Forced Together, Growing Apart: An Exploration of Heterosexual African American Males' Disengagement in Romantic Relationships with African American Females

Kenya Johns

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FORCED TOGETHER, GROWING APART: AN EXPLORATION OF HETEROSEXUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES’ DISENGAGEMENT IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Kenya Johns, LPC, NCC, CAADC, CCTP, ACS

December 2021
FORCED TOGETHER, GROWING APART: AN EXPLORATION OF HETEROSEXUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES’ DISENGAGEMENT IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES.

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ABSTRACT

FORCED TOGETHER, GROWING APART: AN EXPLORATION OF HETEROSEXUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES’ DISENGAGEMENT IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES

By

Kenya Johns, LPC, NCC, CAADC, CCTP, ACS

Month and Year of Graduation

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Jered Kolbert

The decline of intraracial dating has been more pronounced among African Americans in comparison to other racial groups. There is lack of available research tailored towards Black men’s dating experiences. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of heterosexual African American males related to their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females.

A phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of 10 African American males and the dynamics that appear to contribute to the decline in intraracial dating in the African American community. Five themes emerged from the study: – self-regard, family matters, proximity, the new Jim Crow and views of relationships. Implications for mental health field and suggestions for further research are provided.
DEDICATION

In the hopes that one day this research will help to enhance Black life, I dedicate this work to those that have felt unseen, unheard, and less valuable; the truth is that you are loved, you matter, I see you, the world sees you and your value is immeasurable. In addition, I dedicate this work to my mother, Debra L. Coleman, who passed before this could be completed but made sure that I knew that I am enough and that there is nothing that cannot be achieved with dedication and hard work. To my biggest champion and supporter, thank you, mom. I love you beyond words and I miss you. I also like to dedicate this to, Mom Mom and Marquita, two women that have helped to shape me into who I am. Until we meet again.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The process of completing a doctoral dissertation is daunting and arduous. I want to first acknowledge God for the strength and ability to persevere despite the obstacles that presented themselves. I want to make a special acknowledgment to my husband and best friend, Ian Johns, and my daughters, Makena and Milan; you guys are my rock and I thank you for loving and supporting me through the long nights and busy days, you all made it all worth it and I am truly blessed to have you all.

In addition, I would like to thank my family, friends and mentors that have supported and guided me along the way. Only through your prayers, love and grace have I been able to be here.
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Chapter 1

Importance of the Study

America has had a complicated history with African Americans (Leary, 2005; Staples, 1985). Slaves were transported as labor and not treated as humans with equal rights and freedoms as were those of European descent. Throughout this document, the terms African American and Black will be used interchangeably to better capture the diverse definitions of African descendants (Martin, 1991). Slaves were forced to live together in deplorable conditions. African men and women were forced to live, work, and procreate with one another to maintain the labor needs of the European slave owners (Leary, 2005). Laws prohibited slaves from learning to read, write, or other forms of advancement. Black men were whipped, chained, and even killed if they looked at a woman of European descent without permission (Horton & Horton, 2005). For hundreds of years, Blacks in America lacked the freedom to determine their familial relationships (Horton & Horton, 2005). Relationships could be determined by the slave owners because slaves were seen as the plantation owner’s property. Slave owners would buy slaves and arrange relationships with other slaves in order to raise more slaves (Leary, 2005). Oftentimes this would destroy already established family lines and relationships. The frequent selling of slaves between plantations impacted the development of romantic relationships between Black men and Black women.

The historical treatment of African Americans has impacted romantic relationships within the African American community (Betha, 1995; Bae et al., 2020; Leary, 2005). Similarly, to how the perceptions of African American’s by non- African Americans have changed throughout history, and as these negative perceptions about African Americans have changed, African Americans were afforded similar rights as Caucasians. In 1865, the U.S. prohibited slavery. For
many ethnic groups, *intraracial* dating was the norm and law. As freed African American slaves began to purchase land and build their own communities, they were still forced to remain in heterosexual relationships with other African Americans. During the post–slavery era to the early 1960’s romantic relationships within the African American community were successful and flourishing (Besharov et al., 1996; Kelly et al., 2013; Leary, 2005; Ross, 1996). Besharov et al. (1996) described African American families as happier during this time. There was increased collaboration, higher rates of marriage amongst Blacks compared to now, and family meals were a staple in the family (Besharov et al., 1996; Cready et al., 1997). The African American community began to prosper economically, socially, and politically (Leary, 2005). Despite the success developed within the African American community, there continued to be barriers to equality, including but not limited to the miscegenation laws, which prohibited interracial dating and marriage. It was not until about 1967 that all anti-miscegenation laws were abolished in the U.S. (Thompson, 2009). The case of Loving versus Virginia was the first law on record that stated that anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional and violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Cline, 2019; Head, 2019). For the first time in America’s history, there was the legal freedom for African Americans and other racial/ethnic groups in choosing whom they dated or married. The long-term effects of slavery upon the romantic relationships between African American men and women has still not been adequately explored. Currently, there is minimal research regarding the decisions of African American males on not engaging in romantic relationships with African American women. *Interracial* dating has increased amongst all cultures and ethnic groups (Mendelsohn et al., 2014; Passel et al., 2010). However, African Americans are three times more likely to marry outside of their race, which is higher than any other racial or ethnic group (Passel et al., 2010). Passel et al. (2010) research
found that African American males married outside of their race 22% of the time compared to African American women, who married outside of their race 9% of the time. This is congruent with Pew Research (2017) that found that African American men marry outside of their race more than any other race.

The dynamic of romantic relationships between Black men and women continues to be debated (Simons et al., 2012). Because Black men appear to date and marry interracially more frequently than any other group (Livingston et al., 2017; Passel et al., 2010), it is possible that Black men may have a stronger preference for interracial dating comparatively to all other groups, and thus have unique perspectives regarding interracial dating. This qualitative research study was specifically designed to explore the lived experiences of heterosexual, African American males related to their disengagement from romantic relationships with African American females. The primary goal of this study is to begin to close the gap in our understanding of Black men’s perceptions of romantic relationship development with Black women. This research hopes to provide counselors and other helping professionals with a better understanding of intraracial dating within the African American community from Black men’s perspectives, thus, better equipping counselors in engaging with African American men and women regarding relationship development.

**Statement of the Problem**

Since the early origins of America, minorities – particularly African Americans – have been enslaved, oppressed, robbed, and treated as “less than” (Williams, 2019). Minorities have been subjected to hate, but over time minorities have slowly gained access to their legal rights and opportunities. In 1967, minorities began to receive more freedom in dating choices because anti-miscegenation laws were deemed unconstitutional (Thompson, 2009). Since the abolishment
of anti-miscegenation laws the rates of interracial dating and marriage have increased for both whites and minorities (Livingston et al., 2017; Maldonado, 2017; Passel et al., 2010). The growth of interracial dating within the U.S. has helped to make great strides in equality for minorities. It is important to note that this researcher believes in the freedom of choice in dating and values interracial dating. The researcher wants to better understand why African American males are choosing not to date intraracially. Because there is an increase of interracial dating for African American males more than any other group (Maldonado, 2017; Passel et al., 2010), the researcher is justified in examining why this may be occurring within the African American community.

The stark difference between African American males’ and females’ rates of intraracial dating may impact the way that African American men and women view each other romantically. African American women have historically been more likely to intraracially date (Maldonado, 2017; Moore, 2012; Passel et al., 2010), and without a population of African American men available to date, this may affect their view of self, relationship satisfaction and view of African American males (Abrams et al., 2018; Simons et al., 2012; Yancey, 2009). Black women may be the least likely group to date interracially due to the collectivistic nature of Black culture. In collectivistic Black culture, group members emphasize the importance of the communal goal, an example of this is working towards equality for African Americans, comparatively to individualistic culture that focuses primarily on the needs of the individual over the needs of the group (Leary, 2005; Ross, 1996). Historically, African American culture has been considered more collectivistic in comparison to the more individualistic culture of the dominant society (Bethea, 1995). Being a member of a collectivistic culture increases the likelihood to have a preference for intraracial dating (Kelley et al., 2003; Simons et al., 2012;
Yancey, 2009). Finally, it is important to investigate African American males’ decision to avoid interracial dating because the African American population has been oppressed and ignored (Leary, 2005) and it is important to create a forum for their experiences to be shared and studied to better understand this population.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of heterosexual, African American males’ disengagement from romantic relationships with African American females. This study seeks to document and provide insight regarding African American males’ perceptions of inter- and intraracial dating. A secondary purpose of this study is to begin the dialogue within the African American community regarding how they perceive romantic relationships and the perceptions of Black men have regarding Black women. A tertiary focus for this study is to provide counselors with insight on how to better support and navigate the relationship formation of African Americans.

**Theoretical Framework**

There appears to be a lack of research regarding heterosexual African American males’ disengagement from romantic relationships with African American females. African American males and females have had many barriers arise that have impacted the development of their romantic relationships (Bethea, 1995; Cazenave, 1983; Chapman, 1988; Leary, 2005; Moore, 2012; Yancey, 2009). There is a lack of literature that focuses on African American males’ perspectives regarding intra- and interracial dating. This qualitative investigation provides insights from the African American male’s perspective.

To better understand this under-researched phenomenon, it was imperative to use a framework that adequately captures the complexity of African American men. This research
called for the use of a phenomenological qualitative study. This method involves the researchers to examining the lived experiences of African American males and provide insight into the male perspective regarding the disengagement in romantic relationships with Black women. Because African Americans are a complex group that requires specificity in understanding (Bush, 2009) the researcher utilized the African American Male Theory (AAMT) that was developed by Bush V and Bush (2013) to inform the design and methodology. The AAMT provides a theoretical lens to view the Black man from a societal and historical perspective (Bush V, & Bush, 2013; Creswell, 2004).

**Phenomenology**

There is a lack of understanding regarding the potential phenomena of African American males’ disengagement in romantic relationships with African American women. The use of the phenomenological design allowed for the lived experiences of the Black man to be explored. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) believe that this approach provides the basis to explore individual experiences through a collective perspective. This means that the individual experience of each man has the potential to share similar qualities and experiences that may develop themes and commonalities that help to identify an area for future focus.

**African American Male Theory (AAMT)**

It was essential to utilize a research methodology that encapsulated the intricacies related to the Black man. Providing a context to view and understand the African American man is important because of the complexity of this group (Bush, 2009). The AAMT (Bush, 2009) provides a historical and systemic approach in exploring the development of the Black man. Bush V and Bush's (2013) theoretical framework provides a context to view the Black man's lived experiences. AAMT will be further explained in Chapter 2.
African American Relationships

Romantic relationship development share similarities across cultures. These experiences will be discussed further in chapter 2. For Black men and women, there are additional considerations that impact their ability to develop intraracial relationships (Moore, 2012). Moore (2012) asserts that the historical implications of slavery continue to impact the development of intraracial dating standards. Research suggests that the dating relationships between African American men and women often involves negative qualities including mistrust, lack of mutual respect, insecurity, and rage (Hurt et al., 2014; Leary, 2005; Moore, 2012). Understanding these negative attributes experienced by African Americans helps to provide more insight into the development of intraracial romantic relationship between African American men and women.

Rationale

This study seeks to understand the reasons why some African American men elect not to pursue relationships with African American women. Although this research is centered on current relationships, there is a historical component that impacts current romantic relationships (Leary, 2005; Moore, 2012). Research involving minorities should consider the long history of oppression experienced by African Americans during slavery and even in our current societal systems. The rationale for this research is focused on the following conditions: (a) historically, African Americans have been oppressed; (b) research regarding intraracial dating norms within the African American community is significantly limited.

In order to better understand the perceptions of Black men, it is imperative to understand the historical negative perceptions among the dominant society about Black men (Bany et al., 2014; Cotton, 2014; Maldanado, 2017). Black men are oftentimes viewed as aggressive, unable to succeed without supports, uneducated, and oppressed (Bethea, 1995; Hurt et al, 2014). This
harsh depiction of the Black man has impacted the view of himself, other African Americans and racial preferences as it pertains to relationships (Bae et al., 2020; Cotton, 2014; Leary, 2005). The negative stereotypes and stigmas experienced by Black men continue to be a barrier of misunderstanding and trust within the counseling and research community (Diaz, 2012). A better understanding of this population is important and integral to the progression of the counseling community and this research.

**Research Questions**

The primary research questions are how do African American males who have disengaged from romantic relationships with African American women describe their dating experiences, and what reasons do they provide for their decision not to date African American women? The secondary research questions are, “How does the race or ethnicity of a romantic partner influence African-American males’ decisions in dating?” and “What do African-American males perceive as barriers or issues that prevent healthy relationships with African American females?” There appears to be a lack of research regarding the topic of relationship disengagement between African American men and women. Bethea (1995) and Passel et al. (2010) explored the concerns within the African American community regarding relationship development between the African American male and female. Understanding African American male's perspectives regarding inter- and intra-racial dating provides an opportunity for new insight.

**Definition of Terms**

**African American/Black** – African American/Black terms that will be use interchangeable to describe Americans of African descent.
**Heterosexual** – of, relating to, or characterized by a tendency to direct sexual desire toward the opposite sex.

**Intraracial** – of, involving, or designed for members of the same race.

**Interracial** – of, involving, or designed for members of different races.

**Miscegenation** – marriage, cohabitation, or sexual intercourse between a white person and a member of another race.

**Plantations** – Farms that forced slaves to manage and grow the harvest of that farm.

**Delimitations, Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African American males’ disengagement in romantic relationships with African American women. The specific requirements for the study were for the participants to (a) identify as a heterosexual male, (b) identify as African American or Black, (c) be 18 years of age or older, (d) not be currently or recently (within one year) engaged in a romantic relationship with an African American woman, and (e) be willing to discuss the topic with an African American woman. When selecting participants, each participant was screened using this criterion.

The results of this study aim to provide more insight and a better understanding of African American males’ lived experiences in regard to inter- and intraracial dating. The researcher of this study identifies as an African American female and had to address the ongoing assumptions of dialoguing with African American males regarding their relationship development. These assumptions can be found in Chapter three of this dissertation. These assumptions were addressed with each participant and were expected to be challenged. The researcher created a boundary of open, honest dialogue with the participants by discussing what the research was, how the information would be used and answered any question that the
participant had. This helped to create an environment that the participants could be open and honest without judgment. The goal of the researcher was to gain more insight into the potential phenomena within the African American community. Although there is the limited sample size, there still remains credibility regarding the research.

**Conceptual Assumptions**

The first assumption made regarding the research was that each participant has had an experience with an African American woman within their life that has impacted their decision to avoid intraracial dating (Abrams et al., 2018; Bae et al., 2020; Barr et al., 2015; Bush, 2000b; Hall et al., 2014). This was based on the literature regarding African American male identity development that will be discussed in Chapter 2. Another assumption was that African American males that did not date intraracially may not understand how systemic racism and discrimination impact the way that African Americans interact with and perceive one another (Leary, 2005; Moore, 2012). This assumption was based on the fact that African American history is not adequately taught, thus, many African Americans do not have a thorough understanding of systemic racism. Subjects were assumed to have known others that also resist in engaging in romantic relationships with African American women. Also, based on Moore’s research (2012) it was assumed that there would be a connection between the Black man's identity development and the disengagement in heterosexual romantic relationships with a Black woman. There will be shared family demographics regarding the Black men. Finally, the Black man may initially be hesitant in having this discussion with an African American woman.

**Bias and Limitations**

It is important to note that the researcher of this study is an African American female that has spent years working with African American males regarding this subject matter. Although
the researcher tried to engage in bracketing, there may have been some unconscious and conscious biases from the researcher's lived experiences. Further discussion on bracketing can be found in Chapter 3.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 provides the introduction of the research inquiry into African American males' lived experiences related to their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females. Chapter 1 explored the purpose of the study and presents the importance of the study including the research question, theoretical framework, definition of terms and the rationale for the study.

Chapter 2 is the literature review that will help to better understand the topic. The chapter explores the general dating norms amongst all cultural and ethnic groups in America. This chapter will then describe the historical context that has impacted the relationship development of African American men and women. This chapter will conclude with the theoretical orientation of the research project and a conclusion of the literature review.

Chapter 3 is the methodology that guided the research from a phenomenological approach. A detailed description of the interviews and data is provided. Chapter 4 serves as a report of the findings from the lived experiences of African American men. It describes the themes that have emerged from the individual interviews. Chapter 5 is an overview of the results. The results allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding the research from the subjects’ experiences. Suggestions and further research and implications for the counseling field complete the chapter.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Black men’s dating practices continue to be under-researched and explored within the counseling, education, and psychological fields (Bae et al., 2020; Diaz, 2012; Johnson & Williams, 2015). It is essential to understand the historical impact of racism, oppression, slavery and laws to better understand potential contributions to inter-racial dating amongst Black men (Bany et al., 2014; Moore, 2012; Yancey, 2009). The rates of interracial dating and marriage have increased for both whites and minorities due to increasing racial equality following many years of slavery and oppression (Livingston et al., 2017; Maldonado, 2017; Passel et al., 2010). The increase in interracial dating for African American males is greater than any other group (Maldonado, 2017). Since African American men are dating and marrying interracially more frequently than any other population group, it is possible to conclude that Black men have a stronger preference for interracial dating, and thus have unique perspectives regarding interracial dating (Livingston et al., 2017; Passel et al., 2010). Black women are less likely than their male counterparts to date interracially (Passel et al., 2010; Pew Research, 2017). Some have suggested that Black men and women have different experiences in African American culture (Allison, 2016; Simons et al., 2012). For example, Simons et al. (2012) suggested that families have more influence on women over men in partner selection. Thus, the dynamics of Black men and women’s romantic relationship development within the African American community continues to be an unresolved issue. The proposed study seeks to fill this gap in the literature through Black men’s experiences about interracial romantic relationships and marriages.
Various pieces of literature relevant to the understanding of the study phenomenon are presented in this section where the empirical literature regarding the historical development of interracial relationships as well as the internal, external, and relational motivation of African American men for dating non-African American women are reviewed. The researcher will critically synthesize the impact of internal, external, and relational factors on romantic relationship development in the African American community throughout literature review while identifying theories guiding the research and discussing the application of those theories within the study. The African American Male Theory (AAMT) theory is selected as the guiding framework for this research. There is a limited scope of literature and data collected to discuss this topic. The researcher will attempt to provide as much context and literature to best understand the research accurately throughout the literature review.

**Factors Impacting Romantic Relationship Development**

The impacting factors on romantic relationship development that will be further discussed are classified into internal, external, and relational factors influencing the development of romantic relationships (Whitton et al., 2018). Internal factors refer to the individual's development of self, including but not limited to personality, values, and beliefs. Evidence suggests that romantic relationship development involves identifying desirable traits and qualities in a romantic partner (Putney, 2017; Sassler, 2012). Brooks et al. (2021) focused on the impact of racial/ethnic worldview on interracial romantic partnership. The results suggest that positive racial worldviews promote intergroup intimate relationships and marriages. Overall, these findings underscore the significant impact of internal factors such as personality, beliefs and values, childhood experiences, and worldview on the development of the romantic relationship. However, it remains unclear how these factors are linked to the high rates of
Interracial romantic relationships in African American males. External factors include influences of one’s family, community, culture, and past and current economic status.

**Internal Factors Impacting Relationship Development**

There are multiple factors within an individual's development such as personality, values, and beliefs known to impact the development of heterosexual romantic relationships. There is a broad range of personality factors including childhood experiences, emotional and cognitive biases, values, self-control, world views have a strong influence on romantic relationship characteristics (Cotter & Kerschner, 2018). These authors have shown that high levels of conscientiousness and extraversion positively contributes to the quality of the romantic relationship. Similar research by Miano et al. (2017) found that feeling connected, financial security and trust has a positive impact on the success of romantic relationships. Decuyper et al. (2018) found an adverse effect of personality pathology on intimate relationships. People are less likely to pursue relationships with emotionally unstable partners. Personality pathology was described as enduring patterns of emotion, cognition, and behavioral aspects with negative effects on a person’s adaption. O’Meara and South (2019) found that neuroticism has detrimental impacts on marital satisfaction. In this sense, neuroticism comprises a bundle of disadvantageous personalities signifying negative emotions such as anxiety, sadness, and anger. Nevertheless, these studies have demonstrated that positive personality traits predict the pursuit and quality of romantic relationships. It is however vital to establish the effects of these internal factors on Black men’s dating experiences.

Ethnic differences in the values and beliefs in romantic relationships influence the quality of romantic relationships. Childhood experiences such as emotional abuse, childhood diseases, and other adverse childhood encounters can adversely affect the future romantic
relationships among Black males. For instance, Madden and Shaffer (2019) found that emotional abuse in childhood is directly linked to adulthood dating violence in this group. Individual beliefs and values such as self-change and close relationships impact the quality of romantic relationships in young adulthood (Tuzgöl Dost & Aras, 2021). Barr and Simons (2018) examined marital beliefs among emerging Black adults. These authors observed that family background, community context, and relationship experiences are the main factors determining these values and beliefs that impact the development of romantic relationships. Accordingly, the presence or lack of presence regarding one’s views of marriage has an impact on the development of the romantic relationship. African American beliefs and values differ significantly from other racial/ethnic groups (Parker, 2020), yet African American men have the highest interracial dating and marriages than any other population group in the country (Passel et al., 2015). For example, unlike western culture that fosters a strong desire for dating and romantic relationships, African American culture attaches more importance to marriage because of the status it offers rather than the focus of developing strong intimate partnerships (Whitton et al., 2018). Thus, Black people experience lower romantic intimacy than their white counterparts (Heu et al., 2021).

External Factors Impacting Relationship Development

Traditionally, the development of romantic relationships is based on the context or environment in which a person lives. These include their socioeconomic status (SES), culture and ethnicity, family support and expectations, time/generation, level of education and employment, self-view, and other environmental factors (Lantagne & Furman, 2017). Bronfenbrenner's systems theory suggests that various environmental factors influence the development of relationships (Putney, 2017). This theory emphasizes the important role played by the extra-familial environment such as school, neighborhood, church, economy, and
government in shaping relationships (Hertler et al., 2018). Generally, most intimate relationships begin within a person’s physical environment, such as their school, workplace, family connections, and most recently online communities (Finkel et al., 2012; Hall, 2014; Ross, 1997; Simons et al., 2012; Simons et al., 2014). Proximity breeds familiarity and attraction between people thus fostering the development of a romantic relationship. Krapf (2018) affirmed that distance is an important external factor impacting the development and maintenance of a romantic relationship. Accordingly, separation rates are considerably higher among couples in a long-distance relationship than couples in close physical proximity (Belus et al., 2019). Thus, physical proximity is an important factor influencing the development and sustainability of a romantic partnership.

There are several other traits that impact the development of a romantic relationship, including physical appearance and behavioral traits. An example of desired physical and behavioral traits includes but are not limited to, body shape and gestures of politeness (Eastwick et al., 2008; Stackman, 2016). Research suggests that relationships are formed when preferred traits are displayed or discovered by the other partner (Sassler, 2012). For example, males typically value the physical attractiveness of partners whereas most women value masculinity (Eastwick et al., 2008; Stackman, 2016). It is important to note that all African American men are not the same; these factors will impact the individual differences and clinicians should consider all these aspects when examining the African American male as a whole. Although the traits previously discussed may be innate, some physical and behavioral traits are shaped by a person’s culture and socialization (Towner et al., 2016). The cultural impact is dictated by traditional dating norms embedded in the African American culture and passed onto next the generation for continuity.
African Americans are socialized differently from other population groups (Labella, 2018). The ethnic background of a person is an important factor influencing relationship formation due to possessing similar norms, values, and beliefs. For example, research has shown that minorities and women may place a greater emphasis on their families’ opinions regarding their relationship decisions (Allison, 2016; Bae et al., 2020; Debnam, 2017; Ross, 1997). Besides, an ethnic group is a social organization of people with similar norms, beliefs, and practices passed from one generation to the next. Hence, similar behavioral aspects occur in people raised in the same social context and culture because they are shaped by the same norms, values, and beliefs. Although American males and females share similar cultural norms and values, it is not clear why African American males are less likely than females to be in interracial romantic relationships (Livingston et al., 2017).

**Family**

Besides ethnicity and culture, the family also plays a crucial role in the development of romantic dating and marriage. Debnam (2017) found that minority adolescent females who develop a dynamic relationship with their mothers tend to have a strong impact on their views about relationships and the future development of romantic relationships than their male counterparts. This finding implies that minority adolescent females who develop a strong relationship with their mothers look to their mother’s help regarding relationship decisions. The researcher concluded that Black families in comparison to other racial groups attach greater value to marriage as an important institution that contributes to the strength of families, including better mental health, less depression, and higher social supports. Chen et al. (2017) also emphasized that a close childhood family relationship is a predictor of positive intraracial romantic relationships. On the contrary, persons who do not experience positive family support
systems may have a negative view of intraracial romantic relationships (Simons et al., 2012). Simons et al. (2012) found that African American families that experience a lot of stressful events, exposure to harsh parenting, family instability, economic hardship, discrimination, and race-related disadvantages in adolescence are more likely to have a negative view of romantic relationships. In particular, African American males are more subjected to oppressive environments than their female counterparts due to such phenomenon as Black criminal stereotyping in sports and school. More Black males are subjected to the criminal system in the U.S. than other racial groups (Kovera, 2019). These family environments increase the likelihood of an African American experiencing poor romantic relationships in early adolescence and emerging adulthood, distrust in relationships, and a cynical view on developing serious romantic relationships (Simons et al., 2012). Simons et al. (2012) concluded that the negative childhood family experiences increase the likelihood of African Americans developing hostile and stormy romantic relationships with other African Americans which may lead to intraracial relationships being deemed less desirable.

Family dynamics may also impact the view of self. In particular, African Americans’ self-perception may influence their views of relationships (Bae et al., 2020; Bany, 2014; Landor et al., 2016; Moore, 2012; Simons et al., 2014). Ross (1997) and Landor et al. (2016) explored the implications of views of self-perception and how they impacted dating preferences amongst Blacks. These researchers found that colorism – discrimination based on color – continues to be a barrier regarding dating, and that there is a preference among Africa Americans to date “light-skinned” people to overcome the negative self-perception. Ross (1997) suggested that Afrocentricity – rooted in the historical, cultural, and philosophical tradition that takes a holistic approach to understand African American cultural consciousness and racial socialization,
impacts a person’s views on intraracial relationships and the effects that the majority culture has on African Americans dating preferences. Bany et al. (2014) and Ross (1997) suggested a broader societal influence that values lighter skin tones over darker skin tones, thin body types over heavier body types, and straight vs. curly hair. The two studies serve as a reminder that self-hate within African Americans continues to be a concern, especially in romantic relationships.

**View of Self**

There is a lack of research regarding Black men’s view of self and racial identity development (Batson et al., 2006; Crooks et al., 2009). Personal, societal, and social environments impact Black mens’ views of self (Bush, 1999; Bush et al., 2009). Black mens’ development of self includes their racial identity development (Bush, 1999; Bush et al., 2013; Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2014). Bush et al. (2013, p. 2) posits that racial identity development for African American males is formed by “individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events and phenomena” that the African American male has experienced. Bush et al. (2013) discusses that racial identity is interconnected and bidirectional, meaning that racial identity is developed based on each individual Black males’ experiences and culture. Racial identity development is passed from one generation to another to define the racial group of a person. Society often portrays Black men as emasculated and this can affect how Black people perceive themselves and their abilities (Bany et al., 2014; Bush, 1999; Bush, 2000b). Bany et al. (2014) found that society continues to only depict Black men as either non-threatening or a thug, and this lack of diversity in the views of Black men has led Black men to develop masculinity traits from these narrow conceptions. Black men’s view of self is directly linked to their relationship with their primary caregiver and their culture (Bae et al., 2020; Bush, 2000a; Bush, 2004; Simons et al., 2012). If a Black man has internalized negative images of his
culture, it may impact the way that he views himself and those within his community (Bae et al., 2020; Moore, 2012), which may decrease the likelihood that he will engage in romantic relationships with African American women. Some Black men view themselves as inferior to Whites and other racial groups (Taylor et al., 2019). In their desire to overcome these negative perceptions, African American men tend to view their engagement in a romantic relationship with a woman that comes from a successful family as a way of boosting their social status in society (Andrinopoulos et al., 2006).

In group prejudice and favoritism is a type of racial identity influencing inter-racial dating and relationship. In group favoritism refers to preferential treatment to the members belonging in the same group. Accordingly, in group favoritism for people in the same racial group is expected to work in favor of intra-racial dating. However, Black Americans’ traumatic history with one another has helped to reduce intraracial dating among male and female African Americans leading to an increase in interracial dating for African American men (Bae et al., 2020; Kleissner & Jahn, 2020; Yancey, 2009). Today, most groups are growing with diversity, and these include professional and business association, and academic or learning groups for persons in schools and colleges such as discussions groups have promoted interracial dating as opposed to intraracial dating and marriages. Essentially, these interracial groups have extinguished the traditional racial groups that worked to foster intraracial dating (Weeks et al., 2017).

**Culture/Upbringing**

Culture and value norms continue to be a defining factor for mate selection in general. The environment that a man grew up in (e.g., involvement of parents, presence of extended family members, religious beliefs, the importance of education, and other cultural norms) – often
influences the characteristics they are attracted to in mates (Andrinopoulos et al., 2006; Ross, 1997). Historically, individuals tend to prefer dating persons of their own race because of the shared culture and values (Ross, 1997). However, there has been an increased tendency for African American males to engage in intraracial dating (Bethea, 1995; Passel et al., 2010; Pew Research, 2017). Interracial dating has to some extent been attributed to the tendency of men in general to value and select female mates that display what are considered more traditional traits, such as physically attractiveness, frugality, and cooking skills (Bus & Barnes, 1986; Moore, 2012). The high rate of interracial dating among Black males could be attributed to men’s preference for traits such as physical attractiveness over culture matching.

Collectivism versus individualistic culture norms may impacts one’s perception of available romantic partners (Bethea, 1995; Ross, 1996; Steward, 2021). Collectivistic cultures value the group versus the individual. Historically, African American culture norms view the world through a collectivistic approach (Leary, 2005). The collectivistic approach focuses on community, such as larger nuclear families and extended support networks (Hartung et al., 2010). Additional features of collectivistic culture include shared finances within the family and shared goals to better the group over the individual needs (Hartung et al., 2010). The influence from family and extended support networks can directly impact African American mens’ view of self as opposed to the majority Caucasian culture in America (Hartung et al., 2010). Although traditionally the African American community is viewed as collectivistic, because African Americans are not monolithic, some African Americans follow more of an individualistic approach to life., such as placing personal needs over group needs (Simons et al., 2021). Whether an individual is raised in a collectivistic or individualistic culture there may still be a commonality of these similar factors that influence mate selection.
Interracial Dating and Marriages

There has been an increase in intermarriages over the years. Immediately following the abolition of miscegenation laws in the U.S. in 1967, 3% of new marriages were interracial (Pew Research, 2017). Interracial marriages increased steadily between 1967 and 2015. For instance, the share of intermarriages among newlyweds increased from merely 6.7% in 1980 to 14.6% in 2008 and a record 17.1% in 2015 (Telles & Esteve, 2019). This translates to about 670,000 intermarriages in 2015 marrying a partner of a different race or ethnicity. The total number of intermarriages reached 11 million in 2015, accounting for 10% of all marriages in the U.S. (Gregg, 2020). This is a three-fold growth since 1980 when barely 3 million or 3% of total marriages in the country was between spouses of different race or ethnicity (Livingston & Brown, 2017).

The overall growth in interracial marriages following the abolition of miscegenation laws is partly fueled by high intermarriage rates among newly married Blacks and whites. The proportion of Black interracial marriages has more than tripled between 1980 and 2015 (Yang & Prost, 2021). The PEW research reveals a sharp rise in interracial marriages among Blacks from as low as 5.5% in 1980 to 15.5% in 2008 and rose further to 18% in 2015 (Choi & Tienda, 2017). The white intermarriage rate rose from about 3.8% in 1980 to 8.9% reported in 2008, rising to 11% in 2015 (Yang & Prost, 2021). However, recent statistics suggest that interracial marriages among Asians have declined among newlywed couples from 33% reported in 1980 to 29% in 2015 (Gevrek & Gevrek, 2020). Interracial marriages among newlywed Hispanics have only increased by one percentage point to 27% from 26% between 1980 and 2015 (Yang & Prost, 2021). Nevertheless, despite this decrease, Asians and Hispanics are more likely to engage in romantic relationships and marry interracially than Blacks when accounting for men and
women because Black women are the least likely to date or marry outside their race (Gevrek & Gevrek, 2020). Accordingly, about 29% of one in three newlywed Asians and 27% of Hispanics are likely to marry a spouse from a different race or ethnicity (Yang & Prost, 2021). Overall, the interracial marriage rate among Black people has increased steadily but remain significantly lower compared to Asians and Hispanics.

The rate of interracial romantic relationships and marriages is influenced by the size of the racial/ethnic group in the country. Accordingly, the size of each population group affects the pool of potential partners within the marriage market comprising unmarried adults and newly married couples (Choi & Tienda, 2017). Whites are more likely to marry within their race because they constitute the largest proportion of the country’s population and most prospective partners are white. On the contrary, due to their small population size, minority races such as African Americans have few potential partners within their race for intraracial marriages (de Guzman & Nishina, 2017). Nevertheless, ethnic/race size is not the only factor influencing intermarriage patterns. Take for example a high rate of marriages among Hispanics accounting for 17% of total new marriages in the country (Qian et al., 2018). However, their rate of intermarriage is comparable to Asians who account for just 5% of total U.S. new marriages in 2015 (Qian & Qian, 2020). Thus, even though the rate of marriages among Hispanics has progressively increased since 1980, their rate of interracial marriages has remained relatively stable (de Guzman & Nishina, 2017). On the contrary, whereas the rate new marriages have remained relatively constant among African American at between 15% and 16%, their intermarriage rate has more than tripled from about 5% to 18% between 1980 and 2015 (Romano, 2018). These statistics demonstrate a higher rate of interracial marriages involving African Americans in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups in the U.S.
**Gender Gap in interracial Dating and Marriages**

Although no overall gender gaps in intermarriage are observed among newly married couples, minority racial and ethnic groups demonstrate a difference in gender patterns. The most remarkable gender gap intermarriage pattern is visible among Black men than any other race/ethnic group (Chuang et al., 2021). Accordingly, Black men are twice as likely to intermarry a partner from a different race/ethnicity than their female counterparts; 24% of African American are in an interracial marriage, whereas only 12% of African American females are in an interracial marriage (Livingston & Brown, 2017). This is a long-standing gender gap in interracial marriage since 1980 when there were 8% of male and 3% of Black female intermarriages. A considerable gender gap in interracial marriages occurs among newlywed Asian ethnic groups in favor of females rather than males. Statistics from Pew Research indicate that 36% of newlywed Asian women intermarry compared to 21% of their male counterparts (Livingston & Brown, 2017). This is also a long-standing gender gap since 1980 where close to 39% of Asian women married a spouse of different race/ethnicity compared to 26% for Asian male intermarriage rate (Gevrek & Gevrek, 2020). Despite accounting for only 5% of marriages in the country, Asians reported the most gender differences in intermarriages (Chuang et al., 2021). Whereas the gender gap in intermarriage has remained relatively stable among Asians from 1980 to the present, this gap has widened among African Americans (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Similar to whites, intermarriage rates are evenly matched for newlywed Hispanic men and women (Gevrek & Gevrek, 2020). The rate of intermarriages was about 26% and 28% for Hispanic men and women in 2015, with little changes from the 1980 intermarriages (Maimon, 2020). Therefore, Hispanics and whites exhibit not considerable gender gap in interracial dating and marriages.


**Education and Socio-Economic Status (SES)**

Economic oppression continues to be a barrier for African American male’s advancement; in fact, Black men experience more economic disparities in comparison to males from other racial and ethnic groups (Bush, 1999; Manduca, 2018). Given that women tend to value a partner’s economic resources more than men (Damen et al., 2021), a lack of economic resources can interfere with African American males' dating relationships. Thus, financial stability and status of success is an important factor to consider with mate selection with African American men (Damen et al., 2021). Amongst Black men, level of education is a primary factor in interracial dating because Black men that are educated – bachelor’s degree or more – are more likely to date interracially than their Caucasian counterparts (Batson et al., 2006). Education has been linked to economic freedom, and oftentimes Black men attend universities that are predominately white institutions (PWI) that have low minority enrollment, limiting Black men’s access to educated Black women (Batson et al., 2006; Bush, 1999). As the education of Black men increases, so does their socioeconomic status (SES). Thus, linking education and SES is an important factor that increases the likelihood of Black men dating interracially.

The rates of interracial dating and marriage vary according to educational level, with persons of college experience being more likely to engage in interracial dating or marriage compared to persons without college experience (Gevrek & Gevrek, 2020). Statistics indicate that interracial marriages among persons with an education level below college increased from 14% to 18%, while the rate of interracial marriage among those with at least some college or a bachelor’s degree was at least 19% (Gevrek & Gevrek, 2020). This is a shift from the 1980s where educational level did not influence the rate of interracial dating and marriage (Robinson, 2017). Overall, the trend is the same for both males and women as there are no gender
differences in interracial dating and marriages by educational achievement (Livingston & Brown, 2017). The rate of intermarriages for males and females with college levels in 2015 was 19% and 18%, and 20% and 18% for bachelor’s degrees respectively (Robinson, 2017). The largest impact of educational achievement on interracial marriages was reported among newlywed Hispanics. Thus, a higher level of educational attainment is linked to a higher rate of interracial dating and marriage among Hispanics (Livingston & Brown, 2017). The rate of intermarriage among Hispanics with high school diplomas or less was 16% in 2015, 35% for intermarriage among Hispanics with a college-level of education, and 46% for those with a bachelor's degree (Qian et al., 2018). However, there is no gender difference in the intermarriage rate among newly married Hispanic people based on educational achievement. Overall, the rate of interracial marriages among Hispanics is associated with the level of educational attainment.

![Figure 1: Proportion of interracial Marriages by Education achievement](image)

Similarly, for African Americans, the rate of interracial marriage is highest among those with bachelor’s degrees at 21%, followed by 17% for college-level or less (Qian et al., 2018). The rate of intermarriage among African Americans with high school diplomas or less is about 15% (Malone, 2020). However, there is an intermarriage gender gap between males and females across the different levels of education. The greatest gender gap in interracial marriage was
reported among Blacks with some college diploma or more (Livingston & Brown, 2017). This means that college-level African American men are more likely to engage in interracial dating than college-level African American women.

There is a relationship between educational achievement and interracial marriages among African Americans and Hispanics. In 2015, Asians with some college education were most likely to intermarry with another other race at a 39% rate, compared to 29% for Asians with bachelor’s degrees and 26% for those with a high school diploma or less (Gevrek & Gevrek, 2020). This implies that among Asians most interracial marriages occur with some college-level education than Asians with bachelor’s degrees or high school education. Besides, the greatest gender gap in interracial marriage based on the level of education was among Asians with high school diplomas (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Asian women with high school diplomas are more than twice likely to intermarry than newly married male Asians at 36% against 14% respectively, representing a gender gap of 22% in this group. This implies that Asian women with high school education are more likely to engage in an interracial relationship than male Asians with high school diplomas. The gender gap in intermarriage declined slightly for college graduates at 36% against 21% for Asian females and males respectively, representing a gender gap of 15% (Han, 2021). The rate of intermarriage is evenly matched between newly married white males and females regardless of education. However, males with a bachelor’s degree are slightly more likely to engage in an interracial marriage than females (Gevrek & Gevrek, 2020). Hence, the gender gap in intermarriages among whites is lower than minority groups.

**Time/Generation**

The generation that the African American male was born into impacts their willingness and openness for interracial dating (Bany et al., 2014; Bush, 1999; Robnett et al., 2011;
Stackman, 2016). For example, interracial dating and marriages were prohibited until 1967 when the miscegenation laws were abolished in the U.S. (Passel et al., 2010). Hence, unlike today’s generation, earlier generations of African Americans were not at liberty to intermarry with other racial groups (Telles & Esteve, 2019). The historical context of interracial dating is still a contributing factor for some in mate selection. Although there has been increasing acceptance of interracial dating amongst African Americans, many African Americans remain mistrustful about interracial dating (Passel et al., 2010; Yancey, 2009). Black men that lived during the Civil Rights era were less likely to engage in interracial dating relationships due to the harsh treatment of Black men by Caucasians during that time (Staples, 1988; Thompson, 2009). Black men were not legally banned from engaging in interracial dating or marriage, however, there were informal mechanisms to prevent Black men from interracial dating or marriage (Ross, 1996; Thompson, 2009).

**Location**

Interracial dating is likely to be affected by the geographic location of African American men (Passel et al., 2010). Passel et al. (2010) found that interracial dating was most accepted and likely in the western area of the U.S. and was least accepted and likely in southern states. The historical context within Southern communities continues to be a barrier in interracial dating (Telles & Esteve, 2019). Also, the racial composition of the residential population impacts rates of dating interracially (Passel et al., 2010). If a Black male lives in an environment that is predominantly non-African American or attends schools in predominantly non-African American areas, there may be greater opportunity for interracial dating (Batson et al., 2006; Gillum, 2007). The northern region of the U.S. has a lower number of African Americans which reduces the chances of interracial dating compared to the southern part of the U.S.
Relational Factors Impacting Relationship Development

Relational factors that impact the development of romantic relationships include compatibility, shared commonalities, communication styles, conflict management styles, equity and fairness, sexual and psychological intimacy, and physical attributes (Bennett et al., 2019). As observed by Miller and Poston (2020), the quality of communication is vital in developing and sustaining romantic partnerships and marriage. Miller and Poston (2020) emphasized the importance of honest and open communication between romantic partners in building trust and commitment to the relationship. Tan et al. (2017) affirmed that engaging in mutual discussions regarding matters of significance to their lives is vital in nurturing a satisfactory romantic relationship. Tan et al. (2017) observed that mutual respect, trust, and understanding are critical in gaining satisfaction and solving differences between romantic partners. However, there are no specific studies on the effects of effective communication skills on the rising interracial romantic relationships among Black males.

Conflict resolution styles are another critical relational factor fostering the development of romantic relationships. Gesell et al. (2020) suggested that directly confronting the conflict by talking directly about differences is more effective in dealing with conflicts in a romantic partnership than employing an avoidant approach. Despite the ineffectiveness of avoidance, research on conflict management in marriages has shown that men are more likely than women react to stresses of conflict by withdrawing (Dildar & Amjad, 2017). Women were more likely to initiate discussions on relational conflict than men. The inability of the parties in heterosexual relationships to resolve conflicts may erode romantic relationships and cause emotional and psychological impairment, particularly in women (Dildar & Amjad, 2017). The results suggest that lack of effective conflict management strategies generates unhappiness and makes it
cumbersome to confront and solve disagreements in romantic partnerships (Delatorre & Wagner, 2018). The findings indicate that females are more likely than male partners to use direct and confronting face-to-face styles in managing conflicts in romantic relationships. Overall, conflict management style is a critical relational factor influencing the development and sustainability of romantic relationships. The conflict management style used by Black men is yet to be explored in literature.

Equity and fairness are other critical relational aspects influencing the development and sustainability of romantic partnerships. A sense of fairness in a romantic relationship is key in overcoming individual differences, including racial and ethnic differences, to gain satisfaction and commitment in the relationship (Varsava, 2017). Equity and a sense of fairness are strongly linked to mutual decision-making in both same-sex and heterosexual couples. Research indicates that equity and fairness overcome racial, ethnic, and socio-economic differences between partners, making them feel relatively equal in the decision-making process, discussions, and negotiation (Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2017). Thus, equity and fairness are largely linked to a quality relationship. Intimacy is an important relational factor closely associated with sexual relations and psychological openness. Studies have shown that increased psychological and sexual intimacy is crucial for overall satisfaction and commitment in both same-sex and heterosexual relationships (Van Lankveld et al., 2018). Therefore, a higher level of psychological and sexual intimacy between partners contributes to the development and sustainability of a romantic partnership. These studies have demonstrated a variety of relational factors contributing to the development and sustainability of heterosexual relationships. Overall, effective communication, style of conflict management, equity and fairness, and sexual and psychological
intimacy are essential relational factors impacting the development of romantic relationships and marriages.

**Historical Influences on African American Males’ Dating Practices**

This section provides a historical overview of the development of romantic relationships among African Americans in America. In order to understand the current state of romantic relationship development for African Americans, it is imperative to have an understanding on the origin of romantic relationship development in America (Leary, 2005). The Middle Passage was a time in American history that Black Africans (modern-day descendants are known as African Americans or Black/Black Americans) were stolen from their homelands in Africa and enslaved by Europeans (modern-day descendants are known as Caucasians) (Brace, 2004). For this section, Black Africans will be referred to as African Americans/Blacks, and Europeans will be referred to as Caucasians (Horton & Horton, 2005). During the era of the Middle Passage, African Americans were enslaved because Europeans believed that African Americans were racially inferior. African American slaves were treated with hatred, violence, and aggression by Caucasians (Leary, 2005).

Brace (2004) defined slavery as, "any system in which property law is applied to people, allowing individuals to own, buy and sell other individuals, as a legal (de jure) form of property" (p. 162). Slavery for African Americans in America lasted for over 300 years (Leary, 2005). African American slaves were bought and stolen from Africa and forced upon slave ships that had deplorable conditions, including but not limited to, confined spaces, torture, and starvation (Horton & Horton, 2005). Many slaves died during this passage; some died from suicide and others from murder and sickness (Horton & Horton, 2005), and during this time African
American men and women were not permitted to enter formal romantic relationships including marriage.

Plantation life had various mechanisms that limited interactions between African Americans and Caucasians (Davis, 2020). It was believed that slaves were beneath the slave masters and their families. The act of even making eye contact with a slave master's wife could often lead to the slave being abused, hurt, beaten, and even murdered (Williams, 2019). Some laws said that the slave owner and anyone that the slave owner allowed had the right to murder slaves and not be charged (Williams, 2019). The laws and practices that were once considered legal had negative implications for African Americans.

Romantic relationships for African American men and women in America have had a tumultuous history. African American male slaves were forced to procreate with African American women to bear children for slave labor (Williams, 2019). The foundations of these relationships involved force, fear, intimidation, and necessity (Stewart, 2020). The sexual relationships between African American men and women were not necessarily formed out of love and companionship but out of obligation. Although there are many stories of slaves marrying and procreating out of love and choice, many African American slaves were forced into relationships that were not based on love and choice (Moore, 2012). Some of the experiences that African American men and women were forced to endure include forced rape by slave owners and by other African Americans (Williams, 2019). Williams (2019) recounted experiences of African American women being forcibly raped by African American men because of their slave masters demanding them to. Other stories describe African American men being forced to watch while their wives, mothers, and even daughters were raped by their slave owners, leaving them feeling powerless. Such trauma is likely to continue to influence romantic
relationships between African American men and women (Leary, 2005; Moore, 2012). This has greatly contributed to mistrust amongst Black men and women (Leary, 2005; Simons et al., 2012). This long history of slavery has negatively impacted the way that Black men view Black women and romantic relationships between Black men and women. Towner et al. (2015) asserts that African American men and women tended to be mistrustful and perceive each other as unreliable. They may have the notion that other races are superior (Bae, 2020; Bush, 1999; Ross, 1997) thus making the other races more attractive to Black men (Hall et al., 2014; Manduca, 2018; Mendelsohn et al., 2014).

**Post-Slavery Era**

This section highlights the progression from the post-slavery era into the “freed slave” era. Although slaves were “free,” they were still segregated and experienced racism in all aspects of their lives, including but not limited to dating (Grant, 2003). African Americans were only allowed to engage, date, and marry other African Americans (Boyer et al., 2008). Some African American romantic relationships survived slavery – meaning that some families were maintained despite many slaves being sold to other slave owners. Some African Americans were even able to trace their family members sold to distant locations through the maintenance of family names. Subsequently, African Americans were now allowed to travel throughout the country together. African Americans began to build communities interracially, creating families and environments out of choice instead of force (Carson et al., 2005; Gillum, 2007; Stewart, 2020). As African Americans began to build communities, own land, and have income, their lives began to shift. Gillum (2007) discussed the great success that African Americans created within their communities, including a strong economic base, skilled laborers, and strong entertainment and artisans. The African American family became a staple within the African American community.
Although African Americans were still experiencing lynching (murders by hanging), Black codes (laws that regulated slavery) (Boyer et al., 2008), Jim Crow laws (laws created to segregate minority and majority culture), and other systemic pressures, African American families were growing in number and economic power. African American men and women were a collective that worked together with a shared goal of living, surviving, and thriving in their new American life.

African American communities following slavery had most of the same amenities that Caucasian communities had. This includes businesses and organizations that were owned and led predominantly by African Americans. During this era, the African American family and the relationship between the African American man and African American woman was the cornerstone of the community's success (Bethea, 1995; Leary, 2005; Staples, 1988). The success within these relationships contributed to the strong communities that were challenging the common stereotyping of African American men and women as inferior and impoverished (Staples, 1985). Members of the African American community relied on one another and worked closely together to build powerful establishments such as businesses and institutions that were owned and run by African Americans. These include banks, churches, community systems, and schools and universities (Leary, 2005). The development of these institutions was based on collectivistic values and core beliefs (Leary, 2005). Collectivistic values emphasize the importance of ethnic group membership, communication styles, beliefs regarding psychological services, views of trust, and views of dietary beliefs (Acevado, 2003; Swaidan et al., 2008). The communication style post-slavery was based on a paternalistic family structure with male elders being the final decision-makers (Swaidan et al., 2008). The communication within the African American communication was friendly and respectful.
Dismantling of the Black Family

As previously discussed, African Americans families play a significant role in the development of romantic relationships (Debnam, 2017; Simons et al., 2012; Smith, 1996). African American families have historically had less access to economic resources and have built their families from a communal perspective (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1994). African American families utilized the community as a way to support their family and have access to additional resources and opportunities to promote success within their community and families (Grant et al., 2005; Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1994). As the African American family unit had begun to create their society, new laws and new ways of regulation began to emerge and impact the ability of the community to function (Grant et al., 2005; Gunja, 2003; Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1994). Multiple strategies have been adopted by Caucasians in the post-slavery era to oppress and discriminate against African Americans to impoverish and portray them as inferior. Taylor et al. (2019) argues that African American males have sought to date non-Black women as a way to overcome their sense of inferiority.

The 'war on drugs' that was established in the late 1960s and early 1970s contributed to the dismantling of the African American family (Verkerk, 2017). The war on drugs led to increase policing in these communities, and increased incarceration of African Americans – men in particular – and a lack of resources for community members (Gunja, 2003; Tonry, 1994). As the over-policing in African American communities grew, the number of African American men in prisons grew, creating the system of single-parent – predominantly mothers – households (Gunja, 2003). In 1984 the Sentence Reform Act was created to combat the growing concern for drugs in the U.S. (Gunja, 2003). The Sentence Reform Act was a federal standard that restricted a judge's discretion on sentencing for crimes and changed the standard on a federal level (Gunja,
2003; U.S. Government, 1984). Families were separated due to incarceration and there was an erosion of community supports. Community organizations that had a positive impact on enhancing the quality of life for African Americans, such as, the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam, began to be demolished (Carson & Carson, 1990; Kelly et al., 2013; Knapper, 1996).

In the late 1980s, the drug crack cocaine devastated many families within the African American community (Golub & Johnson, 1996; Hartman & Golub, 1999). During the crack epidemic, the community was met with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act that imposed harsher criminal sentencing for those that were caught with possession of crack cocaine – not cocaine (Gunja, 2003; Verkerk, 2017). This law of possession allowed for public assistance programs to deny housing and aid to families experiencing addiction to crack cocaine (Gunja, 2003). This law disproportionately affected the African American family and jeopardized their housing and family dynamics. The early policing that left many African American men incarcerated now allowed for federal housing programs to deny these men access to homes and in many cases their families. The families were then forced to try to find their resources despite still struggling with poverty or dismantle their family and have the man or male figure of the household no longer be a part of the immediate family unit (Gunja, 2003; Staples, 1988). In 1996, the Welfare Reform Act created a lifetime ban on access to resources and benefits to those that have had a drug conviction (1996). These reforms continue to dismantle, segregate, and cause separation and loss within the African American family (Bethea, 1995; Staples, 1988). Bethea (1995) and Yancey (2009) found that the historical impacts previously discussed have also impacted the romantic relationship development for African American men and women. Literature on the effects of the dismantling of the African American community from the early initiatives in the 1960’s
continues to emerge (Bae, 2020). The single-mother households faced numerous stressors, such as poverty, concerns regarding childcare, rearing styles, and redistribution of family roles (Bush, 2001). Single mothers oftentimes played the roles as nurturer and disciplinarian for their children (Bush, 1999a). Although there is limited research regarding relationship outcomes of Black women and their sons, Bae et al. (2020) posits that a combination of the family dynamics, economic resources and several other adverse childhood experiences (ACE) increases the likelihood of a mother and son developing a defensive relational schema related to growing up in a conflictual and uncertain trajectory group (Bae et al., 2020). Bae et al. (2020) describes a defensive relational schema as an increased likelihood for males to have negative views of romantic relationships due to poverty, lack of representation of positive Black relationships, difficult home environments and poor prosocial relationships with their families and caregivers. Kogen et al. (2014) research postulates that the development of healthy romantic relationships is negatively impacted by racism, caregiving practices, poverty, community stressors, and relational schemas amongst family members. The history of slavery, racism, segregation and unjust laws have impacted the African American community in a multitude of ways, including but not limited to, changing their communication styles, the ways that they address stereotypes both intrinsic and extrinsic, and how they perceive and handle loss (Davis, 2020).

African American men and women have developed mistrust in each other (Hurt, 2014; Simons et al., 2014). Previously, communication among African Americans was friendly and involved a respectful approach with males as decision-makers (Davis, 2020; Leary, 2005). This has since changed due to modernization and globalization thus breaking some of the cultural values that promoted friendliness and respect in communication. Davis (2018) discovered early patterns of communication that were characterized by harmony and balance between males and
females, with multiple ways of complementing each and accorded accolades in specific areas. However, African Americans have since developed a culturally induced vulnerability that make them overly wary to open themselves to danger in a romantic relationship. There arose differences in communication patterns between male and female African Americans. African American men have been influenced by in-group discrimination that has led to an increase in working against each other rather than working together (Langmia, 2018), thus, impacting intercultural dating patterns between male and female African Americans.

The stereotyping of African Americans has also led to mistrust between African American men and women in dating and marriage. The mistrust between African American men and women was largely driven by years of stereotyping by characterizing Black men as aggressive, unintelligent, sexist, violent, and criminal (Leary, 2005). Historically, this type of stereotyping of Black men, has had a negative impact on the African American communities dating practices, families, and communities. As previously discussed, research has found that African Americans are already at an increased risk of developing mistrust in romantic relationships and stereotyping continues to contribute to it (Simons et al., 2012; Simons et al., 2014).

Simons et al. (2012) concluded that negative childhood experiences in African American households also increase the likelihood of a person developing an insecure attachment and hostile attribution bias. Insecure attachments and hostile attribution biases may lead to mistrust and poor negative views of relationships (Simons et al., 2012). These negative views and mistrust in the African American relationships are also derived from experiencing racism, communities engulfed by crime, poverty, child-rearing (corporal punishment), hardships, and an increased number of stressful events (Simons et al., 2012; Simons et al., 2014). The stereotyping
has also worked to deter intraracial dating among Black males and females. This has potentially influenced the perception of other races about dating African Americans.

African American men have also been stereotyped as hypermasculine, violent, and aggressive (Crook et al., 2009). Hypermasculinity refers to the characterization of males as being aggressive and negative (Crook et al., 2009). Black men are often represented in the population as being lazy, non-leaders, uninvolved, unable to communicate, and lacking in the ability to provide. Although research has shown these stereotypes are not accurate, these are widely held beliefs that add to the relationship development between Black men and women. Black women are often seen as the head of household, argumentative, unapproachable, or promiscuous and unworthy of love (Gillum, 2007). These stereotypes have been disproven but still are held as beliefs for many within and outside of the African American community. Although some of these may be true for individuals, this is not representative of the community as a whole.

Crooks et al. (2009) discusses that the lack of opportunity afforded to African American families comparatively to Caucasian families also adds to the tension within the African American romantic relationship development. These opportunities the Caucasian families are afforded – e.g., economic freedom, better education, two-parent households – have created resentment, anger, hurt, and lack of understanding among African Americans, have impacted their racial identity development and increased hatred of other African Americans (Crook et al., 2009; Norment, 1986).

The research suggests that members of the African American community need skills and counseling on dating and marriages to heal and address the systemic impacts that contributed to the current stress of intra-racial dating within the African American community (Crook et al., 2009; Gillum, 2007; Leary, 2005; Norment, 1986). The relationship between African American
men and women historically has been a tenuous relationship, and the intermarriage rates between African American men and women have declined.

Civil Rights Era to the Crack Epidemic and Beyond

The civil rights era occurred in 1950s and 1960s and was characterized by struggle for social justice for African Americans to achieve rights under the law. Even though the civil war ended slavery, discrimination against black people continued particularly in the Southern regions. With the flourishing of the African American community, laws were implemented segregating African Americans and Caucasians. One set of laws, the anti-miscegenation laws, in particular, impacted the African American and Caucasian communities in the U.S. (Beckett & Francis, 2020). Miscegenation is defined by Browning as, “intermarriage of persons of different races” (p. 26). The creation of the anti-miscegenation laws reinforced negative stereotypes regarding African Americans, and sought to protect the virtue of Caucasians, Caucasian women in particular (Thompson, 2009). ‘Jim Crow’ laws were established in late 19th century in the south prohibited African Americans from using the same public facilities as Caucasians or live in the same towns or attend the same schools. These set of laws also prohibited interracial marriage and voting rights. These set of laws were established to marginalize Black Americans and erase the progress achieved by African Americans during the reconstruction era. The prohibition of intermarriage was later abolished in 1976 in what is known as Loving v. Virginia declaring anti-miscegenation unconstitutional and violated the Fourteenth Amendment in the United States Constitution (Cline, 2019; Head, 2019). With the gradual removal of the anti-miscegenation laws there was an increase in interracial marriage between African Americans and Caucasians.

Although many northern states began to change their laws regarding interracial dating and marriages, in the late 1950s, twenty-nine states still had anti-miscegenation laws (Barnett,
1964; Browning, n.d.; Thompson, 2009). Intermarriage was not a federal right until 1964 in the case of McLaughlin v. State of Florida (Head, 2019). Although this federal law was established in 1964, this federal law did not impede on the state's rights over miscegenation or interracial relationships; that law did not exist until 1967 and is well known as, Loving v. Virginia (Cline, 2019). Loving v. Virginia was the first court decision that rule that anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional and violated the Fourteenth Amendment in the U.S. Constitution (Cline, 2019; Head, 2019). For the first time in America's history, there existed the legal freedom of choice for African Americans in choosing whom they dated and even married. This would be the legal precedent until the present day.

Though laws may have changed on a federal level for miscegenation, negative opinions, stereotyping, and attitudes among Caucasians on African Americans largely did not immediately (Bany et al., 2014; Thompson, 2009). The creation of the anti-miscegenation laws and the new societal laws after Loving vs. Virginia (1967) reinforced the negative stereotypes regarding African Americans and reinforced the notion that something needed to be done to protect the virtue of Caucasians, Caucasian women in particular (Thompson, 2009). The message continued to be that African Americans were aggressive, and violent and cannot be trusted (Bany et al., 2014; Johnson, 2018; Litwack, 1998; Thompson, 2009). The ‘war on drugs’ project was a new strategy to combat and continue to keep African Americans and other minorities away from the Caucasian population. It was initiated in 1969 to combat the increasing presence of drug-related offenses in America (Waldinger, 1999; Verkerk, 2017).

The ‘war on drugs’ initiative was primarily used in the post-slavery era to maintain the dominance of Caucasians over African Americans and other minority groups (Waldinger, 1999; Verkerk, 2017). The ‘war on drugs’ was changed to be an oppression tool to separate Caucasians
and African Americans. Further information on the use of the ‘war on drug’ project to separate minorities from majority populations can be reviewed in the FBI archive, specifically in the Cointelpro resources. A federally funded project to combat the war on drugs was introduced in June 1971 that later led to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) (Gunja, 2003; Tonry, 1994). For the subsequent forty years, the war on drugs was a failure of its intended goal and contributed to a significant increase in the incarceration rate of minorities (Gunja, 2003; Tonry, 1994). In 1994 John Ehrlichman – counsel and assistant of Domestic Affairs of the then President Richard Nixon – asserted that the war on drugs was created to attack the African American community and dismantle their homes (Baum, 2016). It is believed that war on drugs reinforced negative images of African Americans, several negative stereotypes emerged which have become internalized within the African American community (Hurt et al., 2014; Leary, 2005; Moore, 2012). These internalized stereotypes have continued over generations and has had both negative and positive impacts within the African American community and continues to impact how African Americans see and choose who they date (Hurt et al., 2014; Moore, 2012). Hurt et al. (2014) suggests that the negative stereotyping of African Americans from the ‘war on drugs’ contributed to distrust between African American men and women.

**Modern African American Dating Practices**

African American men and women share a history that is complicated, beneficial, and challenging. African American men and women have gone through more challenges than other racial groups. The challenges faced by African Americans, such as oppression through projects such as the war on drugs, are unique and deepen their urge to work closely to solve the larger communal issues (Bethea, 1995; Gillum, 2007; Littlejohn-Blake, & Darling, 1994; & Tonry, 1994). The stereotypes that have been influenced over decades of oppression and history
continue to impact the relationship developments of African American men and women (Gillum, 2007; & Crook, Thomas, & Cobia, 2009).

The researcher wished to investigate why Black men have decided not to engage in intraracial dating or marriage, which may provide us with a better understanding of the high rate of interracial marriage involving Black males in comparison to Black females (Passel et al., 2010; Pew Research, 2017). Previous literature identified some factors that promote negative dating practices among African American males and females, including child-rearing, relationship conflict, need for relationship support, lack of dyadic trust and reliability, and poor caring from the spouse (Bae et al., 2020). The previous discussions have noted variables such as low socioeconomic status, education, and mistrust as contributing factors to the low rate of intraracial dating and marriage among African American males. There is an ongoing fight within the African American community involving the development of romantic relationships. The ongoing fight within the African American community has led to generations of misunderstanding, resentment, fear, poor communication, and a lack of respect and trust for one another in the African American community (Bae et al., 2020; Moore, 2012; Simons et al., 2012).

Although the research literature indicates difficulties within the romantic relationships of African Americans, there are also strengths within the relationships between African Americans, including strong family values and support in dealing with societal oppression experiences (King, 2009; Ross, 1996). King et al. (2009) found that successful Black marriages share similar outcomes comparatively to the majority culture. African Americans maintain marriages that are monogamous, reliable, affectionate, financially stable, and share cultural beliefs (King et al.,
Due to a lack of research on the strengths and positives of Black marriages, there is an immediate need for future research on the strengths of Black marriages.

**Theoretical Orientation**

The nature of understanding the Black male is unique and requires the adaptation of many different perspectives and views to understand the diversity of Black men (Bush, 2009). Since there is a lack of research regarding heterosexual African American men’s disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females, it was important to utilize a phenomenological approach. This approach allows the researcher to explore the lived experiences of African American men. This research will be explored through the African American Male Theory (AAMT) that utilizes parts of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) (see Figure 3). Bronfenbrenner's systems theory identified various environmental factors influencing the development of the relationship (Putney, 2017). The model emphasized the significant role played by various environments such as school, neighborhood, church, economy, and government in shaping development and relationships (Hertler et al., 2018). The model categorized environmental factors influencing the development and behaviors of an individual into five systems namely the microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems.

African American Male Theory was first published in 2013 in the African American Males in Education journal by Lawson and Edward Bush. The AAMT was developed to help better understand the complexity of Black men (Bush V & Bush, 2013). This theory encompasses many social, cultural, and systemic variables that contribute to the development of the Black man (Bush & Bush, 2013). This theory argues that both collective and individual behaviors, experiences, events, outcomes, phenomena, and trajectories of the lives of Black
males can be best assessed using an ecological system approach. It is hence a relevant theory for explaining the lived experiences of the Black males, which has been ignored and misused throughout history.

![Ecological Systems Model for African American Male Theory by Lawson and Edward Bush](image)

Figure 2. Ecological Systems Model for African American Male Theory by Lawson and Edward Bush

As shown in figure 3, The AAMT model incorporates all the five interconnected ecological systems identified by Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Accordingly, the ecological microsystem constitutes the personality of Black males, biology, perceptions, beliefs, and intellectual gifts as well as their interactions with peers, family, school, and neighborhoods (Bush, 2013). The second category is the mesosystem describing the connection between different types of microsystem environments. It involves the interaction between the systems of inner and outer microsystems to subsequently influence the behaviors of Black males (Putney,
The subsystem in this category refers to the influence of spirit and the supernatural on Black males. The exosystem category is comprised of external environmental and community factors influencing the development and behaviors of male African Americans (Lawson Bush & Bush, 2018). Typical of this group include unemployment, access to healthcare, education, and housing as the key factors adversely affecting Black males’ development and behaviors. The macrosystem is constituted of the larger systems and cultures, including emotional, ideological, and physical aspects influencing individual development. The behavior of Black males is influenced by discriminatory laws and policies, cultural hegemony, widespread racism, and youth culture, hip-hop culture, Black nationalism, and patriotism (Bush, 2013). The final category of chronosystems are patterns of environmental transitions and events including their historical context such as increasing educational and career opportunities for Blacks in history. Increased access to education and healthcare in recent years has improved the exposure of Black males to other racial groups (Noonan et al., 2016). It has also improved their socio-economic status in American society. The ecological factors at different system categories were explored in the AAMT model to guide their influence on interracial and intra-racial romantic dating and marriages.

The history of Black men and Black women in American culture is intrinsically linked to one another through a series of events (e.g., slavery, law changes, war of drugs) (Bethea, 1995). Intraracial dating – or dating within the same ethnic and/or cultural background – between African American men and African American women has decreased three times more in the African American community than any other racial or ethnic community in the U.S (Passel et al., 2010). The AAMT theory postulates that Black males have innate resilience and desire for self-determination as well as unlimited intellectual and morality capacity. This theory incorporates
six fundamental values likely to influence Black men’s increased preference for interracial dating and marriages (Bush & Bush, 2013). These values are critical in understanding their interracial romantic relationship building and sustainability.

First, this theory posits that individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events, phenomena, and trajectories of African American boys, and men’s lives are best analyzed using an ecological systems approach. This is demonstrated in how each of these interconnected systems combines to influence the behavior and development of Black males (Lawson Bush & Bush, 2018). This theory affirmed the uniqueness of being male of African descent whether stemming from their nature or nurture, or both. The goal of this theory is to establish the distinctive nature of Black males as a group and their distinctions within this group. These distinctions are relevant in this context to understand their development of romantic relationships with people from another other ethnicity or race. This theory also emphasizes the continuity and continuation of African culture, biology, and consciousness that influence the experience of Black males (Bush & Bush, 2009). Accordingly, African culture has persistently influenced Black males throughout history (Strayhorn, 2017). In the context of this research, an assessment of romantic behaviors of this population group should be anchored on African culture and consciousness. The resilience of Black males is another essential value pointed out in the AAMT theory. This theory emphasized the innate self-determination desire with unlimited intellectual and moral capacity among this population group. This point of view implies that educational and social challenges stem from social construction rather than innate cultural and biological deficiencies. Resiliency is the capacity, ability, and power inherent in people and system that enables them to overcome adversity to become successful. Therefore, all forms of resistance demonstrated by Black males should be considered as a strength rather than moral and
intellectual deficiency. This theory further argued that race and racism coupled with classism and sexism have profound effects on each aspect of Black male life (Bush & Bush, 2009). This oppressive force in society can harm the romantic behaviors of Black males and subsequently interracial dating and marriages. Finally, this theory seeks to pursue social justice for African American males by undermining oppression. The explicit investigation has exposed and corrected racism and cultural hegemony. The value and principle of AAMT theory provide crucial tools and space for explaining romantic experiences and behaviors of Black males. Bush et al. (2013) aimed to validate the importance and effectiveness of the AAMT. The researchers demonstrate the effectiveness of using this cross-disciplinary approach to better understand and view Black men.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore different factors impacting the African American males’ disengagement to date interracially. Multiple factors were identified in the literature as categorized into internal factors, external factors, and relational factors. The review has provided an understanding of traditional relationship development which provided insight into how the African American male is drifting towards interracial marriages over intraracial marriages. Traditionally, dating is influenced by several factors that can be categorized as internal factors, external factors, and relational factors, as were previously discussed (Allison, 2016; Putney, 2017; Ross, 1997). Relationship satisfaction has been linked to the factors that have been previously discussed (Sassler, 2012). The opinions of family members can be a bigger determinant of success within a relationship for women and minorities compared to men and Whites respectively (Allison, 2016). Internal and external factors likely influence African American males’ pursuit and selection of a romantic partner (Bae et al., 2020; Hall, 2014;
Moore, 2012). Slavery and intergenerational trauma also likely influence the romantic relationships between Black men and women. The emasculation of Black men also impacts their intraracial romantic relationships with African American women. This review has identified the impact of the education gap between Black men and women in regard to the interracial dating gap between men and women. The growing educational gap between Black men and women poses a barrier to developing interracial romantic relationships. There is minimal research regarding the decisions of African American males on not engaging in romantic relationships with African American women. Since there is a lack of research regarding heterosexual African American men’s disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females, it was important to utilize a phenomenological approach. This approach allows the researcher to explore the lived experiences of African American men.
Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of heterosexual African American males related to their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females. My initial inquiry into this subject matter began through a series of conversations within the African American community regarding the decline in intra-racial dating within their community. Through my work as a counselor, I worked closely with African American men, and a common theme emerged amongst the clients, several of them would not date intraracially. Because Black men continue to be under-researched within the counseling, education and psychological fields there was a lack of research to gain a better understanding of the client’s perspectives (Diaz, 2012; Johnson & Williams, 2015). The primary goal of this study is to begin to close the gap in our understanding of Black men’s perceptions (Bae et al., 2020; Bethea, 1995) of romantic relationship development with Black women.

Description of Research Methodology

Rationale for using a Qualitative Research Design

As the researcher, it is important to understand the context that the responses were derived from as well as the overall response itself to help generate meaning from the Black males. It allows me to create a space that is inclusive and authentic for the participant to engage in dialogue. Qualitative research sees the researcher as a tool because of the process of collecting the data and helping to decipher meaning from the individuals lived experiences. Emergent design is defined as the process of data collection being able to change if necessary, based on the data that emerges from the research (Creswell, 2004), which is a characteristic of
qualitative research designs. Without much prior knowledge regarding this topic, the research
design will utilize inductive and deductive data analysis.

Phenomenology is the process of the researcher making meaning of the individual’s
experience, helping to interpret the data (Creswell, 2004). Finally, a qualitative method was
selected because the research is subjective to the individual’s experience (Silverman, 2010), and
Halfpenny (pg. 799; 1979) described qualitative work as, soft, flexible, subjective, political, case
study, speculative and grounded. These terms used to describe qualitative work describe the
practices used in understanding this research. Quantitative research tends to focus on measurable
data with a testable hypothesis (Silverman, 2010), thus, this research aims to explore the lived
experiences and examine the data that emerges without testing a hypothesis. Qualitative research
is able to help elicit findings from the individual’s lived experiences without generalizing or
stereotyping. For these reasons, a quantitative research design would have been less effective to
explore the lived experiences of African American males’ and a qualitative research method was
selected.

Phenomenological research is defined as providing meaning to several individuals’ lived
experiences of a concept (Creswell, 2004). Phenomenological research collects the lived
experiences and develops a description of the experiences to help explain “what” and “how” the
individual has experienced the phenomena (Creswell, 2004), thus, the phenomenological
approach best described the purpose of the research.

This qualitative research method utilized a phenomenological research approach. This
approach describes the lived experiences of several individuals and extrapolates meaning from
the individuals’ common experiences (Creswell, 2004). This research will collect the data from
the lived experiences of heterosexual African American males’ disengagement in romantic
relationships with African American females, attempting to gain knowledge of the situations and meaning from the individual. The phenomenological approach allows for the research to focus on providing a diverse perspective from the individuals instead of focusing on developing a generalizable experience (Creswell, 2004). This qualitative design is focused on the experiences of the individuals and their relationship with the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). In this investigation, the lived experiences of Black males are analyzed. Creswell (2004) defined the phenomenological approach as creating perspectives to explore the research as it is intended from the author without presuppositions of meaning making. Creswell (2004) suggested that in order to understand what the author is saying, one must first understand the context in which the author said it, taking into consideration the way that the author creates meaning. A phenomenological approach is used to understand the participant’s perspective. The aim of the research guided the selection of the methodology. The subsequent sections discuss the rationale for conducting a qualitative research design and the importance of using a phenomenological approach. These sections will explore the foundation of the research.

**Research Design**

The phenomenological design provided the structure for Black participants to discuss their lived experiences in an interracial relationship, the impact on their decision to date interracial, and their reasons for avoiding intraracial relationships. Exploring the lived experiences of multiple individuals helps to develop meaning (Creswell, 2004). Since there is a lack of research the phenomenological approach provides the opportunity to view African American men's experience with reduced bias and within its own context from their experience (van Manen, 1990). The phenomenological design allowed the researcher to explore if there were common themes that emerged amongst the participants. The phenomenological approach
allows the researcher to analyze the lived experiences of these men and use the resulting data to systematically describe their relationship experiences (Creswell, 2004; Patton, 2002). Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) believe that this approach provides the basis to explore individual experiences through a collective perspective. This means that the individual experiences of each participant may share similarities that may lead to the development of themes and commonalities amongst members of this population that can help to illuminate the phenomenon and identify areas for future focus.

The researcher utilized the African American Male Theory (AAMT) that was developed by Bush V and Bush (2013) to inform the design and methodology. The AAMT provides a theoretical lens to view Black men from a societal and historical perspective (Bush V & Bush, 2013; Creswell, 2004). The AAMT allowed the researcher to better understand the information generated in this study because there is evidence to suggest that the experiences of the Black man in the U.S., although not universal, share many commonalities that impact their development and view of the world (Bush V & Bush, 2013; Crooks et al., 2009).

Working with African American men – an under-researched population (Moore, 2012) – requires that the researcher take into account the nuances and intricacies that accompany this population and AAMT helps to account for this including the six fundamental values discussed above. These values will help inform the analyses. AAMT utilizes the Ecological Model to help better illustrate the intricacies that is the Black male. The Ecological model can be viewed in Figure 2. In addition to using the Ecological model, interviews will also be used to help generate new themes, ways of thinking and insight into the Black man’s state of being.

The literature review provided a strong foundational understanding of the phenomenon. The literature review led to the initial research question, “How do African American males who
have disengaged from romantic relationships with African American women make sense of their dating experiences, and what reasons do they provide for their decision not to date African American women?”. Upon further review of the literature, AAMT and the initial research question, secondary questions emerged. The secondary questions were, “How does the race or ethnicity of a romantic partner influence African American men’s decisions regarding dating?”, and “What do African-American males perceive as barriers or issues that prevent healthy relationships with African American females?”.

**Participant Selection**

Upon receiving approval to conduct the dissertation from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Duquesne University, the researcher began the search for participants through the social media platform, Facebook. The recruitment process began by posting in a social networking group on Facebook.com. A copy of the post can be found in Appendix A. The post was created regarding the specific criterion needed to investigate the research on the dynamics that are leading to a decline in intra-racial dating in the African American community at a rate of three times more than other cultures and ethnic groups (Bethea, 1995; Passel et al., 2010). In order to obtain a sample of participants of African American males’, the researcher had to determine the appropriate criterion for the sample. Coyne (1997) describe sampling as being a complex process that included early preparation in engaging the research in order to effectively analyze the data. The criterion for this phenomenological study will be reviewed later in Chapter 3. The aim of the researcher is to obtain saturation in the research. Saturation is defined as, information redundancy (Tuckett, 2004). Saturation, information redundancy, is met when no new information is gathered (Tuckett, 2004). Saturation is important to obtain because it alerts the researcher that the data has been thoroughly reviewed and there are commonalities that have
emerged in the data. After reviewing the first five interviews, it became evident that there were themes that were emerging in the data. After three more interviews, it became evident that there was no new information that emerged from the interviews, thus, saturation had been met and the researcher had obtained all that she could from this niche population.

Through the researcher's on-going conversations regarding intraracial and interracial dating within the African American community, the researcher was able to find groups of people that matched the criteria. Participants were typically chosen through snowball sampling and word-of-mouth from peers of the potential participants that had seen the post and thought that their peers met the criteria to participate in the research.

The Facebook post generated a total of ten participants. The researcher obtained the contact information from the interested participants. Upon contacting the participants, the researcher explained the nature of the research, any potential risks and the IRB process. Confidentiality and the subject's commitment to the research was a primary focus of the initial interaction. Each interview was either conducted in-person or through an online secure video conference platform. Upon the participants’ arrival to the interview, confidentiality, the research topic, the participants’ voluntary involvement and access to results were discussed. All participants were then given the consent form to sign.

**Purposive Selection**

Qualitative research utilizes purposive sampling to find participants who can provide insight into the phenomena (Patton, 2002). Choosing specific participants provides a collection of knowledge on a particular subject (Patton, 2002). van Manen (1990) discusses that in research, the participant is the expert on the subject, and it is important to find appropriate participants for the inquiry. In this research, the selection criteria of the participants were one of
the most important variables to consider. Criterion sampling is the most commonly used
criterion sampling strategy used in qualitative research practices (Palinkas et al., 2016). In
qualitative research, no set number of participants need to be used for research to be accurate and
reliable (Palinkas et al., 2016; Suri, 2011). Patton (2002) suggests that the number of participants
needed depends on the aims of the research and the information that is being collected.
Theoretical saturation had been reached after the interviews were analyzed and no new
information was gathered. Theoretical saturation was met after ten participant interviews. All of
the participants met criterion and agreed to participate. There is not a standard protocol in
establishing what an appropriate number of participants for qualitative research is because the
experience is subjective, thus, interviewing participants until no new information is elicited is
generally used within qualitative research designs (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011; Marshall et al.,
2013). The dissertation committee was in agreement that after interviews with ten participants
saturation had been met because no new themes emerged. For the participants to be a part of the
study, they had to meet the following criteria:

1. They must identify as a heterosexual male
2. They must be at least 18 years of age
3. They must identify as African American/Black men
4. They must actively date or prefer to only date non-African American woman
   (greater than one year)
5. They must be willing to talk about the topic with an African American woman

All participants met all of the criteria to be a part of the research. Using purposeful sampling of
the niche population of African American males increased the probability that similarities
amongst the group would emerge from the data (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007). The following
sections will cover the interview process and the instruments used to collect the data regarding
the African American men’s disengagement in romantic heterosexual relationships with African
American women. Redundancy in the interviews can be used as a sign that there are
commonalities or shared themes amongst the participants. This is useful in data analysis and
essential for data collection (Tuckett, 2004). Saturation had been reached in the sample of
participants because no new themes emerged from the interviews.

Data Collection

Bracketing

As an instrument of data collection, it was important to understand how my own attitudes
or beliefs may have impacted the interpretation of the Black males’ experiences (Creswell,
2004). As a member of the African American community, I had on-going experiences with
African Americans. I made every attempt to understand potential presuppositions and biases. In
order to monitor these biases and presuppositions, a journal was used throughout the experience.
There was regular contact with the dissertation committee. I addressed any concerns that the
African American males may have had of my beliefs regarding intraracial dating during the
initial contact. I disclosed her ethnicity to the African American male and discussed how this
may impact their willingness to engage in the interview. All of the participants acknowledged
my ethnicity and agreed to continue with the interview. I remained cognizant of the biases in an
attempt to minimize the transference. My presuppositions that I had discovered through
journaling before conducting this research is below:

1. African American males that do not date intraracially and who had a previous negative
   experience with an African American female.
2. The African American males lack an understanding of the historical context that impacted the relationship development between the Black man and the Black woman.

3. The African American man had a negative view of an African American women.

4. The African American male may have been struggling with their racial identity development.

5. There is a cultural value placed on non-African American women as different or better compared to African American women.

6. There will be similar family structures between the Black males’ experiences, i.e. single-parent homes, matriarchal family structures.

7. The Black male will be hesitant to engage in dialogue with a Black woman regarding interracial dating.

As a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in Pennsylvania, National Certified Counselor (NCC), Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CAADC) and Certified Clinical Trauma Professional (CCTP) with more than ten years of experience, I have developed skills and competencies to help address my biases and learn how to bracket them in an interview experience. I took every precaution to be aware of how my identity may impact this experience. I have made the necessary changes in my personal and professional identity by being aware of my body language and tone when participating in interviews. I began to work closely with my support system and my dissertation chair to address concerns. Also, when a bias emerged in the research, it was documented in the journal.

**Interviews**

For this phenomenological qualitative study, interviews were used as the primary tool. The interviewer used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions that used the same
prompts but still allowed the researcher to be flexible in adjusting the questions to elicit more information from the participant. The researcher engaged in the iterative process of reviewing the data and after the initial interview was conducted, the interviewer transcribed the interview, reviewed the data and began the next interview based off of the knowledge gained from the initial interview. Novick (2008) presupposed that face-to-face interviews provide an opportunity to develop rapport, monitor non-verbal cues, encourage in-depth discussions and better understand relevant contextual data.

The researcher is seen as an instrument because the researcher needs to be skilled in understanding interviews and immersed in the experience (Creswell, 2004; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The researcher has been trained in interviewing techniques through ten years of education in counseling and research. The questions used in the interviews can be found below:

1. Please describe your childhood upbringing. Be as detailed as possible, including some of the roles that African American women have played in your life.

2. What qualities do you look for in a romantic relationship? Describe the characteristics of your partner, the traits that attract you and traits that you avoid. Please be as detailed as possible.

3. Describe positive and negative experiences that you have had with African American women. Please be as detailed as possible.

4. Within the last year, has your views of intraracial dating changed? If so, describe how.

As the interviewer, I used my experience with conducting interviews and my skills in counseling to help guide the conversations. These skills include attending, restatements, and summaries. The interview allowed the participant to explore, engage and discuss their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. As the researcher and as a woman of color, this could have created a barrier for the
participants to feel open to sharing. In order to help prevent this, the researcher discussed with the participants that if at any time they felt uncomfortable with the question, they were able to skip to the next question without explanation. This helped to assure autonomy for the participant and allow the participant to discuss what they felt comfortable discussing.

**Treatment of Participants**

The treatment of participants is essential to consider by the researcher (Fraenkel, & Wallen, 2006). This research appears to have no apparent risk to the subject. Subjects were informed that participation is voluntary and that their information would be stored confidentially.

**Confidentiality, Storage and Retention**

In order to ensure the safety of the recorded information the following procedures were used to increase safety. The data was collected via an in-person or video recording interview. The data was recorded on computer audio programming. The recording was only audio to have additional anonymity for the participants, and the participants were not video recorded. The data was collected via self-reflections and answers to interview questions. The researcher detailed observation notes on the participants during the interview.

After the data was collected, it was stored in a safe, secure location on a locked computer in a locked bag in a locked office to secure the participant's confidentiality. Limited identifying information was collected from the participants, e.g., consent forms, phone numbers and email addresses. The research will be stored for up to seven years.

**Data Analysis**

The focus of data analysis in phenomenological research is to provide meaning to the lived experiences (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology is research that focuses on the lived experiences of and interpretations of life (Creswell, 2004; van Manen,
van Manen recognizes the researcher as an instrument to interpret data and make meaning (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990). van Manen described hermeneutic research as an approach that used six steps (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990). Step one is that a researcher turns towards the nature of a lived experience of something that interests them to help generate research questions (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990). As an African American woman, I have had the experiences of discussing with African American males their opinions regarding dating intraracially versus interracially. These conversations with African American males discussing their disengagement in intraracial romantic relationships served as an interest of mine to begin the exploration of the phenomena. Step two requires the research be viewed through multiple methods of investigation (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990), thus, this research will utilize the literature, the researcher's journal, observations noted from the interview, historical context and responses to the interview questions with Black males. van Manen (1990) suggests describing the moment “as if you lived it” focusing on “a particular experience” or specific events being mindful of the language used to provide a clear explanation and not an exaggeration of the experience. Next, the researcher reflects on the themes of the phenomena and develops meaning to the lived experiences (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990). The fourth and fifth steps are intermingled, the researcher describes the feelings, thoughts and attitudes of the Black males maintaining a constant connection with the material and the topic of the phenomena (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990). As the researcher, I will have to document the experiences and data collected from the study and document my own processes along the way to help maintain my commitment and focus on the research. During this process, I focused on journaling, reading any new material and reviewing the Black males’ lived experiences continuously. The researcher begins the iterative process of reviewing the data. Finally, the researcher begins the interpretive
process that helps to provide meaning of the lived experiences (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990). Through my process of being in the interviews, experiencing the lived experiences of the Black males, journaling, and immersing myself into the data I then have a better understanding on how to interpret and generate themes from the data.

A total of ten African American males were interviewed. Data was collected through individual interviews. Once data collection was complete, I utilized van Manen’s (1990) six step protocol that was previously described to analyze and review the data. Since phenomenological research does not have a step-by-step guide for data analysis, utilizing van Manen’s steps help to provide a model of data analysis. From the interviews, the researcher was able to ascertain the difference between a unique experience and a collective experience between the participants.

**Turning to the Nature of the Lived Experiences**

I used a computer, Zoom recording software, a tablet, a pen and audiotape during the interviewing process to collect data. In the initial phase of the process, there was a semi-structured interview conducted with each participant. It was essential to best capture the experiences as they were occurring. As previously stated, the research question came about from conversations that I had with African American men.

**Investigating the Experience as we Live It**

In order to best capture this phenomenon, interviews, readings and notes were used. van Manen (1990) explains that using multiple sources of data helps to best understand the phenomenon. I utilized the interviews and after the initial interview was conducted, I reviewed the raw transcript and used data from that initial interview for the subsequent interviews. After completing the remaining interviews, the interviews were transcribed and presented to the interviewees for verification. All participants were offered the opportunity to review the
transcriptions from their interview. The transcriptions were viewed for accuracy by five out of ten participants; five participants declined the opportunity to review their transcription. I used the recorded observations from the interviews and the data collected in my journal to help provide context from the original interviews to ensure that the interpretations from the interviews were accurately being captured. I began the iterative process of data collection.

**Describing the Phenomenon in the Art of Writing**

Writing was utilized to be capture the thoughts and feelings of the participants (van Manen, 1990). I sought to capture the art of writing by participating in the iterative process of reviewing the data. The process began by reviewing the raw data of the transcription. Next, the interviewer transcribed the interview; this was accomplished by using the audio recording, notes captured during the interview, and the journal entry. I reviewed this data and then completed interview number two and interview number three. After this was completed, the initial interview was sent to the committee for review. Upon further review of this transcript by the committee, it was determined that the transcription should be reformatted, thus, the interview data was reformatted. After each subsequent interview, I reviewed each recording to transcribe the data and take notes on the interview. The transcriptions and recordings help to create accountability for the research (Patton, 2002). There was a total of ten interviews conducted. The interviews were transcribed, evaluated and recorded in a word document.

After transcribing all ten of the interviews, reformatting each interview and reviewing the data collected, each participant was offered the opportunity to verify their transcription. The recordings were erased after offering each participant the opportunity to review their transcript. The interviews were transcribed and categorized initially by the interviewer (Patton, 2002). I completed the transcription process manually in order to immerse myself into the interview and
the lived experiences of the participants. This allowed me to become a part of the experience (van Manen, 1990). I was able to immerse herself in the data collected and analyze that data obtained from the interviews by taking adequate notes, listening to each interview after completion, reviewing the transcriptions multiple times and allowing the participant to review the transcriptions for accuracy (Patton, 2002).

**Reflecting on the Essential Themes**

The third step in van Manen's (1990) six-step protocol required the researcher to reflect on the essential themes the emerge from the informant’s experiences. I focused on the reflection of themes by reviewing the transcripts and notes from journaling. After initially transcribing the interviews, I captured important data, descriptive concepts and redundant comments that emerged from the interviews. I listened to each interview after completing the interview, collected notes from the interview, read each transcription three times and transcribed the interviews twice in order to help immerse myself in the data. I recorded my observations in my journal throughout the process. Each time that I read the transcription, if I would find new insights from the data, I would record this information in my journal to review when comparing the other interviews. I made notes of the participants language, phrases, key words, and terms that appeared to have significant meaning for the participant. I met with a member of my dissertation committee to help assess the data and review the research procedures. This was done after the first and third interview to assess if the information that had been generated from the interviews were accurate and if the questions for the subsequent interviews needed to be changed based off the new information that had been obtained. For additional accuracy and credibility for the data, I enlisted the help from a third party African American male to review the data for
accuracy. The notes from this third-party reviewer helped to validate the information and
decrease internal bias that may have been present.

**Maintaining a Strong and Orientated Relationship to Lived Experiences**

The fifth step required me to maintain focused on the research. I was able to focus on the research by being immersed within the data of the lived experiences of the participants. After being immersed in the data, the researcher was able to derive meaning from the participants description of their lives and then record codes from the information gathered from the interviews. The researcher was able to accomplish this by being immersed in the data, carefully analyzing the language, the lived experiences, and reviewing the context of the information collected from the interviews (Creswell, 2004; van Manen, 1990; van Manen, 2017a). The transcriptions and notes became the protocol. I, as the researcher, utilized the transcriptions to help create meaning of the lived experiences of the participants. After offering the participants the opportunity to review their transcript, I collected all of the language used in the transcript and created a chart that had three columns, the first column recorded just the language from the participants, the second column interpreted meaning and thoughts that I had when the interviewee spoke and the final column included key words that summarized the experience, this was completed for five out of ten of the interviews. After further review and communication with the dissertation committee, this formatting was changed. The new formatting consisted of five columns – the question that was asked of the participant, the participant’s response, my interpretation of the participant’s statement, the third-party reviewer’s comments regarding meaning from the participant’s statement and then key words and phrases that summarize the meaning and throughout the interviews. I considered all of the language that was being said and found that the significant statements were statements that discussed the participant’s experiences
regarding intraracial dating norms. For majority of the transcribed data, the meaning and context of the data was easy to discern. For the data that was easy to discern, categories were created to help group these ideas between participants.

Initially, there were ten themes that emerged from the interviews. However, after further immersion in the data the ten themes were condensed into five categories. The five categories best captured the data between the ten interviews, this can be found in Appendix. There were some instances where the participants seemed to struggle and require me to pay close attention to and note in the charts, this was observed by the participant’s body language, tone of voice and use of language. All terms were viewed within the context of what they were said by the participant. These terms were then put into a document on the computer. Upon completing the interviews, I was able to extrapolate shared or similar responses and language. The final lists can be found in the appendix. This list helped to generate the theme clusters that emerged.

Balancing the Research Context by Comparing Parts of the Whole

Data analysis was a continual process that began at the beginning of the first interview and was not completed until all of the transcriptions were reviewed several times, the data was collected and stored in a meaningful way and clear theme clusters had emerged from the participant’s interviews and my observations. The sixth and final step was essential in helping to maintain validity and trustworthiness of the data.

The lived experiences of the participants were captured into subgroups based on the theme clusters. These theme clusters and subgroups were validated from the original transcribed protocols. Once the lived experiences of the participants were accurately transcribed, reviewed, categorized and appropriate theme clusters emerged, I was confident that the themes adequately represented the lived experiences of the participant’s and data analysis ended. The data was
organized based on the themes that emerged and the data that was collected. The themes were recorded in a word document and can be found in the Appendix. The themes that emerged will be discussed more in Chapter 5.

**Trustworthiness**

In order to best establish the trustworthiness of the data, I worked collaboratively with the participants in order to review the data. As previously stated, the transcriptions were transcribed verbatim. Using the participants to collect the data and detailed notes of the process, aimed to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings in this study.

**Credibility**

As an instrument of data collection in this research, the researcher needed to be cognizant of her biases that may have be present and interfere with the interviews. This was accomplished by journaling, reflection on emerging suppositions, and dialoguing with the dissertation chair and committee regarding these assumptions. Because the subject matter was intraracial dating, it was important as an African American woman to address the participants before being a part of the research opportunity. In order to address this, it was important to create an environment that was open and allowed the researcher to develop a rapport with the participants. The researcher utilized counseling skills that had been developed. The researcher remained cognizant and open to the conversations regarding this topic that was not thoroughly researched. In addition to the steps previously discussed, the researcher elicited the help of a third-party reviewer. This third-party reviewer was an African American male that read all ten of the interviews and helped to decipher meaning in each participant statement collected. The third-party reviewers’ remarks can be found in the Appendix.

**Limitations of the Study**
The study experiences several limitations. Due to the nature of the research and the small sample size, the findings cannot be applied to all African American males that have disengaged in intraracial relationships with African American women. Although the participants are from different regions throughout the country, they all have a history of residing in rural Western Pennsylvania. The nature of the area is homogeneous and lacks a wide range of diversity.

Another limitation to the study was the race and gender of the researcher. With the researcher being from the racial group as the participants, it could have been a barrier from the participants being as truthful and candid with their responses. In order to best limit this, the researcher openly discussed with all participants her race and gender with each participant and journaled.

**Ethical Considerations**

African American men continue to be a population that lacks research and mistrust in participating in research due to historical unethical research practices (Diaz, 2012). Creating an environment of respect and trust is important in developing a relationship with African American men and conducting research with this population as well. In order to ensure ethical procedures, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Duquesne University. The review board required extensive information and specifics about protecting the rights of this group. The IRB proposal can be found in Appendix B. To adhere to ethical practices, the researcher reviewed confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation, and assessed the risk and the release of information post-interview. Providing the participant with informed consent is important so that the participant can make an informed decision to participate in the research. The consent form can be found in Appendix A.

**Summary**
The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of heterosexual African American males related to their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females. To begin to better understand African American men and women’s relationship development process from the lens of the African American man. Black men continue to be an area that is not researched, understood or explored within the counseling, education and psychological fields. The research explored the dynamics that are leading to a decline in intra-racial dating in the African American community at a rate of three times more than other cultures and ethnic groups (Bethea, 1995; Passel et al., 2010). The research explored what contributing factors were causing the increase for African American men to participate in interracial dating.

The research utilized a qualitative research design. The qualitative research design implemented a phenomenological approach with a specific focus of AAMT. AAMT provided a context to view the Black man through multiples lens and viewpoints (Bush V & Bush, 2013). The samples were chosen through purposive research designs that focused on a specific population – African American men that date non-African American women. The research relied on snowball sampling to provide more participants for the sample. The participants participated in in-depth interviews. After the interviews, the data was coded and analyzed. The research was then stored in a secure location that will be secured for up to seven years.
Chapter 4

The Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of heterosexual African American males related to their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females. Black men continue to be under-researched and explored within the counseling, education and psychological fields (Diaz, 2012; Johnson & Williams, 2015). The primary goal of this study is to begin to close the gap in our understanding of Black men’s perceptions (Bea et al., 2020; Bethea, 1995) of romantic relationship development with Black women. This chapter presents the findings of the data analyses.

Participant Demographics

The participant’s demographics is reported in Table 2. This research utilized purposive sampling and all of the participants met the following criteria:

1. They must identify as a heterosexual male;
2. They must be at least 18 years of age;
3. They must identify as African American/Black men;
4. They must actively date or prefer to only date non–African American woman (greater than one year)
5. They must be willing to talk about the topic with an African American woman.

Table 2

Demographic Description of the Purposive Sampling: Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants Married</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants Single</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. Participants Demographics

The purposive sampling consisted of ten participants. The participants included a diverse group of individuals in terms of marital status, children, education level, and income. The diversity of this group provided a broad spectrum of perspectives from the African American male participants. In addition to the demographic information found in Table 2, there was a wide range of ages among the participants. The participants’ ages ranged between 19 – 47 years old, providing multiple developmental phases as well. Four participants were between the ages of 18 – 29 years old, five participants were between the ages of 30 – 39 years old, and one participant was over the age of 40.

Summary of Interview Analysis

The interview analysis sought to identify each of the participant’s lived experiences. All of the interviews were semi-structure in format and were recorded to ensure an accurate account for transcription. Nine out of the ten interviews were conducted via zoom and the researcher took detailed notes regarding the participants’ non-verbal behaviors. The researcher journaled after each interview and between reviewing the transcriptions in order to address the researchers’
presuppositions that were previously addressed in Chapter 3. After completing the verbatim transcripts from the ten interviews, more than 130 pages of transcription emerged. It was imperative to condense the data into more manageable information. Initially the data appeared as thematic coding from each interview. After further review, the data began to answer the research questions from the semi-structured interviews. Further data that was elicited from the interviews was then a part of the iterative process described in the next session. The interview analysis took several weeks, and 10 initial themes naturally emerged from the research questions and the AAMT orientation. Finally, five themes emerged that were present in each of the interviews.

**Emergent Themes**

Data analysis was an iterative process. The interviews sought to reveal each participant’s subjective experiences regarding their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females. In order to accurately interpret the participants’ subjective experiences, the researcher recorded and transcribed all of the interviews in synchronous order. After each individual interview was conducted the researcher recorded notes of the interview and reread the interviews seeking to find key words or phrases from the interviews. The researcher used the participants responses from the research question as the initial way to categorize the data. The responses that did not directly answer the research questions from the semi-structured interviews was then collected and clustered together based on the keywords and phrases that emerged. After key words repeatedly emerged from the interviews, the researcher generated a list of words and phrases. After identifying key words and phrases of the participant interviews, these lists from the individual interviews were combined. After reviewing the lists and responses to the research questions, code words to categorize the list were created. Upon further review of the code words and phrases that emerged from the data, further coding occurred, and themes began to emerge.
These themes were then reviewed for continuity to the interviews and the literature review. The data was categorized based on AAMT’s stages that was described in Chapter 2. Next, the themes were defined and named. After reviewing all ten interviews and deriving significant statements from the data, meaning was formulated.

The thematic codes that emerged are representative of the subjective lived experience of each participant. These significant statements were captured in a journal the researcher maintained and compared to each other interview protocol. The summaries of this protocol can be found in the Appendix. After reviewing each interview and the summaries the researcher began to derive meaning from the statements, and then themes began to emerge. Initially, there were ten categories that emerged: 1. Self-hate; 2. Family Matters; 3. The status symbol of the White race; 4. Proximity—location and opportunity impacting relationship development; 5. Intraracial Beliefs—Addressing the attitudes and beliefs Black men have about Black Women 6. Boys will be boys – Exploration of the Black man’s development and view of self (poor view of self/introvert/insecure, provider/protector/strong male characteristics); 7. The new Jim Crow – Exploration of the impact on systemic racial inequities and demise of the Black family; 8. Relationships views – Perceptions of relationships; 9. Trust issues; and 10. Rejection. These original categories can be found in the Appendix. However, after further review of the data and significant statements, these ten categories were condensed into five thematic codes. These five prominent thematic codes that emerged helped to organize the data and subjective experiences of each participant. The five themes that emerged are: 1. Self–Regard; 2. Family Matters; 3. Proximity; 4. The New Jim Crow; 5. Views of Relationships. The development of these five themes will be discussed in Chapter 4 and the derived implications and meaning of these themes will be further discussed in Chapter 5.


**Similarities Among Experiences**

The study used purposive sampling, thus, each interviewee shared similar characteristics. Although it was not a requirement to participate in the research, each participant shared similar self-described characteristics such as not approaching women and preferring women that approached them. The participants experienced a “vibe” or “connection” when developing romantic relationships. Every individual exhibited uncomfortable body language during some aspect of the interview. Each participant had experienced at least one relationship with a woman of color. All participants described a relationship with their mothers that impacted their development and view of self.

**Differences Among Experiences**

While the purposive sampling provided commonalities among the participants, there were several differences that emerged. There were differences in the environments in which they were raised, their education, their experiences with romantic relationships, their willingness to engage in romantic relationships intraracially, exposure to minorities and their family structure.

Several participants identified negative generalizations of African American women which contributed to their decision not to date African American women. However, other interviewees did not share the same negative stereotypes regarding African American culture. It is expected that differences would be present in each participant’s interview. These differences between participants are not limitations, rather, they demonstrate the diversity among African American men.

**Self-Regard**

The initial code developed was *self-regard*. This thematic code is defined as the individual’s view of himself and the way that he believes that he is perceived by the world. This
thematic code generated 96 significant statements. Self-regard is a broad theme that encompasses the sub-themes of self-hate, boys will be boys, and rejection category. According to the responses of the participants and the literature review, the self-regard theme relates to research question three, “What do African-American males perceive as barriers or issues that prevent healthy relationships with African American females?”, and AAMT depiction of the macrosystem and the mesosystem. Further in-depth analysis will be described later in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Each participant shared how they believed that they were viewed. There was a total of 96 significant statements that emerged from the research. Examples of participants’ response which reflect the theme is self-regard include the following:

“I don't really know. I've always kind of just let whatever happened, and I'm not really the type to aggressively pursue anything when it comes to relationship wise, I guess you could say. But like I said, I just go with the flow. If it happens. It happens if it doesn't, it doesn't.”

“I feel like I'm just having to like protect and kind of make sure you're good at all times. Not in a simpy way, but, like just, like always checking on you, make sure you're good before, I'm good, you know.”

“The other part of it is, I was always looked at it as being like too White or too nerdy or too weird for the Black people.”

“You know what I mean, like, I don't want to butt heads with somebody like I want to find my sense of peace. For myself, like I have to that's a big part of the person I am. I can't always be calm. Because I can’t rest if there's conflict. So, but I feel like, I can say for my wife, for example, she has I think she would have a lot of what some people
would call Black people characteristics because she’s loud, she’ll speak up. She’s also caring and very genuine. Um, and I think people have the tendency to share that idea that White women are submissive, conniving, Um, free spirited. Wow, I just completely worked myself back into that, didn’t I?"

“I got to do more and get more places with my White friends and I mean I'm guessing they like predominantly White girls and their friends were White, so Boom.”

“So I had insecurities. You know, I was a big dude and mainly I can't even say that because that's not true, mainly I was just too nice.”

**Family Matters**

The *Family Matters* thematic code generated 78 significant statements. The family matters thematic code reflects the implications of the view of family and the family’s perceptions of the individual. This thematic code encompasses the do as I say category. The thematic code concerns the role that family plays in the individual’s life and views of relationships. According to the responses of the participants and the literature review in Chapter 2, the Family Matters theme correlates to research question one, “How do African American males who have disengaged from romantic relationships with African American women make sense of their dating experiences, and what reasons do they provide for their decision not to date African American women?” and AAMT depiction of the microsystem and the chronosystem. Further in-depth analysis will be described later in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Examples of participants’ responses which reflect the Family Matters theme including the following:

“Okay, the relationship with my mother is she's my best friend, put it that way. She’s my best friend.”
“Because I wanted to do what I want. And I think what I needed was distance. Distance definitely helped too because, I mean, we're at a good spot, but if I moved back in I don’t know how good we will be again.”

“For me, please, for… You figure I was the first-born grandkid. So, my mom didn't want me at first because my grandma was going to keep me as hers.”

“Yeah. She [mom] still calls me her baby and I still tell her that I am the youngest, but I am not a baby. Um, I think there's always been between me and my mom of accepting the fact that I'm my mom’s child, but also not wanting to necessarily be babied and have my manhood coddled.”

“So, I would say it's been pretty good over the years. There was a few years there were kind of had some resentment towards my father. But I have matured and moved past that.”

**Proximity**

The *Proximity* thematic code was not as prevalent as the other themes, only being reflected in 30 participants’ statements. This thematic code encompasses the same description as the proximity category. This theme concerns participants’ having access and location to developing romantic relationships and the focus was on the location and opportunity impacting relationship development. According to the responses of the participants and the literature review, the Proximity theme correlates to research question one, “How do African American males who have disengaged from romantic relationships with African American women make sense of their dating experiences, and what reasons do they provide for their decision not to date African American women?” and AAMT depiction of the mesosystem and the exosystem
previously described in Chapter 2. Further in-depth analysis will be described later in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. The following participant statements are reflective of the Proximity theme.

“Um, either it just it being a random common interest, whether it's mutual friends and then we just learn more about each other and go from there or just we happen to be at the same place, same time and share that common interest, whenever it's an event or if it's a living situation, the same building or something like that. Just from, you know, those encounters from those situations. That's usually how it develops.”

“So it's like finding someone I think my basis for relationship when I got to like my junior year of college and I actually started dating like an adult was to say, like, let's find someone that matches your priorities. And stuff like just taking steps to get in the door. Because that's what I kind of like what I was doing.”

The New Jim Crow

*The New Jim Crow* theme was reflected in 91 participants’ statements. This thematic code encompasses the new Jim Crow, the status of the White race category and the Intraracial Beliefs category. These categories shared responses that overlap with the historical implications that continue to impact the African American community. This thematic code concerns the impact of systemic racism on the individual’s development and view of Black culture, Black people, and views of the status symbol of the White race. According to the responses of the participants and the literature review, the New Jim Crow theme correlates to research question two, “How does the race or ethnicity of a romantic partner influence your decision to date them?” and AAMT depiction of the macrosystem, mesosystem and the chronosystem. Further in-depth analysis will be described later in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Examples of participants statements which reflect his include this theme include the following:
“I mean, they were protesting, but they put that out there and I'm talking about don't kill our Black men because we want mixed babies meaning don't kill him [Black men]. I mean, they were protesting, but they put that out there and I'm talking about don't kill our Black men because we want mixed babies. That's me seeing them claiming them as trophies. I mean, I don't like that. I mean if they’re up there protesting then it’s cool but *hand gestures* you know what I mean.”

“You look at the light skin that boys and the skinny boys. There's the ones getting it once I had a nice hair. Girls like that's what it was like. Like this Carmel look in there. He had the good hair and we had a nappy coarse hair so.”

“So it's like finding someone I think my basis for relationship when I got to like my junior year of college and I actually started dating like an adult was to say, like, let's find someone that matches your priorities. And stuff like just taking steps to get in the door. Because that's what I kind of like what I was doing.”

“Um, I will say one of the big differences is having conversations about the social or certain social subjects. For example, as recently as the protest for George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Um, that has been an interesting time with my fiancé’s family, mainly her brother. He’s a very close minded individual so that didn't really progress very far in the conversation. He started to understand some of it. And then a couple of drinks later he completely changed his tune and saying, you know what, it’s stupid. That's wrong. White lives matter, blah, blah, blah. Whenever the race war happens I’ll be on the other side so.”

**Views of Relationships**
The theme *Views of relationships* was reflected in 136 significant statements, which was the most common theme within this study. This theme concerns African American man’s views on relationship development, dynamics, courting and attraction. This thematic code encompasses the relationships views category and the rejection category. According to the responses of the participants and the literature review in Chapter 2, the Views of Relationships theme correlates to research question two, “How does the race or ethnicity of a romantic partner influence your decision to date them?” and AAMT depiction of the microsystem, and the chronosystem previously described in Chapter 2. Further in-depth analysis will be described later in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Examples of participants’ statements which reflect this theme are as follows:

“I don't like, like wasting energy. So like if I feel like I'm wasting energies to speaking to you then like I won't talk to you that much.”

“Is it weird that I’m cool with Black guys dating White girls but I don’t like Black girls dating White guys?”

“I get bored with a female. I tend to not talk to them. And I'll just be more passive. Now I'm just trying to work through that.”

“Um, sure, um *pauses* both good and bad I'd say good, um, communicate. Always make sure you're looking for something to be successful, communicate. I know, I still have to improve on that.”

**Summary of Participant Observations**

After the initial interview was conducted in person, the protocol for this study had to change due to the pandemic and all future interviews were conducted via Zoom. All participants still reviewed the informed consent protocols at the beginning and the end of the interview. All participants were requested to complete the demographic information presented in Table 2. All
participants were provided an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback regarding the research.

In addition to the global pandemic that was occurring, the USA was experiencing a state of unrest within the African American community. More specifically, during the times of the interviews the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by law enforcement officials started a catalyst of protest, unrest and distress within the US, especially within the African American community. During this time, the conversation regarding race, views of self, and portrayals of African Americans were being displayed across all media platforms and in common “household” conversations.

One participant participated in an in-person interview and the other nine participants were conducted virtually. The in-person interview provided a unique experience to observe the participant in real time. It was easier to pick up on the body language, such as a shaking of the foot or a nervous tap, in the in-person interview compared to the virtual interviews. The in-person interview allowed for more exchange between the participant and the researcher. The in-person interview appeared to be less direct in responding the questions, this could be based on the participant’s personality or the nature of the interview. The in-person interview provided ample time to take direct notes and observations comparatively to the virtual interviews that felt more direct and required more explanation to the participants about what was occurring when there was not much dialogue from the researcher.

Although the other nine interviews were virtual and provided less opportunity to observe the participants full body, there was value in this interviewing style. The virtual interviews took less time to complete than the in-person interview. In all of the virtual interviews all of the participants appeared to be more direct and straight to the point regarding answering the
questions. Each virtual participant appeared to be more focused on the interview and less focused on the environment around them. The virtual participants appeared to be more open to discuss their experiences and thoughts regarding the research.

Overall, all of the participants appeared to be open and honest regarding their experiences and beliefs. After each interview there was an opportunity to document detailed notes and write in a journal to adequately collect and summarize the interviews.

**The Findings of the African American Males Subjective Experiences**

It was important to present each individual’s subjective experience in order to help understand if there was a phenomenon, the results from this research can be found in Chapter 5. Each interview is described in the order of which it was collected. Each interview was conducted and coded in a table that consisted of each participant’s statements from the interview, and the coded material can be found in the Appendix. Each interview described hereafter will only represent a sample of formulated statements that were derived from each category.

**Analysis of Interview 1**

Interview one (P1) was conducted in-person and was one hour and twenty-seven minutes long. P1 began the interview and appeared to be nervous, this was observed and recorded in the notes during and after the interview. P1 was asked to describe his relationships with women, and he responded as follows,

“I like to have things like that have meaning, so I don’t do things like willy nilly relationships but I do have a lot of friendships.”

P1 had to be prompted several times to explain his relationship with woman. P1 discussed that who he was impacted the development of these relationships because he believes that,
“I think a lot of people use me as kind of like someone to talk to, like, a good one. I think I'm a pretty good listener. Most part… Oh, someone came to me. They just needed to talk about some of the person and I would be the person to just sit there… The other side of that I can be funny at times and I can crack jokes. But it’s just I call myself a chameleon.”

Another part of development regarding relationships with women were determined by the rules that he was taught to live by, stating,

“Yeah, you have to principles. You have to have pretty clear principles. And be aware of, like, if you make a mistake. It could be real consequences, and I don't think that's any different than a lot of rules that African American males deal with interculturally. There are certain rules that we have that are different than everybody else. And it's, I think there is part of it is, there was a conscious effort. To make that happen. And then there was also in conjecture that self-perpetuation of it to make it happen as well so…The whole idea of like…Perception of our African Americans are lazy… Unproductive. Unhealthy. Violent. Unreasonable. Basically like savage, savage pack like animals. I think that has done a lot to, it has done a lot to make, um, make it make living here very different for African Americans.”

Relationship development for P1 was not impacted by “one type of female,” but more so traits and qualities of “free spiritedness,” “trust and honesty” that balance him as a person. P1 described that he tended to receive “more initiation from White women” comparatively to other groups of women. He found that he initially struggled to develop romantic relationships with women

“because I was trying to get the wrong type of person for me specifically and I don't know if part of that was, I don't want to play the spiritual part here. I don't know if that
was part of God protecting me or what because there's a certain population of women not
I'm not just gonna say Black woman, but just women in general that want nothing but this
particular image of a, um, they want to be associated with, um, I would say probably
like… they are more attracted to the thugs.”

P1 found that one characteristic that made him less likely to engage in romantic
relationships with African American women was because their “aggressiveness.” Also,

“I feel like the African Americans they also feel more restricted. Like there's more
pressure on them. They're the ones that are trying to more of that fast paced like, go, go,
go. But everybody's experiencing the fast pace that makes you feel like the go, go, go. So
I feel like they're a little more loud, more aggressive. They're extremely independent and
boisterous.”

These are not characteristics that he is interested in for a romantic relationship. He prefers to
participate in relationships with people that come from “polite” cultures and he believes that
polite culture is more prominent in “White” culture.

P1 was asked to describe his relationships with the Black women in his family, which he
described them as, “tough,” “honest and caring,” but they do not need to be “coddled” or like to
be “led.” He described having different relationships with the different women in his family. He
believes that his relationship with his aunt was casual and they were able to share ideas about
“cooking,” and he believes that his mother “emasculated” him and he feels indebted to her for
“birthing” him.

P1 was offered the opportunity to share his thoughts regarding the topic and he responded
as,
“I did not choose my wife. God chose my wife for me. And I was also warned, like, you know when you deal with someone of a different race, you're also have to deal with a different culture. And there's a lot of conflict in that. And sometimes you are going to have to forego some of the things that you believe and some of the tenants and things that you've been raised with you can't necessarily be married to a White person super Black and militant. I mean, you could be, but it becomes very difficult, especially if you're respecting of that other person's culture. So, and then when it comes to raising children. There are certain things you're going to have to figure out like whether or not if your kids wear sunscreen.”

The interview with participant 1 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 3 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 1.

Table 3
Participant 1 Phrases of Significance

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Categories</th>
<th>Quotations of Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>Sexuality is… It's always been something for me that's been very spiritual in the sense of where it's like, you have to be very careful how you share it and who you share it with. So I've always been very cautious about sexuality. So I've always been very careful about relationships because I've seen people get into a relationship and then start a sexual relationship. I've always hung out with my brother and his friends, more than my own friends, just because number one, my brother would take me along and number two, I always felt like, I always felt like I fit in better,</td>
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| 2 | Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem | Depending on the person's background, there's kind of like a push and pull. And I think there's kind of like an element of it where…

There was a time when I was like I couldn't get a relationship for anything, because I was trying to get the wrong type of person for me specifically. Specifically, and I don't know if part of that was, I don't want to play the spiritual part here. I don't know if that was part of God protecting me or what because there's a certain population of women not I'm not just gonna say Black woman, but just women in general that want nothing but this particular image of a, um, they want to be associated with, um, I would say probably like… I'm trying to find a way. |
| 3 | Exosystem         | I felt like the lower your economic status the more you felt like you had to subscribe to these rules and live within these rules because your margin of error were a lot smaller versus those with a higher economic status and I would say that the disproportions racially as long as the economic status. |
| 4 | Macrosystem       | So they are more attracted to the thugs, you know, then they are attracted to, like, you're like, cool people.                                                                                               |

Because a lot of gangstas are actually really quiet people they don't want to draw a lot of attention to themselves because they are doing things. |
| 5 | Chronosystem      | my grandparents are from the south. There was also this feeling of, you also have to be very careful with how to be talking to, because if you do it in the wrong way. You could get lynched for it or you could get killed |

I can look at Antonio Brown’s situation versus Ben Roethlisberger’s situation. Both have multiple allegations. Very different in
the media, both are very, very different but same organization. I'm sure there were some other things that went on behind the scenes, but just the way that they were presented to us were very different.

6. Subsystem

I did not choose my wife. God chose my wife for me.

Note. Interview 1 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Analysis of Interview 2

Interview two (P2) was conducted virtually and lasted fifty-four minutes long and the interview was conducted in the early evening after the participant finished work. The interview focused on the participants’ thoughts and beliefs regarding the research. The informant began his discussion regarding his relationships with women discussing how he was “too nice,” and women “took advantage” of him because he “didn’t have confidence” in himself. He felt that in many of his relationships that he had to “try to save them.” He explained that he always “tried to look at people for they are and where they are at instead of as opposed to what’s for me to grow as a person.”

P2 explained that for a lot of his early relationships that he “wasn’t ready for it,” and he participated in a lot of “one nighters.” The participant appeared to be agitated or uncomfortable during this time and his answers began to become shorter and less in-depth. He discussed that he wanted “to date someone my own color”. He described that he dated a Black woman and the relationship was unsuccessful, so he decided to date a diverse collection of women and he decided that it was important that no matter who he decided to date that they needed to be a “good women,” “just be real to me, [and have] communication” and have “loyalty and trust.”
P2 was asked how he established these values and standards he was seeking when looking for a significant other, P2 explained that his “grandma was a good model of that.” He spoke of his grandma with admiration and explained that, “my grandmother was more like my mom then, uh, my, my mom.” P2 had a change in his tone as he described that his mother was “in and out of different relationships, [and] men cheating on her.” He expressed that he “didn’t want to be that type of dude” to women in his life.

Despite his family dynamics, he “was spoiled” and “got anything that I wanted” from his grandparents. However, when he was with his mother, “[I] didn’t get because that was like the struggling time.” For a significant amount of time in his life he was able to rely on his grandparents and it took a long, long time” for him to “learn how to be independent.” As he learned this independence he also had to learn, “you gotta like yourself, more than anything, because Ain't nobody gonna like you more than you like yourself. Got to be comfortable in your own skin. And if you're not, guess what, it's it's bad.” It took him time to learn this because he felt rejected and that “girls didn’t like the dark chocolate morsels like me, you know.” If he did engage in relationships he would,

“probably get bored because I've seen what I need to see from them. And when I get bored I just me when I get bored with a female I tend to not talk to them. And I'll just be more passive. Now I'm just trying to work through that.”

When prompted, P2 described himself as, “I am very more introverted than I am extroverted, it seems like an extrovert, but I gotta be comfortable with to, you know, and if I'm, what I'm comfortable, then I can be more extrovert introvert.” He explained that his grandparents expressed the importance of honesty especially in relationships. P2 shared a story involving a
significant other and his grandparents and how it may be him look differently at who he was
dating. He expressed that the reason he stopped dating African American women as,

“[the] reasons why I could say I didn't date a lot of Blacker women is because my family
so big… We just don't know each other because there's so many off links and people
didn't have kids and kids got everybody at different last names. So that's why. That's my
only real reason why I stayed away from Black women. This is my one wife. But she
wasn't, but we try to make sure we weren't related and we weren't so that was good.”

When P2 was given the opportunity to add any additional information to the interview, it was
important that it was captured that he is “a good dude [and] got a good heart.”

The interview with participant 2 provided several quotes of significance that related
directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in
chapter 2. Table 4 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 2.

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Categories</th>
<th>Quotations of Significance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>She was a ride or die for me that type person. But with her, I took her for granted and my family got on me all the way to probably, like I say, almost like 20 years ago.</td>
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She [his grandmother] was a good woman. And she didn't let her obstacles to define her
and she didn't let them say dictate how she was going to live and how she's going to
not take care of her responsibilities, because she didn't get that far in school. I seen that.
That was my map because I seen how she was and said, This is how I want my woman, the
way she is course, my grandfather, because they both were together. My mom and them
have parents that were together.

Well, my grandmother was more like my mom then, uh, my, my mom.
I'm more introverted than I am extroverted

Reasons why I could say I didn't date a lot of Blacker women is because my family so big

2. **Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem**

Other relationships they were just… Just some one nighters, that's all they were they were one nighters,

I didn't try to look at their flaws. I said, because we all got flaws. Just be real to me, communication, that's all, that's all I asked for and most of them couldn't even do that. That's, that's why a lot of relationships didn't work because they weren't honest, so.

Loyalty and trust is it. That sums it all up, right there.

3. **Exosystem**

I was looking for more, and, and Most of them (ex-relationships) were… You try to save them, so to speak, that's, that's what it was.

4. **Macrosystem**

So I had insecurities. You know, I was a big dude and mainly I can't even say that because that's not true, mainly I was just too nice.

Yes I do, I got a cold heart *chuckles*

5. **Chronosystem**

Yeah, yup, yup. Because you had like the mixed boys or the high yellow boys who the girls like they didn’t like the dark chocolate morsels like me, you know.

You look at the light skin that boys and the skinny boys. There's the ones getting it once I had a nice hair. Girls like that's what it was like. Like this Carmel look in there. He had the good hair and we had a nappy coarse hair so.
Yeah, I don't have to be patted on my back for it. So it's sometimes it's hard for take a compliment or offense. That's not what it's supposed to be about this life and growing up as a person.

It was just like wow that was my model with what they did. You know, my grandfather, you take care of your family, make sure everybody straight and you provide for them. And that's what you do.

6. Subsystem

Then that's when I met the girl who was, was, was had all alias after her. Because I said, you know what I want to date someone my own color. That's what I thought.

I seen how my mom got treated, and I said, I don't want to treat women like that. My mom had two boys me my brother and I never wanted a woman to feel like how my mom felt.

Note. Interview 2 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Analysis of Interview 3

The third interview (P3) was completed virtually in the early evening during a weekday and lasted forty-nine minutes. P3 appeared to be anxious and ready to begin the interview, the participant appeared to be in their home with their significant other and children present.

As P3 was asked to describe his relationship with women he stated,

“I mean, I build friendships first. More I get to know you that's when you get the title of my girl. It's not no accomplishment or nothing, but yeah, takes a while for me to even get in a relationship. I gotta know you for a while, or at least talking for a while. I'm saying, like, six months at least.”
P3 explained that over the years his engagement in relationships have changed but most of his relationships began “usually [as] friends.” After friends he usually looked for women that were, “just attractive. That’s about it. Attractive about them and actually I mean be cool. Chill. Calm.” Attractive to the participant was “dark hair,” “can’t be too crazy,” “make me laugh,” “loyal like me,” “down to earth and mellow.”

P3 expressed that he had “under ten” relationships and he has never dated an African American woman. He expressed that he “got to do more and get more places with my White friends and I mean I’m guessing the like predominantly White girls and their friends were White.” He expressed that because of his predominantly White friend group he was limited to the access that he had with Black women, “I mean what I was around, you know, I mean, but I was being put into the situation. I was always around Whites girls.”

In P3’s history he expressed, “there weren’t too many, uh, Black woman trying to, uh, pursuing me.” He expressed that he believed it was hard for Black girls to like him and engage him and after feeling rejected so many times,

“I mean for the situation being like that. I think I started to. You know, I mean, when you put a situation so many times. I mean, it becomes custom. Like just me going up there with him. And them always picking him. And then the other one, the other race picking me. I mean, we just go into that situation. That's what it is.”

As P3 began to reflect on any other reasons why he did not date African American women he expressed that,

“Honestly, I really can't. I mean, there's a bunch of attractive African American woman. I mean, I think it really was just the situations that I was put in. I mean sometimes attitude
because, I mean, that, you know I had an attitude, and yeah, I mean we just clash head on sometimes.”

He began to share stories of his experiences with African American females becoming argumentative with him and those characteristics not being “a turn on to me.” However, he was able to develop friendships with African American women, stating,

“As friends wise, yeah. Yeah they have been great. We can joke around, you know how I am. They have been great. I mean, we're always jokey. That's what I definitely love. I mean, I guess the attitude I hate when we're not trying to relate to in a [romantic] relationship, in a friendship it’s okay because you have fun with it. You know what I mean, if that that makes any sense I guess.”

Through reflection, P3 was able to ascertain that he had experienced “combative” behaviors from other African American woman in his life, his “mom and “grandma” they expected “obedience” from him. Growing up he felt “respect” for his grandma because she raised him “for ten years” of his life and for his mom he felt “Angry, super angry. And I stay gone for like a week because I didn't wanna come back home.” Although now, “It doesn't really bother me as much nothing bothers me really anymore.”

When P3 was asked to describe his beliefs regarding interracial dating versus intraracial dating, he had the following response,

“Is it weird that I’m cool with Black guys dating White girls but I don’t like Black girls dating White guys? And I have never dated an African American, but I feel that way for them. I just feel like they try to claim Black people as a trophy or something. Guess that's what a lot of dudes do with White females.”
When asked to share his thoughts and experiences regarding African American men dating non-African American woman he believed that this group may also “claim them as trophies,” and he thought that there may be a preference to “have mixed babies.” He was proud of his culture and he believes that, “we’re tougher. You know what I mean, we are everything. I mean… we’re Black! We are strong people we are a strong race. We got pride, I think, I think White females love that.” He began to discuss his beliefs on why interracial dating is so popular, he expressed that, “everybody just wants a mixed kid.” When he was asked to further explain why biracial kids are considered a prize he explained that “they’re cute,” the “color of their hair,” and “everything.”

In closing, P3 expressed that he may have subconsciously “wanted a mixed kid,” although he has had “a crush on a couple people back in the day that were African American.” His final comments were that growing up he felt “intimidated, but I really don’t feel intimidated by anybody as I got older.”

The interview with participant 3 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 5 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 3.

Table 5

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<tr>
<th>Participant 3 Phrases of Significance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Analytical Categories</td>
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<td>1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
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<td>Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and</td>
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<td>outer microsystem</td>
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<td>2. Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem</td>
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<td>and outer microsystem</td>
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<td>3. Exosystem</td>
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<td>4. Macrosystem</td>
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5. Chronosystem

Love might be different now that I'm older. But back in the day, we just had a group of friends group of friends and I mean, and then I went on from there or social media.

I mean sometimes attitude because, I mean, that, you know I had an attitude. And yeah, I mean we just clash head sometimes I mean

Because I wanted to do what I want. And I think what I needed was distance. Distance definitely helped too because, I mean, we're at a good spot, but if I moved back in I don’t know how good we will be again.

I just feel like they try to claim Black people as a trophy or something *hand gestures*. Guess that's what a lot of dudes do with White females.

6. Subsystem

I attracted more White girls than Black girls too.

[Black women had] Just a, just a smarter mouth… Damn, you make me feel bad, shit.

Note. Interview 3 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Analysis of Interview Four

The fourth interview (P4) was completed in the late evening and was conducted virtually.

The interview lasted for fifty-five minutes. The interview began with P4 describing his relationship with women in his family as being “caring, loving, [and] protective.” He expressed that,

“when it comes to like women in my family or women that I'm in relationship with there's always like um, like just a protective and like but caring, you know, and all that.
And then if it’s just like any other random female it’s respect and kinda, you know that treat them as a regular person I treat it like if, if you're not like in my family I kinda treat you like I treat everyone else.”

His tone changed as he began to discuss the importance of his role with these women in his life. He expressed that with these relationships there was “more emotions and just like comfort as well.”

P4 stated that he enters a new romantic relationship when they “have anything in common.” Traditionally, he does not begin relationships, stating,

“If you know me, it's like I'm the type of person I'm not going like talk to you if you don't talk to me so… If you don't really approach me then I'm not gonna approach you or message you, but if, if you're entertaining me then I'm gonna, you know, respond as you are interacting with me if you're interacting nice with me I'm a answer back nice but, you know, if you're, if it's negative, then I'll respond to you accordingly.”

He expressed that he does not like to “waste energy” and that if he is spending time with a woman he will receive a “vibe” from them that will determine if he will continue to pursue a relationship with them.

When P4 is looking to establish a connection,

“this is difficult because like I like it's not like, it's sometimes it's never… For me, at least, it's never something specific. It's like something like about that person that jumps out and it isn’t the same. You know? *Chuckles* I know, you don't know but it's like it's about the same with every person is just like certain things about that person jump out to me and that's what attracted me if nothing is jumping out to me.”
P4 described that woman that were “outgoing,” someone that “brings that [outgoing personality] out of me,” had nice “eyes,” “ass,” or “the way [their] voice sounds” are attractive to him. A woman that does not “smell good,” “take care of herself,” or that “is too quiet” are not attractive. P4 expressed that there he has to be “physically attracted to you and mentally.” Another important characteristic is that the woman does “not just like questioning everything I’m asking like, you don’t understand it.” After further thought and clarification, P4 expressed that,

“I want you to have a voice… Like I don’t want to feel like I'm talking to a wall. Like if I’m speaking to you and it's like. You, you can't respond to me with anything or like what I'm saying. You just kind of like you don't see. I just don't, I don't like want bland plain conversation. I'm not saying I want you to agree with everything because I don't. Because I like to argue with…Not in romantic relationships. Not argue, but banter is fun. You can't like respond to me with a couple words. That is weird. I don't want to talk to you. Because you’ll just be silent all the time.”

P4 believe that this list was exhaustive and asked to move forward.

When asked to describe his relationships, P4 expressed the importance of the relationship that he shared with his mother, stating that he “was her sidekick.” He described his role as being “her best friend [and] that was always my best friend, talked about everything. I was with her all the time.” Despite having such a close relationship with his mother,

“It was a lot. Especially with her because she's a very emotional person, a lot of the sometimes feeling like or especially when I was like going through a time period when I, when we were like moving like every like three months in stuff like around [location removed] stuff.”
He saw his role with his mother was to “protect and kind of make sure you’re good at all times. Not in a simpy way, but, like just, like always checking on [you], make sure you’re good before I’m good.” When describing his relationship with his mother growing up, P4 expressed,

“I think it was so much of what was going on the background that she was trying to hide all that by making it's like… putting a mask over the bad and trying to make the bad look good, so that I wouldn't say I was spoiled. But I don't think I was spoiled. I think it was more so she was trying to shelter.”

This relationship dynamic led to her trying to restrict him, but he did not allow it because “you can’t box me.”

P4 expressed that he’s “never really dated many African American women.” His initial thoughts were,

“No, I have not. And it's not so much as, um, I'm opposed or I'm not attractive anything issues I have. I haven't ran into an encounter…. With one… that I… was…. Feeling like… that I… I mean…. I don’t know. I just know how, I'll tell you this way none have approached me and like… I don’t really be approaching females like that so, I don’t know.”

However, as the interview progressed, P4 spent more time reflecting on why he does not date African American women stating,

“Okay, so. More so, the reason why I don't go for African American or I have been like I said don't, but I have because my experience with Black women is made me feel emasculated and I do not like it. So that's not what I tend to deal with or tend to engage myself with. No hard feelings. It’s all love. They are like so strong. Black women are
strong… stronger than all of us for real. They deal with a lot but they don’t take nothing.

It is inspiring and great BUT, it’s not for me. I respect them.”

When asked to share his closing remarks, P4 expressed the importance of “respect” for women, people “teach[ing] they sons respect for women,” and the “#MeToo movement.”

The interview with participant 4 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 6 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 4.

### Table 6
**Participant 4 Phrases of Significance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Categories</th>
<th>Quotations of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem | any other random female it’s respect and kinda, you know that treat them as a regular person I treat it like if if you're not like in my family I kinda treat you like I treat everyone else  
I'm more comfortable being more upfront and more myself with women that are in my family or women that I am in a friendship or relationship with  
My mother, I was her sidekick. |
| 2. Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem | Um, well, with the women in my family at least I'm very like caring loving, protective in any like female that I care about is like, you know, and how I am with my mother and everything  
when it comes to like women in my family or women that I'm in relationship with there's |
always like um, like just a protective and like but caring

It could be your eyes, it can be your ass. It can be your, the way your voice sounds

I don't like want bland plain conversation. I'm not saying I want you to agree with everything because I don't. Because I like to argue with…

Not in romantic relationships. Not argue, but banter is fun.

3. Exosystem

Not in a simpy way, but, like just, like always checking on you, make sure you're good before, I'm good, you know.

4. Macrosystem

If you know me, it's like I'm the type of person I'm not going like talk to you if you don't talk to me so… If you don't really approach me then I'm not gonna approach you or message you, but if if you're entertaining me then I'm gonna, you know, respond.

I don't like, like wasting energy. So like if I feel like I'm wasting energies to speaking to you then like I won't talk to you that much.

I think it was so much of what was going on the background that she was trying to hide all that by making it's like… putting a mask over the bad and trying to make the bad look good, so that I wouldn't say I was spoiled.

5. Chronosystem

My relationship with my mom is still good, but I think it’s hard for her to deal with the fact that I'm growing up like also like stop lying to her. She's just like, it's kind of like she knows I was wildin’, she didn't know I was well so like now this is she feel like you don't know me. That's not that you don't know me, it's like… and especially when I was younger. When I was doing stuff. I didn't
want you to like have to worry about me, you know.

6. Subsystem

[When asked if he prefers agreeable women he responded] Not agreeable. I like you, I want you to have a voice, but I'm saying, like, *Pauses, smirks, plays with hair* More so if like *Pauses* That’s funny. *Starts laughing* That’s funny.

They are like so strong. Black women are strong… stronger than all of us for real. They deal with a lot but they don’t take nothing. It is inspiring and great BUT, it’s not for me. I respect them.

Note. Interview 4 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Analysis of Interview 5

Interview 5 (P5) was conducted virtually in the late afternoon. The interview lasted twenty-six minutes. When asking P5 to describe his relationships with woman, he began to nervously laugh and stated,

“I don't really know. I've always kind of just let whatever happened, and I'm not really the type to aggressively pursue anything when it comes to relationship wise, I guess you could say. But like I said, I just go with the flow. If it happens. It happens if it doesn't, it doesn't.”

He indicated that he does not “actively seek” any type of relationships in his life and his relationships tend to happen organically, “right place, right time.”

In order to develop a romantic connection, P5 expressed feeling “a vibe from her.” His relationships seem to progress over time, “first we became friends,” and if the “vibe” is there and a connection is developed, P5 will pursue the relationship. P5 described this vibe as,
“I don't really look for any particular thing, whether it be looks, smarts, anything like that. The vibe I was talking about is really just, if I have a good feeling about who you are as a person and if I get like this… I don't even know how to explain is just a feeling that I get inside of my head. And, it is a good feeling.”

When asked to describe characteristics or features that he has looked for from his previous relationships he shared that “they’re all athletic” and “they’ve helped me grow in one way or another.”

When exploring where P5 learned how to interact with women he expressed that he was taught by his mom “to treat whoever I was with the way I would want to see her be treated.” He expressed that has “a relationship, but it’s kind of a distant relationship” with his mother because growing up,

“All right. So I was not sheltered but kind of sheltered as a child. And that made me want to be a rebel, rebellious child as I was still in the house. And now that I have my own. It's kind of like we have a relationship, but it's kind of a distant relationship.”

The communication style growing up with his mother was a relationship of, “it was always just do as I say.” This authoritarian parenting style made him “feel like [he] had a voice, but it was a voice that was only heard when… only heard when needed, I guess you could say.” He expressed that when seeking romantic relationships he looks for people that are “as opposite as possible” of his mother because he believes “everybody’s voice should be heard.”

Growing up P5 never got the opportunity to experience or be surrounded by married couples,

“Like I would go to the wedding and things like that. But when it comes to like the nitty gritty type of stuff. I never really got to see that or like the everyday being around just a
married couple and the things they would do and say, you know, it was kind of just the people I was around.”

When seeking longevity for a relationship, he looked for “someone goal-orientated,” “ambitious, and wants to make a name for themselves.”

P5 did not have any opportunities to date an African American woman as an adult. He had one experience while he was in “high school.” When addressing his thoughts on why he has not dated African American women he stated,

“No, I don't think so. I feel like part of it would be the fact that I've always gone to some sort of private school and the majority of the population in private schools is Caucasian or some type of Hispanic woman so that might be part of the reason that I've majority, that majority of my relationships have been with Caucasian women because I've always been around them since I want to say fourth or fifth, third or fourth grade I've been in a private school where population was predominantly White.”

P5 does not share a preference for interracial dating versus intraracial dating, he believes that you should go “wherever you find yourself being happy at.”

The interview with participant 5 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 7 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 5.

### Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 5 Phrases of Significance</th>
<th>Quotations of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>I never really got to experience it, but my mom would always tell me to treat whoever I was with the way I would want to see her be treated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was always just do as I say. [Describing his mother's parenting style]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Um, I try to be as opposite as possible. [When looking for characteristics for a romantic partner]

2. Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem

I don't really know. I've always kind of just let whatever happened, and I'm not really the type to aggressively pursue anything when it comes to relationship wise, I guess you could say. But like I said, I just go with the flow. If it happens. It happens if it doesn't, it doesn't.

I guess you could say a vibe from her. I just knew there was something special there. First we became friends. And then after we became friends that kind of just one day I was like we should get together and it happened.

3. Exosystem

Uh, growing up, no, it really was just like whoever was in a relationship, they were just in a relationship, but I've never really saw the actual marriage, the different stages of marriage until my brother and his wife got married. But by then I was already an adult pretty much.

No, I don't think so. I feel like part of it would be the fact that I've always gone to some sort of private school and the majority of the population in private schools is Caucasian or some type of Hispanic woman so that might be part of the reason that I've majority, that majority of my relationships have been with Caucasian women because I've always been around them since I want to say fourth or fifth third or fourth grade I've been in a private school where population was predominantly White.

4. Macrosystem

Oh, I feel like I had a voice, but it was a voice that was only heard when… What's the word I'm looking for? Only heard when needed, I guess you could say.
I feel like everybody's voice should be heard. No matter like age, anything like that age, race, gender, whatever it is. Everybody deserves to be heard, for whatever they want to speak up about.

Just with me like sometimes I feel like people want me to be with a African American woman but if I found love somewhere I'm not going to leave, who I love to be with someone else, just to make someone else happy like I'm going to do what's best for myself before I worry about what anybody else has to say.

5. Chronosystem

honestly most of my friends aren't friends that I made, because I was actively seeking friends. It was kind of just I ran into them. Right place, right time and we kind of hit it off right there and now we just stay friends.

It's a good relationship but it could be better. I feel like once when I was growing up, I was not going to say sheltered but just not allowed to do a lot so once I was grown and on my own. Um kind of, I don't want to really wanna say rebelling, but… I don't, I don't know how to explain it.

6. Subsystem

They're all athletic. [women he ends up dating, despite stating he does not have a type].

Note. Interview 5 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Analysis of Interview Six

Interview 6 (P6) was conducted virtually in the afternoon during a weekday. The interview was fifty minutes long. P6 began the interview discussing his relationships with women as,
“With women in general? *Chuckles* Um, I wouldn't say I have many bad relationships with women. I try to be open minded. I know they have different struggles than men. So I try to be as sympathetic as I can with some of those issues. Just because I know I don't experience what they experienced. For the most part, I, I would hope that I'm not perceived as a terrible person to woman.”

He expressed that there is a difference between romantic and non-romantic relationships, and he does not try to “blur a line as far as a friendship or a romantic relationship.” When it comes to P6 developing a romantic relationship, he is “oblivious of them for the most part and just stumble into them.” Relationships tend to start as “friendships” for P6. Each relationship has started by it being “at the same place, same time” and they “just had that connection, and it just evolved to the next level.”

Relationships happen any many different settings because P6 has “several different friend groups” and he is a “chameleon” that is “all over the spectrum as far as [his] interests.” Having that eclectic set of friends has allowed him to “see the beauty in different things.” P6 has expressed that he has had “so few relationships” that it is hard to explain “attraction wise” because what he likes in a significant other “typically develop slowly.” A “sense of humor” is an important characteristic for a significant other to have because,

“Mainly, just because I feel like if you can’t understand that part about me, you're probably not gonna like me or even want to get to know me. Just because you think that I'm just too weird to move on past that. So, if I don't think you're accepting of me in that way, I probably have never even thought about going past the basic conversation with that person.”
“A basic level of intelligence” is an important characteristic for a significant other because he needs to be able to “have conversations that aren’t shallow.” He expressed that it is important to “communicate,” and “be honest, especially if you’re trying to get with somebody.”

When discussing characteristics that were unattractive to P6, he discussed, “Yeah, that's definitely accurate. The only other thing I would really just say that it's like a hard stop for me is someone that is like overly violent looking for trouble or met sort of aspect. Like I’m all for defending yourself. I get it. Things come up where you know you have to, but like…I've been out with people and the first thing they want to do is they get a couple of shots and then they're looking to start trouble. I'm good on that. Like, I don't need that sort of energy or drama in my life so. Male or female I'll pass on that. I have no desire to be around that. Especially being more mature now like not in college, I’m [age removed] now, so, really don't have time drama time is time for more eager for it so.”

He never had rules or guidelines on how to treat women, but he has “picked up do’s and don’ts” over the years from observing his family and friends, essentially he has developed his own guidelines for treating women.

P6 had one experience with an African American woman “that was a short-lived thing in high school.” His experience with African American women was short due to the environment that he grew up in.

“Some people think that I, I don't like African American woman, and that is far from the truth. Um, just growing up where I grew up everybody that I was introduced to is introduce as my cousin. Like, I'm from [location removed], it's a smaller town. And, you know, there's a handful of Black families that are somehow related to each other. The other part of it is, I was always looked at it as being like too White or too nerdy or too
weird for the Black people. Which is whatever like I know who I am. I don't feel that I'm too White or whatever, like I am who I am. But outside of that I have positive relationships with women of color, not even just African American. But, uh, I know that I need to look out for them. But I feel like I was end up in that sort of role like I'm not, I'm not really there to be a translator anything to explain Black culture to people, but, I need to make sure somebody has their back because they're easily marginalized group more so than Black men. Just making sure they're not isolated or put into terrible situations.”

His experiences of growing up and having “different interests” than other African Americans in his community often left him to be unaccepted, criticized and considered to be “lame.”

Growing up P6 was able to witness different aspects of relationships that he “didn’t want to be a part of, like a couple of abusive relationships in my family.” He had role models in his family demonstrate both things that he wanted and did not want for his own life. P6 explains it as,

“So what I mean by that I had aunts and uncles that have had great relationships, raise their kids, went to school, things like that. And I kind of saw myself wanting to have that more so than. *pauses* My aunt and uncle that were in an abusive relationship, didn’t maintain jobs. So I kind of found myself wanting to be the more successful model to where I can provide for my family. I don't have to worry about bills not being paid. I can make sure I can provide for my kids someday provide for my wife someday. So I saw myself going to be more like that and not what I was saying on the other side, which was, yeah, go ahead and sell those food stamps. Go ahead and, you know, borrow so and so's car. I don't want to have to deal with those headaches, I get it that some people struggle
and it's hard to break that cycle, but I don't want to watch and study that whenever I can study the other model and work towards that.”

He described his relationship with his parents who divorced as “pretty good over the years.” He explained that during this time he experienced some “chaotic” moments and he had to make a “tough choice” and ended up “living with his dad.” Despite living far from his mother growing up and being the “baby of the family”, he was able to “get [his] way anytime [he] wanted to” and their relationship is still like this. However, he believes

“I know if I asked her for something right now, she would do it for me, or she would hand me the money for it or whatever it is. But I don't want to do that. So I'm just trying to, you know, not just be that spoiled brat baby of the family, I’m trying to be my own man, but I know like if I needed something she would do it in a heartbeat, just because that's who she is.”

Despite P6 being an adult, to his mother, “I’m still her baby.” Growing up in a working household, his parents had a standard of that required him to “be a little more mature at our age” and do what was requested because he “just knew better” not to.

P6 was asked if he believed if there was a difference between interracial relationships versus intraracial relationships and he expressed that “one of the big differences is having conversations about the social or certain social subjects.” P6 expressed that his interracial relationship had been going through “an interesting time” due to the protests regarding “George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.” He expressed that by having “biracial children if they don’t look White, they are automatically assumed to be Black and it is what it is.” He expressed frustrations on how he had to explain “systemic race issue[s] going back to Jim Crow,” because of the recent
protests and “light on the subject.” Despite these frustrations, he has a “pretty accepting” family that has other interracial families.

The interview with participant 6 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 8 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
<th>Participant 6 Phrases of Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analytical Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wouldn’t say any relationship I saw really impacted things other than the fact that I kind of saw some things I didn't want to be a part of, like, a couple of abusive relationships in my family and, and kind of like the family sort of setting, I would want to see myself in the future.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My dad put hands on my mother. My mom, luckily, was strong enough to remove yourself from the situation altogether.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So, I'm considered the baby of the family, and my siblings will say, I can get my way anytime I want to, and it may be true, but I, I won't deny or confirm that, but I didn't know if I need to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So I'm just trying to, you know, not just be that spoiled brat baby of the family, I’m trying to be my own man, but I know like if I needed something she would do it in a heartbeat, just because that's who she is.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2.      | Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem | With women in general? *Chuckles* Um, I wouldn't say I have many bad relationships with women. I try to be open minded. I know they have different struggles than men. So I try to be as sympathetic as I can with some of
those issues. Just because I know I don't experience what they experienced.

Sort of things I look for other than just being able to enjoy yourself enjoy like my presence or anything like that and just a basic level of intelligence. Like it's just hard for me to just get along with anyone that's not too sharp, just because I feel like we're moving at way two different speeds and we can't really have conversations that are shallow, so I feel like that's the main thing as far as looking back, well that's connected with people about.

3. Exosystem

But, um, they've all started as friendships, I would say in some fashion. It's not like I was out in the club looking for someone or anything like that. It's just, you know, mutual friend or a neighbor or whatever it may have been, we just had that connection, and it just evolved to the next level.

The only other thing I would really just say that it's like a hard stop for me is someone that is like overly violent looking for trouble or met sort of aspect. Like I'm all for defending yourself. I get it. Things come up where you know you have to, but like…I've been out with people and the first thing they want to do is they get a couple of shots and then they're looking to start trouble.

Like, I'm from [location removed], it's a smaller town. And, you know, there's a handful of Black families that are somehow related to each other.

4. Macrosystem

I don't know, some people say, I'm like a chameleon that I just get along with so many different types of people and that I can find an interest in so many different groups.

I'm just all over the spectrum as far as what my interests are. So that's why I get along so many different people.
I guess you can say, I can see the beauty in different things that people were entertained by or interested in and I can learn to, to, like those things too, but still know who I am myself.

The other part of it is, I was always looked at it as being like too White or too nerdy or too weird for the Black people.

A clutch of the both. Um, mainly just know a little bit of acceptance just about how I thought, how I talk, how I carry myself, how I dress. You know, I didn't just like a typical Black kid in the 2000s every day. *Chuckles* You know, I, I kind of had a diverse look.

5. Chronosystem

I would say I have several different friend groups, just because I get along with so many different types of people.

I had an older brother, so watching him in his situations over the years, growing up and then being around other people, high school, college, things like that. I feel like I've picked up more just like do's and don'ts, but really I don't think they're really set of rules, other than don't pursue a friends significant another.

Some people think that I don't like African American woman, and that is far from the truth. Um, Just growing up where I grew up everybody that I was introduced to is introduce as my cousin

But I feel like I was end up in that sort of role like I'm not, I'm not really there to be a translator anything to explain Black culture to people, but, I need to make sure somebody has their back because they're easily marginalized group more so than Black men. Just making sure they're not isolated or put into terrible situations.
To having to explain why there is [begins air quotes] more crime in Black neighborhoods [ends air quotes] and it's really a systemic race issue going back to Jim Crow. You know, some people on that, um, Black relations, like you know Black circles understand that without having to know the whole Ins and Outs about the numbers of details and the written laws that there were, were like her family and our, some of our friends out that aren't Black never really had to think about how those little things impact them.

Well, you know, both my siblings have dated outside of our race and that's not who they are with permanently or they've been currently, but they've had that experience too. I would say my mom is pretty accepting my dad side of the family. There's quite a few men that date White women are married to a White woman.

6. Subsystem

I just connect with people differently when it comes to those types of different types of relationships and I try to not…blur a line as far as a friendship or a romantic relationship.

Honestly, I've just been oblivious of them, for the most part and just stumble into them.

Which is whatever like I know who I am. I don't feel that I'm too White or whatever, like I am who I am.

Note. Interview 6 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Analysis of Interview Seven

Interview seven (P7) was conducted virtually in the evening on a weekend. The interview lasted seventy-eight minutes long. P7 appeared to be relaxed and described his relationship with woman as,
“Historically, I mean, I would say it wasn't always easy. When I was younger, I was kind of chubby. So, I mean, I was never like the first guy that girls were looking at or anything like that. My family is really big on taking care of women like women in our family, we look after them. You know what I mean. So, I've never been like, like an ass or like a jerk to women or anything like that. So that's kind of, you know what I mean. I got my nose in the door. I got my foot in the door until you know and, I mean, I grew up and kind of grew into that. I mean, who I was going to be and what I look like. I can remember my first actual girlfriend. And then I can remember it was like third grade, me and my best friend met two girls who are best friends, and we sat by each other during lunch, stuff like that. Middle School is when your feelings start getting involved. And I was like, my first little, like, you know, one the most popular girls, you know, I mean the prettiest girls and now, I mean being turned down and stuff like that, for the first time and then I got my braces off and got to high school and it kinda was easy. From that, you know what I mean. Have a nice decent personality and be smart and I mean play football and all that, just to be around women. I come from a family that's like that. I wouldn't say like, I mean it's just easy historically, the men in my family don't really have an issue of, you know, I mean, communicating to or, attracting women and then I mean, anything like that. My grandfather got seven kids, six different women, which is not something that you know I mean usually can be proud of. But like all the women that he's been with like they still all get along. And then I mean it's goes against the grain for us to have a family function and everybody be there, you know, I mean like around each other and things like that.”
P7 expressed that he grew up around “a lot of strong single women” and it has shaped his preferences for woman. It was important for him to begin a relationship with a that was able to have “intellectual conversations,” be “beautiful,” not “cheat,” and bring “something to the table.”

P7 discussed that growing up in his area people “never really had any aspirations,” or realized that “the world’s way bigger than this [area],” which he thought made him different than the typical males from his area which left his approach to woman coming off as “intimidating.” He explained that it is important to motivate those around him to find out their “goals,” and “travel” in order to “[see] what life could be like.”

P7 explained that because he can come off as “intimidating” and future oriented he’s not the “type of guy” that woman go after. He explained that women “like street dudes.” I asked him to clarify what that means and he explained it as, “Street dudes, I don't know when it got to that. I think a lot goes into this mental warfare, that's what a lot of people even like, I know girls that come from where I come from, that are very educated women. I mean, that are nurses and doctors and go to law school, but the type of guys today, like, just to me don't match. Where would they live the lifestyle that I live? And I think that's the problem. I mean, I know there are certain people like you. You want them women will I feel like when a man that appears overly tough and you know I mean like a manly man, I mean, But, uh, I don't know where we started, equating certain actions and behaviors. With that, I mean, who's, I think a lot of it has to go with what you see and what you grew up around and this in a community like mine is reality.”

P7 explained that going away to school “was kind of like a saving grace for me.” It allowed him to experience new women “who are not from around my area” because “they’re kind of
different.” P7 expressed that “time and surroundings” changed the way that he viewed relationships and women. He expressed that he believes that the woman in his area tend to not pursue him. He expressed that in order to have a relationship with established women he would still need to “level up” in a sense and become more financially and socially desirable. P7 explained that he viewed American culture and relationships as,

“American culture is really the only culture that like marries for love and people all around the world think that we are insane because, because you know what I mean, like, people will put themselves in worse off situations because they love somebody that's outrageous to other cultures, you know, but then there's other extremes of like arranged marriages that I've studied, you know, have like these people have no connection to each other and they're just supposed to live their lives together for the rest of their lives. You know, and then there's the middle ground. I'm just like, it has to be a mixture of both like I love you, but you know what I mean. What else are you bringing to the table outside of, you know. I mean, so I'm kind of in that middle ground of, like, it's all right to love somebody, but I can love you from afar. You know, I mean, I don't have to be with you, you know, I mean, messed up or you know what I mean.”

P7 explained that his original views on relationships is “actually how I ended up moving back home.” He explained how he returned to reside in his hometown in order to maintain a romantic relationship, and she did not “know what she wanted to do with her life.” P7 explained that relationships have “to be a mixture of stability and love.” When asked to discuss the commonalities of the women he dates, he expressed that he has “never dated a woman that was the same complexion or darker than me.” When asked to explain why this was, he stated that “my entire family is beautiful dark-skinned women” but,
“A lot of Black women do not stand for the same things that my mom and my aunts and them and my grandma stand for anymore. Like, you couldn't be a street dude and my mom give you any attention. You know what I mean. And now, like guys like me to Black women are like considered corny almost, you know what I mean, like they want to, you know, I mean even I'm telling you is not just like it's all around like I know, like I said, educated, I know for, you know, women working for a fortune 500 companies they steal resort back to that route of, like, I don't know what they would see about it you know I mean like you know I find myself to be tough. I will bring it back if I gotta. I gotta spread them out here looking for fight every day or standing on the corner or anything like that. No. To me, I understand the consequences of that lifestyle, so I don't understand why, then, I mean, going to jail and stuff like that. It has become popular like; you know what I mean. So with that, no. I mean, of course, you got men out here acting like there's something that they're not all trying to impress women and the cycle starts, you know, and I mean so I mean, I'm on the outside looking in. I don't know what it is about it. I don't know what it is.”

P7 clarified that this was not just a “Black women thing, all women are kind of like that right now.”

P7 explained that there was a difference between Black culture and White culture. He expressed that White culture is associated with “going to school, getting a job and doing things the right way.” Black culture was is associated with “jail in the streets and things like that.” And that within the Black community there are some people that are “outliers,” but some people “feed into those aspects.” He described that he associates with people that emulate those
characteristics, but he is often considered to be “act[ing] White.” He described what acting White as,

“I don't want to say it’s racist because a lot of that a lot of the time it comes from People of color that, we do it to our own people, but it's a micro aggression that white people have done to us, that is, like I said, it's mental warfare is fed into us where we associate going to school and talking and using proper English and things like that we associate that with white people because most of the black people we know you know I mean a grip around. We're an anomaly. They didn't have the opportunity for education. They talk with slang, you know, and I mean they don't, they don't really have the opportunity to get great jobs or anything like that. So, all of the mental warfare side of it we've associated with it. And there's, there's a lot that feeds into it is systemic, you know, issues that that we've been dealing with and it kind of... I can only give, that system gives like one outcome for how a Black man should operate, you know, I mean to fit into the role of a Black man when there's multiple roles that Black people could carry.”

P7 was asked if he thought that White women or light-skinned women were superior and he responded by saying, “no.” He expressed that it was a stereotype of what Black women are like. He believes that “a lot of Black women feed into” the stereotype that Black women are “hard to deal with, they are argumentative; that loud in your face.” He believes that society has impacted the development of Black women. He expressed that shows like “Love and Hip Hop” affected the Black race negatively because they lack “role models” when you “live in an impoverished community.” He expressed that “they [White people] got 400 years” on us for economic status but the real problems stem from “capitalism.” P7 expressed that despite encountering prejudice, discrimination, oppression and poverty, “love who you love.”
When describing who P7 typically pursues in romantic relationships, he expressed that, “I don’t like really skinny women. So, you gotta have a little bit of thickness,” and he believes that he attracts “shorter women.” He stated that he believes that his relationships “correlate with where I am in life,” meaning that he happens to be in relationships that mirror how he feels about himself at that time. Over time he has been cheated on, experienced heartbreak, developed some “trust issues,” and had to learn how to love again. He expressed that “God's plans are usually different than what yours tend to be” and he was okay with that. He expressed that having a woman like his mom would be ideal. He expressed that maybe if love in the Black community would change and Black men and women would “link back up,” meaning that if Black men and women would learn how to respect one another, love one another and work together he would be open to dating a Black woman.

The interview with participant 7 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 9 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Categories</th>
<th>Quotations of Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>My family is really big on taking care of women like women in our family, we look after them. Historically, the men in my family don't really have an issue of, you know, I mean, communicating to or, attracting women a lot of the Black women that I'm attracted to are not attracted to me, for obvious reasons, you know. There's people that have and there's a have nots.</td>
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<tr>
<td>That's my ace like my mom is the strongest woman I know.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A lot of strong single women in my family that I grew up around so like as far as like What Am I attracted to. I would say that's like my lane. You got to be able to have intellectual conversation. And then I mean, be able to, you know, go back and forth with me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Exosystem</strong></td>
<td>Where I grew up in [location removed], everybody operates on like a real low vibration. I mean, a lot of people have never seen anybody leave this area and then they had never really had any aspirations of leaving this area.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I feel like when a man that appears overly tough and you know I mean like a manly man, I mean, But, uh, I don't know where we started, equating certain actions and behaviors. With that, I mean, who's, I think a lot of it has to go with what you see and what you grew up around and this in a community like mine is reality.</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Macrosystem</strong></td>
<td>Have a nice decent personality and be smart and I mean play football and all that, just to be around women.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I feel as if they don't like Black women. A lot of Black women do not stand for the same things that my mom and my aunts and them and my grandma stand for anymore.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It's been a mental warfare that in the Black community we associate going to school,</td>
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getting a job and doing things the right way we associate that with White culture. And when you associate jail in the streets and things like that with Black culture

White girl, supposedly they’re living the easy life, they got it made. People assume that everybody White has money. So, if you got a White girl. You know what I mean. All you got a girl that got money.

5. Chronosystem

When I was younger, I was kind of chubby. So, I mean, I was never like the first guy that girls were looking at or anything like that.

I think a lot goes into this mental warfare, that's what a lot of people even like, I know girls that come from where I come from, that are very educated women. I mean, that are nurses and doctors and go to law school, but the type of guys today, like, just to me don't match.

being an associate major like knowing About American culture is really the only culture that like marries for love and people all around the world think that we are insane because, because you know what I mean, like, people will put themselves in worse off situations because they love somebody that's outrageous to other cultures

So, we're poor and we're struggling, you know, and I mean like love doesn't pay the bills, essentially, is what I'm saying. In a capitalist society. You know, I mean, you can't be foolish to think that money doesn't factor into, some people marry solely for money.

And now, like guys like me to Black women are like considered corny almost

that system gives like one outcome for how a Black man should operate, you know, I mean
to fit into the role of a Black man when there's multiple roles that Black people could carry.

6. Subsystem
My grandfather got seven kids, six different women, which is not something that you know I mean usually can be proud of. But like all the women that he's been with like they still all get along.

it has to be a mixture of both like I love you, but you know what I mean. What else are you bringing to the table

For some reason, I don't know that I've ever, I've never dated a woman I was the same, the same complex as or darker than me.

But you didn't know the person that God was moving you into be.

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*Note.* Interview 7 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

**Analysis of Interview Eight**

Interview 8 (P8) was conducted virtually in the afternoon during a weekday. The interview was forty-nine minutes long. P8 began the interview discussing his relationships with women as “rollercoasters.” P8 explained that meant that he “like[s] females damn near crazy like me.” He typically goes for woman that are “projects,” women that “got good qualities but you know that got broken wings.” He explained that he does not have “many selections” of good Black women. He explained that the women in his area “ain’t really worth nothing” and the few light-skinned and Black women that are of substance are “already gone.”

P8 expressed that he did not want to feel obligated to date Black women because the “White girls that do, they’re trying to do something” as opposed to the Black women in his area, meaning that he thinks that the Black women in his community lack aspirations whereas the White women have goals and aspirations that they are working towards obtaining. He expressed
that the Black women in his area “only want thugs” and he did not fit the description. He explained that Black women in his area lacked motivation and they focus on,

“They're just giving up. I'm just gonna stay down here. I'm content. I'm gonna have a baby to this nigga. Find me a drug dealer. Take care of me. You know what I mean, it's as long as someone takes care of them. There's not too many women that's independent.”

P8 expressed that the light-skinned women and White women “are trying to get it they know. They know. I mean, especially if you're liking Black men.” He expressed that the Black women in his area were “like his mom.” P8 expressed, “I came from the crack era. So, me seeing my mom like, you know what I mean, like, that was one of my first impressions of Black women, too.” He explained that growing and watch his mom “drunk, fucked up, not seeing you for day” “might have had a little resentment off rip” towards “Black women,” meaning that he thinks that from his childhood he negatively perceived and disliked Black women because of his early experiences with his mother. He expressed that his relationship with his mom and “the Black women I grew up in my life” impacted the way that he viewed all Black women. He said that the Black women he grew up around were “ignorant,” “petty,” and “felt like the man owed them.” He explained that his grandmother was the only Black woman that showed him love. However, his experience with White women what that they were “always nice to me.” He explained that as a kid he was attracted to what he viewed as the caring often displayed by White women.

P8 explained that most of the Black children in his community, “90% of kids ain't got no damn dads. You know, I mean, and niggas is loud outside all day and night and shit. So, you really ain't got no guidance.” He expressed that “maybe these girls are looking for love” and maybe that’s why “they want to fit that stereotype” of “wanting to fight,” “lack communication,” “trying to fit a stereotype of being extra hard and like tough,” and being “angry and mean.” He
expressed that the Black women “always [have] the limitations” and “it was more or less like it's either your way, there was no 50/50 it was always this is how we're gonna do it” as opposed to White women.

His experiences with Black women made him view Black women as unappealing. He expressed that if he “want[ed] to date a man, I just date a man for all that.” He expressed that “women are supposed to be soft, gentle, like, the other half of you.” He believes that this lack of warmth from Black women has caused friction between Black women and White women. P8 expressed that White women are better at getting things out of Black men than Black women because “they [Black women] don’t want nothing” and “they’re content,” meaning that Black women do not challenge Black men to be better providers or better men, whereas White women have higher aspirations for Black men.

P8 was asked to describe things he looked for in a romantic relationship, and P8 expressed,

“Yeah, it’s a friendship I ain’t just hitting it and just jumping into it. I got to feel you out. Just over a week or two just hearing you talk, or just, listening. Because the first two weeks I’m just listening. I don’t want to do shit but listen just to see where her head’s at. See what type of person she is. I’m just soaking all that shit in. Because in two weeks, you can find out a lot. You can see if little shit will trigger you, make this motherfucker act a fool or just see how they talk on politics or Black lives matter. Just seeing what they’re talking about. You can see what type of person they are. You know, I mean, and if you tell me you try and do this on a man, you know what I'm like shit. Yeah, I'm trying to I'm trying to build this. I'm trying to shit. Yeah, I'm trying You know what? I'm trying to get my own shop. If you say you're trying to own anything. I'm rocking with you. If
you say you try and get your own anything, cuz that tells me you’re trying to be your own boss already. You try and get your own shit. And like me I don't have too many Black women saying they want what the next motherfucker got but don’t want to work for it, it’s like we already owe them something. I see these White girls differently.”

P8 expressed that for one exception, he typically prefers for women to pursue him because “if you want to fuck with me, and I feel like I got one foot in the door already because you came at me.”

P8 was asked to describe the characteristics that he looks for in a romantic partner and P8 expressed that if he were to date you, you “have to be able to laugh” and “find a silver lining all the time.” He expressed that he “love Black woman’s toughness” and “Black women are strongest thing on earth. P8 expressed that he feels like a Black woman “don’t know her worth and it’s a shame.” He expressed that Black woman’s “worth is priceless.” He expressed that women like his grandmother “is not common” anymore, “those are like unicorns, those are hard to find you one.” Black women have changed. P8 expressed that maybe the Black women in his family do not see their worth because “me dating White women” instead of Black women.

P8 talked about his grandmother often, and he was asked to describe that relationship. P8 described that “she was my mom,” “she raised me” and “that’s my homie, shit, if it wasn’t for her I probably wouldn’t even be here.” P8 described that his mom struggled with addiction and it put a barrier on their relationship. P8 described his relationship with his father as absent. P8 expressed that “my dad had so many fucking kids,” so “he was around but he wasn’t.” His only male role models were his uncles and cousins. P8 expressed that growing up none of his male role models “dated White women.”
P8 was asked if his views on Black women have changed since the protests regarding racist treatment of African Americans and the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, initially he responded by saying “no,” but, after talking more, he expressed that he is starting to “appreciate Black women again.” He finds it “refreshing to see some good Black women” and he’s more open to dating Black women now than within “the last 10 years.” P8 concluded the interview by describing that he attributed the opportunities that White women had to “privilege” but “I’m attracted to what you do with the opportunities that you get. Obviously you have opportunities because you’re a White woman but what are you doing with them?”

The interview with participant 8 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 10 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 8.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 10</th>
<th>Participant 8 Phrases of Significance</th>
<th>Quotations of Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Categories</td>
<td>1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>it's not that niggas like white girls it's just like saying the white girls that do, they're trying to do something.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[My mom] was my first impression. See, you come home drunk, fucked up not seeing you for days, weeks at a time, you know, to me. So I might have had a little resentment off rip to Black women… from my experiences at an early age.</td>
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<td>I still want somebody to push me. I don't want to date anybody like me.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t really go after women besides my child's mother. That’s the only one I felt like, yeah I got to grab her there’s something about her.</td>
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</table>
| 2. **Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem** | I found projects, find them in women that they got good qualities but you know that got broken wings.  

[White women] they're offering something different right now. You know, man I hate to say that but the Black girls, they're not gonna offer nothing besides pussy.  

You know what I mean, there's a handful of good black women.  

I will say it had a lot to do with a Black woman I grew up in my life. You know, I mean, I was around and seeing how they acted and stuff so that's probably why you know me another reason why I feel the way I do.  

A lot of Black women don’t know their worth. |
|---|---|
| 3. **Exosystem** | We don’t have many selections and being a Black man, we really didn’t get much of a selection.  

It’s mainly light skinned and the black woman ain’t really worth nothing, I hate to say that.  

I mean, because that's our people's, you know, I mean, that's our people I would, I mean, I would love to be able to share a system. But I want to be happy at the same time |
| 4. ** Macrosystem** | Females damn near crazy like me.  

I mean, for the most part, they just want a drug dealer. Have five kids, you know, I mean, they only had a kid they want to give them to the grandmother.  

There's no there's no ambition no aspirations [from Black women] |
you got 15 baby dads and I gotta fight with this nigga and shit. You crying about me paying child support and then I can only see my baby if I'm in a relationship with you.

Mean and black like they fight they want to fit that stereotype.

Like I said, this is like trying to fit a stereotype of being you got to be extra hard and like extra tough. You don't mean there's a time to be tough. And there's a time when you turn it on and turn it off. It's like they want to be like that all time.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>5. Chronosystem</th>
<th>As long as someone takes care of them. There's not too many women that's independent anymore.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>I've seen White girls, light skinned girls, these motherfuckers are trying to get it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I'm like even growing up some of my best friends with people that took care of me was like will be white people.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>White woman when I was small was always nice to me</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I mean I do love Black woman's toughness. Yeah, like Black women are like, the strongest thing ever.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When I grew up ain't nothing change white girls still acting like that, and the black girls are still acting the same way.</td>
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<tr>
<th>6. Subsystem</th>
<th>I’m basically trying to be like Captain save-a-hoe, like a fixer upper.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>I'm a brother so I gotta you know mean make everybody else happy just be with somebody black.</td>
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</table>
I hate to say that I love them [Black women in his life] to death but ignorant, ignorant, Petty, and like that's what I grew up with.

Note. Interview 8 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Analysis of Interview Nine

Interview 9 (P9) was conducted virtually in the afternoon during a weekday. The interview was forty-four minutes long. P9 began the interview discussing his relationships with women as, “I love women but have trust issues in all of my relationships.” P9 expressed that he was “only been raised by women” and they play an important role in his life. He described his primary caregivers as his mother, grandmother and aunts, stating that he has had “mostly females in my life I didn’t have too many male figures.”

P9 discussed how growing up with all of his primary role models being Black women and how he felt about them. He described those relationships as,

“Very, very caring, very thoughtful very selfless women. You know I got most of my game from women, you know that's how I can move and be around so many women so freely and not feel any type of way. You know, Like I don't feel like I don't have any real use to have sex with women like it's not just a physical thing with me, I develop good relationships with women, and I can find myself being around, I have a better time being around women than men.”

P9 responded that he was most comfortable around women because that was all he ever had because growing up he did not have consistent male role models. When asked to describe his relationship with his mother, P9 stated,

“My mother was a single parent and she was very selfless. She would take care of anybody and that kind of reflects on me a lot, because I find myself taking care of a lot of
people and helping broken wing people. It's a gift and a curse because you know it makes me feel good to help people, but then again. I've seen my mom used by a lot of people that took advantage of her kindness for weakness. That made me keep my guard up a lot, maybe develop trust issues about a lot of people. But for the most part, you know, my mom She taught me how to be a man. Well she did the best that she could like what she couldn't teach me. She let me figure it out on my own, and she gave me the free will to do so. My mom had complete faith and trust in me that I could have girls stay the night, when I was In middle school, in high school and all that stuff she trusted me because she put real values and respect in me on how to treat women. So therefore, I guess she felt like that wasn't ever going to be a problem.”

P9 stated that his mother “never had a solid relationship in front of us.” Her lack of successful relationships

“instilled in me that you know you can do bad by yourself, you don’t need a woman to validate your life, you don’t need a female for anything you can you can do it on your own, and if they're not going to help. They're not going to compliment you, they're going to complicate you, so you need to figure that out, and she helped me, you know understand that you know. Physical violence and abuse and things like that was not Okay, and that you know you gotta love and respect yourself before you can love and respect anybody else.”

This caused P9 to look at relationships differently.

P9 explained that not having father figures was hard for him and he “found myself collecting father’s everywhere, whether they were good or bad.” P9 recounted stories of his male role models and how they added different things to his life. He expressed that he was “bothered
about” not knowing who his dad was but he “developed thick skin pretty early.” He expressed that his mom instilled in him that “you don’t need a father” and she took care of him and “she was right in some sense and other senses she wasn’t.” His mom was correct in he “didn’t need a father” and

“Well, in regards to her being right. We made it work, we made it happen without my father, we didn't need it, we didn't need a male. I gotta say we didn't need one, but it wasn't. It didn't seem like we needed one because we had our aunts, my grandmother, and you know people that did take care of us in regards to that aspect, so it wasn't like a deconstructed thing to not have a father, you know and When I looked around and most of my friends that were my age, none of them had their fathers either, and the ones that did know their fathers, they weren't in their lives at all. It never really kind of made me feel bad that I didn't have my father in my life because I knew people, I did have their fathers and their fathers didn't care about them so. I always felt, always felt special in the sense like. That common anomaly I'm different from everybody else like I didn't know my father, my father could have been anybody, so I didn't have to. I didn't have a figurehead, on what a father was supposed to be. I didn't have a symbol, so it gave me room to wiggle and figure out, you know, What a man was in you know anybody can be a dad but it takes a certain type of person to be a father.”

P9 believes that growing up in poverty set him back because they had “financial problems” and he could not “focus on school.” P9 felt that he was not “upset with women that didn’t have father figures,” but he felt like “when I did have father figures my life was a lot less confusing.” Although he may have resented some parts of his development, he described his relationship with his mom as “extremely close” and included “unconditional love” and “tough love.” P9
recounted a story with his mother and him “kicking me out the house after high school.” He expressed that other parents would see this as “not the right thing to do,” but he believes “the toughness made me into a stronger man” and “self-sufficient.”

Growing up P9 “only seen one successful romantic relationship in my life” and it was an African American couple, who served as a positive model for him. P9 described the relationship as,

“They’ve been married 50-60 years and that was a pure way I saw a relationship because I saw my uncle just be completely numb to verbal abuse. He kind of taught me how to be a bigger man, how to be bigger, how to not put so much emotion into our relationship. For a negative sense like he, he taught me how to not put negative emotion to relationship and just kind of know be a when people go low he kind of went high, and even though you know when I see it, now I kind of I see the faults in it, because I see how my I treated him and how much he put up with that I kind of see it in myself a little bit.”

He expressed that his only experience was Black women emasculating men to the point that “they were almost stronger than the men.”

P9 recounted his experiences with Black women by saying,

“Well, in regard to the emasculation of a man, Black women, you don’t mean like me personally, like I’ve dated several Black women, and I find a lot of Black women not like not, I won’t say not liking me. But at first sight, I’m not what a Black woman wants. Because I think there’s an image in the mind of Black women of how Black men are supposed to be. And I never really fit that criteria. I was like, always, always felt like too smart and not enough hood, but I was exactly that, like, I was exactly that. But my intelligence made women think that I don’t know maybe that I wasn’t what they wanted,
like in regards to the bad boy, or, you know, the urban person or the hood nigga, or however you want to put it, I wasn’t for most black women, that seems like that’s what they aim for. They wanted a certain type of individual that I wasn't like, it seemed like most of the Black women wanted men that we’re gonna have their way with it, you know in regards to cheating, a lying, abuse, all of those things that they were attracted to, I was not that.”

P9 expressed that from an early age he was rejected by Black women and it got to a stage in his life that he “didn’t care anymore about this stereotype anymore” meaning that he stopped trying to avoid being what he believes to be the stereotypical Black man and this gave him “more confidence” in himself and it “made Black women like me more.”

P9 talked about how he believed that Black women have this skewed view of Black men meaning that he believes that all Black men should be “thugs,” “disrespectful,” and “hood.” and Black women often rejected him because he was “educated,” “smart,” and had “good pronunciation.” This led P9 to “dating outside of my race a lot because none of those perceptions fell on me.” Women outside his race allowed him to be himself without being the stereotype of a Black man.

P9 was asked to describe the type of women that he looks for, he expressed he looks for “self-respect, ambition, drive. I need somebody that, how can I say it, that doesn’t need me. I like women that don’t need me. I like women that are self-sufficient. And I guess that’s from my mother.” P9 explained that when he was younger, he found it easier to date outside his race and thought he would not date intraracially. However, recently he has found struggles dating interracially, stating,
“When I was younger I thought that the older I get no, because when you think of a relationship, you think of all of the things that go within it, it can be your family meeting, you know, their loved ones and seeing their culture. And the cultural differences bother me a lot like when I did date, you know white women or Italian women. I get a lot of slack from their families, you know, because of my race. And that was demoralizing, and you know, irritating because, you know, once they meet me then all the notion is out the window, I feel like I always got to raise the bar. Like, it’s like you know, when you go to a restaurant, you know, someone doesn’t want to wait on you because you’re black. They think oh man they’re a bad tipper. So, I over tip to compensate from the stereotype, I overcompensate.”

P9 discussed how this was “taxing, but that’s just being a Black man period.” He expressed that it would be easier to date intraracially now because “I don’t have stipulations on discrimination” except “the discrimination within ourselves,” meaning the self-hate shared between Black men and women, the harsh treatment between Black men and women and the lack of support for Black women and men.

When describing dating, P9 looked for “color, caramel complected women,” “long hair,” “glasses,” “smart women, a sign of education, strong women,” if this person “can help me,” someone that “actually cared about my well-being,” “unconditional love” and “loyalty” because “loyalty is worth, it means more to me than love.” He felt that he has “abandonment issues” and his relationships start as a “friendship” because he “don’t like rejection.” P9 does not “like to chase women.” He believes that “all women pursue men.” When asked why he believes Black men prefer to date out of their race he states that he believes that it “is a regional thing” meaning that Black men and women treat each other differently in the “North” than they do in “Southern
states.” He believes that the lack of support is based on where the Black man or woman was raised.

The interview with participant 9 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 11 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 9.

### Table 11

**Participant 9 Phrases of Significance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Categories</th>
<th>Quotations of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>My mom was a single parent of seven. She was the main factor as women in my life. My grandmother was a big factor in my life, my aunts, My great aunt. Mostly females in my life I didn't have too many male figures. But for the most part, you know, my mom She taught me how to be a man. Well she did the best that she could like what she couldn't teach me. She let me figure it out on my own, and she gave me the free will to do so. my great uncle shall I say he instilled a work ethic in me I figured everything out by myself. You know, some things that she did made me a better man, even though it may be perceived as not the right thing to do now to most parents but the toughness made me into a stronger man. I’ve only seen one successful romantic relationship in my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>I love women but have trust issues. I don't have any real use to have sex with women like it's not just a physical thing with me, I develop good relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She would take care of anybody and that kind of reflects on me a lot, because I find myself taking care of a lot of people and helping broken wing people. It's a gift and a curse because you know it makes me feel good to help people, but then again. I’ve seen my mom used by a lot of people that took advantage of her kindness for weakness.

She had financial problems. She couldn't, you know, keep the lights on, sometimes you couldn’t keep the water on sometimes. You know I couldn't really focus on school because I was thinking, How am I take a shower tonight or On my lights going to be on you know I have, I have real life issues.

Black women were very strong, very strong almost to the point where they’re, you know almost. Yeah like i said, the masculine thing, like they were almost stronger than the men.

So, self-respect, ambition, drive. I need somebody that, how can I say it, that doesn’t need me. I like women that don’t need me. I like women that are self-sufficient. And I guess that’s from my mother.

3. Exosystem

I grew up without a father, so I didn't have any Father figures in my life, mainly women.

It was severely tough because I found myself collecting father's everywhere, whether they were good or bad.

I developed a thick skin pretty early so that didn't really matter because my mom kind of instilled in me that you don't need a father, I’m your father.

But at first sight, I’m not what a Black woman wants. Because I think there’s an image in the mind of Black women of how Black men are supposed to be. And I never really fit that criteria.
I always felt like too smart and not enough hood, but I was exactly that, like, I was exactly that. But my intelligence made women think that I don’t know maybe that I wasn’t what they wanted, like in regards to the bad boy, or, you know, the urban person or the hood nigga, or however you want to put it, I wasn’t for most black women, that seems like that’s what they aim for. They wanted a certain type of individual that I wasn't like, it seemed like most of the Black women wanted men that we’re gonna have their way with it, you know in regards to cheating, a lying

I just didn’t understand that notion just because I’m smart. And I’m educated. And I have good pronunciation and I have grammar and I am smart that it was a foul. It was like a knock.

4. Macrosystem

You know I got most of my game from women, you know that's how I can move and be around so many women so freely and not feel any type of way.

she never had a solid relationship in front of us. She kind of instilled in me that you know you can do bad by yourself, you don't need a woman to validate your life, you don't need you know you don't need a female for anything you can you can do it on your own, and if they're not going to help.

I found myself dating outside of my race a lot because none of those perceptions fell on me like I didn’t have to be that because they perceived as a stereotype was just that.

5. Chronosystem

I don't have a preference on what type of woman I have a race or creed or religion.

For a long time I didn't put too much blame on her for being a single parent. I didn't spite her, my brothers spitted her, for you know, not knowing our fathers.
When I looked around and most of my friends that were my age, none of them had their fathers either.

African American and they've been married 50-60 years and that was a pure way I saw a relationship because I saw my uncle just be completely numb to verbal abuse. He kind of taught me how to be a bigger man, how to be bigger, how to not put so much emotion into our relationship.

The last years? Yeah definitely. I see that it is, in regards to that, it would be easier to date a Black woman because I don’t have stipulations on discrimination. I don’t have discrimination. But it’s still hard because, you know, the discrimination within ourselves, like you know, you know like I said. [What does that mean?]
The stereotype of what a Black man is supposed to be, with Black women. So, it’s kind of a double-edged sword. It’s like damned if I do damned if I don’t.

6. Subsystem

[Women are] very much important to his life.

I have a better time being around women than men.

I grew up a little bit you know things I started to realize things like you know If I would have had support From a father figure in when I did have support, when I did have Father figures my life was a lot less confusing.

Note. Interview 9 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Analysis of Interview Ten

Interview 10 (P10) was conducted virtually in the evening during a weekday. The interview was sixty-one minutes long. P10 began the interview be hesitantly discussing his
relationships with women as “like everyone else’s, jacked up.” P10 expressed that “these females be messed up in the head.” When asked to elaborate, he stated that “I can’t like, elaborate too, too deep.” He expressed that throughout several relationships he found that “they’re just, you know, all stuck in a way, it’s all about them.” P10 recounted that “back in the day” women could not make decisions and he is “at least 50/50 like, I’m gonna give you a chance” but ultimately “it’s my decision” meaning that he believes in listening to what a woman wants but he makes the decision on what happens in the relationship. He expressed that it is his “role to hold this together” in relationships and he does not agree that he should have to “do all the work.”

When describing relationships P10 believes that “females give up and that’s why to me it don’t really work.” He believes that relationships are easier when they are “not romantic.” He believes that in romantic relationships it is “a lot more crying, fussing and bitching.” When asking P10 to distinguish between African American women and non-African American women, P10 expressed,

“I feel like African American, African American women, I feel like are too judgmental. I feel like they expect too much out of a man. And I feel like they don't put no one there. Let's say in every one of them is, of course, I haven't talked to everyone. But you know, for the most part, they want too much out of them, man. They want more than a man's gonna give them at that short of a time, in a sense, if that makes sense. Like, you know, they expect us to give them the world in a sense, as in a white girl would you know, and it says they want to give us the world, you know what I'm saying?"

When discussing his clarifying thoughts, he said,

“Like as in like, you know, I'm not gonna say the White woman rely on us less. But you know, the man last but it's like, you know, Black women, first of all, they have an
attitude, a terrible attitude. Like, it's not going away. It's like, it's like, you just, you know, kill someone in a family almost, you know, a white woman, they don't get over it if it don't go their way. You know what I'm saying? Black women want to fight you white women, in a sense, don't as much, you know, they want to argue. I mean, it's not you that you're different, you know, Black women will cook for you more than white women. You know, but I feel like the average white woman clean more than a black woman. You know, the average black woman wants to go out there and get a secure bag more than a black woman. You know, the average black woman wants to collect and I'm just I'm This is me speaking from my point of view. Your average Black woman, wants to collect from the government, you fill me in and I'm just, you know, I'm just I'm just over like, you know, now I must say not all of them know this. There's a lot of them that you know, do work a lot of them that do secure that bag, you know a lot of them that're doing better than me. I'm not saying you know, anything like that. But what I'm saying is you have the white woman that was raised better and let's say from both of your parents that know how to respect a man I guess I could say more.”

P10 began to discuss how he defined respect. He said that respect included not “cheating,” “what we do is 50/50”, and is different than at a “friendship respect level.”

The conversation progressed to discuss P10’s early statements regarding being his upbringing. P10 expressed that “most Blacks only grow up with one parent” and most “Whites grows up with both, and they get taught the aspects, you know, the respect of male, female, both.” He explained that people in White homes “get taught better all-around about everything, you know about way more things.” Also, P10 believes that if you are raised by a “single-parent you get less attention” and that impacts a person’s development and how a person views the
world. P10 expressed that he grew up different than the typical Black people that he described; he grew up in a “two parent household” until his teenage years. While he grew up in poverty the “White people down the street” were not in poverty and had more material things than he did. He expressed that White families were “raised better” and their parents “cared more” than Black parents because the White families offered their children more.

When asked if P10 thought if White people were better than Black people, he said that he “used to” but “it sounds a little bad.” He says he sees it as Black people “don’t really care if they have something or not.” He believes that Black people from Black culture lack “motivation” and they want to “go out and, and party all the time” whereas in White culture they have higher expectations for themselves than Black culture. He expressed that he believes that Black people “have bends and turns and bumps” but it is Black people’s responsibility to rise above it because other Black people have. P10 stated that as Black people “we don’t care, we don’t see the big picture” meaning that due to living in poverty Black people lack the ability to look towards long-term goals and focus on their immediate survival needs.

P10 believes that parenting failed early in the Black community meaning that he believes that Black parents failed to prepare Black children to succeed in society. He stated, “it’s not just on parent’s because as you get older, you can realize things yourself, you can do things yourself you're grown, and we choose not to.” He expressed frustration and contention for his parents because “they didn’t care if we had something or not,” “they didn’t actually go out there and, and get it.” He stated that his parents “never cared to get better jobs, better life.” P10 believes that his relationship “wasn’t the best” because he believes he “could have a better life right now if ya’ll would have tried harder” and he would not “be struggling as hard as we are now in sense. He does not regret the hard work because “you still need to do your part” to succeed but there is
animosity for his parents providing him with anything or preparing him for “the life of being
grown.” He recounted different styles of Black culture and White culture and expressed that at a
young age he was forced to be independent and figure it out by himself.

As the conversation progressed P10 was asked to describe his relationship with his
parents and his responses were short. He expressed that their relationship ended and “a lot of
Black relationships fail” and he was not sure why, but it contributed to him not wanting to be in
an intraracial relationship anymore. He explained that “Black culture don't know how to respect
one another, or even have an argument without or even be able to talk without arguing over
something that we dislike. If we dislike it, it automatically usually is the argument.” His concerns
for the Black community are, “there is a lot, there's a lot judgmental lack of communication, lack
of care. I mean, lack of love, you know, we don't get love, like, our kids, maybe that's the start of
it.”

He expressed that White culture provided “more time and love” and members are more “helpful”
to one another. P10 described how he felt that Black people depended on the government more
than White people, but he also believed that it was not all Black people’s fault. P10 believes that
Black people have had struggles, but he believes that it is Black peoples’ responsibility to “want
to work for what I get.” P10 believes that he received more support from White people than
Black people, he stated,

“Yeah, you know, that they, you know, they're there. They're willing to go all the way
and help you, you know, then they'll go out of their way to help you. Especially if it's for
something good. Okay. As we don't want to move away. We don't want to help the next
person to get up. We want to bring them down. Why? No, we should all want to be
successful. Success would help one another get up and climb that wall. It's not pulling each other down trying to climb the wall first, you know, or not climbing the wall at all.”

The conversation progressed and he began to discuss the rules that he was taught regarding dating from his parents. He was taught “not to cheat,” “you should respect women,” but he does not believe that it is practiced in the Black community. P10 believes that romantic relationships usually start as “a friendship because you have to be friends in order to know if it’s even gonna work.” Although he believes the man is the pursuer and “the average woman is scared to reach out to the man first,” “it’s more like the females come at me” but it depends on the situation and it can be “50/50” because he too fears rejection and he “don’t want to get hurt” meaning that men and women can pursue a romantic relationship.

He stated that he prefers White women because they are “more loving and caring,” helpful, nurturing, “babies,” “they care about yourself” and they take the time to be presentable. P10 expressed that in relationships he needs,

“Females look at me like that, you know, yes, we're stronger. We're stronger than females, but they look at us as if, you know, we don't need someone also to, you know, talk to and be there for and all the other things, you know, they look at it as you know, we just have anything down and we're good. You know, at the same token, no, you know, we may need to cry once in a while, can we get a shoulder to cry on, you know, instead of being called, you know, a name, can we get, you know, someone to cut away instead of, you know, being maybe hit, you know, can we get you know, can we get a day off without being called, you know, lazy and, and this and that, you know, um, I mean, there's a lot, there's a lot, you know, there's a lot to it.”
In conclusion, P10 believes that he does not date intraracially because “relationships don’t, don’t last, they just fail, and no one wants to fail.”

The interview with participant 10 provided several quotes of significance that related directly to the research questions and AAMT’s analytical categories previously described in chapter 2. Table 12 provides examples of significant phrases from interview 10.

**Table 12**  
*Participant 10 Phrases of Significance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Categories</th>
<th>Quotations of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Microsystem – Inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>It means like this, you know, from New days to old days, these females be messed up in the head. Like, they don't know what they want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I grew up with, you know, mainly Blacks in the projects, you know, yeah, I have both my parents there. But we didn't have nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I try to go hard for my kids and a lot of other people because I know what I had and didn't have when I was a kid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah, they [his parents] didn't care if we had something or not, you know, they didn't try to get us out of projects, they didn't try to better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My parents didn't really prepare us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is a lot, there's a lot judgmental lack of communication, lack of care. I mean, lack of love, you know, we don't get love, like, our kids, maybe that's the start of it. You know, I'm, like I say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mesosystem – Interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem and outer microsystem</td>
<td>My relationship was like, you know, like everyone else's, jacked up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They're just, you know, all stuck in a way, you know, it's all about them. It's all about them what they want</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It's my role to hold this together. It's my role to keep it you know, the way it should be together

[He believes that relationships are] A lot more crying, fussing and bitching, yup.

They have to realize we only have one life, you know, they want to, you know, go out and, and party all the time. You know, they don't care about, we don't care about having jobs or the best jobs.

I feel like it starts a friendship because you have to be friends in order to know if it's even gonna work.

Oh, it's more of like. More like the females come at me.

I don't really want to say baby, because I don't need babied, she filled me I just said nurture and care for you.

3. Exosystem

I feel like African American, African American women, I feel like are too judgmental. I feel like they expect too much out of a man.

Most Blacks only grow up with one parent, they don't know the respect of both of both levels to male and female. Okay, as in, you know, the average White grows up with both that leads get taught the aspects, you know, the respect of, you know, male, female, both.

They [Caucasians] get taught better all-around about everything you know about way more things, you know, relationships, goals, you know, they get taught way more, if you're a single parent, you have less attention to your kid, I feel like, people feel like you have more attention to your kid.

A lot of Black relationships fail.
I mean you, you cool vibes me if you good people good vibes I mean you feel me you cute them as.

4. Macrosystem

Black women, first of all, they have an attitude, a terrible attitude.

Black women want to fight you white women, in a sense, don't as much, you know, they want to argue.

Black women will cook for you more than white women. You know, but I feel like the average white woman clean more than a black woman. You know, the average white woman wants to go out there and get a secure bag more than a black woman. You know, the average black woman wants to collect and I'm just I'm This is me speaking from my point of view.

They [Caucasian women] was raised with both of their parents, I feel like and, again, what I say throughout this video might not be with everyone, like I don't hold it against everyone, just for the majority, okay, of what I see or whatever, or what I think, okay.

You know, they [Caucasians] get cars handed to him at 16 in school. You know, they get you know, they're the first ones in with college degrees because I mean, they want they want to have you know, they're the first ones Have you know, nicest cars, nice jobs and nicest careers the nicest, you know, houses, families

5. Chronosystem

I'm saying we can agree on it. Or it's my decision. You know, I'm saying, back in the day, y'all have a decision, we're gonna bring up that, you know, I'm at least 50/50 like, I'm gonna give you a chance, you know, but at the end of the day, know what I'm saying. I mean, it's my decision.
Like, you know, they expect us to give them the world in a sense, as in a white girl would you know, and it says they want to give us the world.

There's a lot of them that you know, do work a lot of them that do secure that bag, you know a lot of them that're doing better than me. I'm not saying you know, anything like that. But what I'm saying is you have the white woman that was raised better and let's say from both of your parents that know how to respect a man I guess I could say more.

6. Subsystem

It's more or less like, I’m cool, we cool.

Why didn’t my parents go out and make something happen [to get out of poverty].

Note. Interview 10 Data Analysis Chart using AAMT Theory

Summary

This chapter is a summary of the ten data analyses from the lived experiences of African American males. The purposive sampling elicited ten interviews that were analyzed separately. Each interview was summarized in narrative format. The similarities and differences that emerged from all ten interviews are presented and help capture the diversity and complexity of the African American male. There were five emergent themes, Self-regard, Family matters, Proximity, the new Jim Crow and Views of relationships. The emergent themes are presented and will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5

Introduction

Marriage, couple, and family counseling is a specialty in the field of counseling. As clinicians that aim to better understand various types of romantic relationships, it is imperative to better understand the views and ideas of Black men regarding romantic relationship development. There is a lack of research the relationship development of African-American males (Bae et al., 2020). This research on Black males’ views on their disengagement in romantic relationships with Black women help to provide insight into why some Black men are not marrying African American women (Bae et al., 2020; Passel et al., 2010; Pew Research, 2017). In the field of mental health counseling, the research on romantic relationship development has also provided insight on the extent to which family ideals influence the development of strong romantic relationships (Simons et al., 2021; Towner et al., 2015). In addition to the family, romantic relationships for African Americans influences their view of self, as well as their view of other African Americans and African American culture (Bethea et al., 1995; Bae et al., 2020; Ross, 1996; Towner et al., 2015). Cross genre research on African Americans shows that there has been a growing divide within the African American community in regards to intraracial romantic relationships (Bae et al., 2020; Ross, 1996; Steward, 2020; Yang et al., 2021), with African American males being much more likely than African American females to engage in interracial dating and marriages (Passel et al., 2010; Pew Research, 2017), growing sense of hostility and anger towards one another (Steward, 2020), and income disparities (Manduca, 2018). Although previously there had been a lack of research on this topic, there has been a recent surge of empiricism focused on African Americans, including their views of self, views of interracial marriage and relationship development (Brooks et al., 2021; Maimon,
2020; Malone, 2020; Miller et al., 2020). Although there is growing literature, there is still a lack of understanding and research focused specifically on intraracial dynamics between Black men and women.

My examination of African American males’ experiences provides insight regarding the contrasting rates of interracial dating and marriage between African American men and women. The research findings revealed that the participants view of self impacted their willingness to engage in intraracial relationships. The participants expressed that their personality – i.e. introvert versus extrovert – and the ways that the world perceived them as Black men, impacted the way that they saw themselves, the way that they saw other Black people and the way that they wanted to be perceived by the world. The participants expressed the impact that their upbringing and child-rearing procedures had upon their development of romantic relationships, indicating that family impacts romantic relationship development. The themes extracted from the data provide context into what may be happening within Black men and their development of romantic relationships with Black women.

This chapter will discuss the primary themes revealed in participants’ responses. The information is organized around the research questions. There will all be an exploration of the implications on the mental health field. The chapter will conclude by reviewing the limitations of the study, implications for future research, and questions generated from the research.

**Discussion of the Findings**

This research was grounded using Bush V and Bush African American Male Theory (AAMT) (Bush et al., 2009) and van Manen’s phenomenological approach (Manen, 2017a; Manen, 2017b) previously described in chapters 2 and 3.

**Research Question #1**
These theoretical foundations informed the primary research question, “How do African American males who have disengaged from romantic relationships with African American women make sense of their dating experiences, and what reasons do they provide for their decision not to date African American women?”

Theme #1. Proximity

This theme focused on the proximity of location, time and access to date intraracially. There were clear barriers that emerged for the participants regarding having access to date and marry Black women. Participants spoke candidly about not being around a diverse group of Black women growing up. Phrases such as “I feel like part of it would be the fact that I've always gone to some sort of private school and the majority of the population in private schools is Caucasian or some type of Hispanic woman”, and “it's a smaller town and, you know, there's a handful of Black families that are somehow related to each other” speak to the opportunities and abilities to date intraracially. For some participants, there were not many opportunities to interact with or date romantically African American women because they were not represented in these predominantly White environments. Some participants believed that having more access to Black women would have potentially increased their likelihood to date intraracially. Participants stated things such as, “there's [only] a handful of good Black women [in my community].” This adds to the lack of opportunity to seek or pursue romantic relationships with Black women if they are deemed as unavailable. With regards to developing a romantic relationship, the “type” of woman that the participants had access to were not the type of Black women that they wanted to seek. Participants expressed that their lack of exposure to supportive Black women contributed to their decision to not date intraracially.

Theme #2. Family Matters
When working with minorities and women, the role of the family in selecting a romantic partner is integral (Acevado, 2003; Simons et al., 2021; Towner et al., 2015). The family can influence and impact the success of a romantic relationship (Hall et al., 2014; Ross, 1997; Kogen et al., 2014; Towner et al., 2015). The participants were asked to describe the roles that the primary caregivers played regarding their beliefs in developing romantic relationships. It was immediately apparent that the participants family played a major role in the participants dating behaviors. Each participant viewed their family as significantly contributing to patterns in their romantic relationships.

Family was integral for all of the participants and for many of the participants, the most uncomfortable part about this interview was describing their families and upbringing. For many of the participants, their body language and tone changed significantly when describing their family. These notes can be found in the appendix in the data analysis. Although the participants’ experiences were unique, all of the participants detailed their relationships – or lack of relationships – with their fathers and their mothers. For some of the participants, their primary caregivers were not their mother or their father but other family members. The role of the primary caregivers seemed to directly correlate with how the participants saw themselves, Black love, love, society and other Black people. This is congruent with the research and literature that was conducted by Bae et al., (2020), Bush (1999a) and Kogen et al. (2014) that described the implications with Black men and their relationships with their mothers or other primary caregivers’ caregiving style may cause a negative view on how Black men perceive other Black people, especially regarding romantic relationship development.
All of the participants had witnessed Black love in a negative way while the participant was a child or adolescent. These negative relationships ranged from domestic violence, emasculation, abuse and even divorce. One participant stated,

“Because I think I'd look to people's more accurate American characteristics. But I don't necessarily translate that part of that is like street characteristics. Part of it is like, yeah, I'm cool being friends and so like that, but I don't want… I don't want it to be considered normal to fight your spouse. You know what I mean. And I know people who consider that normal.”

and “And I don’t want no debbie downers and I don’t want to feel like it’s always a fight. Always a constant battle.” Another example of what the participants experienced during their development is,

“My dad put hands on my mother. My mom, luckily, was strong enough to remove herself from the situation altogether. And that was just a chaotic situation just due to those two splitting, her losing her job, us losing our house all in the same calendar year, which is a chaotic time so we up and moved to [location removed] and I stayed with her. And then whenever things just weren't working for me down there, I had to make the choice of either staying with my mom or moving back with my dad and it was just a tough choice but I ended up living with my dad after that.”

These early experiences of poor outcomes for Black love played a role in how the participants viewed intraracial couples. For some participants, there were not many positive representations of Black love growing up. These early messages of Black love being hard to find, tough, laden in violence or disrespect or poverty influenced the participants views on Black romantic relationships. This finding is consistent with Towner et al. (2015) which revealed that there is a
sense of animosity, lack of trust, communication and understanding within the African American community.

Another common thread that emerged from this theme is the role of the female primary caregiver on the Black male’s development. All of the participants described and discussed having a strong Black female primary caregiver at some point. This relationship was one of the most influential relationships for the participants. The participants often discussed having admiration for these women but feeling emasculated by these women as well. A participant stated,

“Yes. She [mom] still calls me her baby and I still tell her that I am the youngest but I am not a baby. Um, I think there's always been between me and my mom of accepting the fact that I'm my mom’s child, but also not wanting to necessarily be babied and have my manhood coddled.”

Another participant recalled,

“I know if I asked her for something right now, she would do it for me, or she would hand me the money for it or whatever it is. But I don't want to do that. So I'm just trying to, you know, not just be that spoiled brat baby of the family, I’m trying to be my own man, but I know like if I needed something she would do it in a heartbeat, just because that's who she is… and I’m still her baby.”

Another participant also felt similar, stating,

“Oh, okay. More so, the reason why I don't go for African American or I have been like I said don't, but I have because my experience with Black women is made me feel emasculated and I do not like it. So that's not what I tend to deal with or tend to engage myself with. No hard feelings. It’s all love.”
This was a common thread and theme that emerged throughout each of the interviews. Although each of the participants revered Black women, they all shared stories of feeling coddled or emasculated by their Black female caregivers. These relationships with their mothers played a large role on their views of Black women and their pursuit of Black women. Black men’s view of Black women has been impacted by seeing their mothers being unwed, a lack of positive modeling of romantic relationship development between Black men and women, and by observing a disrespectful form of communication between Black men and women. These relationships with their mothers have had long-term effects in multiple aspects of their lives (Bae et al., 2020; Bush, 2000a; Bush, 2000b; Koge, 2014). These parental practices and rearing styles have added an additional factor for Black men to consider when participating in intraracial versus interracial dating (Koge et al, 2014). These harsh environments and lack of representation of positive Black culture and parenting has contributed to African American men having e negative schemas and views on romantic relationships with Black women (Bae et al., 2020; Bush, 2000b).

The participants discussed several experiences that impacted their disengagement with African American women. It was common for the participants to discuss their relationships with their mothers or primary caregivers as adding to their views of intraracial dating. One participant noted that their disengagement stemmed from not wanting to date a woman like his mother, and another discussed not wanting to date Black women because of their emasculation of Black men. These negative experiences and perceptions of African American women are perpetuated in the participants daily lives and within society and mainstream media.

**Implications of Research Question #1.** The participants in this research were influenced by their culture and the environment that they lived in. As people seek to make sense of their
lives and identities it is important to understand how a person’s environment, including family, impact their life’s decisions. These early messages and images have long-term effects on the person’s view of self, view of others within their racial group, and their view of success for their life. The goal of each participant was to be happy and successful, but each felt as if they lacked the blueprint or the hopes of success in being in a romantic relationship with an African-American woman due to their early childhood experiences and rearing, which is congruent with Kogen et al. (2014) research on the implications of environment and rearing on a Black man’s romantic relationship development throughout life. Kogen et al. (2014) found that community related stressors, negative relational schemas and low competence parenting can lead to poor romantic relationship development for African Americans in adulthood.

The participants in this study believed that the lack of representation of diverse African Americans contributed to their lack of opportunities to pursue Black women. The participants expressed having a monolithic view of Black women because of Black women being portrayed as “ghetto,” “lazy,” and “disrespectful” Although there exists diversity within the Black community given the negative representation of Black women, it is hard for Black men to discern the difference from the monolithic representation of Black women from the reality of Black women being a group with a wide range of diverse characteristics and beliefs. These narrow beliefs of other African Americans add to the poor views of self, anxiety, and even self-hate that is experienced within the African American community. Counselors and educators should be informed of these concerns and beliefs in the African American community in order to better understand and serve the community. The study further suggests that counselors can help African American men develop a broader perspective of African American women. The broader perspective of African American women may help to decrease the current monolithic view of
Black women and increase collaboration between Black men and women. In addition, this research supports the need for diverse rearing styles within the African American families. There is a need to learn different ways of developing positive relationships between Black men and their parents. In order to help develop positive relationships, there is a need to better represent Black families in a positive light, increase intraracial love depictions and increase economic access to Black families. Crooks et al. (2009) research posits that poverty and economic hardships increase in-group prejudice and hatred between African Americans and addressing the financial hardships may help to reduce the in-group hatred and animosity.

**Research Question #2**

The question chosen to depict this is, “How does the race or ethnicity of a romantic partner influence your decision to date them?” The participants in this study endorsed having limited or no experience dating intraracially. The participants addressed the role that stereotypes about race has impacted their views of dating. Participants discussed the implications from society on dating to address their concerns. The theme and implications are addressed below.

**Theme #3. The New Jim Crow**

The participants in the research affirmed that there is a system in place that impacts Black men’s views of themselves and others. The participants expressed that these external stressors, or systemic racism, have impacted their views of self. Although the participants were aware of racism, some of the participants lacked insight to discuss the lingering effects of systemic racism on their current views of self and others.

A common thread that emerged in the research is the idea that Black people are monolithic, however, the interviewees did not believe that society’s negative stereotypes fit how
the participants viewed themselves. Common phrases and conceptions that were used to describe Black people by the participants include, “lazy,” “thugs,” “don’t want to work,” “can’t keep a job,” “poor,” “ghetto,” “loud,” “violent,” “strong,” “lacks empathy,” “unambitious” and “angry” to name a few. These are terms that historically have been used to describe African Americans since slavery in the U.S. These are also terms that continue to be garnered as stereotypes about Black people. The constant exposure to these terms and portrayal in society and within the community continues to spread this false narrative of a group. The negative portrayal and feelings regarding the African American community continues to be a barrier to engagement. As previously discussed, it adds to mistrust and poor communication between Black men and women.

When participants were asked to describe non-Black women, the tones and words used were very different than the ones used from the African American community. Phrases such as,

“I think I tend to attract people that are more free spirited, um. People, it's really where people that have more career choices that are required them to be like more unattached, I guess to rules and things like that you have to be.”

Another participant described non-Black women as,

“Like as in like, you know, I'm not gonna say the White woman rely on us less. But you know, the man last but it's like, you know, Black women, first of all, they have an attitude, a terrible attitude. Like, it's not going away. It's like, it's like, you just, you know, kill someone in a family almost, you know, a white woman, they don't get over it if it don't go their way. You know what I'm saying? Black women want to fight you white women, in a sense, don't as much, you know, they want to argue.”
Several participants discussed that Caucasian women in particular were “better” than Black women because they offered more. Some of the participants suggested that Caucasian women offered more access to other Caucasians, “higher socioeconomic status”, better paying jobs, “hard-working”, “supportive,” “cuter kids,” “better hair,” “sneaky”, “less honest,” “giving,” and “empathetic.” The participants failed to acknowledge the impact that systemic racism and American history has had on the stereotypical representation of Caucasians more positively comparatively to the harsher representation of African Americans, despite all of the participants acknowledging these stereotypes to not be fact. All participants expressed frustrations with the ways that Black people were treated by society, however, the participants continued to hold negative stereotypes of other African Americans. Some of the participants were unable to make the connection between racism and negative characteristics of African American women.

**Theme #4. Views of Relationships**

Each interview contained at least one expression of trust issues when discussing romantic relationships. The participants also discussed how trust was the most important characteristic that they needed to sustain a romantic relationship, yet it was something that the participants struggled with. The problem with the participants having trust issues is that it was an on-going concern when developing romantic relationships as trust is essential (Buss et al., 1986; Hall, 2014; Simons et al., 2012; Stackman et al., 2016). Trust is essential for all races regarding romantic relationships development. This signifies a barrier to developing a romantic relationship intraracially and interracially.

Another theme revealed in participants’ responses is the importance of feeling valued and seen. The participants were seeking a partner that listens, is supportive, kind, and that shares responsibilities or a partner that is submissive. Participants talked about having partners that
were “loyal” to them for who they are. They expressed wanting to be “enough” for their partner and not needed to be a “stereotype [ical]” Black man. This attitude pointed towards a major need for the participants was to feel adequate and valued in their romantic relationship.

The participants also described a number of other characteristics that they desired in romantic partners. No common themes emerged in terms of the physical characteristic’s participants were attracted to. However, each of the participants expressed physical attraction to African American women despite their avoidance of romantic relationships with them.

**Implications of Research Question #2.** The findings of this study demonstrate a serious concern regarding the impacts of race on a person’s perception of reality. The participants discussed the ways that African Americans are portrayed and viewed in society, their environments and in the media. The participants discussed in great detail these negative stereotypes and views of African Americans and each of the participants expressed not fitting this monolithic view of African Americans. However, these participants felt that all or the majority of other African American fit these views. The participants may be experiencing cognitive dissonance – differing views – about Black people due to the societal portrayal of African Americans. Clinicians should be aware of this cognitive dissonance and should work on developing strategies to address the dissonance and the harm that is associated with their experiences. Clinicians and educators should work to create programming to change the monolithic representation of African Americans to better help support the individual development of African Americans.

The findings are also congruent with the literature that focuses on in-group prejudice. This is a growing concern within the African American community as this is contributing to a decrease in intraracial dating. This in-group prejudice can be seen as learned self-hate (Kleissner
& Jahn, 2020; Leary, 2005) for African Americans. Learned self-hate can lead to harsher views on other African Americans, increased probability of having less trust, empathy and understanding with other African Americans and less successful development of romantic and non-romantic relationships with other African Americans.

The findings of the study also demonstrate the implications that poverty has on the views of African Americans. The participants equated wealth and race. Participants equated that success is associated with being White and poverty and struggle are linked to the African American community. The participants’ views and schemas regarding wealth and poverty being associated within a racial group can be detrimental to their views of self and views of other racial groups. Much of the research regarding self-hate correlates with the responses regarding the participants (Johnson, 2018; Leary 2005). As clinicians, this can be detrimental to a person’s long-term mental health and physical health. These outcomes may lead to poor life expectancy and negative relations with other minority group members. Clinicians should be mindful of the role that an individual’s correlation between poverty and success plays in a Black man’s development and should work on addressing this concern early on. Addressing these concerns and changing the narratives regarding the perceptions of African Americans and advocating for social change is imperative. Addressing these concerns that are linked to poverty and developing social justice competencies and policies to better support and help these families move from poverty.

Finally, this research has significant implications regarding systemic racism. The themes that have emerged from this literature address the negative and positive views that are associated with the African American community that has been passed down for over 400 years. The linkage to poverty within the African American community has led to generation of unaddressed
trauma and posttraumatic slave syndrome (Leary, 2005). As clinicians there is a need to address this concern as it has had long-term psychological distress amongst an entire racial group. These themes address a need for further education of the on-going concerns for all communities and racial groups.

**Research Question #3**

The primary focus of the study was to address, “What do African-American males perceive as barriers or issues that prevent healthy relationships with African American females?” This question directly and indirectly addresses the concerns or barriers that may be impacting Black men from seeking romantic relationships with Black women. There is a decline in marriage rates between Black men and Black women (Passel et al., 2010; Pew Research, 2017). Understanding what is contributing to this decline in romantic relationships development, it is essential to provide an outlet for Black men to express their concerns.

**Theme #5. Self – regard**

As mentioned previously, Black people are complex. There are multiple layers and aspects that make each individual their own. Understanding this notion of being different within the Black community helps to provide a parallel between the traditional collectivistic African American culture – group cohesion and shared values – and the individualistic American culture. How the participants identify themselves helps to provide insight into how they also view other African Americans.

All of the participants expressed having some form of insecurity. The participants expressed concerns about their “looks,” body image, complexion and even personality. One participant expressed,
“I just learned how you gotta, you gotta like yourself, more than anything, because ain't nobody gonna like you more than you like yourself. Got to be comfortable in your own skin. And if you're not, guess what, it's, it's bad. …Because you had like the mixed boys or the high yellow boys who the girls like they didn’t like the dark chocolate morsels like me, you know.”

Another participant expressed,

“Well, in regard to the emasculation of a man, Black women, you don’t mean like me personally, like I’ve dated several Black women, and I find a lot of Black women not like not, I won’t say not liking me. But at first sight, I’m not what a Black woman wants. Because I think there’s an image in the mind of Black women of how Black men are supposed to be. And I never really fit that criteria. I was like, always, always felt like too smart and not enough hood, but I was exactly that, like, I was exactly that. But my intelligence made women think that I don’t know maybe that I wasn’t what they wanted, like in regards to the bad boy, or, you know, the urban person or the hood nigga, or however you want to put it, I wasn’t for most black women, that seems like that’s what they aim for. They wanted a certain type of individual that I wasn't like, it seemed like most of the Black women wanted men that we’re gonna have their way with it, you know in regards to cheating, a lying, abuse, all of those things that they were attracted to, I was not that.”

Another participant expressed,

“Historically, I mean, I would say It wasn't always easy. When I was younger, I was kind of chubby. So, I mean, I was never like the first guy that girls were looking at or anything like that.”
The participants experienced these early rejections or poor views of self at a young age. Research suggests that early views of self can have long-term implications on the view of self as you age (Stackman et al., 2016). To date there is a lack of research informing the implications of feeling rejected by your race does to your view of self and your views of your racial group. It may lead to an increase in in group prejudice or self – hate.

The participants also shared that they typically do not pursue women. Each of the participants spoke in depth about seeking relationships and having women attract them. The participants suggested that typically non-Black women are more likely to engage them first, whereas Black women tend to want to be pursued by men. For the participants that do not engage first, this could add to a barrier of developing a romantic relationship with Black women. Several participants described themselves as “an introvert.” Several participants discussed not wanting to experience rejection from women. This is a barrier to developing romantic relationships.

**Implications of Research Question #3.** The findings of this study demonstrate that participants are aware of barriers, such as, views of themselves that impact the development of a romantic relationship between a Black man and woman. The participants’ views are consistent with the current research regarding romantic relationship formation between Black men and women, reiterating that there is a lack of understanding between Black men and Black women regarding relationship development (Moore, 2012). Understanding the role that a man’s view of self plays in his views of others is integral to better support them especially regarding developing romantic relationships.

This information, as well as future research, can help aid in developing interventions and resources to help Black men develop confidence and support within their identity. The participants all experienced a sense of rejection regarding the African American community and
this rejection was because the participants felt that they did not fit the monolithic or stereotypical portrayal of what a Black man should be. This early rejection from the Black community may have led to self-doubt within the Black man and his exposure to Black women. This may have added to the in-group prejudice and may increase the likelihood that the participants would want to date or marry from within a group that has rejected a part of their identity.

As clinicians and educators, it may be essential to address the early rejection being experienced by Black men from the Black community. Providing education to the Black community that they do not have to be monolithic and in fact, African Americans are sundry. This diverse set of Black Americans are unique despite not being adequately represented in media, literature or pop culture. Understanding the complexity and diversity of African Americans is important because it may help to assist in minimizing these early rejections of other African Americans. Counselors should be aware of the rejection that African Americans may be experiencing intraracially within their community. Counselors should begin to focus on providing support to the external racial identities and how they impact poor psychological functioning.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study had 10 participants that provided in-depth analysis and information, however, there were not enough participants to from various backgrounds to help portray the experiences of all African American males. This sample size provides enough data to elicit future research but lacks the ability to adequately explore a wide range of Black men’s perspectives.

Another limitation to this study may be that during the time that this study was conducted there were a political and social justice “awakening” occurring. This awakening may have shifted the views and thoughts of the participants from their original views. The participants may
have been influenced negatively or positively by the saturation of conversations regarding African Americans and traumatic and recurrent viewing of the deaths of Blacks in political and social settings.

Additionally, I, too, may have been a limitation to the study based on my race and gender. Although I was mindful of my position as a Black woman interviewing Black men regarding their disengagement with Black women that I may have created a barrier for the Black men to talk authentically. The participant may have perceived an invisible power differential between themselves and me as the “lead researcher.” I assured participants about their voluntary participation, their control of the research that I was allowed to use and their confidentiality in order to help minimize these potential limitations.

**Implications for Future Research**

The research provided insight to many areas to focus on for future research. Black men’s views on the disengagement in romantic relationships with Black women lacks critical research (Bae et al., 2020; Bethea, 1995) and conducting a larger study to review these implications and results from this study would help to create substantially needed research on this phenomenon. We can ascertain that the more knowledge we have on this topic that better equipped we will be to best support the African American population and romantic relationship formation.

The participants discussed insecurities about themselves that increased their likelihood to not engage in conversations and dialogue with women regarding romantic relationship development. Future research that focuses on how dating norms and relationships are changing between men and women if men are no longer likely to seek romantic relationship formations with women. This research could help to explore if there is a shift in dating norms amongst men
and women. This allows for researchers that focus on marriage and family therapy to address or shift their therapeutic approaches to meet the changing needs for people.

Another crucial area for future research is the parent-child relationship within the African American family. Further research that explores ways to strengthen the relationship between the mother-son relationship is needed. It would be beneficial to closely monitor the relationship between Black men and their primary female caregivers’ role and the role it plays on their views of themselves and Black people.

Finally, further research on the impact of a Black male’s racial identity development has on their views of self and views of Black women. Exploring the impacts of the individual’s racial development can only help the mental health counseling field. If we explored the implications of race on romantic relationship development, would we find a correlation between racial development stages and views of other minorities? Would we see a correlation between views of race and other outcomes for Black people? Would we be better prepared to address the needs and concerns of Black people if we help them become more informed of their views of self? There are many questions that go unanswered.

**Questions Generated by the Research**

Qualitative studies warrant questions to be examined for future research. Upon completion of this study there were several questions and implications that emerged. Based on the research, the questions generated from this research are below:

1. How has the views of intraracial relationships changed for African Americans since the death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor?

2. Does a Black man’s views of self impact his willingness to date intraracially?
3. What role does socioeconomic status play in a Black male’s willingness to date intraracially?

4. How does the negative views of intraracial relationships impact the Black man’s view of Black women and Black families?

5. What parenting styles in the Black family increase the likelihood of a Black man not engaging in intraracial dating?

6. If Black men continue to date outside their race at the same rate, how will the Black family be impacted?

7. What role can family therapy play in strengthening Black mothers’ relationships with their sons?

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of heterosexual African American males related to their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females. These participants had all identified their lack of romantic engagement with African American females for a minimum of one previous year. The research provides insight to the decisions that have led Black men to disengage in romantic relationships with Black women.

Ten individuals participated in this study through semi-structured, individual interviews. Each participant provided their perspectives and insights from their daily lives that provided a thorough depiction of their experiences. There was one primary research question and three secondary research questions. From the interviews five themes emerged – self-regard, family matters, proximity, the new Jim Crow and views of relationships. The participants view of themselves played an important role in how they viewed developing romantic relationships. The
relationship and experiences an individual had with their family was a clear factor for all of the participants, noting that families are an integral role in the lives of Black men. The environment and location that a participant grew up in made a difference in the access and type of Black women that the Black man was exposed to. Finally, we review the impact that systemic racism and living in the USA has shaped the way that the Black man sees other people, particularly Black women. The participants were able to share their experiences and the impact that the media, pandemic and society plays on their views of romantic relationship development.

The research findings suggest that there is a need for further research to address the needs of African Americans at a younger age, especially when developing relationships with their Black female caregivers. If we can address and support these men during these critical years of their lives, we may be able to help support and develop stronger relationships between Black men and women. Addressing these concerns may also help to address the growing mental health concerns that are experiences within the Black community. They may increase African Americans participation in counseling, increased life expectancy and increased well-being within the African American community.

Additionally, the study reveals the need for broader education to the African American community regarding their history and the implications that systemic racism has had on their child-rearing and views of self. The collective social justice movement that we are currently in the midst of can serve as a starting place for having these tough conversations within the African American community. Providing this community with necessary support and education may help to change and shape the long-term choices that this community has made.

This research provides insight into the unexplored experiences of Black men unbinding in romantic relationships with Black women, which have endured some of the toughest experiences
of any racial group. This group is often negatively portrayed and stereotyped in all aspects of their identity. This group has often been unseen, unheard from and treated as less than compared to other racial groups. The Black community has endured trauma beyond imagine for more than 400 years and there is a need to address the concerns within the African American community, both intrinsically and extrinsically. It is hoped that this research is just the beginning of the much-needed work that has to come in order to better support Black men and Black women in developing positive, healthy and respectful relationships with one another.
References


Primary Investigator: Kenya Johns, LPC, NCC, CAADC, CCTP

1. **Statement of the research question:**

1) What themes emerge from individual interviews with African American males pertaining to their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females?
2) What role does the ethnicity of a mate play in selecting them as a romantic partner?
3) How do African American men perceive romantic relationships between interracial partners versus intraracial partners?
4) What experiences with African American women have been ineffective in creating an environment to participate in romantic relationships?

2. **Purpose and significance of the study:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of heterosexual African American males related to their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American females. The researcher aims to explore the dynamics that are leading to a decline in intraracial dating in the African American community at a rate of three times more than other cultures and ethnic groups (Bethea, 1995; Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). Interracial dating has grown amongst most cultures, however, the rate of African American men participating in interracial dating has grown past the standard norm of interracial dating amongst all other culture and ethnic groups, which leads this researcher to believe that there has been a shift or change within the African American community that is contributing to this unprecedented amount of variance.

This study serves as the foundational insight of African American male’s disengagement in heterosexual romantic relationships with African American women. Although this research is centered on current relationship implications, there is a historical component that impacts current relationship formation (Moore, 2012; Yancey, 2009). This research had to take into context the long history of oppression experienced by African Americans during slavery and even in our current societal systems (Leary, 2005). The rationale for this research is focused on the following conditions: (a) Historically, African Americans have been oppressed. (b) Research regarding intraracial dating norms within the African American community is significantly limited. (c) The impact this will have on African American woman and their development of romantic relationships.

References:


3. **Research design and procedures:**

The data will be collected via a qualitative research design. The research design will be conducted from an exploratory phenomenological approach. The data being collected will be new data regarding the dating phenomena between African American males and females. The research will be conducted during an in-person interview (once COVID restrictions are lifted) or HIPPA compliant video recording services that will take about 60-90 minutes to complete. All interviews will be conducted using the Zoom platform. The researcher has a business account associated that follows HIPPA compliance. The contract protects personal health information (PHI) in accordance with HIPAA guidelines. Communications are established using 256-bit TLS encryption and all shared content can be encrypted using AES-256 encryption. The rooms are password protected and the recordings are encrypted and only available to the researcher through a link to the cloud account. Although this research does not require HIPAA approval, this level of endpoint security offers the most confidential ways to conduct and record the research interviews.

For in-person interviews, the recordings will be recorded through the Zoom platform on a password protected cellphone that utilizes biometric scanning to access the device. The recording will be stored on the Zoom cloud. Cloud Recordings are processed and stored in Zoom’s cloud after the meeting has ended; these recordings can be password protected or available only to the researcher. Cloud recording and audio transcripts, both will be stored encrypted. The cellphone will be transported in a locked bag. The research interviews that will be conducted in person will be conducted in a mutually chosen location that best meets the needs of the participant. For remote interviews, the interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes by a laptop computer that will be password protected on the computer and will be transported in a locked briefcase.

The online interviews will follow the same procedures as the in-person interview; however, the participant will be contacted prior to the interview to verify they will have internet connection and be able to connect to the HIPPA compliant video streaming service.
4. **Instruments:**

The research instrument that will be used is an exploratory phenomenological interview. The individual interview questions will be derived from the research, a sample of the interview questions have been attached. The interviews should take about 60-90 minutes to complete with each participant. During the interview, the initial phase will be used to develop rapport with the participant, complete the demographic questionnaire (document can be found in the appendix), and discuss the informed consent and withdraw procedures. The next phase will consist of reviewing the interview questions – a sample of these questions have been attached. The final phase will consist of thanking the participant for participating, reminding them of their rights to participate and withdraw from the research, discussing the prospective timeline of completion, and informing the participant how to obtain a copy of the findings upon completion of the dissertation.

5. **Sample selection and size**

The participants will be African American males between the ages of 18 – 75 years old that refuse to date African American women. The aim is to interview enough participants to meet saturation of data. This is estimated at about 6 to 10 participants. The participants must be over the age of 18 in order to consent and participate in the research. The males can have previously dated African American women, but, currently and at least one year prior have decided to no longer date African American women. The researcher will screen for this criterion in the recruitment phase. All potential participants will be made aware of the participation requirements and will only be allowed to proceed to the next stage if they meet all criterion.

6. **Recruitment of subjects**

The participants will be recruited through snowball recruitment methods. Initial participants will be recruited through recruitment letters (available in the Appendix) that will be distributed through community listervs, email, social media platforms and word of mouth. The recruitment material will include a Google phone number (to protect my privacy) and an email address established specifically for this project in order to contact me if they have further questions about participation. After a participant reaches out, the researcher will address the nature of the research, what the research will be used for, contact information for the IRB, and discuss consent forms and inclusion criteria. The researcher will inform all participants that there will be about six to ten participants to be recruited for the interview based on the number of people that have agreed to volunteer and to participate. If the participants are not selected to participate in the interview due to saturation being met, the participant will be notified within 90 days of expressing initial interest. The participant will be contacted based on the contact information provided to the researcher.

7. **Informed consent procedures**

The participants will be notified regarding the informed consent in the initial contact with the researcher. The researcher will email a copy of the informed consent procedures to all online interviewee and provide a paper copy for all in-person interviewees. Also, the participants will
be reminded of informed consent immediately prior to the interview. In the beginning of the interview the researcher will review the informed consent procedures, directly asking the participant if they have any questions or concerns regarding informed consent, and then have the participant sign the consent form either electronically or in-person on paper. The participants will be informed how to withdraw both from the researcher and on the consent form that they will sign before they participate in the study.

8. **Collection of data and method of data analysis**

The purpose of this research is to conduct interviews through exploratory research from a phenomenological qualitative perspective. The data that will be collected will be the African American males’ lived experiences, perceptions, opinions, and beliefs that have shaped the way that they view dating African American women. The data will be collected to review via an in-person interview (if COVID restrictions are lifted) or via Zoom – a HIPPA compliant video streaming platform. The data will be recorded on a password protected cellphone for in-person interviews. The interviews that will be conducted via an online video platform will be recorded via video recording to help minimize the risk of false recording over the internet. Due to potential low-quality of the recordings that may be experienced over the computer, the researcher, will also use the video recording to help transcribe the interviews. The data will be collected via self-reflections and answers to interview questions. The researcher will take detailed observation notes regarding the participants during the interview.

After the data has been collected and stored in a safe secure location on a password protected computer in a locked briefcase, the researcher will transcribe the interview. After transcribing the interview, the researcher will contact the participant to review the transcription for accuracy and privacy. The data will be analyzed via the transcribed document. The transcription of the audio from the interviews will then be categorized into themes that emerge from the interviews. As the themes emerge the researcher will conduct emergent theme analysis using the following steps:

1. Allow the interviewee to review the initial transcription for verification.
2. Begin the interpretative process and view emergent themes
3. Discuss the data with a third party (Dissertation Committee) to view for commonalities
4. Review the data again
5. Begin the process of coding, including the new data that emerged from the clarifying interviews, notes and transcriptions.
6. Review the new data and discuss with third party
7. View themes that emerge from the multiple interviews – such as, the language, choice of words and responses from the research questions.
8. Review the data from all of the individual interviews looking for similarities
9. Review the themes that emerge
10. Deduce meaning from the themes
11. Transcribe the results in a written document and discuss the findings.

9. **Emphasize issues relating to interactions with subjects and subjects' rights**
It is the goal of this research to provide a safe environment for African American males to discuss the phenomena of dating practices that the African American males’ experience regarding their disengagement in romantic relationships with African American woman. The rights and the safety of the participants emotional and physical well-being is the primary concern of the researcher. The participants will be made aware of their right to participate and their right to withdraw from participating in the research. Before participating in research, the participants will be made aware that the primary investigator is an African American woman and that the primary goal is to provide a safe space for the interviewees. The rights of the participants will be held through the use of privacy concerns and discussing the risk and potential concerns of their anonymity. The researcher will respect the participant’s rights to privacy and will change the names, and location of the participants. The researcher will not use identifying information to reveal the specific identity of the participant to the best of the researcher’s ability. The researcher understands that the population comes from a small environment within Western Pennsylvania and that it may be harder to control for anonymity and the research participant will be made aware of the concerns and their rights to withdraw at any time if they believe the information that they are sharing will be too easy to be identified. After the interview is initially transcribed, the interviewee will be offered the opportunity to review the transcription and correct any misinterpretations. The transcription will be conducted with removing ALL identifiers in mind, not simply overt information such as names. Once the recordings are transcribed and reviewed, they will be destroyed. Any other identifiable information will be kept for a period of six years and will be kept on a password protected computer. The participants will be provided with contact information at the conclusion of the research and the dissertation defense. The research participants will be provided the opportunity to read the dissertation once it has been completed.
Recruitment Letter

Hi everyone,
My name is Kenya Johns. I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Duquesne University under the supervision of Dr. David Delmonico.

I am inviting you to participate in my dissertation research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of African American males’ disengagement in romantic relationships with African American woman.

You are eligible to participate in this study if:
- You are 18 years of age
- Identify as a heterosexual male
- Identify as African American/Black
- Have not dated an African American woman in the past year
- Willing to talk about the topic with an African American woman

Participants will be asked to complete a 60 to 90-minute interview (virtually or in-person).

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please contact the researcher:

Kenya Johns kenyas2014@gmail.com <724-506-8171>.
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Sample Interview Questions:
1) Please describe your childhood upbringing. Be as detailed as possible, including some of the roles that the African American woman in your life played.
2) What qualities do you look for in a romantic relationship? Describe the characteristics of your partner, the traits that attract you and traits that you avoid. Please be as detailed as possible.
3) Describe positive and negative experiences that you have had with African American women. Please be as detailed as possible.

Demographics Form

Age: _______
What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
   o A. Some High School
   o B. High School
   o C. Bachelor's Degree
   o D. Master's Degree
   o E. Ph.D. or higher
   o F. Trade School
   o G. Prefer not to say

What is your annual household income?
   o A. Less than $25,000
   o B. $25,000 - $50,000
   o C. $50,000 - $100,000
   o D. $100,000 - $200,000
   o E. More than $200,000
What is your current employment status?

- A. Employed Full-Time
- B. Employed Part-Time
- C. Seeking opportunities
- D. Retired
- E. Disabled
- F. Prefer not to say

If applicable, please specify your religion.

- A. Catholicism/Christianity
- B. Judaism
- C. Islam
- D. Buddhism
- E. Hinduism
- F. Other: ______
- G. Prefer not to say

Marital Status: What is your marital status?

- A. Single, never married
- B. Married or domestic partnership
- C. Widowed
- D. Divorced
- E. Separated
- F. Prefer not to say

How many children do you have?

- A. None
- B. 1
- C. 2-4
- D. More than 4
- E. Prefer not to say
Appendix B

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE:


INVESTIGATOR:

Kenya Johns, LPC, NCC, CAADC, CCTP Duquesne University – School of Education, 724-506-8171, kenyas2014@gmail.com

ADVISOR:

Dr. David Delmonico, Duquesne University – School of Education, 412-396-4032, delmonico@duq.edu

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in the School of Education at Duquesne University.

STUDY OVERVIEW:

The purpose of this study is to explore the African American man’s perspective regarding barriers to intraracial dating. This study will provide an opportunity for African American males to discuss their ideas regarding no longer engaging in romantic relationships with African American women.

PURPOSE:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that is investigating the lived experiences of African American men that have made a decision to no longer engage in romantic relationships with African American women.

In order to qualify for participation, you must:

• They must be at least 18 years of age
• They must identify as a heterosexual male
• They must identify as African American
• They must prefer to only date non-African American woman and not have dated an African American woman for at least the past year.
• They must be willing to talk about the topic with an African American woman

PARTICIPANT PROCEDURES:

If you provide your consent to participate, you will be asked to:
• Participate in an online or in-person 60-90 minute interview
• Discuss your relationship preferences of non-African American women with an African American woman
• Provide demographic information about yourself (e.g. age, education level, employment status, marital status)

The interviews will be both audio and video recorded, and transcribed. Upon completion of the transcription, the participant will be provided an opportunity to review transcription for accuracy and to be sure their identity is not exposed during the transcription process.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. You may feel some discomfort in discussing your romantic interests, but this should be no greater than you encounter in everyday life. The benefits of participating in this study include providing new insight into the perspectives of African American men.

COMPENSATION:

There will be no compensation for participating in this study. There is no cost for you to participate in this research project.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your participation in this study, and any identifiable personal information you provide, will be kept confidential to every extent possible, and will be destroyed 5 years after the data collection is completed. Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. All written and electronic forms and study materials will be kept secure by storing your information on a password protected computer and all written material in a locked bag only accessible to the researcher. Your video/audio recording will be stored on a locked server and will be erased immediately after it is transcribed. The interview will be recording via the Zoom Platform. Zoom is a HIPPA compliant platform that uses 256-bit TLS encryption and all shared content can be encrypted using AES-256 encryption. The rooms are password protected and the recordings are encrypted and only available to the researcher through a link to the cloud account. All transcripts will be linked to an identification number assigned by the researcher that will not contain your name. In addition, any publications or presentations about this research will only use data that is combined together with all subjects; therefore, it will be difficult to determine how any single participant responded to the interview questions.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:
You are under no obligation to start or continue this study. You can withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence by informing the researcher that you no longer wish to participate. Any data that has been collected will be destroyed and not used in the data analysis.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this study will be provided to you at no cost. You may request this summary by contacting the researcher and requesting it. The information provided to you will not be individual responses, but rather a summary of what was discovered during the research project as a whole.

**FUTURE USE OF DATA:**

Any information collected that can identify you will have the identifiers removed and be kept for use in future related studies, and/or provided to other researchers. The data may be used for a future similar study.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read this informed consent form and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, for any reason without any consequences. Based on this, I certify I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any questions about my participation in this study, I may contact Kenya Johns, 724-506-8171, kenyas2014@gmail.com. If I have any questions regarding my rights and protections as a subject in this study, I can contact Dr. James Phillips, Director of the Office of Research at Duquesne University at 412.396.1886 or at irb@duq.edu.

This project has been approved/verified by Duquesne University’s Institutional Review Board.

Proceeding to the next page indicates your voluntary consent to participate in this project.

INVESTIGATOR:

Kenya Johns, LPC, NCC, CAADC, CCTP Duquesne University – School of Education, 724–506–8171, kenyas2014@gmail.com

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___________________________________  __________________
Participant’s Signature                Date

___________________________________  __________________
Researcher’s Signature                Date

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Appendix C
Recruitment Letter

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Appendix D
Social Media Post
Appendix E

Thematic Codes Titles

- Self-Hate – The world told me to hate myself, and I agreed
- Family Matters – Do As I Say
- If it Ain’t White, It Aint Right – The status symbol of the White Race
- Girl Next Door/Proximity – Location and Opportunity Impacting Relationship Development
- Why You Always Sweating Me – Addressing the attitudes and beliefs Black men have about Black Women
- Boys will be Boys – Exploration of the Black man’s development and view of self (poor view of self/introvert/insecure, provider/protector/strong male characteristics)
- The New Jim Crow – Exploration of the impact on systemic racial inequities and demise of the Black family
- Relationship Views - .....Need Broader Term
- Trust Issues - ......
- Rejection
Appendix F

Thematic Codes

• Self-Regard – The individual's view of himself and the way that he believes that he is perceived by the world.

• Family Matters – Exploring the implications of the view of family or families perceptions on the individual.

• Girl Next Door – Location and Opportunity Impacting Relationship Development.

• The New Jim Crow – Exploration of the impact of systemic racism on the individual’s development and view of Black culture and Black people, and, views of the status symbol of the White Race.

• Views of Relationships – Exploring the Black man’s views on relationship dynamics, courting and attraction.