjoy the smooth sailing ride, and not look for anything or try to fight or argue about something that's unnecessary. So I do believe I took that from experiences. So I feel as if, you know, seeing that as a little girl you know I feel as if that's the way a marriage or a relationship is supposed to be, but its not.”

The participant's response is spot on with the lived experiences that she observed from her parent's relationship. She clearly understands that seeing her parent's argue, even as a loving

couple, caused her to think that this is the way that relationships are conducted. She does not allow herself to freely be happy in a relationship without picking fights because controversy and disputes are what she believes is necessary in properly conducting a relationship. The participant has allowed her parent's communication issue, and her mother's nagging to negatively affect her current romantic situation. Hopefully the participant is able to overcome this mindset now that she acknowledges that it is a problem.

Composite Textural Description of all Participants

Textural descriptions were formed by analyzing units of meaning for all participants and grouping them together to identify shared experiences. Textural descriptions for participants included perception of quality of parental couple relationships, reaction to parent's split, perception of quality of relationship with parents, parental household demographics, and perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence. As adolescents and young adults, observing their parent's couple relationships shaped their views on how relationships should and should not be conducted, and how to conduct themselves as a mate. Not all participants observed negative lived experiences growing up, but those who did experienced the most personal growth as emerging adults when learning to develop and maintain a healthy romantic relationship.

In the first textural theme, perception of quality of parental couple relationships, participants shared how they perceived their parent's couple relationship to be as adolescents and young adults growing up. Though some participant's parents separated and got divorced over time, all participants were initially born into a two-parent home. Participants who

witnessed the dissolution of their parent's couple relationship all initially perceived their parent's union to be of positive quality as a child. But the older the participants got, the more clear it was that their parents were suffering from obstacles that would eventually lead to the demise of their relationship. Common relationship obstacles mentioned in this theme were communication, arguing, financial instability, infidelity, abuse, and drug and alcohol use. Participants who had first hand exposure to these obstacles gradually changed their perception of their parent's couple relationship from positive to negative.

These participants family structure shifted from the traditional two-parent home, to single-parent run households. After their parents relationship dissolution, the majority of participants found themselves suffering from fatherlessness. Obstacles such as infidelity and drug and alcohol use forced the participants' mothers to separate themselves and their families from the instability and heartbreak that their fathers caused while in the home. Relationship quality between father and child quickly decreased for these participants once their parents ended their couple relationship; this is further discussed in theme three: perception of quality of relationship with parents. There was one participant (P6), who grew up in a two-parent home whose parents never divorced or separated, but still observed these same relationship obstacles among her parents

Participants whose parents were able to maintain a healthy marriage observed more positive lived experiences of their parent's romantic relationship. These participants recalled growing up in very loving environments, in which their parents still maintain. Obstacles identified in their parents romantic relationship were only small spats and disputes that often died out in the same night. These participants perceived their parent's couple relationship to

be of very high quality, and appreciated their parent's ability to overcome small obstacles and problem solve. They described their parent's relationship to be a positive example of how to conduct yourself in a relationship, and how to maintain a healthy union.

The second theme, reaction to parent's split, was commonly found in the lived experiences of participants whose parents were separated/divorced. As previously stated, all participants were born into a two-parent home, but some participants gradually learned that their parent's union was not quite what they initially perceived. Participant one displayed significant anger and a decline in academic excellence from his parents marital dissolution. "I just want to be mad. When my dad left, my grades dropped." He was having a hard time coping with the separation of his parents which reflected in his behavior and his ability to appropriately conduct himself at school. Participant 5 however, had a totally opposite reaction to her parent's divorce. Her father caused so much pain to her family, that it was a relief to the participant once her mother finally had the courage to leave. Participant five responded with following as her reaction to her parent's separation: "But yea...I was just happy that my mom finally did something to take action you know...I mean it took long enough. I didn't really feel anything when they split because my dad was already in and out." Parental separations caused participants to not only suffer from emotional reactions, but it also altered their perception of the quality of relationship they held with their parent(s).

The third theme found in the data was perception of quality of relationship with parents. This theme was very prominent for participants 1, 2, and 5. These participants expressed negative perceptions of their relationship with their fathers. Participants 1 and 2 suffered from fatherlessness after their parent's marital dissolution. Common obstacles that

led to their parent's separation included infidelity and financial instability. After their parent's separation the participant's lost that emotional bond with their father's. Participant one states the following about his relationship with his father: "Oh man it was rough man...cus I know when my dad left that male figure wasn't in the house."

All of the participant's fathers moved on quickly after their marriage dissolution and began another life that did not include the participant for periods of time. With the absence of their fathers, the participants developed a stronger relationship with their mothers. Participant two described her mother as her best friend and a strong support system for her. She speaks to her mother on a daily basis, whereas her father only calls a few times out of the month. "I have a closer relationship with my mom than my dad. I know that she is my mother, but at the end of the day she is also my friend." All three participants expressed a great appreciation for their mothers' ability to cope from a divorce and still be able to raise and support her family. Fatherlessness did not only have an emotional affect on the participant, it also caused many of the participant's mothers financial strain.

Parental household demographics, theme four, described the lived experiences of the financial strain that took place as participants were growing up. This theme was found to be common in participants who transitioned from two-parent homes into single-parent homes. Many of the participant's mothers worked two jobs in order to support her family after her divorce. Participants 1 and 5 state that their mothers did the best they could to remain financially stable, but often times struggled to maintain their financial responsibilities after their divorce.

There were three participants whose families suffered from financial instability while their parent's were still together. The mothers of these participants were all the breadwinners in their marriage. Each mother experienced a period of time where she was the only one bringing in any income in the home. The fathers' inability to financially provide for his family was often due to job loss; drug addiction was also identified as a factor for financial instability in fathers. Financial strain for participants' mothers not only caused a financial imbalance within the home, but it also contributed to the decline in the quality of their marriages. Participants' perception in the decline of the quality in their parental couple relationships was explained in theme one.

The last theme was the most prominent theme for each participant. Perception of the quality of relationships/intimate partner violence in emerging adulthood gave descriptions of how participants perceived their own romantic relationships. Most participants began causally dating at a young age, but did not have a serious, long-term relationship until young adulthood, as high school students. All female participants admitted to have suffered from verbal, physical, and/or emotional abuse while in their first serious relationship. Participants 2 and 3 were verbally and emotionally abused by their partner within the first year of their relationship; while participants 5 and 6 were emotionally and physically abused by their partners. Though not all participants were willing to share thorough encounters of their lived experiences, it was clear that the abuse suffered caused emotional distress.

P2 was the only participant that openly shared her lived experiences of abuse. She shared the following experiences of her relationship: "During our relationship we had a lot of dramatic points...it wasn't until the end of our relationship that I was realized that I was in a

very...not physically abusive, but verbally abusive relationship. He use to call me stupid and dumb.” She also shared how this abuse caused her emotional distress in which she became depressed and was loosing sleep. “I remember another situation where I was sitting on my back deck and I was ready to pull my hair out, I wasn’t sleeping because I was depressed from being verbally abused.” Other participants were reluctant to share experiences such as participant 2, but one can assume that these participants suffered from similar emotional distress from such abuse.

Developing and maintaining a romantic relationship as young adults was difficult for all participants. Many participants admitted that at a high school age, they were not clear on the factors needed to maintain a healthy relationship. Besides the abuse that took place among female participants, all participants suffered from obstacles in their relationships such as communication barriers and infidelity. The urge to develop romantic relationships influenced male participants to experiment in dating, building unions with many partners through out high school and early emerging adulthood. Whereas, female participants’ urge to maintain their romantic relationship influenced them to remain in unhealthy situations under the direction of a controlling partner. Regardless of the relationships and partners they had as young adults, all participants perceived their relationships to be unhealthy and of negative quality. As participants grew into emerging adults, they were able to learn from their lived experiences of relationships in young adulthood.

Five participants were in committed relationships or seriously dating someone at the time of their interview; with one participant who was currently single and not dating. Three of the five participants who were involved in a relationship perceived their current union to

be of high quality. As emerging adults, they now felt that they had developed the proper qualities within themselves to maintain a healthy relationship. This was in part due to their ability to learn from their past relationships and obstacles suffered in these relationships; parental influence also contributed to participants' personal growth (further discussed in the composite structural description). Participant 1 and 2 share their personal growth in maintaining their relationships with their current partners: "Um I'm a control freak, I like everything to be done my way and I have to remember that in this relationship I have to learn to kinda give in to certain things and you know try to compromise on certain things. (P2)" "In a relationship...I don't want to overstep anyone and think I'm greater than anyone ever...we both should have an opinion and try to work to compromise on things so...(P1)."

Two of the five participants who were involved in a relationship/seriously dating admitted that their relationships started off as or was currently in a rocky state. One participant struggled to find her place at the beginning of her relationship when dating an older mate with a young child. She states: "On my part because I've never been in a relationship with a guy with a child before. This is my first relationship where I'm dealing with that and it is taking a lot out of me." She does however perceive her relationship to be healthy, even though she is still learning to compromise and problem solve in her relationship.

Participant six perceives her current relationship to have started off as positive and then gradually transition into a negative state. Participant six is the main participant who is still struggling with maintaining a healthy relationship. Her and her partner still suffer from communication barriers, which has caused them to call off the relationship many times. She

states: “In the relationship it started off as good, but then I feel that I became a nagging girlfriend.” She perceives her relationship as rocky because they are constantly off and on. Ultimately, each participant was able to share their lived experiences about dating in young and emerging adulthood; as well as, the lessons they have learned which has helped them move forward in dating, developing, and maintaining romantic relationships.

Composite Structural Description of all Participants

Structural descriptions help provide a structural understanding of participants’ lived experiences. Structural themes found in the data were: perceived affects from experiences of parental couple relationships, perceived parental influence, relationships with others, self-growth, giving to others, and perceived commonalities with parents. Though there were many different structural themes identified in the data, two themes were common among the majority of participants: perceived affects from experiences of parental couple relationships and perceived parental influence.

Perceived affects from experiences of parental couple relationships was a common structural theme found in the data that affected the way participants perceived romantic relationships. Experiencing the obstacles their parents suffered from in their relationships, and parental marital dissolution, influenced some participants to have a negative perception of couple relationships. Participant one expressed how his parent’s divorce did not keep him from dating, but did restrict him from developing any committed relationships in young adulthood: “Like right now, discussing marriage and stuff I was afraid to be in a deep relationship.” On the other hand, participants such as P4 observed a very loving relationship

among his parents. Therefore, he seeks to model the relationships of his parents in his current relationship: “Its just a really good relationship I actually try to model myself after.”

The structural theme of perceived parental influence explains how participants received parental support in dating. Participants advice that parents have given them on finding a mate and conducting themselves as mates. The following are quotes from a few participants as they share relationship advice given by their parents.

- (1) Well my parents always told me to be extremely courteous because you know you ultimately have to be with the person that your with.” My parents actually said have fun, and I can see that having fun and laughter is the key to a good relationship.”(P4)
- (2) “I know my parents have both told me to look for certain things in a guy...like how does he treat his mom, how does he treat his sister, you know things like that.” (P3)
- (3) “Oh I hear it every day, basically, just don’t be rude and disrespectful because you don’t want nobody to do that to your sisters and your little nieces.” (P1)
- (4) “My mom always told me to make sure that I find someone who can take care of me, not saying that I need to depend upon a man to take care of me, but he needs to be able to take care of me financially and emotionally.” (P6)

Participants were able to incorporate advice given from parents into their current romantic relationships. If they were not currently in a romantic union, they still planned to utilize this information in future relationships. Personal characteristic of parents also influenced some participants in conducting themselves as mates, as they shared

commonalities in their personalities. Participant two expresses that she is a lot like her mom when it comes to being in control of her relationship. When she prefers something her way, she rejects compromise; she admits to have learned this from observing her mother.

Participant six expresses how she has picked up her mother's way of communication: "...I don't know if that's because a lot of times now I see my mom just nag, and she nags and nags...I don't know if I took after that but I nagged a lot." Most parental advice was provided to participants by their mothers, due to the high amount marital dissolution and fatherlessness among parents. Overall, all participants acquired some parental influence and support when learning to develop romantic relationships.

Composite Textural-Structural Description of all Participants

For this section the lived experiences of participants were pulled from their textural and structural descriptions. Participants' lived experiences of observing their parental couple relationships were both positive and negative. Participants' experiences ranged from observing a very loving home and marriage among their parents, to observing abuse, drug addiction, and the inability for parents to compromise for the sake of their marriage. Some participants who observed negative obstacles in their parent's couple relationship during adolescence and young adulthood developed a negative perception of romantic relationships. While female participants found themselves partaking in unhealthy relationships that consisted of some of the same obstacles that their parents suffered from, i.e. verbal and emotional abuse, communication barriers, and financial instability.

All participants were able to identify character traits of their parents that they would like to acquire for themselves, desire in mates, and/or desire in a relationship. There were some

participants that expressed their current mates and/or relationships to share similar qualities of their parents and parental couple relationships. Participant one and participant four expressed that their current mates shared similar characteristics of their mothers, providing them with emotional support and nurture that their mother does. “She reminds of my mom with some of the stuff she do, like her cooking...just certain advice she gives me, you know just being...she just cares for me, so that reminds me of her a lot. (P1)” “She pushes and motivates me like my mother would motivate my father. (P4)” P2 shares how similar her mother’s current relationship is to her current romantic relationship by expressing the following: “My mom’s current relationship and my relationship are kind of similar...he mellows her out but still keeps her on her toes, and my boyfriend does the same for me.”

At the end of each interview, participants were asked to respond with their reaction the following statement: It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parents due to exposure and/or experience. Each participant had their own explanation of why this statement was true in their opinion. Participants provided explanations that were indicative of the lived experiences they shared in the data. Participants agreed that there is a possibility that the exposure to experiences of parental couple relationships can influence a persons decision to model that parental relationship, or develop opposing relationship values depending on the quality of parental couple relationships.

Participant one states that he tries to model the good experiences he observed in his parental couple relationship and apply them to his current romantic union. “Oh that’s really...that’s true! From the good parts of the relationship, not the bad you know...so I try to you know mimic my parents...not mimic but what I saw that worked, I want to be...you

know have that with my partner...and how we care for each other.” Participant two and four express that parental couple relationship(s) are your first examples of how a relationship should be conducted and maintained as a child. Therefore, as an adolescent and young adult, your parental couple relationship is often times the only example a person has as a model when developing and maintaining their own romantic relationships growing up. “I feel that that statement is a 100% true, and I don’t even think that its something you do on purpose... because that’s all you know about relationships, you don’t know anything but what you see. (P2)” “I actually agree with that statement because if you think about it, our parents relationship is the first thing that we see and what we know is love. Either its gonna be a bad mirror or its gonna be a good mirror, but that’s ultimately what we have to judge on what a relationship is, how to conduct a relationship...(P4).” Reviewing the composite textural, structural, and textural-structural descriptions, it is clear that participants’ perceptions and ability to develop and maintain romantic relationships are a result of the lived and observed experiences from parental couple relationships. Table 4.5 shows all participant responses to the closing interview statement.

Table 4.3
Participant Responses to Closing Interview Statement

Closing statement: It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parents due to exposure and/or experience. Tell me how you feel about this statement.					
Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
<p>“Oh that’s really...that’s true! From the good parts of the relationship, not the bad you know...so I try to you know mimic my parents...not mimic but what I saw that worked, I want...have that with my partner...So yea, the stuff I saw with them...the good stuff...I would love to have that.”</p>	<p>“I feel that that statement is a 100% true, and I don’t even think that its something you do on purpose...it just happens and when I look back on it I’m like wow that was really close to that situation or wow he’s really similar to my dad...because that’s all you know about relationships...”</p>	<p>“I honestly, whole heartedly agree with it...That’s what you know, and that’s what you’ve seen, and that’s what you’re exposed to and its like embedded in you and you go and do the same thing.></p>	<p>“I actually agree with that statement because if you think about it, our parents relationship is the first thing that we see and what we know is love. Either its gonna be a bad mirror or its gonna be a good mirror, but that’s ultimately what we have to judge on what a relationship is...”</p>	<p>“I feel like, it definitely could play a part because if that’s what you grow up seeing and that your use to, it wouldn’t be odd for it to be repeated...I don’t’ disagree with the statement.”</p>	<p>“I kinda agree with that, um because like I said...little things I remember from being a little girl, my parents loved each other, but they also fought and they argued. So I think I took that...”</p>

Credibility

Credibility of work can be demonstrated through an array of techniques such as checking, peer review, external audits, and triangulation (Magilvy & Thomas, 2011). For this study, two graduate students—fellow Masters of Science student at North Carolina State University in the Family Life and Youth Development Program, and a Masters student at Norfolk State University in the African American Community Counseling program—aided in peer review to ensure accuracy and clarity in editorial and analysis. To further ensure credibility, the researcher used Moustaka's Epoche' approach to fully explore the participants' lived experiences. The researcher recorded notes and important points during and after each interview, to ensure that the focus was strictly on that of the experiences of the participants during data collection and analysis.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The literature on African American emerging adults and romantic relationship development shows that emerging adults may indeed acquire attitudes and behavior about intimate relationships through observing their parental romantic unions (Cui & Fincham, 2010). Parents are typically emerging adults' first role models when it comes to illustrating the proper way to develop and maintain healthy romantic relationships (Basuil & Casper, 2012). Therefore, emerging adults' self-efficacy beliefs and perceptions are developed and learned through observation of these role models. Negative perceptions of marriage and other romantic unions among African American adults may be the result of observing high levels of conflict, separation, and/or divorce in their parental couple relationship(s) (Willoughby,

2012). As a result, these African American emerging adults are more likely to struggle with developing and maintaining positive, committed romantic relationships of their own (Zimmer-Gembeck et al, 2011).

In contrast, African American emerging adults who observe positive, low-conflict romantic relationships among their parents have a higher chance of developing and maintaining positive romantic unions (Trotter, 2010). Parents who maintain healthy, loving marriages and romantic relationships are more likely to report relationships satisfaction. As emerging adults observe positive interactions in their parental couple relationship(s) they develop learned behaviors that promote positive relationship interaction and often times model positive examples of romantic unions (Bandura, 1977; Trotter, 2010). Despite any perception developed from observing parental romantic relationships, African American emerging adults who really desire to maintain healthy relationships are more willing to work on developing stability and satisfaction in their own committed unions (Crouter, Kan, McHale, 2008). This is especially true among emerging adults who strive to avoid similar negative romantic experiences as their parents.

Information presented in this section is derived from the six participant interviews with African American emerging adults in chapter four. Interviews lasted over 45 minutes to an hour, providing insight on the lived experiences of observing parental couple relationships, perceptions of romantic relationships and parental relationship quality, and how these perceptions influenced the quality of their personal romantic relationships. Participants were asked to share their experiences and provide insight into the relationship

development of emerging African American adults. Much of the discussion has been written in the composite descriptions above. Therefore, the following section provides a discussion of findings in this study that answers both research questions and ties these findings back to the literature.

Perceived Quality of Parental Couple Relationships and African American Emerging Adults' Ability to Develop and Maintain Relationships

Emerging adults who are exposed to parental couple relationships, whether positive or negative, in adolescence and young adulthood develop perceptions of romantic relationships, which influence the way they develop and maintain couple relationships of their own (Sassler, Cunningham, & Litcher, 2009). This was found to be true in this research study. All participants of the study developed perceptions of the quality of their parental couple relationships through observation in adolescence and young adulthood. From these observed experiences, five textural themes emerged in the data: (1) perceptions of the quality of parental couple relationships; (2) reaction to parent's spilt; (3) perception of quality of relationship with parents; (4) household demographics; and (5) perception of quality of personal relationships in emerging adulthood/intimate partner violence.

Four out of six participants expressed the perception of their parental couple relationships to be negative and of low quality; whereas two participants viewed their parental couple relationship to be of high quality and satisfaction. Negatively viewed parental couple relationships suffered from obstacles such as abuse, financial instability, infidelity, lack of communication skills, and drug and/or alcohol use, which resulted in marital

dissolution. The reviewed literature reports that relationship satisfaction in African American marriages may be related to factors such as similar relationship values, socio-economic factors, and the couples ability to maintain relationship satisfaction while suffering through vulnerabilities and stress (Cutrona et al., 2011; Bryant et al., 2008). Negatively viewed parental relationships in this study lacked factors that correlated with research that promotes relationship stability and satisfaction. Marks et al. (2012) report that African American couples who have differences in relationship standards and beliefs are at high risk for marital dissolution. These differences are displayed in the data as differences in relationship values, beliefs pertaining to commitment, and how to treat your mate. All of which contributed to many of the parental marital dissolutions in this study.

In addition to the lack of similarities in relationship beliefs, socio-economic factors (e.g. financial instability) also contributed to many of the marital dissolutions among parents. Financial instability may add stress onto the couple relationship, which may lead to a couple's inability to effectively communicate and problem-solve (Clarkwest, 2006). The data reveals that parents who suffered from financial instability, also suffered from a lack of communication and the ability to compromise for the betterment of their relationship.

All participants interviewed, regardless of perception, expressed their first committed relationship as young adults to be of low and negative quality. Past research shows that parental couple relationships serve as models for emerging adults, in which they use these models to develop their own relationships (Underwood & Rosen, 2011). Participants who witnessed parental couple separation or parental marriage dissolution were found to be

lacking a positive model of how to conduct and maintain a healthy, positive relationship in their first committed union. However, participants who reported to have had a positive model of how to conduct relationships still experienced low relationship satisfaction and quality. All female participants, regardless of perception of parental couple relationships, reported to have participated in verbal, emotional, and/or physically abusive relationships in their first romantic union.

This study did not directly seek to focus on relationship violence among African American emerging adults, or investigate why all female participants suffered from such unhealthy relationships as young adults. However, the data revealed that African American emerging adult females participating in this study all suffered from intimate relationship violence, in which the researcher felt it was important to recognize IPV as a sub-theme in this research. Providing recognition to intimate relationship violence allowed participants to explain why they perceived their first serious romantic encounters to be of negative quality.

Reviewed literature states the possibility of poor mate choice and inexperience in recognizing signs of heightened aggression and violence in male partners, contribute to the development of such relationships (Decker et al., 2011). Verbal and emotionally abusive relationships were especially prominent in female participants who experienced similar forms of abuse in their parental couple relationships. One male participant reported to be the aggressor in his first committed relationship as a young adult due to anger and behavioral changes fueled by his parent's divorce. African American adolescent males have higher risks of engaging in violent, abusive behaviors in romantic relationships due to repressed anger

from parental separation and fatherlessness (Landor et al., 2012). In analyzing this data, the researcher now understands that African American young and emerging adults can suffer from intimate partner violence regardless of the perception of their parental couple relationship. It is important to consider the cultural factors in the African American community that permit such violence in couple relationships; those factors were not investigated in this study.

Past literature suggests that the perceptions of parental couple relationships and lived experiences of personal romantic relationships serve as a platform to the development of romantic relationships in emerging adulthood. Especially intriguing was how single mothers of participants held such a positive influence on emerging adults' ability to develop positive perceptions of romantic relationships over time. These positive perceptions contributed to the high quality of current participant romantic relationships. Raising children in single-parents homes has been found to result in poorer child well-being rates than children raised in two-parent homes (Waldfogel, Craigie, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). More specifically, research shows that single-mother homes have fewer resources available compared to two-parent homes. Without a partner to aid in providing financial stability in the home, single moms more often work more hours, or even multiple jobs, to increase financial stability through a one-person income (Pears, French, Dumas, Moreland, & Ron Prinz, 2012). In return, this limits parent-child interaction, which may make children feel less nurtured. Children may also feel less nurtured in single-mother homes due to the lack of father-child relationships. Fathers of marital dissolutions or relationship separation are less likely to invest quality time

with children than fathers in married-couple or cohabitating homes (Waldfogel et al., 2010; Mather, 2010).

Despite what the research shows, single mothers in this study were able to develop loving, nurturing relationships with their children regardless of financial instability and fatherlessness. Single moms were able to focus their energy on not only providing for their families, but also influencing emerging adults to adjust their negative perceptions of romantic relationships, and use negative parental and personal past relationships as examples of how not to conduct romantic unions. Specific examples of parental influence such as parental advice were provided in the composite structural description.

Although exposure to negative parental couple relationships influenced participants' development of negative perceptions of romantic relationships (e.g. marriage), it did not stray participants away from the desire to develop and maintain romantic relationships. Emerging adults were able to use their own lived experiences and their adjusted perception of parental romantic relationships to develop and maintain higher quality relationships than they did as young adults. Participants modeled observed experiences of love and nurture in their current parental couple relationship and applied these learned behaviors to their current personal relationships. The following section further discusses participants' modeled and learned behaviors from parental couple relationships in their personal romantic unions.

Modeled and Learned Behaviors Pertaining to Personality Traits, Mate Choice, and Relationship Quality

Participants exhibited modeled and learned behaviors from observed parental couple relationships. Social learning theory suggests that behavior can be learned through observation of the actions of others (Bandura, 1977). Each participant identified with at least one personality or character trait that was inherited or learned from parental observation. These traits were specific to behaviors that either increase or decrease relationship quality. Examples of inherited or learned traits for participants include communication styles, work ethic, emotional sensitivity, the need to be in control, and the urge to belong. These personality and character traits directly influenced the participants' ability to conduct themselves as mates in their relationship. For example, participants who shared similar communication styles with their parents often learned ineffective forms of communication that involved heightened levels of anger through the observation of parental couple relationships growing up. As these participants grew into emerging adults they were then able to develop appropriate communication skills through lessons learned in their own romantic relationships, as well as new observed experiences of current parental romantic unions. Parental personality and character traits were not only shared among participants, they were also found in many of participants' current mates.

When dating as emerging adults, participants identified parental personality and character traits that they desired in a mate. These traits served as a platform to identifying the type of partner participants desired in a relationship during mate choice. Participants who

reported suffering from fatherless or a lack of father-child relationship were still able to identify character traits in their father that they desired in themselves or a mate. Character traits desired in themselves and in a mate included, but was not limited to: high levels of work ethic, the ability to financially and emotional provide, humor, understanding, nurturing, domestic skills such as cooking cleaning, and tidiness, effective communication skills, and attention to detail.

Participants identified positive character and personality traits as personal attributes in their mothers and fathers that aided in maintaining the positive quality of their current parental romantic relationships. As a result, participants desired these qualities in partners when seeking mates of the opposite-sex to ensure the development and maintenance of a healthy romantic union. Table 4.4 reveal parental characteristics desired in themselves, mates, and/or relationships through participant quotes.

Table 4.4

Parental Characteristics Participants Desire in Themselves, Mates, and/or Relationships

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
<p>“Uh intelligent, and...just love, like she has love for a lot of people, you know, and really care, so those are two, yea.” [characteristics of mother that participant would want to have in a mate]</p>	<p>“The fact that she [participant’s mom] kind of does things with him [mom’s boyfriend] even if she doesn’t want to things with him...because sometimes my boyfriend will want to do things with me and I don’t want to do them and I can tell that he kind of gets upset...I need to work on that.”</p>	<p>“My parents are really open, they can laugh and joke about simple things, they still sit up late at night and watch TV and just talk...like I want that.”</p>	<p>“Definitely the longevity of their [parents] relationship is one of the few characteristics I want to have in this relationship.”</p>	<p>“I know like with my mom, I pulled feeling comforted because she definitely alone a lot throughout the relationship with my dad...so I look at it like I need somebody to comfort me if I feel alone.”</p>	<p>“I would take from my mom...I guess her strong will for things”</p>

Note: Quotes are verbatim responses to the following guided interview questions: Part B, Questions 6 & 7. See appendix E

As learned and inherited behaviors from parents affected participants' ability to conduct themselves as mates, participants as young adults experienced similar relationship obstacles perceived in parental couple relationships growing up. For instance, ineffective communication skills contributed to an increase of petty arguments and inability to compromise in both parental and participant relationships. Willoughby (2012) states that observing parental behaviors during conflict is likely to shape or influence conflict behaviors in children. Conflict behaviors in the study, such as the need to be in control, decreased partner equality in relationships for both participants and parents. In contrast, emerging adults who were currently in a romantic relationship shared common positive relationship experiences with parents; as both parents and participants were now aware of appropriate relationship and personal attributes required for the development and maintenance of healthy romantic relationships.

Cohabitation was another shared positive relationship experience for two participants in this study. Two participants were cohabitating with one another as a couple; sharing this same attribute as the female participant's mother, as she was cohabitating with her current mate as well. Literature suggests that participants in long-term relationships often illustrate their commitment to each other by moving in together (Underwood & Rosen, 2010). Though the literature reports that cohabitation has been found to be more prevalent in the African American community when compared to other races (Liu & Reczek, 2012), it did not come out of the data as a huge factor for this study.

Of all the themes from the data collected, the researcher was pleased to see that although there is a risk of negative exposure of romantic relationships from parent to child in the African American community, there are still opportunities for self-growth. The researcher now knows that personal and observed experiences open the gateway for African American emerging adults to use life lessons, and more positive parental influences and relationships as models to developing and maintaining healthy romantic unions.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, & IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how perceived parental intimate relationships affect the experience of romantic relationships among emerging African American adults. Through a phenomenological study, the research sought to identify how emerging African American adults find meaning from the couple relationships of their parents, and how they apply this meaning when developing and maintaining romantic relationships of their own. Adolescents and young adults observe parental romantic relationships, and form perceptions of romantic unions based upon the messages they receive from their parents. It is important to understand what examples and messages parents are sending to their children, and what perceptions these children develop from observing their parents. The following chapter provides the conclusions of the findings, limitations, and implications of the study.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study experiencing parental couple relationships influences African American emerging adults' perceptions about romantic relationships. These perceptions affect the way African American emerging adults develop and maintain their own romantic unions. Regardless of perceptions of romantic relationships, African American emerging adults are still susceptible to experiencing negative, unhealthy romantic relationships as young adults and in early emerging adulthood. Although this is true,

emerging adults experience self-growth in developing and maintaining romantic relationships through positive parental influence and lessons learned from mistakes made in personal romantic relationships.

African American emerging adults also find meaning in their parental couple relationships in quality, mate selection, and/or personal or mate characteristics and personality traits. Through observation and learned behaviors, African American emerging adults model behaviors and characteristics of their parents that could increase or decrease the quality of their personal romantic unions, which may lead to emerging adults suffering from the same relationship obstacles as their parents. These characteristics could include communication skills and conflict management. African American emerging adults also desire parental characteristics in themselves, mates, and/or relationships that promote positivity when developing and maintaining romantic unions. Characteristics could include the ability to financially and emotionally provide, nurturing, and effective communication skills. The following section discusses limitations found when conducting this study.

5.3 Limitations to Study

The small number of participants is one limitation to this study. The study consisted of six heterosexual African American emerging adults, and therefore cannot be generalized themes representative of heterosexual and LGBT African American communities. There is also the fact that none of the participants had children in this study and therefore cannot be generalized themes that are representative of African American emerging adult parents in the community. Qualitative research often is a limitation itself as it usually only includes a small

number of participants which makes generalization impossible (Cresswell (1994).

Fortunately, the goal of this study was to focus on understanding the lived experiences of a small group of African American emerging adults, rather than generalizing the entire community. The researcher must also consider that the lived experiences of these participants do not necessarily coincide with the lived experiences of other emerging adults in the heterosexual, LGBT, or parenting African American community.

Another limitation to this study is the potential for researcher bias. Though participants seemed to provide honest and genuine responses to questions, there is still a possibility that participants provided the researcher with responses that she wanted to hear. Along with participants, there is possibility for the researcher herself to have bias. The process of Epoche' was used to eliminate bias in the researcher, but this does not guarantee that the researcher refrained from bias in the study. The researcher also recognizes that the final statement asked to participants might have been a leading question that could be reworded in the future to be more vague and less leading. However, the question still provided insight on the second research question, in which the researcher felt it was important to include the responses in the study.

A third limitation is on the demographics of the participations of the study. The researcher's use of snowball sampling led to a study sample similar to herself; an educated, accomplished African American emerging adult sample. The participants were not necessarily representative of a varied sample of African American emerging adults, in that

their educational level was somewhat higher, their incarceration and cohabitation rates were lower, and they had fewer children than the average African American emerging adult.

5.4 Implications

This study provided direct insight on the experiences of African American emerging adults' perceptions of romantic relationships based upon the experience of their parental couple relationships. This study also explains how young black adults find meaning in these relationships, and how they apply that meaning to their personal couple relationships. Findings from this study can be useful in future research, as well as with families. The following section includes implications for future research, parents, and emerging adults.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should examine what might be done to stop negative cycles of emerging adults developing and participating in unhealthy romantic relationship in the African American community. This cycle could negatively effective future relationship development in the African American community, in which it is important for future research to investigate how these cycles affect the relationship development and how to end these cycles in the community. As intimate partner violence came out as a sub-theme in the research, it may also be helpful to investigate those cultural factors that allow for IPV in the African American community among young and emerging adults. Researchers could aslo look deeper into the experince of single motherhood and how these mothers protect, provide for, and promote self-growth in their young black adults

Implications for Parents

Data supports the idea that parents should be knowledgeable of how their own relationship experiences set examples and influence the perceptions of romantic relationships in their children, and how they apply these perceptions to their own romantic unions. Parents could acknowledge that their children are in fact observing their couple relationships even as adolescents and using these observations to apply meaning to how to develop and maintain romantic unions.

In order to educate themselves and their children on the importance of healthy relationships, it may be helpful for parents to utilize resources that promote the development of healthy romantic relationships. Community resources such as youth and family focused agencies, organizations, and professionals that advocate for healthy relationships among youth and families could be helpful in promoting stable, healthy relationships in the African American community.

Implications for Emerging Adults

Emerging adults are continuously striving to develop and further establish intimate relationships (Karney et al., 2007). Emerging adults should recognize that they in fact develop perceptions of romantic relationships by observing the parental unions. These perceptions could indeed affect the way that they develop and maintain relationships. Having this interview conversation with emerging African American adults seemed to be educational in some ways as it made them think about the experience of their parental and personal romantic relationships in a new, important way. As emerging adults grow to

develop families of their own, the way they conduct relationships could impact the experience their children have with developing and maintaining relationships. This refers back to the cycle mentioned in the implications for future research section. It is important for emerging adults to educate themselves on what constitutes a healthy relationship, followed by replacing any unhealthy relationship patterns with new skills that establish healthy relationships.

In summary, literature presented in the study gives insight on how observation of parental romantic unions can influence African American emerging adults to develop perceptions of romantic relationships, there is a gap in the research that directly gives insight on specific lived experiences of African American emerging adults when observing parental romantic unions, and developing unions of their own. In order to help fill the gap in the literature, this study sought out to gain insight of how African American adults experience parental intimate relationships, how they develop and maintain healthy romantic relationships of their own, and how they find meaning in the romantic relationships of their parents whether in quality, mate selection, and/or personal or mate characteristics and personality traits. This study is important to the African American community as promoting and advocating the development and maintenance of healthy romantic relationships as parents and couples could encourage positive development of romantic relationships among adolescent and emerging adults.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Participant Recruitment Email

Hello,

You have been invited to participate in Sonja Mitchell's thesis research for her Masters in Family Life and Youth Development Program at North Carolina State University! Read the message below for more information about the study.

Identifying Affects of Developing Intimate Relationships Among African American Emerging Adults Based Upon the Quality of Parental/Guardian Intimate Relationships

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study is to find out how parental/guardian intimate relationships affect the choices, decisions, and quality of intimate relationships among emerging African American adults. This study seeks to identify if emerging African American adults mimic the relationships of their parents whether in quality, mate choice, personality, characteristics, etc.

Why is this study important to me?

This study is important because parents/guardians are expected to be one of the most significant role models when learning to conduct healthy, effective relationships. This study allows participants to become aware of their relationship choices and decisions, which could or could not have been affected from the quality of intimate relationships observed by their parents/guardians.

This awareness could become beneficial as participants grow to or already have children of their own, realizing that their choices could affect the way their children do or will conduct and maintain intimate relationships. This is especially important in the African American community as many of today's families are run by single and/or teenage parents who are or will be developing and maintaining romantic relationships while parenting.

How will this study be conducted?

Participants will either participate in a face-to-face or a telephone interview with Sonja Mitchell that asks questions pertaining to the study. Questions asked will be personal questions about yourself and your parent/guardian(s) personal intimate relationships. The interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder, no camera footage will be filmed! **Some personal information about you and/or your parent/guardian(s) personal relationships will be anonymously quoted in this study.**

Do I qualify to participate?

All participants must be an African American emerging adult between the ages of 18-25.

How do I sign up?

Click the following link to sign up to be contacted about more information on this study:

<https://docs.google.com/a/ncsu.edu/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dFZpNVRGVJUybnlfcU1nNjRfWVQxcWc6MQ>

What if I have questions?

If you have any questions, please click the link to sign-up for more information about the study. Once you sign up, you will be contacted within 1 to 2 business days. Feel free to ask any questions or express any concerns once you are contacted.

Thank you for your interest in this study. I look forward to speaking with you soon!

APPENDIX B

Telephone Contact Script

The following is the telephone script that I will be using when I contact potential participants who signed up for more information about the study.

“Hello may I speak with (subject’s name)? Hi, this is Sonja Mitchell calling on behalf of the request for information you signed up for in regards to my thesis project entitled Identifying Affects of Developing Intimate Relationships Among African American Emerging Adults Based Upon the Quality of Parental/Guardian Intimate Relationships. Let me start out by telling you a little bit about myself. I am a second year Masters student at North Carolina State University in the Family Life and Youth Development Program. I am currently working on my thesis in which I am studying how parental/guardian intimate relationships affect the choices, decisions, and quality of intimate relationships among emerging African American adults. You recently received an email about a request for participants to participate in my study. I am looking for African American adults between the ages of 18-25 to participate in my study.”

“For this study I will be conducting interviews with willing participants in order to identify if emerging African American adults mimic the relationships of their parents whether in quality, mate choice, personality, characteristics, etc. Let me explain how the study would work. Interviews are expected to last at least one hour. Please note that this interview does require you to reveal private and/or intimate information about you and your parent/guardian(s) romantic relationships. Therefore, all participants are required to sign an informed consent form to participate in this study. An informed consent form is a form that states that you are a voluntary participant of this study, and that you have properly been informed of the purpose of this study, what is expected of you as a participant, and how your interview information will be used in this study, which ultimately allows me to use you as a willing participant. Are there any questions so far?”

(Answers questions if questions do exist)

“You will be asked 15 questions that pertain to you and your parent/guardian(s) intimate relationships. You are able to reject any question that you are not comfortable with answering. If you decide to participate in this study, you will have a choice of whether you want to participate in a face-to-face interview or an over-the-phone interview. I suggest choosing an over-the-phone interview if you are not located in the Raleigh/Durham, North Carolina area. If you are located in the Raleigh/ Durham, NC area and chose to do a face-to-face interview, I do ask that you allow the interview to be conducted at your home or place of living that I may come to. This is to ensure your privacy as you are answering questions. I also ask that the interview take place in an area in your home or place of living where there is no audience or anyone who can interrupt the interview. If you are doing an over-the-phone

interview I ask that you do find a quiet, private place to sit while questions are being asked to also ensure your privacy and uninterrupted of the interview. Are there now any questions so far?"

(Answers questions if questions do exist)

"I will be using a digital voice recorder to record the interviews. No video cameras will be used so you will not be on film. If you chose to do an over-the-phone interview I will place you on speaker so that you may be recorded. This does mean that I will be in the privacy of my home while interviewing you to ensure your privacy as well. Some information from your interview may be quoted anonymously in the study. If you agree to participate in this study you will be given a participant number such as participant one or participant two. This is how I will refer to you in the study. So your personal information like your name or physical description will not be used in this study. All information taken from your interview will quoted using your participant number to keep your legal name and information private and confidential. Do you have any questions about that?"

(Answers questions if questions do exist)

"All of your information including your name, contact information, interview, and participant number will be stored on a private, secure hard drive for three years. This is to protect your personal information and privacy. Do you have any questions about that?"

(Answers questions if questions do exist)

"Also, if you do decide to participate in this study you will receive a thank you gift basket and card to the address of your choice. This address will also be stored and kept privately. At this time, do you have any questions or need me to go over or repeat anything about this study?"

(Answers questions/goes over information if needed)

"At this time, would you say that you would or would not like to participate in this study?"

(If subject says no, then I will thank them for their time. If participant says yes, I will then confirm a date, location, and time for their interview. See script below.)

"Would you prefer to do a face-to-face interview or an over-the-phone interview? What would be the best time to conduct your interview? (Asks for address if doing a face-to-face interview) May I use the contact information that you submitted on the More Information Sign-Up Form as the best ways to contact you? Once again, a signed consent form will be needed from you to participate in this study. You will be handed a consent form to sign on the day and time of your interview to turn in to me before we get started (only for face-to-face participants). –or- You will be sent your consent form by email five business days before your phone interview so that you can fill out the form and return it to me (only for over-the-phone participants). Your consent form must be filled out and turned in to me before we can do your interview."

“Thank you so much for deciding to participate in this study. I will be sending you a confirmation email within the next 15 minutes to confirm your interview type, date and location, which also includes my best contact information. Please pay attention to the information on cancelling or rescheduling your interview. Thank you once again for your time and interest in this study.” **ENDS PHONE CALL**

APPENDIX C
Participant Consent Form

North Carolina State University
Family Life and Youth Development
Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences

Contact Information:

Sonja Mitchell-NCSU Graduate Student- stmitche@ncsu.edu, (704) 287-1004
Dr. Kimberly Allen-NCSU Assistant Professor, Student Advisor- kimberly_allen@ncsu.edu -
(919) 515-9139
Deb Paxton-NCSU Institutional Review Board Office-(919) 515-4514
Informed Consent

For purposes of the research project entitled Identifying Affects of Developing Intimate Relationships Among African American Emerging Adults Based Upon the Quality of Parental/Guardian Intimate Relationships I, _____ agree to serve as a subject by participating in a face-to-face or over the phone interview for this study. It has been explained to me that participating in this study is completely voluntary and that the purpose of this study is to find out how parental/guardian intimate relationships affect the choices, decisions, and quality of intimate relationships among emerging African American adults. I understand that the proposed use for this research is to aid in the completion of a Master's of Science Degree at North Carolina State University and that some information from my interview may be quoted in this study but that no personal identifying information matching me to any used quotes or otherwise will be published.

It has been explained to me that personal information about me and my parent/guardian(s) will be asked in the interview. You may skip any question, if you wish.

I understand that there is no direct benefit to me for participating in this study but that I will receive a thank you basket and card to the address of my choice for participating in this study. It has been explained to me that my identifying information provided for my participation in this study and the shipment of my thank you basket and card will be stored securely and privately in order to keep my identification confidential.

The researcher has offered and has been willing to answer any questions that I have regarding this study.

I hereby acknowledge that I have the choice to either accept or reject serving as a subject in this study. I acknowledge and understand that I am choosing to voluntarily participate in the research study entitled Identifying Affects of Developing Intimate Relationships Among

African American Emerging Adults Based Upon the Quality of Parental/Guardian Intimate Relationships and that I can choose to withdraw from this study at any point during the process.

Participant's Name (please print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D
Interview Confirmation Email



Hello (participant name),

This is your interview confirmation for the participation in the following study:

**Identifying Affects of Developing Intimate Relationships Among African American Emerging Adults
Based Upon the Quality of Parental/Guardian Intimate Relationships**

Type of Interview: (face-to-face or over-the-phone)

Location:

Date:

Time:

If you need to cancel or reschedule your meeting, please email me at stmitche@ncsu.edu or call at (704) 287-1004. Cancellations should be made at least two (2) days before your scheduled interview. If you would like to reschedule, please contact me withing seven (7) days of your scheduled interview.

For any questions, concerns, or more information feel free to contact me at stmitche@ncsu.edu or (704) 287-1004.

Thank you for your interest in this study!

APPENDIX E
Guided Interview Questions

(A) Quality of Parent's Intimate Relationship

*Goal is to get the participant to open up about their parental's current or past intimate relationships and how they perceived the quality to be.

1. Tell me about your parent's current intimate relationship.
2. What was your parent's intimate relationship like when you were growing up?
3. How would you describe the quality of your parent's intimate relationship while you were growing up?
4. How would you describe the quality of your parent's current intimate relationship?
5. What obstacles were you exposed to in your parent's intimate relationship? Tell me how these obstacles helped or hindered their relationships?

(B) Quality of Participant's Intimate Relationship in Regards to their Parents

*Goal is to get participants to open up about the quality of their intimate relationships and relate it back to the relationship quality of their parent's if they can.

1. Tell me about your experience with romantic relationships.
2. Talk to me about the quality of your current or past relationships.
3. What advice has your parents ever given you about relationships, finding a mate, and/or conducting yourself as a mate?
4. Why do you believe this advice was given?
5. Tell me about a time where you found yourself looking for or dating someone with characteristics of one or both of your parents.
6. What characteristics of one or both of your parents do you look for or want in a partner?
7. What characteristics of your parent's intimate relationship would you want in your own relationship?
8. What similarities of your current or past relationships have you noticed with your parent's current or past relationships whether experiences, obstacles, and/or quality?

9. It is said that people tend to mimic the intimate relationships of their parents due to exposure and/or experience. Tell me how you feel about this statement.

10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX F
Participant Textural Theme Quotes

Textural Themes for Participant 1

Perception of Quality of Parental Couple Relationships:

- (1) “When I was growing up...she was married to my dad around...since I was born in ’88.”
- (2) “But they were together before then, when I was born my dad was in the house still until I was in fourth grade, so maybe nine years.”
- (3) “Oh they had a great relationship...till things started getting rocky...”
- (4) “My dad cheated on my mom.”
- (5) “They was arguing all the time so, he just packed his stuff and never came back.”
- (6) “Their relationship now is probably hmm...when it comes to me it’s great.”
- (7) “Anything other than me they don’t speak.”
- (8) “She did the best she can, but it was a rough time when my dad left...it was rough on her.”
- (9) “At this time my mother is single, and she is not dating...the last date she had was probably bout six, seven years ago to my knowledge.”

Reaction to Parent’s Split:

- (1) “When my dad left, my grades dropped.”
- (2) “Uh I was going through a lot of stuff in school.”
- (3) “Uh...being rude to my mom...blaming her for everything...it was real rough.”

- (4) “I had a lot of anger built up in me...I was letting it out the wrong ways, on the wrong people.”
- (5) “I just wanted to be mad.”
- (6) “But my mom finally knocked some sense in me...it got better like...my attitude got better.”
- (7) “I couldn’t be mad at my mom for standing up for herself you know...that’s what I would want my sisters and little nieces to do.”

Perception of Quality of Relationship With Parents:

- (1) “I didn’t speak to him [dad] for like a year.”
- (2) “Oh man it was rough man...cus I know when my dad left that male figure wasn’t in the house.”
- (3) “I didn’t have anybody to put me in my place like a father should when I was acting out...like my mom disciplined me but not like it would’ve been from my dad.”
- (4) “You know dads are supposed to teach their sons life lessons on how to be a man...I didn’t have that...I learned on my own, I’m still learning.”
- (5) “I was in a house surrounded by strong women...my mom and my older sisters raised me.”
- (6) “I am a lot closer to my mom than my dad.”
- (7) “Like me and my dad speak now...but not like that...like we have a relationship, its just not as close as my mom.”

Parental Household Demographics:

- (1) “When my dad left, we was on the verge of being poor, so yea.”

- (2) “When he left, my mom was the only one working.”
- (3) “We got by though for real, but we aint live no lavish life that’s for sure...I mean growing up we didn’t...now we good!”
- (4) “But when my dad left, it got hard on my mom to pay bills you know...we would stay at my grandma’s or my aunt’s when the power got shut off...you know stuff like that.”

Perception of Quality of Personal Relationships in Emerging Adulthood/Intimate Partner Violence:

- (1) “Like right now, discussing marriage and stuff I was afraid to be in a deep relationship.”
- (2) “But now I see the beauty of it...but at first I was like hmm no I’m good...I’ll just be like my dad and have multiple friends, but I see that’s not the way to go.”
- (3) “Oh it’s great, uh we get along...she’s a sweetheart and she’s very caring...spoiled but she’s a sweet person.” [about participant’s current romantic relationship]
- (4) “I can say we’re on a good level, and could be getting to the verge of marriage...well not on the verge of marriage, but seeing her as a mother of my children and a wife.”
- (5) “Wifey material!” [how participant describes his current mate]
- (6) “Four and a half years on Monday.” [how long participant and mate have been together]
- (7) “When we first got together it was kind of rough cus...I was just going through so much...we didn’t know how to communicate that well...and I wasn’t rude but...ok I was very rude.”

- (8) “I was a good guy, but at the same time I had a lot of anger in me...so I use to be mean to her and be rude.”
- (9) “My mom and dad put some fire under me, that really took a toll and it really got me on the right path.”
- (10) “Oh I hear it every day, basically, just don’t be rude and disrespectful because you don’t want nobody to do that to your sisters and your little nieces.” [relationship advice given to participant from parents]
- (11) “That’s when I really understood it, and learned from it...learned from what I seen with my mom and dad...and also stuff I seen around my sisters.”
- (12) “Oh wow, basically she reminds me of my mom right now...which is a good thing for the most part...I haven’t seen no bad in it really” [about participant’s current mate]
- (13) “She reminds of my mom with some of the stuff she do, like her cooking...just certain advice she gives me, you know just being...she just cares for me, so that reminds me of her a lot.”
- (14) “She is kind of strict...she wants to know where I’m at at all times...since I’m up here by myself in Washington” [about participant’s current mate]
- (15) “Uh intelligent, and...just love, like she has love for a lot of people, you know, and really care, so those are two, yea.” [characteristics of mother that participant would want to have in a mate]
- (16) “Yea communication...being able to let your know partner know how you feel.”
[obstacle found in participant’s own relationship(s) that is similar to parental couple relationship]

- (17) “Communication is key...the key to all relationships...so I’ve learned how to communicate better.”
- (18) “My dad is not a good communicator, and he always like...he always spoke over my mom...that’s one thing I do not want to do.”
- (19) “In a relationship...I don’t want to overstep anyone and think I’m greater than anyone ever...we both should have an opinion and try to work to compromise on things so...”
- (20) “It also helped me be a better compromiser...for the both of us because I don’t want to do that...like I don’t want to be like my dad when it comes to that.”
- (21) “Oh that’s really...that’s true! From the good parts of the relationship, not the bad you know...so I try to you know mimic my parents...not mimic but what I saw that worked, I want to be, you know have that with my partner...and how we care for each other. Just get along you know, and maybe have kids one day. So yea, the stuff I saw with them...the good stuff...I would love to have that. [participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]
- (22) “It could be a good thing but could also be a bad thing as well, but on my end it was always a good thing...whatever floats your boat (laughs)!” [continued participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]

Textural Themes for Participant 2

Perception of Quality of Parental Couple Relationships:

- (1) “Well my parents are currently divorced...they divorced when I was sixteen.”
- (2) “Well when I was growing up my parents were, what I thought, happily married.”
- (3) “Um I mean they did fight a couple times but what couple did not fight.”

- (4) “We went traveling, um we did a lot of things together.”
- (5) “It wasn’t until I turned a teenager that I kinda noticed that there was some distance in between my parents.”
- (6) “I mean my parents, they interacted with each other.”
- (7) “They were cordial in the after work setting, like when my mom wanted to come home and relax her and my dad could kinda mesh on that end...when they were out partying, having a good time, they could mesh on that end.
- (8) “But when it came to like paying bills, and going to work every day, the kind of grown up side about it, they kind of bumped heads on that a lot.”
- (9) “In the beginning, I can even speak on before I was born, my parent’s relationship was very high quality...they were very much in love.”
- (10) “They were moving into a new house.”
- (11) “My dad had adopted my sister as his own child so he had really opened up to try to make the whole relationship thing work.”
- (12) “But as the years went on, the quality started to fall a little bit more.”
- (13) “My mother was growing and my dad was stagnant where he was...my mother grew up in the city so she always had that work hard, do what you gotta do to make ends meet...she had my sister when she was young so she always had that drive to do her best.”
- (14) “Whereas my dad grew up in the country...my dad came from a certain way of dad where the man was the head of the household and the wife basically...you know just did her wifely duties, he thought he could do whatever he wanted to do.”

- (15) “So towards the end of their relationship it was very low quality...they were sleeping in separate bedrooms.”
- (16) “Um they were barely communicating, and there was tension in the house.”
- (17) “Sad to say I kinda knew divorce was coming...but I didn’t know it was going to come in the way that it did...they were fighting a lot more.”
- (18) “I feel like my mother just wasn’t very happy and my dad was kind of oblivious.”
- (19) “It took me a long time to realize that it wasn’t nobodies fault that my parents split up, like it wasn’t my mom’s fault or my dad’s fault...they just really grew apart and that happens.”
- (20) “My mother is currently dating this man that we’ve known for a long time.”
- (21) “My dad is currently single...not dating anyone, I don’t even think he’s looking to date anyone any time soon.”
- (22) “My mother says that she does not want to get married again...she says she’s happy with her current situation...she wants to keep it that way, that’s really what I don’t think she wants to get remarried.”
- (23) “Things are going her way...and she is happy with that.”
- (24) “My niece and nephew call him grandfather and everything so it’s like he’s part of the family!” [mom’s current mate]

Perception of Quality of Relationship With Parents:

- (1) “I have a closer relationship with my mother than my dad.”
- (2) “I know that she is my mother, but at the end of the day she is also my friend.”

- (3) "I only talk to my dad like once a month, once every few months sometimes even...its not like frequent or on a regular basis, no."

Parental Household Demographics:

- (1) "Kinda noticed that after my dad had got laid off in 2001, um it put a lot of strain on my mom to take care of the bills, and do things like they were supposed to be done...just to keep us a float."
- (2) "It wasn't until I got older that I noticed there began to be a wedge in between them when the financial issues came about."
- (3) "As my mother grew and started to be the bread winner of the household, really the only person bringing in the income...I think it kind of bothered my dad."
- (4) "At first I think it bothered him, but after a while he got use to it and he got comfortable."
- (5) "My mom and her boyfriend have been living together since I was about eighteen...so that's about four or five years now."
- (6) "My mom likes being in charge and in control...she likes to be independent and do things on her own...and I think she likes that"
- (7) "He stays with my mother but its her house...he doesn't help her with anything for real, except fixing something you know stuff like that."
- (8) "He doesn't pay any bills there though."

Perception of Quality of Personal Relationships in Emerging Adulthood/Intimate Partner

Violence:

- (1) “I started dating, well what I thought was dating at a very young age...I started dating boys when I was little little.”
- (2) “I had like a little neighborhood boy who I use to call my boyfriend when I was like five.”
- (3) “It wasn’t until I hit high school where I had my first like real relationship.”
- (4) “One boyfriend that I had in high school broke up with me because I changed my hair color (laughs)...he didn’t like it so he broke up with me...it was heartbreaking at first but it kind of made me the main target at school, every guy wanted to talk to me after that...they were like “he’s dumb...her hair was cute!”...(laughs).”
- (5) “And then after that I had my first real deal Holyfield relationship after that with my ex.”
- (6) “During our relationship we had a lot of dramatic points...it wasn’t until the end of our relationship that I was realized that I was in a very...not physically abusive, but verbally abusive relationship.”
- (7) “He use to call me stupid and dumb.”
- (8) “I think the main issue was I was country, but I came from a pretty good family , my mother was making pretty good money...and he came from the hood, like he didn’t know his father. He lived with his grandma and he was always getting tossed back and forth from his grandmother to his mother because nobody wanted to keep him for long periods of time.”

- (9) “I was always there trying to rescue him.”
- (10) “I feel like I fell in love with the potential of who I thought he could be, but not who he actually was...and it wasn’t until the end when I saw him for who he actually really was.”
- (11) “I think that bothered him that I was in school...I was in college and I was doing things with my life, and in my mind I was trying to bring him along.”
- (12) “One time we got in an argument over molded strawberries in a save-a-lot (laughs)...he was mad because I told him “oh I don’t wanna buy these they got mold on them”...and he got mad, he was like “you too good to shop in save-a-lot, you too good for molded strawberries?”...and I was like “but they have mold on them” (laughs)...and I couldn’t understand and we got in this big knock out drag out fight...he was slamming doors in my face...it was just really dramatic”
- (13) “It took me a long time to get to the point where I could be completely and utterly over him.”
- (14) “Now when I look back on it, it was just so many situations and red flags in my face that were telling me that I need to leave him alone...it took me a long time to get my sanity back from that relationship.”
- (15) “I remember another situation where I was sitting on my back deck and I was ready to pull my hair out, I wasn’t sleeping because I was depressed from being verbally abused.”

- (16) “But now, my current romantic relationship is funny because I never saw myself with my current boyfriend, but now I think he could possibly be the one...which is crazy.”
- (17) “My current relationship, um the quality of it...I think its very high...and I hope it stays high.”
- (18) “Sometimes we do have some lows...sometimes it can be very tiring sometimes...you know the process of us living together and you know trying to work things out.”
- (19) I make more money than him, like I already graduated college, and he is still in undergrad so I pay the rent and he helps me with the smaller bills.
- (20) “Once again, I’m from the country and he’s from the suburbs so...we have different morals...different ways that we do things.” [current mate]
- (21) “But in this relationship I’m learning to really compromise.”
- (22) “Um I’m a control freak, I like everything to be done my way and I have to remember that in this relationship I have to learn to kinda give in to certain things and you know try to compromise on certain things.”
- (23) “One thing I’ll never compromise on is, if I know I’m right I’m right so there’s no if ands or buts about it.”
- (24) “I think before I was kind of searching for a relationship...for someone who kind of reminded me of my dad”
- (25) “But my mom told me, she said “when you find someone, find someone that you can grow with not someone that you just like right now...find someone that when you’re

growing to the next yeas of your life, they're growing with you to those next years"...and that really explained a lot to me about what happened to my parents."

- (26) "I think in my past relationships I was always looking for people because I was drawn to their potential but they never lived up to their potential...whereas now I think I'm finally with someone that is striving to grow and want some of the very same things that I want."
- (27) "One thing I can say is, most of the build of the guys I date reminds me of my dad, which is so funny."
- (28) "I realized that my ex was really like my dad, um he was set in his ways, set in the way he was gonna be...I kept trying to you know do things that I thought would help him in life but he never took the opportunity...he never strived to do better or exceed my expectations...and thinking that I was gonna be the breadwinner and he was just gonna reap all the benefits"
- (29) "Its ok to have someone that kind of reminds me of my dad, but not someone who is just like my dad...not saying that I don't like my dad or don't love my dad because I do but I wouldn't want to be in the same situation as my mom and my dad were."
- (30) "I think the reason that I love my current partner the way I do is he makes me laugh, he tells me to calm down, and he's not a planner in any kind of way which is what I am...and that reminds me of my dad, my dad is not a planner."
- (31) "For me its all plan, plan, plan, schedule, schedule, schedule, things have to be set a certain way...and my partner is like just let some things go and go with the flow we don't have to go by a schedule...he balances me out."

- (32) “Initially my parents worked because my dad helped my mom chill out...that’s what [participant’s boyfriend’s name] does for me.”
- (33) “The fact that she [participant’s mom] kind of does things with him [mom’s boyfriend] even if she doesn’t want to things with him...because sometimes my boyfriend will want to do things with me and I don’t want to do them and I can tell that he kind of gets upset...I need to work on that.”
- (34) “I have to learn that we can’t always do things the way I want to do them.”
- (35) “My mom’s current relationship and my relationship are kind of similar...he mellows her out but still keeps her on her toes, and my boyfriend does the same for me.”
- (36) “I feel that that statement is a 100% true, and I don’t even think that its something you do on purpose...it just happens and when I look back on it I’m like wow that was really close to that situation or wow he’s really similar to my dad...because that’s all you know about relationships, you don’t know anything but what you see. But like I said I don’t think its something people walk around trying to do it just happens, and then you look back on it like wow!” [participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]

Textural Themes for Participant 3

Perception of Quality of Parental couple Relationships:

- (1) “My parents are married...they’ve been married a little over 20 years.”
- (2) “My parents are quite affections towards each other still”
- (3) “...the pet names, the gestures towards love and kindness.”

- (4) “They’re still, I’m pretty sure, sexually intimate.”
- (5) “Growing up my parents had a...overall I would say a good relationship.”
- (6) “There were arguments, but there was never anything to the point where they were on the verge of separating.”
- (7) “...there wasn’t anything more than like a little spat in the house that wasn’t over and done with a few hours later.”
- (8) “They are both very giving, and nurturing, and providing.”
- (9) “I feel like...like it was good.”
- (10) “They cared and you knew they cared.”
- (11) “It wasn’t like a oh those two are married...it was like a oh those two are married and you can tell.”
- (12) “Argument would be over like a basic money issue that should’ve been taken care of but somebody wouldn’t for whatever reason.”
- (13) “It never hindered anything, if anything I appreciate the fact that they were able to talk about it and get over it.”

Perception of Quality of Personal Relationships in Emerging Adulthood/Intimate Partner
Violence:

- (1) “I have seriously dated and just casually dated, you know, a decent amount of people.”
- (2) “I haven’t had the best luck.”
- (3) “I’ve dated people who weren’t really serious about dating or didn’t know what they wanted.”

- (4) “So I’ve never gotten like the full...like full fledge I’m dating someone and we’re in to each other, let’s see where this goes deal.”
- (5) “My first serious relationship, um, was two and a half years long.”
- (6) “Granted at that moment I thought I was like head over hills in love...I can sit back now and say that it was just puppy love.”
- (7) “It wasn’t a positive in any sense like it was very controlling on his behave...it was very mean and abusive on his behave verbally wise.”
- (8) “If anything, it made me realize what I never want.”
- (9) “My mother is very like southern in her ways...you gotta know how to clean, you gotta be able to do these things...you gotta find a guy that’s got goals for himself you know.” [parental advice given to participant]
- (10) “I know my parents have both told me to look for certain things in a guy...like how does he treat his mom, how does he treat his sister, you know things like that.”
- (11) “My dad is a very good provider and he means well but sometimes he does things that like make absolutely no sense...I found myself dating guys who you know may have struggled financially or weren’t good decision makers...I found myself sometimes dating guys that does things he does.”
- (12) “I need someone who you would be caring...but just like you know, just understanding...he will go over the top and work a few jobs, my dads that type of person, so I definitely just want that type of person.”
- (13) “My parents are really open, they can laugh and joke about simple things, they still sit up late at night and watch TV and just talk...like I want that.”

- (14) “I honestly, whole heartedly agree with it. I feel like you know, if your parents are the quote unquote all American family or whether they’re a family that works extremely hard and they have struggled but made sure it happened, you know you like go for that. That’s what you know, and that’s what you’ve seen, and that’s what you’re exposed to and its like embedded in you and you go and do the same thing.
[participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]
- (15) “But at the same time, like I don’t want to contradict it like, if you know if your parents were in a abusive relationship then you may be like, ok I never want that. But you usually just go for what you know and like what you see...I definitely agree with that.” [continued participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]

Textural Themes for Participant 4

Perception of Quality of Parental Couple Relationships:

- (1) “My parents have the most beautiful relationship, uh intimate and romantic relationship I’ve ever seen in my life.”
- (2) “My parents have been together for a sum of 32 years.”
- (3) “They’ve been married for at least 25 of those years.”
- (4) “They have been loving each other hard from day one, like my parents have never talked of divorce.”
- (5) “They’ve struggled but they’ve never had anything to the point where they’d not want to see each other or be with each other every day.”
- (6) “My parents, like myself, are very affectionate.”

- (7) “Like you know, they have a remarkable relationship, its strong, its faith based you know.”
- (8) “They ultimately believe in a higher power, you know, like God.”
- (9) “So you know Jesus and religion is very much the basis of my parent’s relationship.”
- (10) “They also strive to make each other happy, you know, on a day-to-day basis...happier than they’ve ever been before.”
- (11) “When I was a child, all I saw you know was nothing but affection like they always included me in every activity that they did.”
- (12) “Everything that they did was family oriented and family based.”
- (13) “Just observing, you know just sitting back and looking at it, my parents always loved to have fun, they loved to laugh.”
- (14) “To be truthful I honestly don’t think it was any serious obstacles.”
- (15) “Like my parents argued about stupid stuff like who remembered what.”
- (16) “I honestly think it worked out for the better because it strengthened their ability to work things out...problem solve.”
- (17) “Its just a really good relationship I actually try to model myself after.”

Perception of Quality of Personal Relationships in Emerging Adulthood/Intimate Partner Violence:

- (1) “When I first started dating, I think I was looking for love in uh, in all the wrong companions to be honest.”
- (2) “I think I was looking for someone that is everything I thought I wanted that is not what I have now...if that makes any sense.”

- (3) "I thought you know that I had to have like you know the most popular person."
- (4) "One thing with one of my previous girlfriends is that she ended being you know a little bit promiscuous."
- (5) "She didn't have the same core values that I had, and the same core values that I was raised on."
- (6) "I also got myself involved with someone without any manners, or any appreciation values."
- (7) "I feel like that was reflective of the relationship her parents held."
- (8) "But the girlfriend that I have now, she's sweet, she's caring, she actually holds me down in a sense."
- (9) "She makes more money than I do, and it's not about money but she's actually able to provide more than I am."
- (10) "She understands my sense of you know, not being well endowed right now with the monetary sense of being with her."
- (11) "But I give her the things that money can not buy you feel me."
- (12) "Like being just romantic, spontaneous, sweet, and caring."
- (13) "She's nurturing to my sensitive needs and sensitive points of view."
- (14) "I can't see myself being with anybody else, I ultimately love her from the bottom of my heart."
- (15) "I think by looking at my parent's relationship, and analyzing the true definition of love from looking at my parents I initially sought what I saw my father saw in my mother."

- (16) “Well my parents always told me to be extremely courteous because you know you ultimately have to be with the person that your with.”
- (17) “My parents actually said have fun, and I can see that having fun and laughter is the key to a good relationship.”
- (18) “We have to find out what works for us ya know.”
- (19) “Her mannerisms are a lot like my mother and its kind of scary to say that.”
- (20) “Its very comfortable to be with her because in a sad sense she reminds me of my mother.”
- (21) “You know what they say, little girls marry their fathers, and little boys marry their mothers.”
- (22) “She’s caring but sarcastic at the same time just like my mother would be.”
- (23) “She pushes and motivates me like my mother would motivate my father.”
- (24) “Definitely the longevity of their [parents] relationship is one of the few characteristics I want to have in this relationship.”
- (25) “Not that my parents have gone through, but that the other person I’ve been talking to...like some of the things that their parents were going through in their relationship at the time, we would go through it in our relationship.” [Referring to past relationship not present]
- (26) “I actually agree with that statement because if you think about it, our parents relationship is the first thing that wee see and what we know is love. Either its gonna be a bad mirror or its gonna be a good mirror, but that’s ultimately what we have to judge on what a relationship is, how to conduct a relationship...and how to deal with

the aspects of like problems and things that are going on in a relationship. And how we see them interact and react with each other.” [participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]

Textural Themes for Participant 5

Perception of Quality of Parental Couple Relationships:

- (1) “Well considering the fact that um my mom and my dad relationship was pretty bad, considering that he was a drug addict and stuff.”
- (2) “He was a womanizer.”
- (3) “It wasn’t good I mean.”
- (4) “To me it seemed as if she was trynna create a romantic type of environment when she could...just so she could hold on to whatever little bit she thought she had left with my dad.”
- (5) “I wouldn’t say that they had a romantic type of relationship.”
- (6) “It was an in and out type of situation.”
- (7) “It was definitely a negative relationship.”
- (8) “It was some good moments but for the most part it was negative.”
- (9) “She [mom] was hindered by it...mentally, emotionally, physically, everything.”
- (10) “I feel like since she’s divorced him she’s different now...she’s not in the same mind state that she was in before.”
- (11) “I feel like it helped her because she knows not to go back, or deal with situations she’s dealt with when she was with my dad.”
- (12) “I think the quality of their relationship is very good.” [mom’s current marriage]

- (13) “They’re married, it’s at a good start.”
- (14) “[mom’s current husband’s name] and my mom, their relationship is very loving.”
- (15) “He really takes pride into making her happy.”
- (16) “He’s very engaged with my mom, makes sure that she engages him as well.”
- (17) “They’re passionate in front of me...they kiss in front of me.”
- (18) “Both of them are very accepting of one another.”
- (19) “Its their second time getting married, so its not like all of the big high hopes when they first got married because they’ve already been through this already so they already know what to expect.”

Perception of Quality of Relationship with Parents:

- (1) “I’ve experienced the cheating...that my dad had did.”
- (2) “He would actually bring me around the females that he would be cheating on my mom with.”
- (3) “I’ve experienced abuse...and when I say abuse I mean physically, verbally, and mentally.”
- (4) “I’ve experienced everything under the sun really with the relationship that I dealt with with my dad and my mom growing up.”
- (5) “It was like, my dad was very selfish so it was all about him.”
- (6) “He made sure that he fed his habit and his addiction without thinking about his family.”

Reaction to Parent’s Split

- (1) “I didn’t really feel anything when they split because my dad was already in and out.”

- (2) “Well I was happy when my mom said that she was finally filing for divorce because that meant that my dad wouldn’t have any more rights to come in the house.”
- (3) “But yea, I was just happy that my mom finally did something to take action you know...I mean it took long enough.”

Parental Household Demographics:

- (1) “When she [mom] was still in the relationship with my dad, she was definitely hindered by it financially.”
- (2) “My dad came in and out of the house as he pleased.”
- (3) “But I pretty much referred to my mom as a single parent then.”
- (4) “My dad stole from us a lot when he would be high so we did a lot of replacing things, well not a lot, but replacing necessities...important things.”
- (5) “Which pissed me off because we were already low on funds.”
- (6) “Like I remember one time when I came home and my stereo that I had gotten for Christmas was gone and I was so pissed...I asked my mom if I could get another one and she pretty much told me no because we had to pay bills.”
- (7) “So it was like keep the lights on or buy me a new stereo and I know she wasn’t having that (laughs).”
- (8) “But yea we struggled a bit, like my mom worked two jobs.”
- (9) “One job she worked was at night so she would be gone, and it would just be me and my little brother there ya know.”

Perception of Quality of Personal Relationships in Emerging Adulthood/Intimate Partner

Violence:

- (1) “I think from the start I’ve always had a boyfriend...like even as small as kindergarten.”
- (2) “I think my first serious relationship was when I was in eighth grade.”
- (3) “Of course in relationships I tend to fall hard.”
- (4) “I always try to give the most of myself to that other person expecting the same in return.”
- (5) “However, I’ve of course dealt with cheating in my last relationship that I was in for six years.”
- (6) “I think that’s the relationship that I went through the most because I was 15 going into this relationship...15 going on 16, and ended the relationship when I was turning 22.”
- (7) “So I went through experiences from a child...pre-teen mind state, all the way to an adult mind state.”
- (8) “So I pretty much grew up with this person while I was dating him and we went through the most.”
- (9) “My current romantic relationship is quite difficult (laughs).”
- (10) “It’s a relationship where both ends are having to sacrifice and work hard to make this relationship work.”
- (11) “On my part because I’ve never been in a relationship with a guy with a child before.”

- (12) “This is my first relationship where I’m dealing with that and it is taking a lot out of me.”
- (13) “I’m seeing in myself that I am capable of doing these things but it was a learning process, it still is.”
- (14) “I would say overall the relationship is good, but it took a lot for us to be good.”
- (15) “Even now the relationship my mom and my dad had in front of me, it definitely effects my relationships that I have with you know my significant other in my life.”
- (16) “The person who has really given me the most advice between my parents is my mom.”
- (17) “I come to her here and there, I’m not the type to give my mom or my dad information about my relationship.”
- (18) “I’m kinda secret about that because I don’t want to involve parents to make relationships worse.”
- (19) “But if its something that I feel I don’t know the answer to of course Ill come to my mom and ask for her opinion, due to the fact that she’s been through many experiences throughout life.”
- (20) “I feel like the advice she’s given me has definitely helped me in certain situations dealing with my current relationship.”
- (21) “One of the things she has always told me is that I definitely need to voice when I have a problem with something because your mate can not read your mind.”

- (22) “I know like with my mom, I pulled feeling comforted because she definitely alone a lot throughout the relationship with my dad...so I look at it like I need somebody to comfort me if I feel alone.”
- (23) “I would say with my mom her being understanding, and with my dad him being a business person, knowing how to make a dollar...being able to provide and make money.” [parental characteristics participant wants in a mate]
- (24) “I think when I get their age (laughs) I would want to be as cool and as relaxed as they are in their relationship.”
- (25) “The main thing boils down to love and trust and stability.”
- (26) “I feel like, it definitely could play a part because if that’s what you grow up seeing and that your use to, it wouldn’t be odd for it to be repeated. I feel like if you’re lacking something from your parents...I’m sure somewhere down the line something will take place, either the exact same or something similar to it. So I mean...I don’t disagree with the statement.” [participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]

Textural Themes for Participant 6

Perception of Quality of Parental Couple Relationships:

- (1) “My parents are married.”
- (2) “Their relationship I would say was a little bit touchy.”
- (3) “Both of my parents were loving.”
- (4) “They had a loving marriage.”
- (5) “But they also argued, uh a lot so I do remember them arguing a lot.”
- (6) “Um I would describe it as positive...besides the arguing it was high, it was positive.”

- (7) “It’s gotten worse, I would say its negative.” [quality of parental relationship]
- (8) “I think certain things my mom would’ve done differently in the past.”
- (9) “They argue more now and there’s less communication between the two.”
- (10) “I don’t know if its because my father is significantly older than my mom, that might have something to do with it.”
- (11) “My dad has a...he drinks a lot so I would say that was something that kind of hindered their relationship.”

Parental Household Demographics

- (1) “I grew up in a stable household.”
- (2) “My mom basically now makes all the money and that’s kinda a stress factor on her.”

Perception of Quality of Personal Relationships in Emerging Adulthood/Intimate Partner Violence:

- (1) “My last serious relationship was kind of just head strong over the hills type.”
- (2) “In the relationship it started off as good, but then I feel that I became a nagging girlfriend.”
- (3) “And I don’t know if that’s because a lot of times now I see my mom just nag, and she nags and nags.”
- (4) “And I don’t know if I took after that but I nagged a lot.”
- (5) “Then eventually we kind of just stopped talking and our relationship went down hill.”
- (6) “At the beginning, I was a very loving girlfriend...I was committed.”

- (7) “I was just happy all the time, but then my insecurities um kind of kicked in, and then I was questioning all the time and I began to nag...so I think I took that after my mom”
- (8) “My mom always told me to make sure that I find someone who can take care of me, not saying that I need to depend upon a man to take care of me, but he needs to be able to take care of me financially and emotionally.”
- (9) “Because my dad in the long run is not able to take care of her, she’s taking care of him.” [participants perception of why mother gave her that advice]
- (10) “I was dating someone whose birthday was actually the day after my dad’s and they’re the same sign, and we didn’t mesh too well.”
- (11) “I would take from my mom...I guess her strong will for things.”
- (12) “I don’t think I would take too much from my dad besides maybe his eye for detail maybe.”
- (13) “Communication wise yes.” [obstacle suffered in personal relationship(s) that parents suffered from in their couple relationship]
- (14) “I kinda agree with that, um because like I said...little things I remember from being a little girl, my parents loved each other, but they also fought and they argued. So I think I took that...my relationships, sometimes I feel as if my relationships if I’m in one, if they’re going good for too long and we’re both happy for too long then I need to do something to upset that because I don’t like it. I feel like we need to fight about something , we need to argue.” [participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]

(15) “I feel as if my relationship is not exciting and I think that’s something wrong with that and I should just enjoy the smooth sailing ride, and not look for anything or try to fight or argue about something that’s unnecessary. So I do believe I took that from experiences. So I feel as if, you know, seeing that as a little girl you know I feel as if that’s the way a marriage or a relationship is supposed to be, but its not.” [continued participant response to section B question 9, see appendix E]