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Emerging Adult African American Men: Romantic Relationship Profiles and Predictors

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COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES

EMERGING ADULT AFRICAN
AMERICAN MEN: ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP
PROFILES AND PREDICTORS

By

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I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all of the African American men in my life who are not afraid to be different and to my dear son who will defy gravity.

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ABSTRACT

Establishing stable, high quality romantic relationships is an important developmental task during emerging adulthood with prognostic significance for future relationship development such as marriage (Fincham & Cui, 2011). Studies suggest that considerable challenges exist for African American men in developing and maintaining healthy romantic relationships. These studies suggest that man African American men may be more likely to pursue a sexual partnership trajectory that involves multiple and/or concurrent sexual partners at the expense of committed monogamous romantic relationships (Bowleg, 2004). Such patterns of involvement increase the likelihood that as young adults, African American men will place themselves at risk of contracting and transmitting sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS (Adimora et al., 2004).

Individuals enter into romantic relationships already having exposure to numerous developmental influences that affect their behavior. Exposure to adversity during childhood, such as abuse, neglect, and other stressors, is one important factor in understanding the development of satisfying and committed romantic relationships (Miller et al., 2011; Walker, Holman, & Busby, 2009). Informed by the internal working model perspective (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and research on abuse and other adversities (e.g. Burton & Jarrett, 2000; McLoyd, et al., 2000; Umberson, Williams, Thomas, Liu, & Thomeer, 2014), I hypothesized that young men with elevated levels of adversity would evince relationships characterized by one of two patterns. The first involves avoiding deeper levels of commitment and participating in relatively superficial romantic relationships. The second pattern involves participating highly committed relationships, but projecting their anxieties and fears in ways that create volatile and conflictual interactions. For men with low levels of adversity I expected that there relationships would

conform to a more healthy pattern as characterized by commitment, low levels of conflict and supportive relationships.

Hypotheses were tested with data from men in committed relationships in the African American Men's Health Project (AMP), which included 361 African American men between the ages of 19 and 22 years. To better understand the kinds of relationships that young, African American men participate in, I conducted a person-centered analysis which confirmed the expected relationship patterns. I identified three profiles or relationship types: (1) healthy relationships, (2) volatile relationships, and (3) superficial relationships. The participants in healthy romantic relationships are characterized by high commitment and support and low criticism and conflict. The volatile group is characterized by high commitment, criticism, conflict, and low support. The superficial group is characterized by low commitment, support, criticism, and conflict. Further analysis confirmed that more adverse childhood experiences predicted increased odds of belonging to a volatile instead of a healthy relationship. Findings suggest targets for preventive interventions designed to foster healthy relationships among African American men.

CHAPTER 1

INTEGRATIVE STATEMENT

Romantic relationships in emerging adulthood are vital developmental stepping-stones into later, more permanent relationships, such as marriage (Fincham & Cui, 2011). During this time, young adults are in a trial-and-error period when they are exploring and discovering who they are within relationships as well as the characteristics they look for in a potential marriage partner (Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2007; Parker, Bermudez, & Neustifter, 2007). Healthy romantic relationships during this developmental stage have positive implications for marriage (Karney, Beckett, Collins, & Shaw, 2007; Karney & Bradbury, 1995) and are conducive to good physical, emotional and economic well-being (Amato, 2010; Beach & Whisman, 2012; Gottman, 1997; Wade & Pevalin, 2005; Wickrama, Lorenz, & Conger, 1997). Investigations of young people's romantic relationships have historically focused on the development of increasingly intimate and committed bonds (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Collins, 2003) as well as the influence of cohabitation on later marriage (Brown & Booth, 1996; Thorton, Axinn, & Xie, 2007). Little research, however, has addressed the complexity of the relationships emerging adults construct, which may vary across a range of issues such as commitment, conflict and volatility, and satisfaction.

The complexity of romantic relationships is of particular concern when discussing African American couples. Studies suggest that considerable challenges exist for African Americans in developing and maintaining healthy romantic relationships. Compared with White and Hispanic couples, African American couples report less satisfaction, more conflict, more distrust, and less commitment in their romantic relationships (Anderson, 1999; Kurdek, 2008; Wilson, 2003). Furthermore, studies suggest that African American men may be more likely to

pursue a sexual partnership trajectory that involves multiple and/or concurrent sexual partners at the expense of committed monogamous romantic relationships (Bowleg, 2004)—a pattern of involvement that increases the likelihood that as young adults, African American men will contract and transmit sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS (Adimora et al., 2004). These factors undermine the quality and stability of African American romantic relationships, thereby affecting both the probability of couples choosing to marry (Kreider & Ellis, 2011) and the likelihood that married couples will divorce (Fields & Casper, 2001; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004).

Investigations of normative romantic relationship processes and characteristics from the perspective of African American men are critical to ultimately address challenges to family formation among African Americans. To date little research has investigated how African American men view their relationships. This is significant because men and women experience romantic relationships differently (Bryant et al., 2008, 2010; Cutrona et al., 2003) and have different goals for their relationships; this is particularly true among emerging adults (Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2006). Furthermore, research on African American men's perspectives on romantic relationship have been limited almost exclusively to engagement in risky sexual activities (Doherty, Schoenbach, & Adimora, 2009; Giordano, Longmore, Manning, & Northcutt, 2009; Kogan, Yu, Brody, & Allen, 2013).

Knowing that these complexities and challenges exist for African American men in romantic relationships, the following two studies have addressed the gaps in the literature. Specifically, in Study 1, I investigated romantic relationship profiles for rural, emerging adult African American men based on commitment, support, criticism, and conflict. In doing so, the complexity that exists within romantic relationships was highlighted by using a person-centered

approach rather than a variable approach. This strategy moves beyond examining relationships with a focus on scores on a single variable allowing for a more holistic view of romantic relationships from African American men's perspectives.

In Study 2, I shifted my focus to understanding how and why the profiles from Study 1 might exist. Previous literature suggests that exposure to adversity during childhood, such as abuse, neglect, and other stressors, is one important factor in understanding the development of satisfying and committed romantic relationships (Miller et al., 2011; Walker, Holman, & Busby, 2009). The longitudinal effects of such adverse experiences during childhood tend to be stronger for African American men compared to African American women and Whites (Umberson et al., 2014) with psychosocial ramification in the form of *street code* (Anderson, 1999).

Individuals who endorse the code of the street tend to display aggression and mistrust in social relationships (Barr, Simons, & Stewart, 2013; Jacobs, 2004; Mateu-Gelaber & Lune, 2007; Stewart, Simons, & Conger, 2002; Stewart & Simons, 2010). Specifically, Barr and colleagues (2012) found that those who adopted the code of the street were more likely to report less satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationships, which they attributed to increased relationship hostility and conflict. Therefore, I examined the links between adverse childhood experience, street code, and the romantic relationship profiles that were created in Study 1 with the same population of rural, emerging adult, African American men. Together, these studies contribute to the literature by giving the perspective of African American men, exploring multiple dimensions of their romantic relationships, and investigating how adverse childhood experiences and street code work together to predict group membership.

CHAPTER 2

PAPER 1—INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Romantic relationships in emerging adulthood are vital developmental stepping-stones into later, more permanent relationships, such as marriage (Fincham & Cui, 2011). During this time, young adults are in a trial-and-error period when they are exploring and discovering who they are within relationships as well as the characteristics they look for in a potential marriage partner (Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2007; Parker, Bermudez, & Neustifter, 2007). Successful navigation of this developmental stage has positive implications for marriage (Karney, Beckett, Collins, & Shaw, 2007; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). The importance of emerging adult romantic relationships for young people's development and the health of their future relationships underscore the need to understand emerging adults' participation in romantic relationships.

Historically, investigations of young people's romantic relationships focused on the development of increasingly intimate and committed bonds (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Collins, 2003) as well as the influence of cohabitation on later marriage (Brown & Booth, 1996; Thorton, Axinn, & Xie, 2007). Little research, however, has addressed the complexity of the relationships emerging adults construct, which may vary across a range of issues such as commitment, conflict and volatility, and satisfaction. The current research addresses the need to better understand the complexity of young people's romantic relationships in general and those of African Americans in particular.

African Americans are an important focus for research on emerging adult relationships. Studies suggest that considerable challenges exist for African American couples in developing

and maintaining healthy romantic relationships. Compared with White and Hispanic couples, African American couples report less satisfaction, more conflict, more distrust, and less commitment in their romantic relationships (Anderson, 1999; Kurdek, 2008; Wilson, 2003). These factors undermine the quality and stability of their relationships, thereby affecting both the probability of couples choosing to marry (Kreider & Ellis, 2011) and the likelihood that married couples will divorce (Fields & Casper, 2001; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004).

The present research also focuses on heterosexual, African American, emerging adult couple relationships from the perspectives of African American men. To date little research has investigated how African American men view their relationships. This is significant because men and women experience romantic relationships differently (Bryant et al., 2008, 2010; Cutrona et al., 2003) and have different goals for their relationships; this is particularly true among emerging adults (Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2006). Sex differences in experience of relationships hold across racial ethnic groups (Bryant et al., 2010). Furthermore, research on African American men's perspectives on romantic relationship have been limited almost exclusively to engagement in risky sexual activities (Doherty, Schoenbach, & Adimora, 2009; Giordano, Longmore, Manning, & Northcutt, 2009; Kogan, Yu, Brody, & Allen, 2013). Investigations of normative romantic relationship processes and characteristics from the perspective of African American men are critical to ultimately address challenges to family formation among African Americans.

The goal of the present study was to characterize the romantic relationships of 361 rural African American men ages 19 to 22 who report being in a committed relationship with a female partner who is like a "girlfriend" or a "wife." I employed a "person-centered" analysis to develop profiles of these romantic relationships. This approach characterizes men's romantic

relationships across a range of variables and allows the development of a typology of relationships. Below, I have detailed the rationale for using a person-centered approach, the relationship characteristics that were employed to develop an empirical typology, and the types of groups I expect to find.

Person-Centered Approach to Romantic Relationships

To better understand the kinds of relationships that young, African American men participate in, I used a person-centered approach. In contrast to traditional “variable-centered” approaches, person centered analyses use multiple variables to create profiles (Magnusson, 2003). Variable centered approaches are limited in that they overlook the reality that aspects of romantic relationships do not exist in isolation (VanLear, Koerner, & Allen, 2006). Any particular man’s relationship may be high or low across a range of characteristics. It is the pattern across the variables, however, that provides a uniquely informative portrait of a group (Muthen & Muthen, 2006).

The need for understanding how combinations of variables characterize couple relationships is exemplified by research on relationship stability and relationship quality. Relationship stability and quality are two key elements of romantic relationships. Relationship stability refers to maintaining a relationship over time (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hazan & Hutt, 1990) and relationship quality is satisfaction within the romantic relationship (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). In early research, relationship stability was considered an indicator of a healthy and strong romantic relationship; it was assumed that stable relationships were likely to be of high quality (Burgess & Walin, 1953; Hill Rubin, & Peplau, 1976; Levinger, Senn, & Jorgensen, 1970). In fact, quality and commitment are associated in most studies (e.g. Simpson, 1987). Multiple studies investigating couples, however, indicated that there are many stable, highly

committed couples who are unhappy (Cuber & Harroff, 1965; Rands, Levinger, & Mellinger, 1981). This holds across racial ethnic groups (Bryant et al., 2010). Thus researchers often conclude that it necessary to examine relationship stability and relationship quality simultaneously (Orbuch, Veroff, Hassan, & Horrocks, 2002). From a person-centered perspective, it is critical to identify and compare couples that are committed and happy to those who are committed and unhappy in order to better understand their relationships.

Similar patterns may occur with other key variables used to characterize the dimensions of couple functioning such as conflict and support. Although conflict is generally associated with low levels of support as well as reduced commitment there are couples who report both high levels of support and conflict (e.g. Verhofstadt, Buysse, Ickes, Clercq, & Peene, 2005) or both conflict and commitment (e.g. Cate & Lloyd, 1992; Lloyd, 1990; O’Leary et al., 1989). Olson and Fowers (1993) demonstrated such associations using a person-centered approach. They identified five different types of marriages based on ten different dimensions of marital relationships: vitalized, harmonious, traditional, conflicted, and devitalized couples. Vitalized couples were those with high quality relationships. Harmonious couples reported “relatively” high relationship quality, but not as high as the vitalized group. Traditional couples were characterized by more conventional parenting practices and religious identification. Conflicted couples reported “moderately” low scores across all 20 dimensions. Devitalized couples had the lowest scores, indication poor relationship quality. This study provides some bases for the groups I hypothesized in the following sections. Although Olson and Fowers (1993) acknowledged that characterizing couples across multiple dimensions provides a holistic view of romantic relationship, particularly those who are married, such studies do not exist for African American couples in dating relationships.

Profiles of Emerging Adult African American Men's Couple Relationships

To characterize men's perception of their romantic relationships, I selected a parsimonious set of relationship factors that have been used in past research to characterize emerging adult and adult couple relationships. These include (a) commitment, (b) support, (c) criticism, and (d) aggression. Commitment is the desire to remain in the relationship long-term, also known as personal commitment (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999; Overbeek, Ha, Scholte, de Kemp, & Engels, 2007; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Commitment is a salient predictor of relationship satisfaction, particularly in couples who are in long-term marriages (Acker & Davis, 1992). As soon as late adolescence and emerging adulthood, commitment is a feature of romantic relationships (Bouchev & Furman, 2003; Collins, 2003; Fincham & Cui, 2011). However, all young adult romantic relationships are not stable and committed. In fact, scholars have demonstrated that many young adult romantic relationships can be unstable, moving in and out of committed and uncommitted romantic encounters, investing very little into these relationships (Arnett, 2004; Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hardmark, & Gordon, 2003).

Support involves the provision and receipt of both instrumental and emotional care between partners. Support in a romantic relationship is linked to both individual and couple well-being (Carels & Baucom, 1999). However, the perception of increased support does not necessarily mean less conflict in the relationships, which is why examining profiles is critical (Verhofstadt et al., 2005). Criticism, on the other hand, is a combination of negative judgments and expressions of dislike towards one's partner, sometimes known as perceived destructive and/or hostile criticism (Chambless & Steketee, 1999; Gottman, 1994; Peterson & Smith, 2010). This feature of relationships is important, because it has been linked directly to relationship dissolution (Gottman, 1994). Specifically, perceived criticism in marital relationships has

predicted elevated reports of conflict and distress (Hooley & Teasdale, 1989; Renshaw, 2008). Due to the need to understand relationship stability, criticism is an important dimension of romantic relationships.

A key aspect of romantic relationship development involves how young people manage conflict. Studies reveal that many emerging adult relationships already exhibit aggression and the presence of even verbal aggression has prognostic significance for behavior in the future in the present relationship and in others (Infante, Sabourin, Rudd, & Shannon, 1990; Schumacher & Leonard, 2005; Stets, 1990). Conflict in the romantic relationship often signals distress (O’Leary, 1988). However, relationships that report conflict often times still report high relationship satisfaction similar to that of couples that report low levels of conflict (Cate & Lloyd, 1992; Cuber & Harroff, 1965; Levinger & Mellinger, 1981; Lloyd, 1990; O’Leary et al., 1989), which highlights the importance of examining multiple dimensions of romantic relationships simultaneously. Thus, I am proposing to examine commitment simultaneously with conflict, support, and criticism to create romantic relationship profiles of from the perspective of young African American men.

Summary: Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the prior research, the current sought to explore if and how many romantic relationship profiles exist based on the perspectives of heterosexual, emerging adult African American men. I hypothesized that at least three groups would emerge based on four relationship dimensions (commitment, support, criticism, and conflict): (1) a group characterized by high commitment and support and low levels of criticism and conflict, (2) a group on the opposite end of the spectrum with high criticism and conflict and low commitment and support, and (3) a

group in the middle that has moderately high levels of commitment, support and moderately low levels of criticism, and conflict.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Hypotheses were tested with data from the African American Men's Health Project (AMP), which included 505 African American men between the ages of 19 and 22 years. The men were recruited from 11 counties in South Georgia to collect information regarding their HIV-related risk behaviors. For the purposes of this study, I focused on men who identified having a "main" female sexual partner, defined as "a woman or girl that you have a very special or committed relationship with, such as a girlfriend or a spouse." This reduced the sample to 367. Six participants were excluded from the analysis, because they reported having had sexual intercourse with another male, which is beyond the scope of this study, leaving 361 participants.

Participants were recruited using the Respondent-Driven Sampling method (RDS; Heckathorn, 1997, 2002), which is a referral-based recruitment method that alleviates the bias inherent in convenience samples. Community Liaisons (CLs) in the counties of interest recruited 45 initial participants, known as "seeds," across the 11 counties to complete the survey. The surveys were completed by participants in their homes or a convenient location in the community. Upon completion, participants were asked to give the names of three other men they knew other than their brother or close kin with whom they grew up in the same home. The project staff contacted the referred participants, and upon meeting eligibility requirements, the referring participant would receive \$25 per person who they referred into the study. Once the referred participants completed the survey, they were asked to refer three more men in their network. Participants completed the survey on a laptop computer using an audio computer-

assisted self-interview (ACASI). This allowed participants to navigate the survey with the help of voice and video enhancements. Participants received \$100 for completing the survey.

Measures

Comittment. Commitment was measured using the reliable alliance subscale of Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). The 3-item Reliable Alliance subscale assessed how sure (*very sure to not sure at all*) the participants were that the, "...relationship will last no matter what," "...relationship will continue in the years to come," and "...relationship will last in spite of fights." Scores were summed together such that higher scores indicated more commitment to the relationship ($\alpha=.79$).

Support. Participants completed the Support subscale of the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI; Buhrmester & Furman, 2008). The 4 item scale assesses emotional and instrumental support received from a partner. Participants respond on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*) regarding receipt of support from one's partner. Sample items include, "How often do you turn to her for support with personal problems," or "How often does she help you figure out or fix things?" Items were summed, and higher scores reflect more support from one's partner ($\alpha = .79$).

Criticism. Criticism was measured using the NRI's 3-item Criticism subscale (Furman & Buhrmester, 2009). Participants respond on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*) regarding the frequency with which participants' partners would, "...point out your faults or put you down," "criticize you," and "say mean or harsh things to you." Items were summed together so that higher scores indicated more perceived criticism from their partners ($\alpha=.74$).

Conflict. Conflict was assessed with a brief measure adapted from items in the Conflict Tactics Scales-2 (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The 14 item scale

is introduced with instructions to assess the extent to which each item characterizes how conflict is managed in the relationship. Each item first referred to one's own behavior followed by a version of the item referencing the partner's behavior. The response scale ranged from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*very often*). I included items representing verbally aggressive conflict tactics (ex. How often do you insult, swear, or yell), psychologically aggressive conflict tactics (ex. Threaten, damage the other's property), and physically aggressive conflict tactics (hit, slap or kick). Two items were written that represented non aggressive, problem solving forms of conflict resolution (ex. I show respect for my partner's feelings; my partner shows respect for my feelings). The negotiation items were reverse coded and summed with the aggressive conflict items to represent total conflict management in the relationship. Chronbach's alpha for the scale was .77.

Demographic Correlates. I examined the relationship between group membership and several demographic variables. The demographic correlates included the participant's age, educational attainment, marital status, their parent's educational attainment, income, changes in living arrangements, age of their main female partner, and the educational attainment of their main female partner, employment status, and whether or not they live with and have children with their female partner. Participant's age was reported in years. The participant's education ranged in years from ninth grade (*9 years*) to "in graduate school" (*18 years*). Parents' education, as reported by the participants, ranged from 1 (*Grade 10 or below*) to 5 (4 year college degree or more). Participants reported if they were *never married*, *married*, *separated*, or *widowed*. Mother's and father's scores were averaged together to create an indicator of parental education. If the value for either parent was missing, only the value for the available parent was used. Income was reported in dollars by summing how much money the participants make from a pay check and/or in cash each month and how much they receive monthly in supplemental income

such as child support, disability, or public assistance. Participants were asked how often in the past six months their living arrangements changed. Responses ranged from 0 (*my living arrangements did not change or I am a college student who lives at school part of the year and at home the rest of the year*) to 4 (*my living arrangements have changed 4 or more times*). Age of female partner was reported from 0 (*16 or younger*) to 5 (*26 or older*) in two-year increments. Partner's educational attainment was reported based on the highest level of education she completed, ranging from 1 (*grade 10 or below*) to 4 (*some college or trade school or higher*). Participants were asked if they lived with their main female partner and if they had children with her and responses to each question were coded 0 (*no*) or 1 (*yes*).

Plan of Analysis

Profiles of emerging adult African American romantic relationships were developed using Latent Profile Analysis (LPA; Lazarsfeld & Henry, 1968). LPA is a person-centered technique that creates classes/groups based on similar response patterns by participants to a set of continuous variables (Muthen, 2006; Muthen & Muthen, 2002). For the current study, the variables were commitment, support, criticism, and conflict. This analysis was conducted with Mplus Version 7.3 (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2014).

LPA models are created in sequential order, starting with a one-group class. The number of classes increases until the model fit indices indicate the most appropriate number of classes. To identify the number of classes, I examined Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1987), the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978), and the sample-size-adjusted BIC (SSA BIC, Sclove, 1987). Lower scores on these fit indices for each increase in number of classes indicates a better model fit. I also examined the Lo-Mendell-Rubin (LMR; Lo, Mendell, & Rubin, 2001) likelihood ratio test, which compares the new model to the prior model with one

less class. The LMR with a p value less than .05 means that the current model fits the data better than the model with one less class. Finally, entropy (Muthen, 2004) refers to the accuracy with which individuals assigned to a class belong to that class with values ranging from 0 to 1. The closer entropy is to one, the more likely the individuals belong to their assigned class. Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) was used to account for missing data. Finally, I conducted ANOVAs with post-hoc Tukey tests and Chi-Square analyses with adjusted standardized residuals with a ± 2 cutoff to determine if there are profile differences based on the demographic correlates described above.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Latent Profile Analysis

For preliminary descriptive analyses, see Table 1. The results of the LPA indicated that a three group solution best fit the data (see Table 2). Profiles were interpreted based on the comparison between the total sample means and the within-profile estimated means of each indicator (see Table 3). The first profile, labeled the *Healthy Relationship* group, included 220 (61%) participants. This group was characterized by commitment and support that were each moderately above the mean and criticism and conflict moderately below the mean. On average, young men in this group report the highest levels of commitment and support and the lowest levels of criticism and conflict amongst the three groups. The *Uncommitted Relationship* group ($n = 89$; 25%) was characterized by low commitment, slightly low support, and somewhat elevated criticism and conflict. Participants in this group reported the least amount of commitment and support, on average amongst the three groups. Participants in this group reported more criticism and conflict than those in the healthy relationship group. Finally, the *Volatile Relationship* group ($n = 52$; 14%) was characterized by moderately high commitment, low support, moderately high criticism, and high conflict. Men in this group reported the second highest level of commitment and support. This group also reported the highest levels of criticism and conflict of the three groups.

Correlates of Profile Group Membership

Associations between raw scores on the demographic variables and profile group are presented in Table 4. There were no differences between the groups based on age, marital status,

parents' education levels, income, housing relocation frequency, partner age, and partner education level, employment status, or cohabitation with partner. However, there were significant differences in participant educational attainment [$F(2, 358) = 4.37, p = .01$]. Post-hoc Tukey tests revealed that participants in healthy relationships ($M = 4.47, SD = 1.21$) had attained more education than those in volatile relationships ($M = 3.96, SD = 1.69$). Finally, there was a significant association between having children with one's partner and profile group [$\chi^2(2) = 8.88, p = .01$]. Evaluation of the adjusted standardized residuals indicated that men who reported having children with their current partner, were more likely to belong to the volatile group than others and unlikely to belong to the uncommitted group versus others.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated romantic relationship profiles for rural, emerging adult African American men between the ages of 19 and 22 years old. In doing so, the complexity that exists within romantic relationships was highlighted by using a person-centered approach rather than a variable approach. This strategy moves beyond examining relationships with a focus on scores on a single variable allowing for a more holistic view of romantic relationships from African American men's perspectives. The LPA revealed three types of romantic relationships: healthy, uncommitted, and volatile relationships.

The majority of the young men ($n = 220$; 61%) were involved in *healthy romantic relationships*, which were characterized by high levels of commitment and support, and low levels of conflict and criticism. This group, is similar to normative relationship patterns identified in previous empirical (Wildsmith, Manlove, Steward-Strenf, & Cook, 2013) and theoretical (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Collins, 2003; Fincham & Cui, 2011) literature on relationship development among emerging adults. The majority of emerging adults report positive relationships characterized by actions and behaviors that would be conducive to a healthy long-term relationship (Wildsmith et al., 2013). No prior studies, however, have focused on normative developmental patterns in African American young people; typically, studies document the struggles of African American couples. The vast majority of African American couples in our low SES rural sample, as reported on by the male partners, are in typical, well-functioning and developmentally appropriate relationships.

A second group, the *uncommitted* group, comprised 89 (25%) participants. The participants in this group were below average on commitment and support and slightly above average on conflict and criticism. This group is consistent with past research that underscores the fluidity of romantic relationships for many emerging adults. Many young people at this age often move between romantic relationships with relatively little commitment to any one relationship (Arnett, 2004; Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hardmark, & Gordon, 2003) and not all romantic relationships during this time period are going to be highly committed or lead to marriage (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Rather there will be some individuals who will explore relationships without the intentions of finding a lifelong partner and their level of engagement and involvement will reflect such. It is also plausible that a portion of the uncommitted group may develop more commitment over time.

Finally, the *volatile* group (14%) was characterized by a high level of conflict, and above average in commitment and criticism, but slightly low on support. The characteristics of this group are consistent with studies that indicate that conflict and commitment can coexist (Cate & Lloyd, 1992; Cuber & Harroff, 1965; Levinger & Mellinger, 1981; Lloyd, 1990; O’Leary et al., 1989). Other studies also indicate that couples who fight more can also be highly affectionate to one another (Gottman, 1993; Miller, 2015). It is this same coexistence, however, that can lead individuals who are involved in a relationship that is highly conflictual to commit to a relationship that may be unhealthy (Hayes & Jeffries, 2013; LaVoilette & Barnett, 2014; Strube & Barbour, 1983). Also consistent with previous literature, individuals in relationships that are highly conflictual which includes aggressive physical and verbal conflict tactics are at risk for or already engaging in relationship violence (Infante, Sabourin, Rudd, & Shannon, 1990; Schumacher & Leonard, 2005; Stets, 1990).

Investigation of the demographic correlates of relationship profile revealed that men in the healthy relationship group tended to have more education than those in uncommitted and volatile groups. This is consistent with literature that suggests people who have attained more education are more likely to be involved in healthy romantic relationships (Brown, 2003) and more stable marriages long-term (Wilcox, 2010). Men in volatile relationships were more likely than those in uncommitted or healthy relationships to have children with their partner. Having children with a current partner could maintain commitment to a relationship with negative attributes like criticism, conflict, and the lack of support. These men may be tied to a relationship they do not want to be in for the sake of the children, which would be a barrier to leaving the relationship – a notion supported in the literature (e.g. Knoester & Booth, 2000; Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2010; Vennum, Lindstrom, Monk, & Adams, 2014)

Limitations and Future Research

A number of limitations to study findings are noteworthy. For starters, the findings of this study are based on a rural sample, which may not be generalizable to urban couples. Although I was able to identify three relationship groups using variables that are commonly used to describe relationship processes, relationships possess even more dimensions than were covered with this study. The variables chosen are not all encompassing; therefore, future studies should seek to examine romantic relationships in terms of other dimensions such as satisfaction and trust. Additionally, the information gathered in this study about romantic relationships was from the perspective of African American men only. This study was based on their perceptions and interpretations of their partners' actions in their relationships. Future studies should explore profiles of romantic relationships using dyadic data to see if similar profiles emerge for the men and women separately and as a couple. In spite of these limitations, this study contributed to the

current literature by painting a more holistic picture of romantic relationships from the perspective of African American men.

CHAPTER 6

PAPER 2—INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Establishing stable, high quality dating relationships is an important developmental task during emerging adulthood with prognostic significance for functioning in future, more long-term relationships such as marriage (Fincham & Cui, 2011). Having a healthy romantic relationship is conducive to good physical, emotional and economic well-being (Amato, 2010; Beach & Whisman, 2012; Gottman, 1997; Wade & Pevalin, 2005; Wickrama, Lorenz, & Conger, 1997). In general, however, research suggests that considerable challenges exist for African Americans in developing and maintaining healthy romantic relationships. Specifically, studies have revealed that African American men may pursue a sexual partnership trajectory that involves multiple and/or concurrent sexual partners at the expense of committed monogamous romantic relationships (Bowleg, 2004). Such patterns of involvement increase the likelihood that as young adults, African American men will place themselves at risk of contracting and spreading sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS (Adimora et al., 2004). These studies underscore the importance of examining men's perceptions of and involvement in romantic relationships and the factors that predict the kinds of relationships in which men become involved.

From Working Models to Romantic Relationship Profiles

I conducted an analysis on African American men, where I employed a person-centered approach to characterize and identify types of romantic relationships among emerging adult African American men. To characterize men's relationships, I selected a parsimonious set of relationship factors that have been used in past research to characterize emerging adult and adult-couple relationships. These included (a) commitment, (b) support, (c) criticism, and (d) conflict.

Commitment is the desire to remain in the relationship long-term, also known as personal commitment (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999; Overbeek, Ha, Scholte, de Kemp, & Engels, 2007; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Commitment is a salient predictor of relationship satisfaction, particularly in couples who are in long-term marriages (Acker & Davis, 1992). Support involves the provision and receipt of both instrumental and emotional care between partners. Support in a romantic relationship is linked to both individual and couple well-being (Carels & Baucom, 1999). Criticism, on the other hand, is a combination of negative judgments and expressions of dislike towards one's partner, sometimes known as perceived destructive and/or hostile criticism (Chambless & Steketee, 1999; Gottman, 1994; Peterson & Smith, 2010). This feature of relationships is important, because it has been linked directly to relationship dissolution (Gottman, 1994). Finally, conflict is the combination of verbal and physical aggression, which often signals distress in romantic relationships (O'Leary, 1988).

Results of the analyses indicated three profiles or relationship types: (1) healthy relationships, (2) uncommitted relationships, and (3) volatile relationships. The participants in healthy romantic relationships were characterized by moderately high commitment and support and moderately low criticism and conflict. The uncommitted group was characterized by low commitment, slightly low support, and slightly high criticism, and conflict. The volatile group was characterized by high conflict, moderately high commitment and criticism, and slightly low support. I refer to these groups and elaborate on their relevance in the subsequent sections.

Childhood Adversity and Romantic Relationships

Individuals enter into romantic relationships already having exposure to numerous influences that affect their behavior. Many such influences come from their family of origin. More specifically, exposure to adversity during childhood, such as abuse, neglect, and other

stressors, is an important factor in understanding the development of satisfying and committed romantic relationships in early (Miller et al., 2011) and middle (Walker, Holman, & Busby, 2009) adulthood. Exposure to adversity during childhood in the family of origin has been linked to divorce in adulthood (Colman & Widom, 2004) and perpetration of intimate partner violence (Roberts et al., 2011). Adversity during childhood and adolescence disproportionately affects African Americans, compared to other racial-ethnic groups (Sweeney & Phillips, 2004; Umberson et al., 2014). Abuse (Burton & Jarrett, 2000; McLoyd et al., 2000), family instability (Fields & Casper, 2001; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004), economic hardship, and having family members with mental health issues during childhood (Umberson et al., 2014), negatively impact romantic relationship outcomes for African American couples.

The longitudinal effects of such adverse experiences during childhood tend to be stronger for African American men compared to African American women and Whites (Umberson et al., 2014). Umberson and colleagues (2014) demonstrated that African American men who experienced an accumulation of adverse childhood experiences, such as economic hardship, parental marital problems and divorce, parental death, and family members with mental health issues during childhood, were more likely to report a lack of support and more strain in their romantic relationships in adulthood. However, there is not an understanding of the psychosocial mechanism that explains the association between childhood adversity and romantic relationship outcomes among African Americans. Thus, I examined the pathway that links adverse childhood experiences to African American men's type of romantic relationship.

Internal Working Model of Relationships as a Mediator

I hypothesized that African American men who report childhood adversity would also report problematic romantic relationships and that working models of relationships would

mediate that association. Social relationships during childhood inform how individuals behave as adults in social relationships, particularly relationships among family members. According to the internal working model perspective (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), the social cues gleaned from social interactions throughout childhood and adolescence result in an individual developing an internal working model, or schema that informs how he or she perceives and interacts in later relationships (Cohn, Silver, Cowan, Cowan, & Pearson, 1992; Dodge & Pettit, 2003; Simons, Simons, Lei, & Landor, 2012).

Studies including African American youth reveal that parenting practices play a key role in the development of these schemas, which in turn, influence their romantic relationship quality (Kogan et al., 2013; Simons et al., 2014). Youth who report warm, nurturant relationships with parents also report greater harmony and supportiveness in their romantic relationships than those who report harsh parenting (Simons et al., 2014). A hostile family environment characterized by harsh parenting, family instability, and financial hardship is linked to mistrust of romantic partners through cynical and hostile views of relationships as young adults (Barr & Simons, 2012; Kogan et al., 2013; Simons et al., 2012). Furthermore, individuals who were insecurely attached as a result of neglectful and rejecting parenting during childhood and adolescence were more likely to exhibit cynical and distrustful relational schemas and thus, report elevated conflict and mistrust in their romantic relationships as adults (Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1990; Feeney, 2008). Although informative, these studies do not take into account a range family of origin stressors beyond the role of parenting. The current study examined how a host of adverse childhood experiences influences young men's internal working model, thereby influencing their involvement in certain types of romantic relationships.

Based on these findings, young men with low levels of adverse childhood experiences would endorse models of relationships that promote trust and commitment and involvement in healthy romantic relationships as young adults. In contrast, adverse childhood experiences can potentially derail this path by facilitating the internalization of cynical and defensive beliefs about people in general and romantic relationships in particular. The internalization of these beliefs is expected to affect men's participation in romantic relationships in two ways. First, they may simply avoid commitment and participate in relatively superficial relationships, thereby placing them in uncommitted romantic relationships. Second, they may participate in committed relationships, but project their anxiety and hostility in ways that would create a volatile romantic relationship.

The previous findings are particularly important for African American men, because research has demonstrated that African Americans are more likely than Whites to be exposed to the factors that facilitate a negative internal working model of relationships. These factors include family instability (divorce), harsh (often times physical) discipline, and growing up in impoverished communities (Fields & Casper, 2001; McLoyd et al., 2000; Simons et al., 2012). More specifically, Anderson (1999) reported that economic hardship and violence experienced by many African American youth, especially men, have psychological ramifications in the form of adopting the *code of the street* or *street code*. Street code is a set of principles that influences people from impoverished and violent communities to seek respect and retribution through aggressive and retaliatory means (Anderson, 1999). Individuals who endorse the code of the street tend to display aggression and mistrust in social relationships (Barr, Simons, & Stewart, 2013; Jacobs, 2004; Mateu-Gelaber & Lune, 2007; Stewart, Simons, & Conger, 2002; Stewart & Simons, 2010). Specifically, internalizing the code of the street also has ramifications with

intimate romantic relationships. Barr and colleagues (2012) found that those who adopted the code of the street were more likely to report less satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationships, which they attributed to increased relationship hostility and conflict. Therefore, I examined the adoption of street code as the internal working model that bridges the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and romantic relationship type.

Hypotheses

Informed by the internal working model perspective (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and research on early life adversities (g. Burton & Jarrett, 2000; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000; Umberson, Williams, Thomas, Liu, & Thomeer, 2014), I hypothesized that adverse childhood experiences would negatively affect African American men's romantic relationships. The more adversity participants report, the more likely they would belong to an uncommitted or volatile relationship versus a healthy relationship. Lastly, I hypothesized that code of the street would mediate the association between adverse childhood experiences and relationship type. The more adversity participants' report during childhood and adolescence, the more likely they are to have endorsed street code. The more they endorse street code, the more likely they would be a part of a volatile or uncommitted relationship than a healthy relationship.

CHAPTER 7

METHODS

Hypotheses were tested with data from the African American Men's Health Project (AMP), which included 505 African American men between the ages of 19 and 22 years. The men were recruited from 11 counties in South Georgia. For the purposes of this study, I focused on 367 men who identified having a "main" female sexual partner, defined as "a woman or girl that you have a very special or committed relationship with, such as a girlfriend or a spouse." Men who have sex with men and women are at a greater risk of having experienced more severe childhood adversities than men who have sex with women only (Friedman et al., 2011). Therefore, six participants were excluded from the analysis, because they reported having had sexual intercourse with another male, which is beyond the scope of the current study, for a total of 361 participants in the current sample.

Participants were recruited using Respondent-Driven Sampling (RDS; Heckathorn, 1997, 2002); a referral-based recruitment method that attenuates biases inherent in chain referral samples. Community Liaisons (CLs) in the counties of interest recruited 45 initial participants, known as "seeds," across the 11 counties to complete the survey. The surveys were completed by the seed participants in their homes or a convenient location in the community. Upon completion, participants were asked to give the names of three other men they knew other than their brother or close kin with whom they grew up in the same home. The project staff contacted the referred participants, and upon meeting eligibility requirements, the seed would receive \$25 per person referred into the study. Once the referred participants completed the survey, they were asked to refer three more men in their network. Participants completed the survey on a laptop computer using an audio computer-assisted self-interview (ACASI). This allowed participants to

navigate the survey with the help of voice and video enhancements. Participants received \$100 for completing the survey.

Measures

Dependent variable. Relationship type is a nominal variable developed from a previous study. Based on Latent Profile Analysis in the prior study men's romantic relationships have been classified as healthy, volatile, or uncommitted.

Independent variable. Adverse childhood experiences were assessed using the Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale (ACE; Felitti et al., 1998). ACE is a 16-item risk index that assesses cumulative exposure to abuse (verbal, physical, and sexual), household dysfunction (substance abuse and mental illness), and criminal behavior from someone living in the home during the first 16 years of life. Participants respond *yes* or *no* to items, such as "During the first 16 years of your life, did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?" A count was made of the 16 items and higher scores meant that the participant experienced more adverse experiences in the first 10 years of life.

Mediating variable. The Street Code measure (Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006) is a 7-item scale developed to assess the extent to which an individual believes that aggression is a means of gaining respect. Sample items are "It is important not to back down from a fight or challenge because people will not respect you," and "Being viewed as tough and aggressive is important for gaining respect." Participants responses range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Responses are summed, so a higher score indicates a stronger belief that aggression is a means of obtaining respect ($\alpha = .73$).

Control variables. I controlled for the participant's age, educational attainment, marital status, parents' education, and the presence of a casual partner. Age was reported in years. The participant's education ranged in years from ninth grade (*9 years*) to "in graduate school" (*18 years*). Participants reported if they were *never married*, *married*, *separated*, or *widowed*. Parents' education, as reported by the participants, ranged from 1 (*Grade 10 or below*) to 5 (4 year college degree or more). Mother's and father's scores were averaged together to create an indicator of parental education. If the value for either parent was missing, only the value for the available parent was used. Inherent in street code is sexual prowess (Anderson, 1999), which is seen as a way to gain respect and display masculinity to other men, therefore I controlled for the presence of a casual partner. Participants were asked if they had another partner, casual partner, in addition to their main partner. Responses were coded as "yes" or "no."

Plan of Analysis

For the purposes of the current study, I used Mplus Version 7.3 (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2014) to perform Multinomial Logistic Regression using Structural Equation Modeling with romantic relationship type as the dependent variable; the healthy relationship group is the reference group. Mplus does not provide fit statistics for Multinomial Logistic Regression. Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) was used to account for missing data. To test the first hypothesis that adverse childhood experiences would predict romantic relationship type, the first model had adverse childhood experiences predicting the log odds of relationship type, controlling for age, participant's educational attainment, marital status, parents' educational attainment, and the presence of a casual partner. To test the second hypothesis that street code would mediate the relationship between adverse childhood experience and romantic relationship type, a path was specified from ACE to street code and from street code to romantic relationship

type, controlling for age, participant's educational attainment, marital status, parents' educational attainment, and the presence of a casual partner. To determine if street code is a mediator, I examined the significance of the indirect effect.

CHAPTER 8

RESULTS

Multinomial Logistic Structural Equation Model

Preliminary analyses of study variables are presented in Tables 5 and 6. I examined the direct and indirect effects of adverse childhood experiences on relationship type, controlling for age, education, marital status, parents' education, and the presence of a casual romantic partner (see Figure 1). Participants who reported experiencing more childhood adversity were 1.12 times or 12% more likely to belong to the volatile than healthy relationship group ($B = .11$, $SE = .05$, $OR = 1.12$, $p < .05$). Adverse childhood experienced did not predict belonging to an uncommitted relationship over a healthy relationship. Next, I examined the indirect effect of adverse childhood experiences on relationship type through street code. Adverse childhood experience significantly predicted street code ($\beta = .16$, $SE = .06$, $p < .01$). Street code predicted the increased odds of belonging to the volatile relationship group compared to the healthy relationship group ($B = .15$, $SE = .05$, $OR = 1.16$, $p < .01$). This indirect effect was significant ($B = .03$, $SE = .02$, $p < .05$). Street code did not predict the odds of belonging to an uncommitted relationship compared to a healthy relationship.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

Young men enter romantic relationships having already been exposed to a number of factors during childhood and adolescence that can influence their participation in relationships. These experiences can include exposure to childhood adversities such as physical, verbal, and sexual abuse, interparental conflict and abuse, and economic hardship. The circumstances they experience during childhood can leave a psychological imprint that guides how these young men react to and perceive their romantic relationships. Therefore, I hypothesized that the accumulation of adverse childhood experiences would predict characteristics of men's romantic relationships. I further expected that endorsement of "street code" would mediate this association. The current study examined these links in 361 rural African American emerging adult men between 19 and 22 years old. The results revealed that an accumulation of hardships during childhood and adolescence was linked to street code, a mindset characterized by hostile attributions and aggression, which may increase the likelihood that men are in relationships characterized by aggressive behavior.

Past research has identified the negative impact of adverse childhood experiences on romantic relationships. The majority of this research has focused on sexual abuse and women, consistently finding that experiencing sexual abuse was linked to risky sexual behavior and mental health (e.g. Arriola, Loudon, Doldren, & Fortenberry, 2005; Mullen, Romans-Clarkson, Walton, & Herbison, 1988; Noll, Shenk, & Putnam, 2009). More recently, studies have linked a range of adversities to relationship problems (e.g. Doucet & Aseltine, 2003; Roberts, McLaughlin, Conron, & Koenen, 2011). Umberson and colleagues (2014) in particular tested the

cumulative effects of adverse childhood experiences on relationship behavior among a sample of 3,477, adult African American and White men and women. They found that adverse childhood experiences had the most pronounced effect on support and strain in the romantic relationships of African American men. In the current study, an accumulation of adverse childhood experiences also influenced young men's relationships. However, the current study extends the previous one by linking childhood adversity to specific romantic relationship profiles, specifically to a volatile versus a healthy relationship.

Whereas prior research (e.g. Umberson et al., 2014) provided a link between the accumulation of childhood stressors and romantic relationships outcomes, the current study tested a novel psychosocial mechanism hypothesized to mediate this association. Endorsement of street code, a self-protective tendency toward mistrust and defensiveness and a concern with being taken advantage of, has been identified as an important psychological characteristic that affects African American men exposed to challenging socioeconomic environments (Anderson, 1999). In accordance with the internal working model perspective, adverse childhood experiences were hypothesized to affect men's relationships by increasing their endorsement of street code (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). The results partially supported this hypothesis. Endorsement of street code mediated the association between adverse childhood experiences and membership in a volatile relationship. This finding is consistent with previous research that demonstrated a link between street code and unsatisfying, uncommitted relationships (Barr et al., 2013).

Contrary to hypothesis, experiencing adversity and endorsing street code did not predict participation in uncommitted romantic relationships. During emerging adulthood, some relationships are not necessarily intended to be long term or lead to marriage. Some individuals

are in and out of romantic relationships and this may be normative (Shulman & Connolly, 2013) rather than a function of adverse childhood experiences and endorsement of street code.

Study findings can inform interventionists working with African American couples. They encourage a focus on the examination of partners' exposure to adversity and how such exposures shape relationship behavior. Specifically, interventions that target street code could be of particular significance to men who have grown up with adversity. Researchers (e.g. Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997) highlight how attitudes such as street code comprise a reasonable coping style for specific, hostile conditions. When this coping style cannot be adjusted, however, it becomes problematic. An example of an intervention that targets these sorts of hostile attributions is found in Stevenson's work with young African American males. The Preventing Long-Term Anger and Aggression (PLAAY; Stevenson, 2003) program focuses on teaching African American boys adaptive coping skills that minimize the propensity for aggression. Such interventions may be adapted for older men whose exposure to negative childhood experiences promotes a hostile attribution bias that affects their relationships.

Limitations and Future Research

An important area for future research involves longitudinal studies that can investigate the potential for dyadic and selection effects to account for study findings. I hypothesized that adversity induced levels of street code would affect how men participated in their relationships. Exposure to stressors earlier in life also could affect *who* men select as partners and the extent to which they are influenced by partner characteristics. Additional longitudinal research with both partners would be useful to investigate these mechanisms. Other limitations to the present study include the sole focus on African American men's perspectives. Considering the fact that some of the findings may be a selection effect, it would be beneficial to examine this study with

women separately and as a dyad to determine of the associations identified in this study are intrapersonal or is each person in the couple influencing one another to create a certain relationship type. Furthermore, in the current study, I examined an accumulation of risk factors, but perhaps there are more salient stressors that differentially influence the type of romantic relationship in which young men become involved. Certain risk factors may trigger different psychosocial mechanisms to influence romantic relationship type.

Despite these limitations, the most important message from this study is that stressors and adversity during childhood may make a lasting impression on young African American men, promoting a defensive mindset that is difficult to turn off when dealing with or interpreting the behaviors of a romantic partner. In doing so, it may be difficult for these young men to compartmentalize, distinguish, and reconcile thoughts and behaviors that are appropriate for a romantic relationship versus a relationship with someone else on the street. As scholars, we have a responsibility to identify ways to improve their romantic relationships for the sake of their future as individuals and as part of an eventual family.

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

The Florida State University
Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 10/14/2014

To: Kimberly Allen

Dept.: FAMILY & CHILD SCIENCE

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Examining African American Males' Relationship Styles: A Latent Class Analysis National
Institute of Drug Abuse awarded to Steven M. Kogan and approved by the IRB at University of
Georgia (2011-10095-0)

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and one member of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 10/12/2015 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol

change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is FWA00000168/IRB number IRB00000446.

Cc: Melinda Gonzales-Backen, Advisor
HSC No. 2014.13674

APPENDIX B

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1

Paper 1: African American men's reports of relationship variables and demographic correlates: Correlations and descriptive statistics (N=361)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Commitment	-													
2. Support	.30**	-												
3. Criticism	-.10	.06	-											
4. Conflict	-.16**	-.25**	.34**	-										
5. Age	-.05	-.04	.03	.10	-									
6. Education	.05	.16**	-.03	-.14**	-.04	-								
7. Parents' Education	.05	.09	-.13*	-.08	-.12*	.25**	-							
8. Employment ^a	-.01	.08	.02	-.11*	.03	.24**	.09	-						
9. Monthly Income	-.07	.01	-.06	-.03	.13*	.08	.04	.48**	-					
10. Changes in Living Arrangements	-.02	-.14**	.00	.05	.01	-.08	-.07	-.02	.02	-				
11. Partner's Age	-.02	.03	-.02	.03	.38**	-.05	-.02	.01	.18**	.09	-			
12. Partner's Education	.02	.18**	-.04	-.05	.07	.44**	.25**	.12*	.20**	-.01	.22**	-		
13. Lives w/ Partner ^b	.10	.05	.07	.06	.21**	-.09	-.05	.02	.09	.11*	.29**	.01	-	
14. Children w/ Partner ^c	.16**	.03	.20**	.13*	.09	-.05	-.13*	.04	.03	.12*	.03	-.11*	.21**	-
M	9.09	6.99	2.29	9.09	20.32	4.31	3.22		733.05	.61	2.47	3.14		
SD	2.69	2.97	2.04	5.24	1.21	1.33	.90		614.24	.93	1.19	.75		
Range	3 – 12	0 – 12	0 – 9	0 – 26	19 – 24	1 – 7	1 – 5		169 – 5198	0 – 4	1 – 5	1 – 4		
α	.79	.79	.74	.28										

Note: ^aEmployment: 0 = No, 1 = Yes. ^bLives w/Partner: 0 = No, 1 = Yes. ^cChildren w/ Partner: 0 = No, 1 = Yes.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Paper 1: Model fit statistics for latent profile solutions for total sample

No. of Profiles	No. of free parameters	AIC	BIC	SSA BIC	LMR P-value	Entropy
1	8	4109.89	4141.00	4115.62	-	-
2	13	4027.30	4077.86	4036.62	.03	.71
3	18	3937.35	4007.35	3950.25	<.00	.81
4	23	3924.58	4014.02	3941.05	.54	.81

Note: Fit statistics for the best fitting model are in bold

Table 3

Paper 1: Raw score descriptive statistics for romantic relationship profile group

Variables	Total (N=361)		Healthy (n=220; 61%)		Uncommitted (n=89; 25%)		Volatile (n=52; 14%)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Commitment	9.09	2.69	10.40	1.54	5.29	1.52	10.04	1.81
Support	6.99	2.97	7.84	2.75	5.35	2.57	6.23	3.16
Criticism	2.29	2.04	1.82	1.82	2.60	1.91	3.75	2.36
Conflict	9.09	5.24	6.47	3.10	10.39	3.98	17.95	3.54

Table 4

Paper 1: ANOVA and chi-square results of demographic correlates

Correlates	Romantic Relationship Type			
	Healthy <i>n</i> = 220 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Uncommitted <i>n</i> = 89 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Volatile <i>n</i> = 52 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	
Age	20.24 (1.17)	20.39 (1.30)	20.52 (1.20)	
Education	4.47 (1.21) _a	4.12 (1.34)	3.96 (1.69) _a	
Parent's Education	3.29 (.88)	3.10 (.87)	3.10 (1.02)	
Monthly Income	719.72 (609.66)	785.22 (688.90)	700.17 (491.61)	
Change in Living Arrangements	.60 (.95)	.63 (.87)	.62 (.95)	
No. of children	.43 (.73)	.31 (.67) _a	.63 (.93) _a	
Age of main female partner	2.48 (1.19)	2.43 (1.13)	2.48 (1.31)	
Partner's Education	3.19 (.69)	3.09 (.78)	3.02 (.94)	
	Healthy <i>n</i> (<i>ASR</i>)	Uncommitted <i>n</i> (<i>ASR</i>)	Volatile <i>n</i> (<i>ASR</i>)	<i>X</i> ² (<i>df</i>)
Employment				2.61 (2)
	Yes	99 (1.1)	38 (.0)	17 (-1.6)
	No	121 (-1.1)	51 (.0)	35 (1.6)
Live w/ partner				2.12 (2)
	Yes	98 (.1)	35 (-1.1)	27 (1.2)
	No	122 (-.1)	54 (1.1)	25 (-1.2)
Child w/ partner				8.88 (2)**
	Yes	55 (.5)	13 (-2.4) _a	19 (2.3) _a
	No	165 (-.5)	76 (2.4)	33 (-2.3)
Marital Status				9.22 (6)
	Never Married	208 (.6)	85 (.7)	46 (-1.8)
	Married	7 (-.2)	3 (.0)	2 (.2)
	Separated	2 (-1.0)	0 (-1.3)	3 (2.9)
	Widowed	3 (.0)	1 (-.2)	1 (.4)

Note: ^a Means in the same row that share subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Where Chi-square is significant, adjusted standard residuals beyond +/-2 indicated a difference was detected.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Paper 2: Correlations and descriptive statistics of African American men's reports of predictors, relationship variables, and demographic controls (N=361)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	-									
2. Education	-.04	-								
3. Parent's Edu	-.12*	.25**	-							
4. Casual Partner ^a	.00	-.04	-.01	-						
5. ACE	-.00	-.03	-.10	.10	-					
6. Street Code	.03	-.02	-.05	.20**	.18**	-				
7. Commitment	-.05	.05	.05	-.19**	-.12*	-.10	-			
8. Support	-.04	.16**	.09	-.12*	-.05	-.07	.30**	-		
9. Criticism	.03	-.03	-.13*	.14**	.20**	.23**	-.10	.06	-	
10. Conflict	.10	-.14	-.08	.16**	.23**	.28**	-.16**	-.25**	.34**	-
M	20.32	4.31	3.22	.48	2.84	18.86	9.09	6.99	2.29	9.09
SD	1.21	1.33	.90	.50	2.95	3.72	2.69	2.97	2.04	5.24
Range	19 – 24	1 – 7	1 – 5	0 – 1	0 – 13	7 – 28	3 – 12	0 – 12	0 – 9	0 – 26
α					.81	.73	.79	.79	.74	.77

Note: ^aCasual partner: yes = 1, no = 0.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6

Paper 2: ANOVA and chi-square results of predictor and control variables

Correlates	Romantic Relationship Type			$X^2(df)$
	Healthy <i>n</i> = 220 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Uncommitted <i>n</i> = 89 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Volatile <i>n</i> = 52 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	
Age	20.24 (1.17) _a	20.39 (1.30) _a	20.52 (1.20) _a	
Education	4.47 (1.21) _a	4.12 (1.34) _{a,b}	3.96 (1.69) _b	
Parent's Education	3.29 (.88) _a	3.10 (.87) _a	3.10 (1.02) _a	
ACE	2.54 (2.68) _a	3.20 (3.29) _{a,b}	3.55 (3.31) _b	
Street Code	18.30 (3.73) _a	19.21 (3.17) _{a,b}	20.60 (3.98) _a	
	Healthy <i>n</i> (<i>ASR</i>)	Uncommitted <i>n</i> (<i>ASR</i>)	Volatile <i>n</i> (<i>ASR</i>)	$X^2(df)$
Casual Partner				21.04 (2)***
Yes	85 (-4.5) _a	58 (3.7) _a	31 (1.8)	
No	135 (4.5)	31 (-3.7)	21 (-1.8)	
Marital Status				9.22 (6)
Never Married	208 (.6)	85 (.7)	46 (-1.8)	
Married	7 (-.2)	3 (.0)	2 (.2)	
Separated	2 (-1.0)	0 (-1.3)	3 (2.9)	
Widowed	3 (.0)	1 (-.2)	1 (.4)	

Note: ^a Means in the same row that share subscripts differ at $p < .05$. Where Chi-square is significant, adjusted standard residuals beyond +/-2 indicated a difference was detected.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

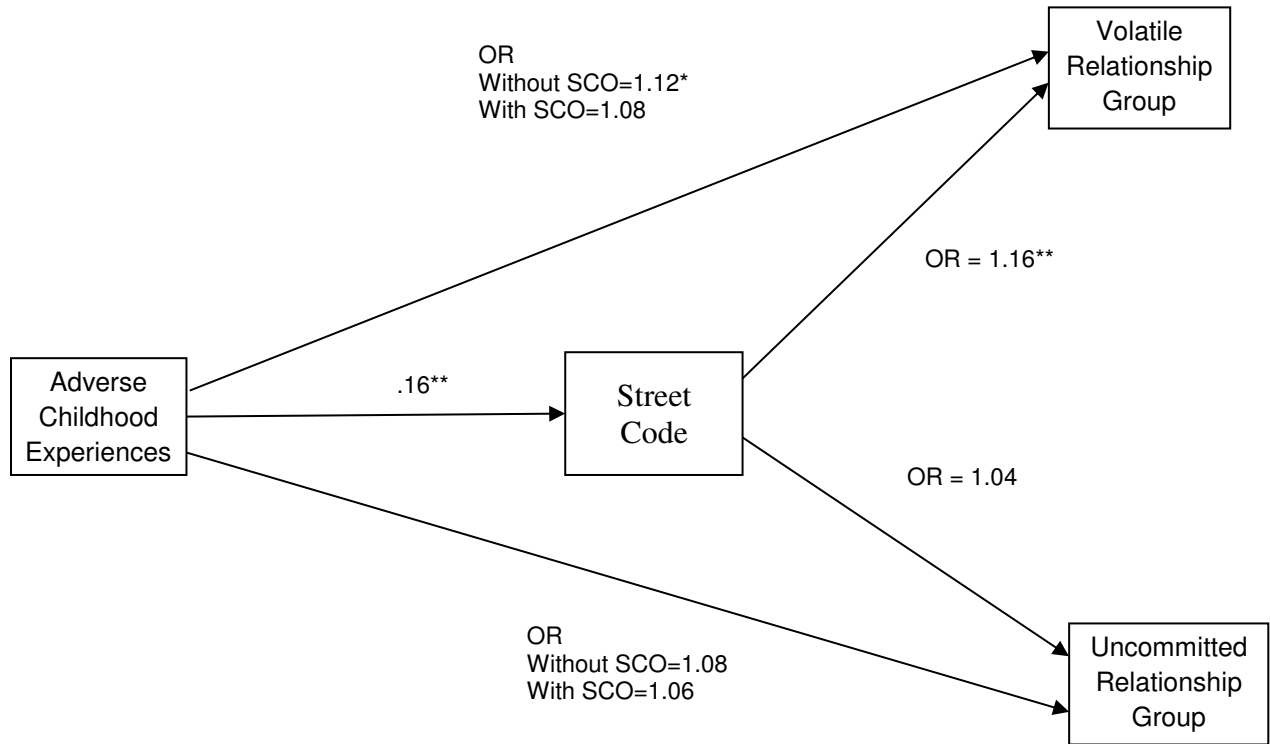


Figure 1. Results of multinomial logistic regression structural equation model with direct and indirect effects

Note. Reference group is healthy group. Standardized coefficients and odds ratios are shown. Target age, education, marital status, presence of a casual partner, and parent's education was controlled.

Indirect effect to volatile relationship was significant ($B = 0.03$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .05$); Indirect to uncommitted was not significant ($B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = 0.32$)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

KIMBERLY A. ALLEN

EDUCATION

- August 2015 (expected) Ph. D., Family Relations, Florida State University (FSU)
Dissertation: *Emerging Adult African American Men: Romantic Relationship Profiles And Predictors*
Co-Major Professors: Drs. Melinda Gonzales-Backen & Steven M. Kogan
- 2012 University of Georgia (UGA)
Advanced Coursework in Human Development and Family Sciences
- 2011 M. S., Family and Child Sciences, Florida State University
Thesis: *Dating Relationship Commitment in Black Men*
Major Professor: Dr. B. Kay Pasley
- 2009 B. S., Psychology and Family and Child Sciences, Florida State University
(Cum Laude)

CERTIFICATIONS

- Certified Online Mentor, FSU Office of Distance Learning
- Certified Peer Educator, FSU University Counseling Center

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2014 – Present Graduate Teaching Assistant, Family and Child Sciences, FSU
Supervisor: Drs. Kristy Greene & Emily Purvis-Montford
- Instructor of Record, FAD 3432: Stress and Resilience in Individuals and Families (60 students)
 - Prepared and delivered lectures
 - Designed and evaluated various assessments of student learning
 - Managed all course related responsibilities
 - Assistant in Teaching, CHD 2220: Child Development (online), FAD 4805: Practicum in FCS (online)
 - Aided instructor in course management and assessment of student learning
 - Mentored students in successfully completing all course requirements and practicum assignments
- 2013 – 2014 Graduate Research Assistant, Family and Child Sciences, FSU
Supervisor: Dr. Melinda Gonzales-Backen
- Reviewed literature and drafts for several manuscripts and presentations

- Researched and reported on methodology for publication and presentation manuscripts for authorship

2011 – 2012

Graduate Assistant, Human Development and Family Science, UGA

Supervisor: Dr. Steven M. Kogan

- Assisted with the roll-out and management of Wave 1 data collection for a study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse
- Shared responsibility for creating a codebook with preliminary analysis for a wave of data collection
- Conducted literature reviews and statistical analyses for publications and presentations
- Co-taught CFHD 3700: Adolescents Development (traditional)
 - Prepared and delivered half the lectures
 - Shared responsibility for designing and evaluating various assessments of student learning

2009 – 2011

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Family and Child Sciences, FSU

Supervisors: Drs. Larry Barlow, Tom Cornille, Carol Darling, Kristy Greene, & Ann Mullis

- Instructor of Record, FAD 3432: Stress and Resilience in Individuals and Families (Summer, 2010; online)
- Assistant in Teaching: Aided instructor in course development, delivery, and assessment of student learning
 - FAD 3271: Ecological Contexts (Summer, 2011; online, Dr. Carol Darling)
 - FAD 2230: Family Relationships: A Life Span Development Approach (Spring, 2011; traditional, Dr. Kristy Greene)
 - FAD 2230: Family Relationships: A Life Span Development Approach (Fall, 2010; traditional, Dr. Larry Barlow)
 - FAD 3220: Individual and Family Life Span Development (Spring, 2010; online, Dr. Ann Mullis)
 - FAD 3432: Stress and Resilience in Individuals and Families (Fall, 2009, online, Dr. Tom Cornille)

PUBLICATIONS

Gonzales-Backen, M. A., Bamaca-Colbert, M. Y., **Allen, K. A.** (under review). Ethnic identity trajectories among Mexican-origin girls during early and middle adolescence: Predicting future psychosocial adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*.

Reynolds, J. E., Gonzales-Backen, M. A., **Allen, K. A.**, Schwartz, S., Agocha, B., ... Williams, M. (under review). Ethnic identity of Black emerging adults: The role of parenting and ethnic socialization. *Journal of Family Issues*.

- Kogan, S. M., Cho, J., Simons, L. G., **Allen, K. A.**, Gibbons, F. X., & Beach, S. R. H. (2015). Pubertal timing and sexual risk behaviors among rural African American male youth: Testing a model based on life history theory. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 44, 609-618.
- Kogan, S. M., Yu, T., **Allen, K. A.**, & Brody, G. H. (2015). Racial microstressors, racial self-concept, and depressive symptoms among male African Americans during the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 44, 898-909.
- Kogan, S. M., Yu, T., **Allen, K. A.**, Pocock, A., & Brody, G. H. (2015). Pathways from racial discrimination to multiple sexual partners among male African American adolescents. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 16, 218-228.
- Kogan, S. M., Cho, J., **Allen, K. A.**, Lei, M.-K., Beach, S. R. H., Gibbons, F. X., Simons, L. G., Simons, R. L., & Brody, G. H. (2013). Avoiding adolescent pregnancy: A longitudinal analysis of African American youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53, 14-20.
- Kogan, S. M., Yu, T., Brody, G. H., & **Allen, K. A.** (2013). The development of conventional sexual partnership trajectories among African American adolescent men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 42, 825-834.

PRESENTATIONS

- Reynolds, J. E., Gonzales-Backen, M. A., **Allen, K. A.**, Hurley, E. A., Donovan, R. A.,... Williams, M. (2014, November). *Ethnic identity of Black emerging adults: The role of parenting and ethnic socialization*. Paper presented on African American Emerging Adults' Relational Experiences at the annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Baltimore, MD.
- Allen, K. A.**, Kogan, S. M., Yu, T., Pocock, A. M., & Brody, G. H. (2014, March). *Pathways from racial discrimination to multiple sexual partners among male African American Adolescents*. Poster presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Austin, TX.
- Gonzales-Backen, M. A., Bámaca-Colbert, M. Y., & **Allen, K. A.** (2014, March). *Ethnic identity trajectories among Mexican-origin females during early and middle adolescence: Predicting psychosocial well-being*. Poster presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Austin, TX.
- Allen, K. A.**, Pocock, A. M., Kogan, S. M., Grange, C., Cho, J., & Brody, G. H. (2012, October). *The influence of perceived racial discrimination on the risky sexual behaviors of rural African American adolescent men*. Paper presented at the Symposium on Predictors of Health Outcomes and Health Risk Behavior of African American Emerging Adults at the annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Phoenix, AZ.

Cho, J., **Allen, K. A.**, Kogan, S. M., & Grange, C. M. (2012, October). *Predicting delayed fertility among African-American emerging adults: A prospective analysis based on life history theory*. Paper presented at the Symposium on Predictors of Health Outcomes and Health Risk Behavior of African American Emerging Adults at the annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Phoenix, AZ.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS/SERVICE

Society for Research on Adolescents (member since 2013)

National Council on Family Relations (member since 2011)

Southeastern Council on Family Relations

NCFR Proposal Reviewer, 2011-2012

Kappa Omicron Nu National Honor Society in Human Sciences (member since 2011)

Graduate Student Advisory Council

Family and Child Sciences Representative, 2010 – 2011