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The influence of father involvement on emerging adult daughters' romantic relationships

Katie M. Granger

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT ON EMERGING ADULT DAUGHTERS' ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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This purpose of this study was to explore the relationships of emerging adult daughters with their fathers from childhood to adulthood, and how those unique experiences over time, impact their personal romantic relationships. Research has shown that father and daughter relationships are important and can impact women's perceptions, and their ability to function in romantic relationships. Fathers play a crucial role in how daughters form ideas about their own romantic relationships, since the father is generally the first male figure daughters have in their lives. Data was collected through intensive interviews with twenty-four emerging adult women (ages 18-25) irrespective of their relationship with their biological father. The interviews were analyzed using constructivist grounded theory, which highlighted the individuals' actions, definitions, meanings, and perceptions about their personal experiences. Participants in this study defined father involvement as "being there" in some way, shape, or form for their daughters. Nine themes emerged in the data: fathers can give daughters hope for romantic relationships, fathers can influence daughters' perceptions of romantic relationships, difficulty trusting others, not sure what to expect in romantic relationships, aware of parent's relationship shortcomings, fearful of mirroring parent's relationship, relationship expectations, fathers can be the example, and staying true to oneself. The results broaden our understanding of the father-daughter dyad,

and can be beneficial to clinicians, educators, and other professionals. The findings of this study can also be applied in a way to foster more intentional decision-making for emerging daughters in their romantic relationships.

Keywords: daughters, fathers, emerging adulthood, romantic relationships, father-daughter relationships, qualitative

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THE INFLUENCE OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT ON EMERGING ADULT
DAUGHTERS' ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

BY

KATIE M. GRANGER
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DEDICATION

To Mom, Dad, Elizabeth, Natalie, and Grandma Granger; you five are everything to me.
And in memory of my three beloved grandparents, Harold Glen Granger Jr., Wallace Ray and
Betty Joyce Hines, with love

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Fathers matter to the healthy development of their children. An extensive and growing body of research indicates that children benefit socially, psychologically, and physically from having an engaged and present father (e.g., Jeynes, 2016; Yogman et al., 2016). Previous research indicates that paternal involvement and the father-child relationship may predict child and adolescent adjustment alongside the effects of corresponding maternal processes (Vazsonyi, 2004; Williams & Kelly, 2005). The combination of a father-offspring relationship and a mother-offspring relationship is more likely to compliment one-another and positively impact children and adolescents.

Fathers often have a more significant impact on their daughter's romantic relationships than that of mothers (Nielsen, 2014). A daughter that has a secure, supportive, communicative relationship with her father is more likely to create and maintain emotionally stable, fulfilling relationships with men later in life (Nielsen, 2014). A daughter that felt close to her father as a young girl was a strong indicator of how close she felt to her father as an adolescent or as an adult (Nielsen, 2014). Aquilino (2006) found that fathers who were interested in making important decisions that affected his increased the odds that as an adult, his child would look to him for support. Fathers were unlikely to have close relationships with their offspring as adults when they did not who did not stay highly involved with their younger children (2006).

In recent years, it was reported that roughly 73.7 million (69%) of children under the age of 18, are living in families with two parents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2016). On the contrary, 23% of children live with a single mother; the second most common family living arrangement in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2016). Approximately 72.2 million fathers living in the United States in 2014 (Monte, 2017). Father-child relationships within the family system have been of keen interest to many social and behavioral science researchers for over three decades. Childhood circumstances have lasting effects on father-child relationships, as fathers lay the stepping stones in regard to their children's long-term life outcomes (Kalmijn, 2015; Finley & Schwartz, 2007).

The socio-economic resources fathers often provide are important for the life prospects of their children, as negative consequences may arise for children who have a weak relationship with their father, particularly during the transition to adulthood (Kalmijn, 2015). According to research by Nielsen (2014) regardless of family income or whether the parents stay married, adult children who had felt close to their fathers during childhood tend to exhibit less depressive symptoms, less antisocial behavior, and better quality in their own marriages. Regardless of marital status, when fathers are more involved in their child's life, the better quality relationship they will have with their children as adults (Kalmijn, 2015).

When noncustodial fathers invested in the relationship with their sons and daughters during childhood and adolescence, that investment was likely to pay off, as they had a closer relationship with their offspring during the emerging adulthood years (Aquilino, 2006). Similarly, the results from Finley and Schwartz (2007), showed that intact families who reported father involvement were positively related to personal well-being (self-esteem, life satisfaction,

and future expectations) in young adulthood. However, there was no such relationship for divorced families (Finley & Schwartz, 2007).

The findings from Jaeger, Hahn, and Weinraub (2000) strengthens previous empirical research that adult-daughters-of-alcoholic-fathers (ADAF) had significantly more insecure attachment relationships than did non-ADAF. Female children of father-absent families (fathers did not remain in the household) have increased rates of teenage pregnancy, are subject to earlier onset of sexual activity than father-present families, and may be more likely to participate in unfavorable behaviors, influenced by their peers (East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2006).

In recent years, public awareness regarding the significance of fathers in the lives of their children has emerged and captured the media's attention. For instance, the former President of the United States, Barack Obama, delivered a speech in 2008 regarding Father's Day:

Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded that family is the most important. We are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation. They are teachers and coaches. They are mentors and role models. They are examples of success and the men that constantly push us towards it. But if we are honest with ourselves, we'll admit that what too many fathers also are is missing...missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men...and the foundations of our families are weaker because of it... We know the statistics – that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and twenty times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems, or run away from home, or become teenage parents themselves. And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it. (New York Times, 2008)

Former president Obama's message aligns with previous findings in the literature regarding fatherhood worldwide (Wilcox & Malone-Colon, 2014). Present fathers play such a fundamental role in the lives of their children, and increase the odds that their child will thrive socially, emotionally, and economically as an adult.

The Present Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of emerging adult daughters and their fathers, and how those experiences have shaped their perceptions in regards to their past, present, and future romantic relationships. The goal of this study is to inquire about the various patterns of father-daughter relationships, generate a deeper understanding in how father involvement has impacted emerging adult women, and explore the lenses through which they perceive their own romantic relationship experiences due to unique circumstances as a daughter. Accordingly, four research questions were proposed:

RQ1: How does father involvement positively influence emerging adult daughters' perceptions about romantic relationships?

RQ2: How does father absenteeism negatively influence emerging adult daughters' perceptions about romantic relationships?

RQ3: How does parental conflict, separation, or divorce, impact romantic relationship perceptions among emerging adult daughters?

RQ4: What do emerging adult daughters hope to learn from their fathers regarding romantic relationships?

All of these questions are grounded in the idea that the presence of a father in a daughter's life is fundamentally significant in not only her well-being from childhood to adulthood, but also in her ability to maintain stable romantic relationships and successfully function in them during the emerging adult years, and later in life.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Throughout the family science literature, it is noted that adult daughters and their fathers are the least studied parent-adult child dyad (Krampe & Newton, 2012). As stated by Amato (1994, p. 1040), “Fathers appear to be uniquely psychologically salient figures in their adult children’s lives.” Agar, Cioe, and Gorzalka (2010) posited that parental marital status, paternal involvement, and overall involvement were considerable indicators of young adults’ romantic relationship functioning. Research by Washington and Hans (2013) suggest that parental separation can impact the bond a child has with a caregiver, therefore, effecting romantic attachment in adulthood.

Father Presence

Findings from Agar et al. (2010) discovered higher overall male involvement, (either biological father or other male role model), was connected to better relationship functioning in young adulthood. Though parental divorce plays a role in intimate relationship function of young adults, Agar et al. (2010) also found that positive paternal involvement was significantly related to more positive functioning, as the nature of the improvements for young adults depended on their relationship with their male role model. The uniqueness of a father’s purpose in their child’s life was examined by Jeynes (2016), who found that the father’s role was just as meaningful no matter the age of child. This trend was about the same for both boys and girls - and also for social outcomes, psychological measures, and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2016).

Father-Daughter Relationships

Most participants described their overall relationships with their fathers in positive terms, yet some of those same participants reported barriers earlier in their relationship (Krampe & Newton, 2012). Younger daughters who reported a strong physical relationship with their biological fathers, viewed them as more involved and felt more support from their mothers for having that paternal relationship (Krampe & Newton, 2012). Moreover, their findings suggest that as daughters increased in age, their fathers' level of engagement with them began declining (Krampe & Newton, 2012). Agar et al. (2010) posited that the lack of a meaningful father-child relationship negatively influences romantic relationship functioning among young adults. Specifically, young adults who reported moderate levels of paternal involvement were more likely to express higher levels of relationship detachment, which was reflected in decreased levels of intimacy and increased endorsement of sexually permissive attitudes (Agar, et al., 2010). Thus, quality paternal involvement is associated with healthier young adult intimate relationship functioning and romantic attachment (Agar et al., 2010). On the contrary, Agar et al. (2010) noted that paternal involvement was not significantly correlated to commitment, sexual communion, or risky sexual behaviors among their emerging adult daughters.

The findings from Amato (1994) highlight that offspring were most satisfied with their lives if they were well educated, grew up in an intact family, and were married. The closer children were to their fathers, the happier, the more satisfied, and less distressed they reported being (Amato, 1994). The Amato (1994) article also notes the closeness to mothers and closeness to fathers made independent contributions to offspring life satisfaction. Yoder, Brisson, and Lopez (2016) found that fatherhood relationship characteristics were robust indicators of

delinquent behaviors. Unfortunately, because fathers fulfill crucial roles in the lives of their children, the lack of positive paternal involvement has serious consequences for the development of young adults' healthy intimate relationships (Agar et al., 2010).

Non-Resident and Non-Custodial Fathers

Krampe and Newton (2012) noted their participants whose parents did not live together when they were younger, had a much different view of paternal relationships. If the physical relationship with their father had been lacking, they reported a relatively low level of maternal support for the father-child relationship. Furthermore, adult daughters of nonresident fathers are also less likely to describe their fathers as involved with them. Hence, their perception of their parents' relationship was found to be more negative than the sample average (Krampe & Newton, 2012). Additionally, Washington and Hans (2013) discovered that spending time with a nonresidential parent, post parental separation or divorce, was related to anxiety among young adults.

Stepfathers

Closeness to stepfathers was marginally related to happiness, and significantly related to life satisfaction among their stepchildren (Amato 1994). There is also evidence that the quality of the stepfather-child relationship is associated with young adults' psychological well-being independently of the mother-child relationship (Amato, 1994). Findings from Agar et al. (2010) indicate that although stepfathers were the most involved among their sample of participants, their involvement was associated with the least positive intimate relationship functioning in terms of sexual irresponsibility. Further, young adults who reported stepfather male models had

increased levels of sexual permissiveness and engaged in riskier sexual behaviors, in comparison to young adults who had grandfather male models (Agar et al., 2010). However, the highest levels of commitment and intimacy were associated with stepfathers and the highest levels of sexual communion were associated with older brothers (Agar et al., 2010).

Academic Support and Achievement.

Few studies exist that explore how aspects of the father-daughter relationship, particularly those of a positive nature, are associated with academic related outcomes (Cooper, 2009). This under-researched topic was investigated by Cooper (2009), as she specifically explored the father-daughter relationship quality and academic engagement of African American adolescent girls. Her findings were consistent with the study's hypothesis, and indicated that girls who perceive a more supportive and communicative relationship with their fathers also report greater academic-related engagement (Cooper, 2009). The second set of results yielded from the study by Cooper (2009), was that self-esteem mediated the association between father-daughter relationship quality and academic engagement. Indeed, this relationship may be of singular importance as adolescent girls seek to define themselves and develop a positive sense of self (Cooper, 2009). Cooper noted it is possible that these quality-related aspects of the father-daughter relationship (e.g., supportiveness and warmth) are uniquely consequential to girls' academic self-esteem. Both African American fathers who facilitate more positive academic self-esteem for their daughters, and daughters who perceive a more positive relationship with their fathers, are related to promoting higher academic engagement and greater academic achievement (Cooper, 2009).

More recently, findings from Rossetto, Manning, and Green (2017) on perceptions of paternal support after transitioning to college, indicated that the perception on emerging adult children as both adolescents and adults may improve fathers' capacity for support and responsiveness, and provide informational and emotional support while encouraging independence. For instance, their study suggested paternal support contributes to patterns of closeness and highlights the significance of increased communication quantity and quality for both college students and the father (Rossetto et al., 2017). Furthermore, transitioning to college initiated purposive communication between fathers and their sons/daughters (Rossetto et al., 2017). Some participants even noted the affection from their fathers held a deeper meaning that did not exist when coming from others because it signaled a developmental change or defied expectations (Rossetto et al., 2017).

Risk Factors in Family Structure and Functioning

Family Structure

Findings of the 2012 Krampe & Newton study found that family structure had the strongest impact on the quality of adult daughters' paternal relationships. Interestingly, daughters who lived with their biological mother or with their biological mother and stepfather as primary household caregivers during childhood and adolescence, reported less positive relationships (Krampe & Newton, 2012). The researchers discovered with their participants, that in terms of family structure, growing up in a household without the biological father, appears to have a far greater influence on the relationship with their fathers than did race or ethnicity (Krampe & Newton, 2012). Another intriguing discovery by Krampe & Newton found African American

adult daughters living with two biological parents had less positive bonds with their fathers in comparison to non-Hispanic Whites with the same family structure (2012).

Maleck and Papp (2015) examined childhood risky environments and romantic relationship functioning among young adults. Their findings suggest that young adults who experienced risky family environments that were never settled, seemed more likely to continue negative patterns in their own romantic relationships. Not only did they find a significant positive association between male and female partners' risky family levels, but their post hoc correlation test also exhibited that male and female partners' risky family scores were significantly linked even after accounting for the length of the dating relationship (Maleck & Papp, 2015). Their investigation reflects that riskier family environments are associated with poorer romantic relationship functioning in young adulthood (e.g., reported lower relationships satisfaction, higher observed negativity) for both male and female partners whose parents remained together opposed to those whose parents divorced (Maleck & Papp, 2015). Additionally, sex differences emerged in the study, as males' risky family backgrounds (both directly and interactively with parental divorce experiences) surfaced as a potent predictor of their female partners' relationship functioning (Maleck & Papp, 2015). They concluded that experiencing parental divorce during childhood buffers young adulthood romantic relationships from the possible negative correlates of riskier family environments – when evaluated retrospectively (Maleck & Papp, 2015). Perhaps thinking of divorce as a 'buffer' can offer a different mindset to the young adults experiencing parental divorce. The exposure of divorced parents, may offer an increased chance of resiliency in their own romantic relationships.

Parental Divorce

The literature clearly indicates that parental divorce can have a substantial impact on children. As explained by Amato (2010): “Research during the last decade continued to show that children with divorced parents, compared with children with continuously married parents, score lower on a variety of emotional, behavioral, social, health, and academic outcomes, on average.” All forms of family disruption, including divorce, weakens the salience of fathers for children’s psychological well-being (e.g., Amato, 1994). Marsiglio, Amato, Day, and Lamb (2000) stated that divorce is often followed by a decline in the quality and quantity of contact between fathers and children. According to findings from Kaufman and Uhlenberg (1998) children tended to report more negative relationships with biological parents who were unmarried. According to Benson (2015) parental divorce distorts the image of healthy relationships among adult women. Irrespective of background, divorce was more likely for these adult women, and marriage was less likely (Benson, 2015). It is very clear the impact of parental divorce negatively effects father-child relationships into adulthood (Benson, 2015; Amato, 2010). For instance, fathers who were still married, overall, had a greater degree of contact and a better-quality relationship with their adult children than fathers who were divorced (Benson, 2015). Regardless of the parents’ level of conflict surrounding their divorce, very few children of divorce are able to sustain a close relationship with their father as adults (Benson, 2015).

Finley and Schwartz (2005) found that participants who resided with their fathers for longer periods of time following parental divorce were likely to rate their fathers as more nurturing and involved than did those who resided with their father for shorter periods of time (or did not reside with their fathers at all) following the divorce. Their results showed that

participants whose parents divorced earlier in their lives tended to rate their fathers as less nurturing and involved than did those whose parents divorced later in their lives (Schwartz & Finley, 2005).

Finley and Schwartz (2010) indicated that perceiving both parents as non-nurturing, uninvolved, or perceiving a sharp difference between maternal and paternal nurturance or involvement, may be associated with compromised psychosocial functioning and troubled ruminations in emerging adults. For instance, Schwartz and Finley (2009) found that children of divorce perceived having suffered greater levels of both expressive and instrumental paternal deprivation, compared to children from intact families. Indeed, Finley and Schwartz (2010) noted that the “divided world” effect is more pronounced in divorced families than in intact families when assessing traditional measures of well-being, distress, and relational functioning.

In addition, Maleck & Papp (2015) stated that it is possible that the young adults who managed stressors and transition associated with divorce in childhood, were the same ones that were more proactive in seeking out better relationships for themselves in the future. Conversely, Halligan, Chang, and Knox (2014) surveyed a sample of 336 undergraduate students to identify whether there were any positive effects of parental divorce. Their results emitted positive outcomes of their parents’ divorce such as, respondents being more compassionate, having a greater tolerance for differing viewpoints, enjoying spending time alone with one parent, being more independent and less reliant on their parents, and seeing one or both parents happier following the divorce (Halligan et al., 2014). Similarly, Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard discovered that parental divorce had no impact on ideas toward marriage or divorce among emerging adults who were in an intimate relationship (2016). These emerging adult participants

also reported that they were more likely to expect to marry when believing divorce is avoidable if they work hard at their current relationship (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2016).

Trauma and Abuse

In the recent research by Rholes, Paetzold, and Kohn (2015), it was discovered that individuals who demonstrate externalizing behaviors in close adult romantic relationships can stem from disorganized attachment, often resulting from childhood trauma. Having higher attachment anxiety is likely to advance towards an attachment figure (versus having lower anxiety, which would represent an increased level of attachment security), allowing both to provide an explanation for the relationship between trauma during childhood and externalizing behaviors in close relationships as adults (Rholes et al., 2015).

Additionally, inadequate care-giving for children provided by a father who is violent, can disrupt the individual's capacity to trust male partners and to be comfortable with their sexual and emotional vulnerability in their adult relationships (Durbach & Bain, 2016). Participants showed their adult relationships carry traces of the quality of the mental representations they acquired within their earliest relationships with their fathers (Durbach & Bain, 2016). Internal representations of romantic relationships were inevitably associated with their experiences of their fathers and their violent behaviors (Durbach & Bain, 2016). The results show that the participants' ways of connecting with and being in their intimate relationships (sexually and emotionally) were notably affected by how their fathers related to them in childhood and adulthood (Durbach & Bain, 2016). Disturbed fathering was found to elicit severe intrapsychic conflict in these daughters with regards to making meaning of their fathers' aggression and pain

in relation to the expression of their own feelings of distrust, fear, and neediness in their own romantic relationships as adults (Durbach & Bain, 2016).

One dominant finding in Parent and Boursier's 2015 study was the perception of security to fathers predicted outcomes following Child Sexual Assault (CSA) – namely both internalized and externalized behavior problems and six subscales (anxious/depressed, withdrawn, delinquent, aggressive behaviors, social problems, and thought problems) – even after controlling sociodemographic characteristics, the mothers' psychological distress, and the perception of security to mothers. Children's perception of security to their fathers predicted all behavior problems demonstrated by the child following the abuse except somatic complaints and attention problems (Parent & Boursier, 2015).

Father Absenteeism

There are many circumstances in which fathers may not be actively involved in the lives of their children. In regards to father absence, there are a number of possible circumstances daughters may be faced with such as, parental conflict or violence, separation, divorce, remarriage, abandonment, incarceration, drug or alcohol abuse, enrollment in rehab, military deployment, illness, or death. For each family, comes different circumstances, in which are likely to change over time. Marsiglio et al. (2009) posited that never married fathers are even less likely than divorced fathers to keep in contact with their children.

The narratives derived from East, Jackson, and O'Brien (2007), suggested that their experiences of having an absent father strongly influenced their life path. The participants in their study expressed feelings of abandonment and being let down by their fathers, which led to the development of negative attitudes and feelings toward their fathers, and at times, those

feelings were extended to males in general (East et al., 2007). Further, the daughters in their study described that the relationships with their absent fathers were similar to that of a stranger or acquaintance, rather than a family member (East et al., 2007). In addition, many daughters voiced having little or no memorable childhood experiences, having lack of communication, having little involvement with their father and in a sense not knowing their fathers; their fathers were ultimately strangers (East et al., 2007). The daughters in the study by East et al. (2007) also reported vulnerability and difficulty in forming relationships with males and felt that those difficulties were closely related to experiencing father absence. Moreover, these women upheld pessimistic ideologies of men which they attributed to their experiences (and lack thereof) with their fathers, and the ideologies were perceived to have had a deleterious impact on the development of their intimate sexual relationships (East et al. 2007).

Finley and Schwartz (2010) indicated that perceiving both parents as non-nurturant and uninvolved and/or perceiving a sharp difference between maternal and paternal nurturance or involvement may be associated with compromised psychosocial functioning and troubled ruminations in emerging adults. In the study review done by McLanahan, Tach, and Schneider (2013) their findings suggest that there is connection between early childbearing and parental absence, with the effect increasingly stronger for individuals who experienced divorce in early childhood rather than in middle childhood (McLanahan et al., 2013). McLanahan et al. also found in their review, that an association between adult mental health and father absence or parental divorce does exist, with the effect being negative (2013). Not only is there evidence that children are negatively impacted both socially and emotionally from father absence, but externalizing behaviors, and risky behaviors such as smoking, and childbearing are more prominent during the adolescent years as well (McLanahan et al., 2013).

In an article by Peyper, de Klerk, and Spies (2015) most of these adult women who grew up with an emotionally absent father reported that they had difficulty sharing their emotions with their fathers, and experienced their fathers as uncomfortable with their emotions and with emotional problems. Likewise, Kalmijn also suggests children may emotionally suffer from not having any contact with their fathers (Kalmijn, 2015). Peyper et al. (2015) highlighted one potential outcome of father emotional absence, in which they found that daughters may be at risk to repress their emotions with male figures throughout their lives, due to emotional experiences (or lack thereof) with their fathers.

Interestingly, father loss (e.g., abandonment, incarceration, death) can even impact children biologically. Previous research has examined the many psychological and physical effects paternal absence has on children into adulthood, but a new research study uncovers the effects at a cellular level. The connection between father loss and a child's telomere length (TL) was researched by Mitchell, McLanahan, Schneper, Garfinkel, Brooks-Gunn, and Notterman (2017). Their findings suggest that children who experience father loss are likely to have shortening of telomere length versus children who experience parental divorce, due to the prolonged stress period (Mitchell et al., 2017). Because death is a permanent loss for the child, other (temporary) forms of paternal loss may not impact children as significantly.

Romantic Relationships in Emerging Adulthood

Sexual Behaviors and Attachment

Research by Alleyne-Green, Grinnell-Davis, Clark, Quinn, and Cryer-Coupet (2016) suggest that adolescent girls who perceived a positive relationship with their biological fathers,

shown by feelings of closeness to their fathers, were less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors. Their findings also provide the conclusion that the more dating violence an adolescent female experienced, the more likely she was to report engagement in risky sexual behaviors (Alleyne-Green et al., 2016). According to Nielsen (2014) daughters who were fathered also have a better chance to experience emotionally intimate and fulfilling relationships with other males. Nielsen's findings also suggest that these well-guided daughters in college are not as likely to be pressured into having sex (2014).

Goldsmith Dunkley, Dang, and Gorzalka (2016) highlighted that women high in attachment-related anxiety and avoidance experienced lower levels of sexual satisfaction and sexual communication. Their results indicate that individuals high in attachment related avoidance and anxiety may struggle with communicating their sexual needs to their partner, creating an obstacle to sexual satisfaction and fulfillment (Goldsmith et al., 2016). Additionally, findings from Trub and Starks (2017) revealed that among young adult women in romantic relationships, attachment anxiety and avoidance were significantly associated with sexting indirectly through difficulty controlling impulses. This indirect pathway proposes that individuals with high levels of attachment anxiety who struggle with regulating distress increase the likelihood of engaging in sexting (Trub & Starks, 2017).

Alcohol Use

The findings from Graham, Negash, Lambert, and Fincham (2016) were parallel to their hypothesis in that problem drinking was a significant predictor of extradyadic sex. Further, individuals who engaged in problem drinking behaviors were more likely to engage in sexual intercourse with someone other than their partner while they were dating that partner (Graham et

al., 2016). Another collateral finding was that more than 20% of participants who engaged in extradyadic sex did not use a condom at the time of intercourse (Graham et al., 2016). Far fewer than half of the participants in this study disclosed the incident to their primary partner (Graham et al., 2016). In conclusion, problem drinking is a robust predictor of extradyadic sex among college-aged students (Graham et al., 2016).

Romantic Relationships, Attachment, and Communication Patterns

Monteoliva, Garcia-Martinez, and Calvo-Salguero (2016) investigated the perceived benefits and costs of romantic relationships in young adults, specifically, differences in adult attachment style. Their results indicated that compared to all other attachment styles, securely attached individuals perceived more benefits than costs in relation to relationship behavior, in comparison to dismissing individuals perceived more costs than benefits (Monteoliva et al., 2016). It was found among the insecurely attached group, that preoccupied individuals demonstrated an increased perception of benefits compared to costs connected to the relationship behavior Monteoliva et al. (2016). Furthermore, Monteoliva et al. (2016) discovered that secure and preoccupied individuals rated behavior consequences that led to increased intimacy or closeness more positively than avoidant individuals. With this, Monteoliva et al. (2016) suggested that the individuals who were classified under secure and preoccupied attachment styles were the two groups that perceived more advantages in exhibiting relationship behavior, and who had positively rated consequences that lead to increased closeness and intimacy in their couple relationships.

In an article by Tarabulsky et al. (2012), the following two pieces of attachment theory relative to the study of romantic relationships were addressed. Their first piece suggested that the

attachment mindset contributes to differing aspects of the quality of romantic relationships (Tarabulsky et al., 2012). The second set piece suggested that levels of attachment preoccupation predispose romantic relationships to be at a higher risk. Participants who scored higher on the preoccupation factor were more likely to report lower levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment in romantic relationships, and described involvement in less stable relationships over time (Tarabulsky et al., 2012).

Interestingly, the findings from Young and Schrodt (2016) demonstrated that not only were Family Communication Patterns (FCPs) predictive of confirmation in romantic relationships, but the extent to which young adult children observed confirming behavior within (and between) their parents' relationship was associated with the intensity to which young adults communicated in confirming ways with their romantic partner. Additionally, after controlling for the norm of reciprocity in partner confirmation, FCPs and (inter)parental confirmation emerged as significant predictors of confirmation enacted in the participants' romantic relationships (Young & Schrodt, 2016).

Research by Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard (2016) found that both among single individuals and romantically involved individuals, they were more optimistic about successful future relationships when disagreeing that a relationship worsens once the couple becomes married. Emerging adults reported that they are more likely to expect to marry when they believed divorce can be avoided if you work hard (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2016). Indeed, Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard noted that young adults involved in a romantic relationship appear to have developed or adapted their own outlook toward romantic life without focusing as much on their parents' relationship experiences (2016).

Nielsen provides a review of recent research that highlights the importance of father-daughter relationships:

During the early adult years, daughters face an array of new and challenging situations. Among those important are academic and career development; romantic relationships; mental health in regard to anxiety, eating disorders, or clinical depression; and physiological responses in dealing with stressful situations. Despite the increasingly loud chorus of researchers emphasizing the importance of fathers in child development, there is still too little emphasis placed on building and strengthening father-daughter relationships – and on maintaining or improving the quality of these relationships during daughters' adult years. (2014, p. 369)

The present study aims to bridge existing gaps in the literature regarding the relationships between the emerging adult female age group and both their biological and non-biological fathers. The gap in the literature is specific to this age group, since there is a considerable amount of previous studies covering daughters from birth to the adolescent age, as well as pinpointing biological fathers only. In the current study, I focus on the relationship with their biological father or other father figure (or both) growing up, how it changed over time, and what nature of their relationship is currently. Few studies give participants an opportunity to discuss the different ways they were impacted by their biological father versus a different father figure throughout the course of their life. Both the circumstances of daughters who did have a biological father or other father figure present in their life, and daughters who did not have a biological father or other father figure present in their life, are discussed in this study. Another focal point of this study incorporates the various family backgrounds (i.e., intact, divorced, separated, intergenerational households, etc.) revealed by the participants, and how their past and present environment has influenced their familial relationships, and perceptions about romantic relationships. The last focal point of this study involves what things daughters did learn and can learn about romantic relationships from both their biological fathers and other father figures, not

only as emerging adult daughters, but throughout their entire life. These focal points are in alignment with my four research questions, as well as the four categories and nine themes presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

Qualitative research design was used to survey and interview 24 emerging adult females on a university campus. Subjects were recruited during the spring semester at Northern Illinois University (DeKalb, Illinois campus) by distributing flyers across campus and in undergraduate classes. Flyers indicated that emerging adult daughters were needed for a study involving a demographic survey, and a 60-minute, intensive, one-on-one interview with the researcher. Subjects signed up for an interview time-slot pending their interest level in participating in the study, by accessing a link to the doodle poll provided on the recruitment flyer (See APPENDIX A). The researcher explained eligibility for the study, the reason subjects are needed, and outlined the study process to potential subjects, both via classroom recruitment, and on the doodle poll website itself.

Individuals who identified as emerging adult females were recruited for this study, and were required to meet the following criteria in order to participate: (a) Participation was voluntary, (b) Identified as female who fit the age criteria of the emerging adulthood years (18-29 years old), (c) Read the recruitment letter, (d) Signed the informed consent sheet, (e) Was willing to complete a short demographic survey, and (f) Was willing to participate in an intense, one-on-one interview with the researcher regarding the role their biological father, stepfather, or other father figure has played throughout their life, and how those experiences have affected their personal romantic relationships. At the conclusion of the interview process, the researcher

read the debriefing statement to each participant aloud, and then provided them with an incentive of a \$10 gift card for their contributions to the research study.

All participants were emerging adult females ($N = 24$) with an age range of 18 to 25 years old ($M = 20.7$). Education level of the participants ranged from freshman undergraduates to graduate students at Northern Illinois University. Of the 24 participants, most were undergraduate students ($N = 23$), and one participant was a graduate student ($N = 1$).

Most participants were identified as Non-Hispanic White (41%), and the remaining participants were rather diverse African American/Black (12%), Asian/Pacific Islander (16%), Latino/Hispanic (8%), and Mixed-Race (12%). Participants varied in family structure, as 37% of participants had divorced biological parents, 45% had married parents, and 16% of the participants had parents who were never married at the time of the interview. Participants were emerging adult females ranging from freshman to graduate students at a Mid-Western University. Of the 24 participants, most were undergraduate students ($N = 23$), and one participant was a graduate student ($N = 1$). At the time of the interviews, 58% of participants indicated that they were in a romantic relationship, while 41% of participants were not in a romantic relationship. 54% of the participants who were in a romantic relationship at the time of the interview, described their relationship as dating exclusively, while 4% of participants were dating non-exclusively. During the intensive interviews, subjects were asked to share their experiences with their biological father, and also asked about experiences including a different father figure who was influential in their life. Other than a biological father, among some of the other father figures included stepfathers, uncles, older brothers, cousins, grandfathers, or family friends. This study's focal point was not only about the biological fathers, but other influential

father figures in the lives of these emerging adult daughters. 12% of biological fathers from this sample had been incarcerated at some point in their daughter's life.

All interviews were conducted in a private room on campus. All subjects participated voluntarily, and were aware they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Permission was granted to use human subjects in this study based on research approval from the Northern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol # HS18-0001. Eligible participants were required to read the recruitment letter and sign the informed consent sheet. Completion of informed consent was a requirement of all subjects involved in this study (See APPENDIX B). Participants were provided with a copy of their signed informed consent sheet, as well as the debriefing statement upon the conclusion of the interview process.

Data Analysis

The data collection consisted of brief demographic questions designed to gather information about the participant's sex, age, race, current education level, relationship status and parental relationship status (See APPENDIX C). If the participant marked "Yes" for the question asking if they were currently in a romantic relationship, the participant was asked to complete four additional questions about their relationship. The first of the four additional questions included, "Which statement best describes your relationship?" Answers for this question included, "Dating nonexclusively", "Dating exclusively", "Engaged", and "Married". The second of the four additional questions asked, "This relationship is with:" Answer choices were, "An opposite sex partner", or "A same sex partner". The third of the four additional questions asked, "My partner and I are:" Answer choices were, "Living separately", or "Living together".

The fourth question in addition to the demographic questions asked was, “How long have you been in your current relationship? (total time together as a couple)”. Participants filled in a number for years, and a number for months. If the respondent marked “No” for the question asking if they were currently in a romantic relationship, the respondent was asked to skip those four questions. The next question asked about the subject’s parental relationship situation, “Please select the option that best describes your biological parent’s situation”. Answer choices included “My parents are married”, “My parents are divorced”, “My parents are going through a trial separation”, “One of my parents is deceased”, “My parents never married”, and “Other (please specify)”. Next, the subject was asked to complete questions regarding the demographic information of their biological father to the best of their knowledge. These questions included their biological father’s current age, age he became a father to the participant, race, educational level at the time he became a father to the participant, and his current educational level now.

The participants then were asked to participate in, and complete 60-minute, intensive interview with the researcher regarding their experiences primarily with their biological father, and if the circumstances permitted, other possible father figures, and how the experiences with either has shaped their perceptions of romantic relationships. On the consent form, the researcher asked participants for permission to audio-record the entire interview. The researcher did not have to take notes for participants who do not grant permission, as every participant agreed to do so.

Interviews were semi-structured in format, and began by asking general information about the participant, followed by questions about household structure and familial relationships. The data collection was only done by the primary researcher. Some interviews did not follow the

interview schedule exclusively, as the sequence of questions differed in appropriateness for the circumstances of each participant. The complete interview schedule appears in Appendix D.

Data was collected and thematically analyzed using the constructivist grounded theory, as informational, intensive, and investigative interviewing strategies were applied (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory prioritizes theoretical usefulness of the interview data, as it is the basis for theory construction (Charmaz, 2014). Conducting open-ended, subject-centered interviews allows for the possibility of movement towards mutual conversations about theoretical categories as the researcher seeks more data to develop these categories (Charmaz, 2014). Intensive interviews are framed in an open space that focuses on the participants' statements about their experience, how they portray the experience, and what it means to them (Charmaz, 2014). The in-depth nature of an intensive interview allows the researcher to elicit each participant's interpretation of his or her experience at the time the interview takes place (Charmaz, 2014). In this way, the participant reveals their background, so the interviewer is capable of understanding the topic and their unique, personal experiences (Charmaz, 2014).

Data was transcribed into written (typed) format by the primary researcher, three colleagues, and by gotranscript.com. Three additional coders assisted with the transcribing of one or two interviews each. Analyst triangulation (Creswell, 2014) was also used to aid in the reliability of the data analysis for this study. The primary researcher and three additional coders met on a frequent basis throughout the coding process to establish the initial codes. The researchers used initial line-by-line coding to study the data closely and began conceptualizing ideas (Charmaz, 2014, p.19). Focused coding was used to detect themes that emerged in the data, particularly by the two primary researchers. Coding helped link data collection to emerging theory/themes and provided an analytic skeleton for grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014, p. 19).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Through the steps of qualitative analysis nine unique themes emerged that were organized into four distinct categories: father presence (two themes), father absenteeism (two themes), parental relationship instability (two themes), learning from father (three themes). The themes within these categories are discussed and numbered below.

The majority of the participants discussed the importance of father presence (i.e. “being there”) and these emerging adult daughters expressed a strong desire to have their fathers present in their lives. The participants explained that when fathers were present this provided reassurance about relationships with men and helped these participants to feel more supported. Most of the participants indicated that (1) *fathers can give daughters hope for romantic relationships* especially when fathers are committed in their own romantic relationships. These emerging adult daughters also indicated that (2) *fathers can influence daughters’ perceptions of relationships* and that by observing their fathers’ behavior they learned more about the need for support, loyalty, trust, and closeness in relationships.

Consistent with the research literature father absenteeism seem to have a negative impact on the participants. For instance, the participants stated that when their father was absent (e.g., divorce, separation, abandonment, incarceration) they had more (3) *difficulty trusting others*. Father absence seemed to also create more uncertainty for emerging adult daughters, and they were (4) *not sure what to expect in romantic relationships*. Some participants seemed to demonstrate a longing for a more active and engaged father to address the basic things when it comes to dating and relationships, especially if they had very little prior experience.

Parental instability (conflict, separation, divorce) also seemed to have a substantial impact on the participants. As indicated earlier, family of origin was diverse among the participants, as 37% of had divorced biological parents, 45% had married parents, and 16% of the sample had parents who were never married at the time of the interview.

Interestingly many of the participants seemed to process their parent's relationship, and by observing their parent's relationship throughout their lives they became (5) *aware of parent's relationship shortcomings*. These relationships flaws taught daughters "what not to do" in their own romantic relationships. Unfortunately, some of the participants also indicated that they were (6) *fearful of mirroring parent's relationship*.

Finally, emerging adult daughters discussed what they hoped to learn from their father regarding romantic relationships. These participants indicated that ideally their father would teach them and discuss (7) *relationship expectations* (e.g., effort required, relationship expectations), and there is teaching and learning often happening because (8) *fathers can be the example*. The participants also explained that they wanted their father to communicate the importance of being their own individual, hence, (9) *staying true to oneself*.

Father Involvement Defined

In order to provide context to the results it is valuable to first discuss how these participants defined father involvement. This context can provide important insights to the themes that will be further discussed in the results. Many of the emerging adult women mentioned "being there" while explaining in their own words what father involvement means to them. As one explained:

Being around most of the time. I know some dads are more hesitant than others to

be more involved. Just being active. If you have a child, playing with them, or even as a family. Having the father around to like go out for ice cream or just have specific things that the dad and children do together is an important thing. Specific things you do with dad versus things that you would do with mom. Just to have special moments between the child and the father. Telling their children they love them, support them, and their interests by verbally saying things like, “You’re doing great, and I love you” is definitely an important part of it.

This participant suggested things fathers do with their children are unique to that of what mothers do with their children, and it is a valuable difference.

Being an active, engaging, supportive, and loving father were among the other prevalent ideas surrounding the definition of father involvement the participants in this study had described. For example:

I guess I would say like someone who asks, who cares about what’s going on with your life and cares about your schoolwork, or spends time with you. They’re there most of the time. Not all fathers can be there physically because they could be busy, or away, or at work. As long as they’re there in some way in some shape or form. And if they can’t be there physically, then like calling, checking in and keeping in contact often.

Regardless of work or other responsibilities most fathers have that may hinder them from being physically there all the time, maintaining interest in their child’s life, checking in with them, and being there for them in some way, was reported as crucial elements in father involvement. Another participant said something similar:

If you can’t really physically be there, if you genuinely want the best for your kids, you will do what you have to. If you have the means to get them what they need, you will do that. Even if you don’t call them every day, when you call them, make sure they know in their heart that you care about them, you’re thinking about them, and you want what is best for them. Because whatever circumstances prevent you from actually physically being there, whether it be work, the military, jail, or something, you know that your kids are number one in your life no matter what, and nothing should stand in the way of you doing what you need to do for them. If you are physically there, make sure they know every day that you love them, support them, want the best for them... You will be there for them during the good times, the bad times, when they are at their worst, and when they are at their best. It’s all about what you do with your time, physically there or not. Leave some type of positive mark on your child so that when they go out into the world,

they have what they need... Not only will they have confidence in themselves, but they will also know they have a strong, positive person there to back them up.

According to these emerging adult women, father involvement means sacrificing things in order to meet the needs of the children, especially if fathers expressed that they want what is best for their children. Additionally, fathers being there for the triumphs and defeats in life, and being verbally, physically, or emotionally communicative about the love they have for their children is how these participants would define father involvement.

Father Presence

Many participants in this study talked about their experiences with their biological father who was present in their life. For the participants who were able to not only have a present father, but to witness a healthy parental relationship or marriage, while maintaining a close relationship with their father (and mother) seemed to be the most positive outcome that emerged in our findings. Defining their relationship with their biological father as close, was more connected to the second theme of this category.

Fathers Can Give Daughters Hope for Romantic Relationships

For the first theme of this category, some emerging adult participants, who experienced a present father in their life, witnessed marriage between their parents, or were a part of an intact family, seemed to help them believe the idea that a romantic relationship or marriage is attainable and sustainable. Some of the emerging adult daughters were able to observe a functional or healthy relationship or marriage, whether it was their biological parents, or stepparents together. As one participant stated: "When I see a man who is committed in a

relationship or marriage, who is serious and committed, that's the type of thing I wish for. It just gives me hope. It gives me hope for marriage.”

Having witnessed a relationship between her biological mother and stepfather in their marriage as serious and committed to one another, it made her feel like it is feasible, and can be a piece to the puzzle in a successful relationship. Another participant described her admiration regarding her parent's 36-year marriage. She described a clear, reciprocal pattern her parents demonstrated toward one another in their relationship:

I can tell he loves my mom because if it's important to her, he does it. Then, he always wants to be around her, like when they're off work, they are always together. Most of the time, they are joined at the hip. My mom will be on the phone and my dad will be on his laptop and they won't even be talking, but they're in the same room together, in the same house, but doing their own separate things, but still together. He also spoils her. It's just anything that is important to her and she wants it, my dad will go out of his way to do it or get it for her. And vice versa; my mom will do the same thing with my dad. It's just amazing to see my dad bend over backwards for my mom because you don't see that often anymore. But they have fought, they have loved, and they still act like they are 20 years old trying to impress each other. It's just so awesome. They do things for each other and that's their love language.

These participants specifically discussed the actions of their parents or stepparents within their marriage, and how it is inspiring for them to be a part of it. Positive examples from a paternal figure in his romantic relationship with the biological mother has given these daughters hope and made them believe that their future partner could certainly be capable of similar healthy, selfless actions in their own relationships.

Fathers Can Influence Daughters' Perceptions of Relationships

In the current study, participants described how beneficial their father's perception of dating and relationships can be. Overcoming that fear of discussing such matters with their father and just listening to how their father views emerging adult relationships, can be an easy way to

attain some of the best relationship advice. One participant mentioned that men know how other men think, and those thoughts can be very helpful for fathers to share with their daughters:

Just be open about romantic relationships. I know sometimes it's an awkward conversation for dads and daughters to have, because it's a relationship talk... But to try to let them know what the male perspective is about relationships, because dads have been in relationships before and they know what it's like. So if a dad was like, "When you're talking to a guy, this probably what he's thinking", their daughter can go off of that. Dads need to just try to give their daughters a different, yet useful perspective.

A participant whose father was absent all her life, explained how she takes not only her father's perspective into account, but her mother's as well. Both parents' viewpoints are especially important to have (if possible) when daughters are going through a tough time in life:

Just being there for her as a dad and having a dad perspective so that you don't just have a mom's perspective, but you have a dad's perspective as well. Like when you're going through something, you can get both perspectives from both your mom and dad.

Another participant explained how both the role of both her biological father and stepfather are equally important, and how she considers both perspectives when thinking about romantic relationships:

I think I didn't like him because I wanted my mom to be with my dad even though they weren't good for each other. Growing up, he wasn't in the mindset to be like a dad or a parent, he wanted to be my friend, and I didn't want him to be my friend. But now, he's a father figure in my life, like, I love him now. He helps me with any and everything. He helps me try to find jobs and I really appreciate him... It was like a 360 with me and him... But now he's like my dad, I love him. I call him Dad #2... My stepdad shows me what I should look for in men.

This participant explained how her stepfather was not as involved or influential growing up, but now he guides her through many of the challenges emerging adults face. He gives her advice on many things ranging from job searching to character traits in a potential romantic partner. She continued:

My biological dad just wants to make sure that they guy I'm with is nice to me and is trustworthy. My stepdad on the other hand, wants to know what his long term goals are,

what his overall plan is with me... My biological dad cares more about the inner me and my feelings... But my stepdad is saying that a foundation is what I need because when I'm older that man should be able to provide for me... I feel like both perspectives go hand in hand and I believe both of them are important.

This participant identified the differences between what her biological father and what her stepfather believes are important things to look for in a romantic partner. She takes both the perspectives of her biological father and stepfather seriously, and considers them to be advantageous and complimentary of one another.

Many of the participants expressed that there was great value in fathers sharing their romantic relationship past with their daughters. As one participant one explained:

Personally, I think my dad just didn't want to pry things out of me, especially if it was something I might not be comfortable talking about, such as relationships, so he always waited for me to bring it up. I think if he were to actively talk about it and provide some input more often, it would help a lot... My dad was explaining why he thinks I should wait to get married, take things slow, and reflect on things, and I think that's important for fathers to explain... At least in my experience, advice coming from my dad is a lot different than the advice coming from my mom. Since I don't really have a lot of close male friends, I don't really know how they think and feel and things like that. So when I hear things from my dad, I'm getting a new perspective that "Okay this is how they're thinking, so maybe it'll change." Seeing their perspective is really important because you always hear that guys think differently than girls, because girls are more emotionally inclined and things like that. So being able to hear their side of relationships would be helpful.

Waiting on who will initiate a conversation about romantic relationships between fathers and their daughters, came up more than once in these participants' responses. Fathers can offer unique advice about relationships to their daughters for not only gender-difference reasons, but because fathers *should* be talking to their daughters about them. Fathers should be asking their daughters engaging questions regarding what things they may have learned from past relationship experiences, what their relationship goals are, such as waiting or not waiting to marry, etc. Fathers should get to know their daughters on a personal level, as it may benefit the

relationship in the long-run due to increased intimacy and closeness, and not to mention, it could be easier for fathers to keep a close eye out for daughters who are currently dating or in a romantic relationship.

Father Absenteeism

In this category, the stories of participants who did not experience a present father for much of their life is represented below. For participants who did not grow up with their father, or rarely saw him, they described the feeling of being let down on occasion, and for others, it was repeatedly, throughout the course of their life. Theme one in this category involves the challenge of trusting other people in general, and a few participants specifically mentioned not trusting men altogether. Theme two includes the uncertainty of relationships that emerging adult women often feel; This feeling often stems from the lack of having a male role model in their life to openly discuss the topic of knowing what to expect in romantic relationships.

Difficulty Trusting Others

Many of the participants discussed how difficult it was to trust others, especially in romantic relationships. The participants often linked this mistrust to their father being absent in their lives. For example, I asked a participant if there was anything regarding romantic relationships that her father taught her. She responded:

It isn't a good thing, but I'd say he taught me not to trust men. Which is a bad thing. I really don't trust him. He used to give me hope, like false hope... For example, he didn't come to my graduation because of my mom's boyfriend at the time. So he never really tried to come through and fix his life knowing that he had me in his life. So he kind of makes me not trust men with what they say. Or when they say they're going to do something, I don't believe them.

Due to the unreliability of her father, this young woman is now faced with the difficulty of trusting other men she encounters in her life. Her father's actions, or the lack thereof, has disappointed her in previous childhood events. Another participant who grew up rarely seeing her father, commented on a specific situation her father revealed his true colors during a time her and her mother needed him, and asked for his assistance:

Ultimately, everything he told my mom and I was a big lie. Around the time we got evicted, my mom found out she was pregnant with my brother. He would spend the night sometimes and I thought, "It's so cool to have both my mom and my dad here, it's like we're a little family!" Here's the part where I started to hate him. Maybe a week before we got evicted, we went to my grandma's house because he was living there at the time and I told him, "Me and mom are about to get booted out, she's pregnant with your child, so can you please help us?" He said, "I don't know what to tell you. I don't have any money. I can't do nothing to help you." It was at that moment that my whole daddy's girl image just shattered. I was 15 years old. From that day forward, I hated him. Completely hated him. My mom was like, "Honey, he's always been like this. He's never really stuck his neck out or anything for you. Everything that you think that he did growing up, it was actually me."

This participant was able to make meaning of her father's untrustworthy actions after reflecting and talking about this situation with her mother. This specific instance had ruined her optimism she previously had for her father and for enjoying things as a family, which ultimately led to feelings of hate for him. This same participant further explained:

If he really did apologize, I wouldn't have believed him at all because he just lies. Right now, if he told me, "I'm sorry, I know what I did was wrong", I wouldn't believe him. If he told me that the sky was blue, I would have to look up and see for myself because I most definitely would not believe him...I just don't understand how you could tell me that you love me and still not want to genuinely make things right with me. I don't mean some sappy sorry that you just pulled out of your butt. I mean real affection and genuine honesty. I don't believe you when you say that you love me and I know I don't love you because I don't feel that I have to. You should have put in the time and the effort to be a parent, and then apologize to me for being terrible.

Not being able to trust or rely on her father has generated feelings of confusion and resentment towards him. A desire for her father to be sincere, affectionate, apologetic, and loving towards her is connected to an emptiness felt from him not being present in her life.

Not Sure What to Expect in Romantic Relationships

Unfortunately, when fathers were absent this also seems to create uncertainty about romantic relationships, and about how they function. One participant who grew up without her father admitted that when it comes to relationships, she is kind of just guessing what things are supposed to be like between partners:

With my dad not being in my life, I kind of have an idea of how a man is supposed to treat me, but it's just like I really don't know. So, I really don't know what to do, what not to do, what's acceptable and what isn't acceptable in a relationship. So, my relationships are affected because I don't really know what a good relationship is, or what one is supposed to be like. I have only seen the bad. Like when my mom talks about my dad and says, "He's not a good father and he was never a good boyfriend either" ... I just go off what I see in the movies and stuff like that because I don't really know what it's supposed to be like. So, I feel like my relationships end because I have these high expectations of what I think relationships are supposed to be like, and then they're not.

This participant described her awareness of the high expectations she has in relationships, and at times, they may be unrealistic expectations, causing the relationship to end. Having high expectations may be the result of only seeing relationships in the movies or being exposed to only the negative dynamic between her biological parents.

Without understanding how romantic relationships function, some participants expressed apathy about pursuing a committed relationship. As stated by one participant:

I haven't had any relationships since high school because I think I figured, "What's the point?" I don't really know what a really good relationship looks like... So I just don't really know what defines a good relationship or marriage because I myself have never seen one happen in my family... And at this point in life, I don't really know what I'll be looking for.

Once again, the unknown in romantic relationships among these emerging adult women have caused feelings of skepticism and insecurity about entering a relationship due to the lack of exposure of healthy family and parental relationships throughout the course of their life.

Parental Relationship Instability

The third category encompasses a variety of family environments among these participants including the instability that parental discord, separation, and divorce often create. For participants whose parents were once together, regardless of their commitment level, two main themes emerged from our data. Having awareness of what went wrong in the parental relationship, as well feeling concerned about repeating similar patterns to that of their parents' relationship or marriage were the two dominant points that surfaced from seeing their parents' unsuccessful relationship. The biggest take away for these two themes is that the participants eventually realized the weaknesses in their parent's relationship, and want to be sure that they are not replicating those weaknesses in their current or future romantic relationships.

Aware of Parent's Relationship Shortcomings

The majority of the participants recognized shortcomings in their own parents' relationships, and in this way learned "what not to do." One participant explained that she noticed one of the weaknesses in her parent's marriage:

I could definitely tell there were some communication issues between them. I think my parent's relationship has influenced me a lot. I learned that communication is very important because it was one of the biggest shortcomings in their marriage. So I am definitely careful and check in emotionally with my boyfriend quite a bit, just to make sure we're on the same page and know where we stand and how we feel about certain things.

Applying what she learned from her parent's unsuccessful relationship to her own romantic relationship, this participant explained how she is very mindful about communicating well with her current partner. Since one of the issues in her parent's relationship was ineffective communication, she has become more conscious in the way that she approaches her boyfriend with conversations, feelings, and goals in her present relationship.

Fearful of Mirroring Parent's Relationship

Consistent with the research literature, family instability can have a detrimental impact on adult children and impact their attitudes and beliefs about marriage and romantic relationships (e.g., Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2011). For one participant, her parents lacked an affectionate relationship while they were married, and how she is trying to prevent an issue that came up in her parent's relationship, from happening in her own romantic relationship:

In my current relationship, I pay attention to making sure we tell each other we love each other. When we're together I say "I love you", and I'll send him texts that say "I love you". I guess it's probably because I didn't see my parents tell each other that they loved each other a lot, and I want to make sure my boyfriend knows that I'm here, I care about him, and I genuinely want to be in this relationship with him. I could see how my actions may have been influenced by the fact that I didn't see my parents show a lot of affection when I was a kid. It kind of makes sense. And I also didn't see my parents be physically affectionate toward each other either..... I do want to make sure that I'm not mirroring my parent's relationship.

According to this participant, showing love and affection for her current romantic partner, both verbally and physically, are behaviors that she ensures to incorporate into her relationship. She outright states how her actions are likely to be connected to the lack of witnessing any type of love or affection exchanged between her parents growing up. In her current relationship with her boyfriend, this participant frequently puts forth the effort to practice these healthy

relationship behaviors, in hopes that her relationship will not reflect that of her parents. For another participant, her parent's marriage has been on a steady decline for years:

I think their relationship has shown me what I don't want in mine. I'd try to just calm them down and get them to listen but that didn't work. I feel like it's just shown me what I don't want. I want someone that I don't ever feel the need to scream at. I don't want to ever feel like my husband doesn't love me, or that my husband picks our kids over me. I just don't want to argue [laughs] in the future. I don't want to argue; I don't want to see my husband to leave. All that stuff I had to see growing up, I just don't want that [chuckles]. I don't want my kids to be scared.

This participant explains that she knows exactly what she does not want to deal with in a relationship or a marriage. It is clear she witnessed frequent parental conflict, and recognizes that her parent's relationship was not healthy, resulting in an emphasis on her desire for a romantic relationship that is the exact opposite of theirs. The biggest take away for these two themes is that the participants eventually identified the negative examples and weaknesses they observed in their parent's relationship, and want to be sure that they are not replicating those weaknesses in their own current or future romantic relationships. Some of these emerging adult women admitted that they have already begun taking action to prevent conflict in their relationships.

Learning from Fathers

Emerging adult women can learn from their fathers, stepfathers, and other male figures in their lives in a variety of ways. A number of participants mentioned compromise, equality, communication, commitment, being affectionate, loyal, honest, caring, and trustworthy, as vital qualities in romantic relationships which accounted for a combination of both their own beliefs, and their fathers' beliefs.

Relationship Expectations

In this study, there was a clear divide among participants in terms of knowing what to expect in romantic relationships. Many emerging adult women also reported that knowing how to be treated when dating is something fathers are able to make their daughters aware of. One participant stated:

I think fathers should teach their daughters that partners should be equal and that a relationship is not a movie; it's a process. A relationship is a process, and it grows and evolves. You have to be willing to commit to the evolution of it. You have to see if it is even going to evolve into anything worthwhile or if it is going to fizzle out. My dad would ask, "Is it going to be a firework that doesn't last, or is it like a campfire that lights you and keeps you warm for a long time?" Remember that you have a voice and you can be strong by yourself, but sometimes you need someone to share the weight in life. That is when a potential partner comes into play. It isn't about one person; it's about the other person too. Relationships are a balance between sharing the weight and being independent.

According to this participant, it is important that fathers explain to their daughters how to identify which relationships are worth pursuing, as well as understanding how relationships are a process that change over time in conjunction with the two people who are in them. Another emerging adult participant added:

I think that if you're just honest with your partner...be honest, communicate, and show affection. You should make sure they appreciate who you are and if you are honest, open, communicative, and never hold anything back, then it will be successful.

She stated that honesty and an open line of communication were qualities she believes are mandatory for a successful couple relationship. Additionally, a different participant indicated a few expectations in relationships she considers to be essential for fathers to teach their daughters:

Dads definitely need to tell their daughters how they should be treated in a relationship, and to not settle for one. Fathers should also explain to their daughters that they should not let whoever they're in a relationship with walk all over them, and make sure it's known that their opinion matters too. Relationships are not one-sided, and it's all about compromise. Taking turns on what to do, being able to meet in the middle, as well as

mutual loyalty and trust are all important. Also, don't assume the worst, but rather, hope for the best.

This young woman commented on the need for fathers to communicate importance of equality, finding a middle ground between partners, and trusting one another by staying loyal to their daughters when talking about relationships. She also mentions maintaining optimism and hope for the future of the relationship as key points. Moreover, another participant shared some things that daughters could learn from their fathers when it comes to being realistic about the progression of couple relationships:

Fathers should let their daughters know that it takes two to make things work... Just from the stance that if you're going to marry someone, you love them and you both love each other so much that you got married. It's a big deal, it's a big step, and you should be able to work things out because yeah, you might encounter some obstacles, but you have each other to get through it... You have to fight; you have to work for it... Never forget the reason why you started to love each other in the first place, and just show that you are committed enough to make that step.

According to this participant, fathers should explain to their daughters that showing love and persevering through tough times in relationships are two things that assist a couple's growth and increase their strength.

The following emerging adult woman mentioned that when fathers demonstrate chivalric behaviors, it may help daughters understand that it is reasonable to have expectations in romantic relationships:

Pulling her chair out so she can sit down and opening doors for her you know. Their daughters should know how to be treated, so show them in a way how a partner should act and treat them in relationships. Treating them with respect so they know it's normal to be taken care of, especially for daughters who don't grow up with fathers in their lives; they may not know what it is like to have a man in their life.

Being treated fairly in a relationship is among the most reasonable expectations to have.

Whether a father figure was in the picture to relay that information to their daughters or not, everyone deserves to be respected in their relationships.

Fathers Can Be the Example

Individuals of all ages construct meaning of their world by observing others, according to social learning theory. Parental figures often set an example for their children, and this trend continues through adulthood. Majority of the participants agreed that regardless of whether their parents were married, ultimately, fathers should be exhibiting a healthy relationship similar to that of a relationship they hope their daughters can someday replicate. One participant who grew up without her father consistently in her life commented:

It would be helpful if fathers try to emulate the relationships that they want their daughters to have. For instance, if your parents are married, a dad should show them throughout their life what a good relationship looks like. He would try to show them that a man should treat a woman in this manner. Showing is always better than telling because actions speak louder than words. So, if they want their daughters to know how a man should act, dad should be a man and show them what that is.

On the contrary, I interviewed a participant with parents who have been married for over 25 years, and explained things she observed her dad do for her mom over the years, and how his actions exemplify what she will look for in a future partner:

My dad has told me about the stuff he does for my mom. Like surprising her and getting her a new wedding band for their 25th Anniversary. He told her, "You go pick it out". They would also go to the movie theater every Tuesday for their movie date night. It gives me like a sense of what's right to look for in a relationship and what kind of guy I'd want to be with. So, I'm not setting myself up with someone who's not going to treat me right.

Similarly, another young woman with married parents stressed the significance of witnessing the familial actions of fathers regardless if they are negative or positive examples:

I feel like you practice what you preach. You treat your daughter(s) the way that you think that other people should treat them. You can't expect your daughter to go out into the world and find a good partner if you treat her like crap yourself. I feel like everyone needs the attention, and just build up their self-worth. Let daughters know that they're okay and they're good enough by themselves. By showing their kids how things should be and how to treat a woman... Just showing and leading by example is an important thing. Negative examples can be powerful too. Maybe the kids observed their parent's actions and decided to not be like that in their own relationships. They can make a decision to do better and be better by not following in their footsteps and repeating a toxic pattern they were exposed to.

These participants stressed the importance of fathers being a role model on how to succeed and function in romantic relationships. In this way their father could provide an example for them to follow and know they should be looking for in their own relationships.

Exploring with the participants what they hoped to learn from their father provided a variety of insights. Another participant discussed a combination of many things fathers could help make their daughters aware of when considering relationships:

Fathers should help prepare their daughters for romantic relationships. Fathers should definitely warn them that some people are sneaky, and how you can figure out those warning signs or red flags, so you won't have to go through any trauma or suffer. Fathers can help make them aware of the emotional ride, and that it isn't just a physical thing when you're with someone – it's all levels. I think they can show and be a model, especially when it comes to how they treat the mother. A healthy marriage is definitely something kids can look up to. Dads should always do things to show them that you should find someone who will do kind things for you rather than someone who doesn't care or doesn't put much effort into the relationship. Mentioning and making it a point to do the little things like surprising them with the little joys, or kind gestures that help keep the spouse happy.

Another participant who admits her father wasn't especially receptive to discuss romantic relationships with her, and seemed to be convinced that there are things daughters can benefit from their fathers regarding romantic relationships:

Well first, set by example, because if dad is not a loving husband, father, or whatever, I don't think that's a good example for girls. I feel that's the most important man in their life; the very first man in their life really. If they aren't exposed to a good example from them, then how are daughters going to go on and successfully find a romantic partner that

is fit for them? I think fathers should also have conversations with them about it and be more open. Going along with showing by example like I mentioned, dads should treat the mom the way they want their daughter to be treated in any sense.

There was noteworthy pattern among majority of the participants I interviewed for this study. These emerging adult daughters repeatedly expressed the need for fathers to be an example for their daughters by treating her (and other members of his family) how he wants her to be treated in a romantic relationship. Along with fathers setting an example, they should also be showing their daughters in addition to telling them what to expect in a romantic relationship.

Staying True to Oneself

Another notable trend among these emerging adult female participants, is that majority of them also explained that fathers need to communicate to their daughters how to stay true to themselves. There were many variations of this theme, including loving themselves, being comfortable in their own skin, having self-respect and self-worth, never settling, and only change for yourself, not for others. One participant described that it's okay to be mindful of yourself and to think about the bigger picture first:

I think the most important thing a father could tell their daughter is to not let a partner change them. You should always be true to yourself. If you're going to change, you shouldn't change for a partner. You should change for yourself because you don't like who you are currently, not because of something they said... I think fathers should tell them that if you remain who you are and don't let anyone change you, then the person you're meant to be with will appreciate you for who you are and what you bring to the table. They won't complete you – they will just add to the person you already are.

Some participants explained that there were other important male figures in their lives that provided a mentoring role. One young woman shared how a close family friend has been an influential male figure in her life. She explained:

I think he's a positive male role model because for one, I feel comfortable talking to him about how I'm feeling... He is trying to encourage me to know my worth and to know that a man doesn't define who I am as a woman. It's all about what I do and what I present to the world. He just encourages me to be myself and to not let anyone else tell me what it is I should or should not be doing, because I have a strong sense of who I am and I had a strong female show me the ropes. He tells me to stay true to myself...he's definitely encouraged me to pray about anything that is difficult that I'm going through and to keep my own personal relationship with God and to just turn to him when I can't handle something.

For this young woman, a father figure placed emphasis on the idea of being her own person, and that her identity is not defined by anyone but her. Another participant observed the need for fathers to teach their daughters self-love:

I feel like teaching daughters self-love is really important. Loving themselves before they can try to love somebody else and letting them know they're beautiful and that they don't need a guy to tell them they're beautiful. Just making sure they know that you need to love yourself do that you can love others. I feel like if my dad would've told me that, then I wouldn't feel the need to look to a guy to tell me that I'm beautiful and things of that nature.

This participant identified self-love as an important trait for women to have first before they can begin to truly love other people in their life. She also explained how she has caught herself trying to fill the void of her father by instead looking to a partner in relationships to build up her self-worth. These stories of young women highlight the need for fathers to contribute to their daughters' lives in more ways than one. Not only do the benefits come from physically being there in a daughter's life, but it is clear that fathers are unquestionably needed for the maintenance and improvement of emotional health among their daughters.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study deepened our understanding of the experiences in which emerging adult daughters had with their biological fathers, as well as other father figures in their life, and explored how they have influenced their perceptions of romantic relationships. Many of the findings in this study are consistent with important role that fathers have in the lives of the daughters (e.g., Jeynes, 2016). However, the personal stories of emerging adult daughters expressing the ways their fathers have influenced their perceptions about their own romantic relationships, is greatly underrepresented in the existing literature. During the intensive interviews, each participant was asked, then expanded on their family of origin, the individual relationships with their mother, father, or another father figure as a child, and currently, the nature of parental relationship over time, and currently, their past and current romantic relationships, what they learned from their fathers regarding romantic relationships, and what they believe fathers could do to teach their daughters more about romantic relationships.

This study utilized qualitative constructivist grounded theory posed by Charmaz (2014). Constructivist grounded theory allowed the researcher to follow leads during interpretation of the data, outlining the in-depth experiences, situations, meanings, and perspectives of the study's participants. The findings of our work were able to address the four research questions presented.

Father Presence

Many participants who had a father that was active in their life, reported that fathers really can influence their daughters in feelings about romantic relationships, and that fathers have

an important perspective that should be shared more often with their daughters. Whether a father's perspective comes from his past dating experiences, advice given to him, or a book that he read, a handful of participants stated that when fathers provide their perspective on relationships, it actively influences the way their daughters view romantic relationships and make decisions in them. Many of the participants also revealed that fathers can give daughters hope for romantic relationships. The research subjects who noted this, were much more likely to have observed their father in a romantic relationship or marriage at some point in their life. Witnessing commitment, loyalty, honesty, trust, and affection were among some of the key behaviors that participants indicated were important to incorporate in romantic relationships in order to make them work. Having hope for a romantic relationship or marriage can come from a variety of sources, but for fathers to be one source of hope, is very powerful in the context of family relationships.

Father Absenteeism

Some participants did not grow up connected to their biological father, but in some cases, had a different father figure who was supportive due to those circumstances. Some participants expressed confusion, frustration, and resentment towards their biological father for being marginally involved in their life. The conditions in which the father was unable to be engaged with these emerging adult female participants, ranged from incarceration to parental hostility or divorce. This aligns with previous research (Krampe & Newton, 2012) suggesting that participants whose parents were not living in the same household report that the physical relationship with their father is lacking, and mothers are less likely to support the father-daughter

relationship. Adult daughters are also less likely to classify their nonresident fathers as being involved with them (Krampe & Newton, 2012).

For some emerging adult daughters whose father was not often in their life, expressed the difficulty they had trusting other people. Some revealed that they had trusting men, and even “shut out” men in some instances. Participants who had a father who was absent also disclosed that their father gave them false hope on a number of occasions they recalled. Another emergent theme for these young women was the idea of not knowing what to expect in romantic relationships. Participants who indicated this feeling of ambiguity were more likely to have not been around a father, a male role model, or a parental relationship or marriage frequently enough that they could observe a relationship. It is important that young women do not develop their ideas of relationships based off movies or fiction. However, that is the opposite of what one participant disclosed, and she believes it is because she did not witness a paternal figure with her mother.

Parental Relationship Instability

We also explored how the relationship between the biological mother and father alone, can influence the perceptions of romantic relationships among these emerging adult daughters. In this study, there was a mixture of participants whose parents were never married, were separated, or divorced. Some emerging adult women with divorced parents explained that they knew everyone in the family was better off if their mother and father were not together. Many participants were aware of the shortcomings in their parents’ relationship, (communication, infidelity, personal goals) as well as being concerned they would mirror their parents’ relationship at some point in their own future relationships. These findings align with previous

literature (Cui & Fincham, 2010) suggesting that parental divorce and marital conflict are associated with young adults' relationship outcomes through various means. Specifically, when offspring observe an unfavorable marriage between parents, resulting in divorce, they are more likely to develop negative views around marriage and believe divorce is an achievable way to end an unhealthy marriage (Cui & Fincham, 2010). Furthermore, it is also likely that such attitudes towards marriage and divorce will have some effect on their own romantic relationships on account to their commitment in their relationships (Cui & Fincham, 2010).

For many emerging adult participants, the relationship with one or both parents became worse through the teenage years, began improving as they reached young adulthood, and even improved further as participants reached their twenties. Emerging adult daughters in the present study did indicate that their fathers and mothers remarried post-parental divorce. During the teenage and young adult years were among the most frequent times participants indicated one parent remarrying. Some of these instances brought ambiguity and tension within the dyad, while others created a better understanding of what a healthy relationship is. A few participants reported that their relationship with their father became stronger after remarriage, and others reported that they found themselves considering their step-father as another father figure in their life. This is consistent with previous research (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003) suggesting that for many children, remarriage can be as stressful as the divorce itself. Their findings concluded that adult children who reported a father's remarriage was likely to positively affect their life, and their relationship was also likely to improve over time. Conversely, when adult children reported that the father's remarriage had a negative effect, the relationship became worse and their relationship with the new family was inclined to be negative. These findings are important since

it is relative to the long-term implications of the adult children's feelings about family post-divorce (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003).

Learning from Fathers

The majority of this study's participants explained that fathers have so much wisdom to give to their daughters, and one way to do that is to lead by example. Some emerging adult daughters reported that their father set a positive example for them throughout their life by the way of his actions, whether alone or on behalf of the mother. Many subjects explained that this gave them an idea of the types of behaviors that these young women should look for in a potential partner. Another avenue emerging adult daughters indicated they could learn from their fathers was that fathers have a unique perspective to contribute to the ideas formulated around romantic relationships. For one participant, it was clear she felt a desire for her father to share his past romantic relationship experiences with her, so she could absorb her father's perspective when it comes to her own relationships. Multiple subjects revealed that fathers should share their relationship past with their daughters if the daughter is open to it, because there is always something to be learned from others' experiences, whether it concerns relationships or not. Valuing a father's perspective alone, or in conjunction with a mother's perspective on romantic relationships, can both be beneficial for offspring. Multiple participants in the current study explained that having relationship advice from both her mother and her father was able to help her combine the two and construct her own idea of what she thought her romantic relationships should be like.

In the current study, it appeared that emerging adult daughters having a conversation with their father regarding sexual matters within a romantic relationship, were of the most

uncomfortable to approach or carry-out for these young women. Teaching parents and young adults how to communicate with each other regarding sex and relationships is certainly one implication for practitioners and educators.

Strengths and Limitations

In the present study, valuable insights were added to the body of literature surrounding the unique role fathers play in their daughter's life. Due to the in-depth experiences provided by the subjects, there is an opportunity for future researchers to expand on other dynamics of the father-daughter dyad. The primary researcher conducted and analyzed all 24 intensive interviews with the participants. Nevertheless, this study's limitations shall not be overlooked.

None of the participants in the current study had lost a father to death. Additionally, in this sample, none of the participants were mothers themselves. Unlike many emerging adult women, none of the women in this sample were engaged, married, or divorced. The researcher did not include many questions about the participants' current relationship, and only asked follow-up questions. Only one vague question was asked by the researcher, which yielded participants to expand on their current and past romantic relationships. Another limitation of the current study is that the perspective of the emerging adult mothers or fathers were not included. Conducting qualitative interviews with the father and mother may benefit the literature further, as more perspective about this topic from different family members is incorporated to paint a full picture. The last limitation of this research was that the sample only consisted of heterosexual females in heterosexual romantic relationships. Future studies may want to consider investigating emerging adult homosexual women's relationships with their fathers, and how they have influenced beliefs about personal romantic relationships.

Implications

The findings from the current study could be particularly valuable to many professionals, educators, and practitioners who contribute to relationship and parent education. For instance, many emerging adult female participants in the present study described their fathers to be much less likely to engage in conversations revolving around relationships than are mothers. Collins, Angera, and Latty (2008) suggested that incorporating conversations about romantic relationships and sexual health earlier, and more frequently in the offspring's life, and mixing them into everyday discussions, may ease the discomfort felt by both parties. Consistent with the current study's findings, Collins et al. (2008) also proposed that as the lines of communication begin to open and increase regarding romantic relationships and sexual experiences between fathers and their daughters, where various ideas and questions may be easily exchanged. With this strategy in mind, fathers can abandon the idea that only mothers can hold those conversations, and instead, be seen as an equally valuable, supportive, and less ambiguous resource for romantic relationships and sexuality education for their daughters (Collins et al., 2008).

Whether practitioners or educators are targeting the parents or the emerging adult daughters, awareness of being open about topics such as romantic relationships and sexual health is one way to end common discomfort and possible stigma. Another important topic for educators, practitioners, and professionals should consider is, the topic of social networking and dating sites. Due to the escalation of use across various ages, it is important that professionals incorporate programs that are inclusive to involving fathers (and mothers) knowing how to talk to their daughters about these common, yet seemingly risky technology outlets. Another way

professionals may be able to reach this specific population, is to expand the number of programs provided that target incarcerated fathers to benefit their daughters. Children of incarcerated parents are often presented with unique challenges, making it difficult for parents to maintain a close relationship with their children throughout their lives. This particular circumstance needs to be considered when thinking about appropriate programs within various institutions that wish to advocate for families.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study offers a significant contribution to the father-daughter relationship dyad, and how emerging adult daughters' life experiences can influence their perceptions about romantic relationships.

Though the sample provided variance with regard to age, racial classification, family background, and relationship status, a much larger sample of interviewees should be recruited for future studies in this topic. The majority of participants (58%) were in a romantic relationship at the time of the interview. However, some participants had never been in a romantic relationship in their life, and some were not in one at the time. Perhaps future research should recruit a sample of participants that are currently in a romantic relationship or have had a previous romantic relationship prior to the time of the study. It may be beneficial to include only emerging adult women that have had relationship experience one or more times, and then rule out participants who have never been in a relationship before, as it may be informative to conduct research on those emerging adult women separately.

Future research is needed to highlight how fathers are potentially positively or negatively influencing their emerging adult daughters' perceptions of romantic relationships in other ways

that were not discussed in this study. Our findings align with a similar contribution from Arnold et al. (2012) that additional studies are needed to help pinpoint the beliefs parents have about romantic relationships, and how they are communicated directly and indirectly to their daughters. Knowing what particular messages fathers communicate to their daughters growing up, or rather that emerging adult daughters think their parents expressed relationship expectations in other various ways, would be particularly beneficial to the existing literature (Arnold et al., 2012).

Conclusion

This study addressed an important subject matter regarding the dynamic between fathers and their emerging adult daughters, and how fathers influence their daughters' beliefs about romantic relationships. Our findings suggest that fathers who are present are more likely to give their daughters hope for a successful relationship or marriage, and that fathers have a unique perspective that should be communicated to their daughters. These findings also shed light on the consequences of father absence in the lives of emerging adult daughters, and the apathetic beliefs that emerge when it comes to their own romantic relationships. Having reflected on parental conflict, separation, or divorce, the participants reported awareness of their parents' relationship shortcomings, as well as the fear that their own relationships will mirror their parents'. The final finding from our study indicates that among emerging adult daughters, there is a significant desire to be informed, and a great deal of things that can be learned from their fathers when it comes to the topic of romantic relationships. The strongest means of learning from fathers in this study were identified by emerging adult women as, familiarity of relationship expectations, fathers leading by example, and staying true to oneself. Professionals who work with emerging adult women should consider how father-daughter relationships have had an impact on their

lives. In this way the findings from this study can be used to promote intentional decision-making for emerging daughters in their romantic relationships.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

**Young Adult Women Needed to Participate in a Study Regarding their
Relationships with their Fathers and Significant Others!**

Research has shown that father and daughter relationships are important and can impact women and their ability to function in romantic relationships. Regardless of your current relationship with your biological father, we would like for you to participate. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships of emerging adult daughters with their fathers from childhood to adulthood, and how those unique experiences over time shape their romantic relationships.

Participants will be asked to fill out a short survey and questionnaire and then to actively participate in a one-on-one interview, which will last for approximately 60 minutes. Participants will be debriefed and will also receive a \$10.00 gift card to Chipotle upon the completion of the study process.

This study has been approved by the NIU Institutional Review Board (Protocol # HS18-0001). For more information regarding this research study, please contact: Katie Granger, B.S., a Graduate student in the School of Family and Consumer Sciences, at Northern Illinois University at kgranger1@niu.edu. Thank you for your consideration!

To participate, please sign up for an interview date and time using the applicable web link below:

Doodle Poll Link: bit.ly/FatherDaughterResearch

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

I agree to participate in the research project titled “The Influence of Father Involvement on Emerging Adult Daughters Romantic Relationships” being conducted by Katie M. Granger, a graduate student in the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Northern Illinois University with the assistance of her graduate thesis director, D. Scott Sibley, a faculty member in the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Northern Illinois University.

I have been informed that the purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of emerging adult daughters and their fathers, from childhood to adulthood, and how those unique father-daughter experiences have shaped their beliefs and behaviors in regards to their own past, present, and future romantic relationships.

I am aware that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to fill out demographic information, fill out a hard-copy survey, and actively engage in a 60-minute, digital audio recorded, one-on-one interview with the researcher. I understand that if I have any outstanding concerns regarding this research study, I may contact the primary researchers, Katie Granger at kgranger1@niu.edu, or D. Scott Sibley at dscottsibley@niu.edu. This study has been approved by the University Institutional Review Board (#HS18-0001). I understand that if I wish to receive further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I understand that are many potential benefits from my participation in this study such as: recognizing how the relationship with my father has impacted my personal growth and development, understanding that my parent’s relationship can influence my perceptions and decision-making in romantic relationships, or recognizing ways that I might be able to improve my personal relationships.

I am aware that potential risks and/or discomfort I may experience during this study include feelings of vulnerability due to sharing my personal experiences in front of the researcher. I also understand that this interview will be recorded using a digital audio device to ensure a methodical and specific use of the data.

I understand that my signature shows that I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this research study. A signature on this document is an indicator that the study has been explained to me, that I have been given time to ask any questions I may have, and to receive an answer. By signing this document, I understand that all information will be used for research purposes only, and will be kept entirely confidential by removing all identifiable information from the data. I understand that I **will not** be identified by name. It has been encouraged that I make a copy of this signed and dated document, prior to my participation in this research study for my own records. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

I also understand that Northern Illinois University policy does not provide for compensation for, nor does the University carry insurance to cover injury or illness incurred as a result of participation in University sponsored research projects. I am aware that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I may have as a result of my participation. I have acknowledged that I may receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ Yes, I have read and understand the above statement, purpose, and procedure of this study. I agree to be a willing participant in this study.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have additional questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or any concerns about the matter, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

APPENDIX C

BRIEF DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Brief Demographic Survey

1. I Am:

- Male
- Female

2. How old are you? (in years) _____

3. Please indicate your race below: (check all that apply)

- White (Non-Hispanic)
- African American
- Latino
- Asian
- Native American/American Indian
- Other (please specify) _____

4. What year are you at the University?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

Other (please specify) _____

5. Please provide your email address below if you give us permission to contact you to potentially follow-up in case we have questions as we are analyzing the data (please indicate case specific letters):

6. Are you currently in a romantic relationship (e.g., dating, have a boyfriend, engaged)?

- Yes *If yes, please complete questions 7-10
- No * If no, please skip down to question 11

7. Which statement best describes your relationship?

- Dating nonexclusively
- Dating exclusively
- Engaged
- Married

8. This relationship is with:

- An opposite sex partner
- A same sex partner

9. My partner and I are:

- Living separately
- Living together

10. How long have you been in this relationship? (total time together as a couple)

_____ Years _____ Months

11. Please select the option that best describes your biological parent's situation:

- My parents are married
- My parents are divorced
- My parents are going through a trial separation
- One of my parents is deceased
- My parents never married
- Other (please specify) _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule

Initial Questions to Establish Rapport:

1. Please begin by stating your name, your age, and year of school status.
2. What are you studying?
3. What are your plans after graduating from NIU?

Questions Relevant to the Study:

4. What was the structure of your household like growing up? For example, did you live with your father, your mother, your grandparents? What is your household structure like now?
5. How many siblings do you have?
6. Are your parents married? How would you describe their relationship?
7. How would you describe the nature of your relationship with your biological mother growing up? How would you currently describe your relationship with her?
8. How would you define father involvement?
9. How would you describe the nature of your relationship with your biological father growing up? How would you currently describe your relationship with him?
10. Is there someone else in your life that you consider to be a father figure, other than your biological father? How would you currently describe your relationship with them?
11. Please consider the relationship between your biological mother and father. How do you believe your own personal romantic relationships have been influenced by your parents and by the relationship with your biological father?

12. Is there someone else in your life that you consider to be a father figure (like a grandfather, uncle, family friend, etc.) that has been influential in your decision-making in romantic relationships? If so, how?
13. What things were you able to pick up on and observe from your father [figure] regarding romantic relationships?
14. What kinds of things regarding relationships, has your father [figure] taught you?
15. What kind of advice has your father [figure] given to you regarding your own personal romantic relationships?
16. What do you believe fathers could do to teach their daughters more about how to succeed in romantic relationships?

APPENDIX E

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

We appreciate your time and participation in this research study concerning father involvement and relationship functioning among emerging adult women. Adult daughters and their fathers are the least studied parent-adult child dyad. Fathers have been found to be uniquely psychologically salient figures in their adult children's lives.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the unique experiences of the father-daughter dyad among emerging adult college females, and how those experiences influence their beliefs and behaviors regarding their own romantic relationships. By completing this study, you have made a contribution to an area of research that may help professionals and clinicians understand how to help emerging adult women in their relationships with their father and with their significant others.

If you would like to receive a copy of this study after it has been completed, or a summary of our findings in this research, please contact the primary researcher, Katie Granger, at kgranger1@niu.edu. If you have any concerns regarding ethical standards about this research study, please contact the NIU Institutional Review Board at (815) 753-8588.

Below are resources in DeKalb, IL you may wish to seek:

- The Couple and Family Therapy Clinic at (815) 753-1684 or at familytherapy@niu.edu
Located in Wirtz Hall, Room 146, DeKalb, IL 60115
- Counseling and Consultation Services at (815) 753-1206
Located in the campus Life Building, Room 200, DeKalb, IL 60115
- The Community Counseling and Training Center at (815) 753-9312 or at cahc_cctc@niu.edu
Located in Graham Hall, Room 416, 290 North Annie Gladden Road DeKalb, IL 60115