AN EXAMINATION OF EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START MOTHERS AND HOW RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS INFLUENCE EXPECTATIONS FOR AND EXPERIENCES OF AGGRESSION

by

LESLIE A. ABBOTT

(Under the Direction of Jennifer A. Samp)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between dependence power and Early Head Start and Head Start (EHS/HS) mothers' tolerance of intimate partner violence. Seventy-four EHS/HS mothers completed questionnaires measuring their levels of dependence power, their tolerance of intimate partner violence, their perception of their youngest child's fathers' desired involvement, and their use of disciplinary tactics on children. Results indicated that although there were not significant relationships between dependence power and intimate partner violence, there was a significant relationship between a mother's perception of a father's desire to be involved in his child's life and her tolerance of intimate partner violence. In addition, there were significant associations between interactions of the individual dimensions of dependence power and tolerance of intimate partner violence. Significant relationships were also found between individual dependence power dimensions and mothers discipline tactics.

INDEX WORDS: Dependence power, Intimate partner violence, Early Head Start, Head Start, Child discipline, Relationship commitment, Relational alternatives

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DEDICATION

I would first and foremost like to dedicate this thesis to my mom and dad, Jane and Terry Abbott, as thanks for their unending encouragement, love and support. They have always been my number one fans and I appreciate that more than they'll ever know. Their hard work and dedication to all they do is inspiring and the motivation behind all of my accomplishments. They are my rocks, my anchors keeping me grounded and constantly reassuring me of who I am and who I want to be. I know I can accomplish anything with them by side.

Next, this paper is dedicated to my friends and family at home in Boston. I'd like to thank them for unselfishly supporting me in my decision to head south for a while. Their phone calls, emails, and visits have kept me going, reminding me I'm never really far from home.

I also must dedicate this project to Betsy, Carolyn, and Katie, my fellow cohort ladies. Our lunches at McAlister's, mornings spent by the pool, and late nights working together on class assignments have all contributed to getting me through graduate school. I couldn't have asked for better colleagues and friends. Their intelligence has inspired me and challenged me over the past two years, and I am a better person for having known them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal relationships are often a great source of positive benefits such as happiness, security, and satisfaction. However, some close relationships turn costly, leaving participants trapped in unhealthy and potentially dangerous associations. In some instances, people may perceive that they cannot leave their relationships because they are emotionally or economically dependent on a partner, fear the consequences of terminating a relationship with a partner who does not want the pairing to end, or feel that they need to stay with a partner for the sake of their children. Without the physical or psychological ability to leave a relationship, individuals become prey to any violent behavior in which a partner decides to engage. Intimate partner violence (IPV) transforms our most intimate relational partners from trusted confidants to our worst enemies. Previous research on intimate partner violence focuses primarily on marital relationships, explaining how factors such as economic dependency can heighten one's risk for experiencing domestic violence. This study examines the risk for intimate partner violence by utilizing the construct of *dependence power*. Dependence power is the power one derives when she compares her commitment to a relationship to her relational partner's commitment and his potential relational altnernatives. Samp and Solomon (2001) say that dependence power "reflects the control that a partner who is less dependent on the relationship possesses in the eyes of the dependent party" (p. 139).

Previous examinations utilizing the dependence power construct have focused on the context of dating relationships between college undergraduates. Using dependence power as a

tool for studying intimate partner violence, this study contributes to filling a gap in the present literature by examining a unique context outside of the traditional marital or undergraduate dating relationships. Early Head Start and Head Start (EHS/HS) programs in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia see many instances of parents who are trying to negotiate raising a child together without being married or even dating partners. Families enrolled in these programs experience above average stress and conflict due to poor living conditions, low income level, and employment difficulties. Thus, this study examines the Athens-Clarke County EHS/HS population to demonstrate a need for utilizing the construct of dependence power to study violence, while simaltaneously making socially significant contributions to an at-risk population.

While previous literature on relational violence focuses primarily on the role of resource or punitive power that is embedded in the structure of marriage (e.g. financial dependence), examining the potential relationship between dependence power and violence in adult relationships that are not necessarily bound by marriage will provide a greater understanding of the influences on intimate partner violence. Therfore, this study examines the relationship between mothers enrolled in EHS/HS and the fathers of their youngest children enrolled in the program (from here on referred to as the "target child"). Many of these mothers are not married to the fathers of the target children and in most instances the relationship between the mothers and fathers is solely for the purpose of parenting their children. As a result, it must be noted that in this study the construct "intimate relationship" does not necessarily represent the average romantic or familial relationship. Instead, for the purpose of this study, an intimate relationship is defined by two people bound by having had at least one child together. This definition may include parents who are married, dating each other, or no longer have any romantic affiliation. It should be noted that several mothers enrolled in EHS/HS may have multiple children by multiple

fathers. However, to provide an initial examination of the influences of dependene power in this population this project narrows its focus to the relationship that the mother has with the father of the target child.

This thesis advances the study of the concept of dependence power by acting as the first application of the concept to a non-student sample while also focusing on a population that is substantially at risk for violence due to demographic and situational characteristics. Consequently, this study has important social significance providing results that can be used to educate the population on communication skills that will not only improve their daily lives and interactions but reduce their chances of experiencing intimate partner violence. This thesis will commence with a discussion of the EHS/HS population and a justification for utilizing this poulation in the study (Chapter 2). Next, past literature on dependence power and intimate partner violence will be reviewed (Chapter 3). The literature review will be followed by an outline of the study's method (Chapter 4) and a description of all analyses and results (Chapter 5). Lastly, the thesis will include discussion of the observations and potential limitations of the study as well as a illustrate how results of the study could be used in designing a curriculum for EHS/HS parents (Chapter 6).

CHAPTER 2

EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START POPULATION

Since intimate partner violence has been studied in limited relational contexts, a main goal of this thesis was to examine the concept using an at-risk population, so that results of this study may contribute to efforts in improving relational functioning in a variety of pairings. This chapter is devoted to describing the population of focus in this study so as to highlight the unique implications of this population on the study of dependence power and intimate partner violence.

The Athens-Clarke County Early Head Start/Head Start programs services low income families within Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. Income eligibility for these programs is based on the federal poverty guidelines (A. Moon, personal communication, June, 2008). The 2008 Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines indicate that the income requirements are as follows: 1 person household, $10,400; 2 person household, $14,000; 3 person household, $17,600; 4 person household, $21,200; 5 person household, $24,800; 6 person household, $28,400; 7 person household, $32,000; and 8 person household, $35,600. For each additional person after 8 the guidelines add $3,600 (The 2008 HHS Poverty Guidelines, 2008). According to the Early Head Start/Head Start Federal Program Information Report, ninety-two families were enrolled in Early Head Start program during the 2006-2007 fiscal year (Early Head Start and Head Start, 2007).[1] The ethnic breakdown of program participants was as follows: 78% African American, 14% Latino, 6% white, and 2% "other". Families enrolled in the program face an excessive number of stresses and challenges due to life circumstances. For instance, a

[1] Since Athens Clarke County received approval for the Head Start program in summer of 2007, no annual statistics were available for the Head Start program when 2006-2007 Federal Program Information Report was published.

majority of the families enrolled in EHS from 2006-2007 were single parent families (89.13%). A lack of education is one of the chief challenges that the EHS/HS population faces. Statistics indicate that 68% of EHS/HS participants have less than a high school diploma upon entering the program. An additional stress that many EHS/HS mothers face is that the fathers of their children are not involved in the children's lives. Only 31.53% of families have fathers that are involved in their children's lives (Early Head Start and Head Start, 2007). The Federal Program Information Report for the 2007-2008 fiscal year has not yet been completed and therefore, a breakdown of the demographics for the year is not available. It is known however, that 83 families were served by the Athens-Clarke County Early Head Start program during the period from September 1, 2007 until June 23, 2008 (A. Moon, personal communication, June, 2008). Of these 83 families, 9 were two parent and 74 were single parent families. In total, there were 98 children between these 83 families. The Athens-Clarke County Head Start Program served 91 families including 94 children ages 3 and 4 during the period from November 1, 2007 until June 23, 2008. Of these families, 9 were two-parent and 82 were single parent families (A. Moon, personal communication, June, 2008).

Past research demonstrates the presence of a relationship between both income and socio-economic status (SES) and the perpetration and toleration of violence. Sorenson et al. (1996) found that individuals with lower incomes (<$25,000) were more likely than individuals with higher incomes ($25,000-$39,999) to report physical intimate partner violence. Results of a longitudinal study performed by Magdol, Moffitt, Caspi, Newman, Fagan, and Silva (1997) found that men who are perpetrators of severe partner violence have experienced chronic unemployment and have received minimal education. These results again highlight the relationship between violence and SES given that employment status and education level are two

indices of SES. The authors provide a potential theoretical explanation for their findings by explaining that male violence may arise due to the fact that individual factors such as poor education and unemployment challenge the male traditional position of dominance. Cunradi, Caetano, and Schafer (2002) found that income level was a more accurate indicator of the probability of intimate partner violence than education level or employment status. Gelles (1985) explains that individuals from lower SES strata are subject to greater social stress and negative life events such as unemployment, low income and illness, which may give rise to situational violence and abuse. Schumacher, Felbau-Kohn, Slep, and Heyman (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of existing violence literature in which they emphasize the connection between SES and intimate partner violence. Although education, occupational status, and income level can all be considered indices of one's SES strata, Schumacher et al. (2001) observed the strongest relationship to be between income and male partner aggression. They explain that although studies measured income in a variety of ways studies consistently observed that the lower the income the more risk there was that male-to-female partner abuse would occur.

The goals and priorities of Athens-Clarke County Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS) highlight the importance of educating low-income family caregivers in order to prepare them to be successful teachers and leaders for their families. The EHS/HS mission also states that the program desires to create families that provide a safe and nurturing atmosphere for children to grow in (Clarke County School District Instructional Services, 2008). Recognizing that caregivers are the most important teachers and leaders of their family, it is evident that the interaction of intimate partners contributes greatly to the type of atmosphere in which the EHS/HS children will grow up.

A description of EHS/HS programs and their participants help to explain why intimate partner violence could be an immediate concern of this target population. Not only does the population fit the demographic described above but results from a recent feedback questionnaire distributed by Early Head Start/Head Start Coordinator indicate that parents in this target population have reported difficulties managing stress and negotiating conflict (A. Moon, personal communication, September, 2007). These parents explain that they need help with having patience and with communicating better with their partners. A stressful environment can breed violent behavior when people do not know how to constructively communicate conflict and manage his/her stress and emotions. Early Head Start/Head Start also stresses the desire to include fathers in the lives of their children and families. Many of these fathers have low education and/or low self-esteem and may be prone to succumbing to violent behaviors. These factors, combined with the stress of parenting and interacting with their intimate partners, may provoke violence if we do not research how to predict and further prevent the onset of such behavior.

Further, throughout nine months of interacting with children enrolled in the Head Start Pre-Kindergarten programs as a volunteer, I observed that many of the children enrolled in EHS/HS frequently display intense violent tendencies. The Head Start Pre-K instructors concurred with these observations explaining that many of the students do not understand how to verbally express their feelings or how to handle conflict. The children believe that engaging in violent behavior is the only way to express their negative feelings or stand up for themselves. The instructors continuously struggled in an attempt to engage in lessons that would teach the children how to express their feelings and how to solve problems using their words. During my volunteer period, the Head Start instructors expressed frustration in how unsuccessful the

students had been in adopting these emotional communication and conflict negation strategies, and speculated that constructive communication tactics were not being reinforced at home. In one instance, the instructor called a mother to notify her that her son was in serious trouble for physically hurting other students and the mother's response was that she'd give the child a beating when he got home from school. The instructor explained that a barrier to teaching students constructive communication skills is that some parents are teaching their children that violence is an acceptable solution to problems. Another example that demonstrates this barrier occurred when I was reprimanding one of the female students for threatening to beat up a classmate. The student explained that her mom told her to beat up any kids who picked on her or took toys from her.

The severity of the children's violence can be demonstrated in one final anecdote from my observations of the Head Start classroom. I observed how a mother who had come to volunteer in the classroom one day began to cry when she witnessed the way that the children interacted with each other and promptly decided to permanently remove her child from the school. Myself, as well as the teachers in the EHS/HS classroom have had experience in other pre-K classrooms outside of the EHS/HS context and agreed that there is a significant difference in the amount of violence that the children in the EHS/HS programs engage in and have been exposed to when compared to other children their age. My experience again demonstrates an acute need to study violence and violence toleration using the EHS/HS population.

The research and anecdotal information reviewed above suggests that individuals in the low-income population who are receiving services from the Early Head Start/Head Start program may be at a heightened risk for relational abuse. Therefore, this thesis will examine hypotheses about the relationship between various life factors of the target population, dependence power

and the risk for intimate partner violence. The next chapter turns to provide greater insight into the relationship between dependence power and intimate partner violence as well as present several hypotheses concerning the nature of this relationship.

CHAPTER 3

DEPENDENCE POWER AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Chapter two offered a description of EHS/HS population characteristics demonstrating the risk of intimate partner violence that individuals in the population face. This chapter will review previous research on dependence power and intimate partner violence in order to advance predictions about the relationship between an individual's dependence power and their tolerance of intimate partner violence. The concept of dependence power draws themes from the concepts of dependency and relational power. Hirschfeld, Klerman, Gough, Barret, Korchin, and Chodoff (1977) define interpersonal dependency as "a complex of thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors which revolve around the need to associate closely with, interact with, and rely upon valued other people" (p.610). Individuals who possess this high interpersonal dependency desire more support and approval from others, have low social self-esteem, have difficulty making unaided decisions, and are more anxious or fearful of being abandoned than people with lower levels of interpersonal dependency (Meyer & O'Leary, 1994).

Dependency is often defined as constitutive of two types: economic and emotional. *Economic dependency* is defined by the degree to which one person relies on another for financial support. *Emotional dependency* reflects a need for nurturance, protection, and support, even when a person is capable of functioning and taking care of his or herself (Bornstein, 2006).

Although research acknowledges both types of dependency most investigations focus on the easier to diagnose, economic dependency (Kalmuss & Strauss, 1982). Emotional dependency is more illusive and is often used as a default category when a woman cannot tangibly identify

the commitment to her relationship (Bornstein, 2006). Bornstein (2006) explains that emotional dependence is commonly operationalized by Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD) symptoms such as submissive and clinging behavior that results from an individuals' overwhelming need to be taken care of. The author points out that this helplessness conceptualization of dependence is the conceptualization that most studies adopt when examining the role of dependency on violence.

Examinations of relational power as a construct distinct from dependency often define power as a function of which partner makes most of the decisions in distinct areas, such as where the couple lives or what goods are purchased (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Most literature on domestic violence examines *power* from this outcome domain perspective. Gray-Little and Burks (1983) explain that power can also be defined as a capacity to produce intended effects. Cromwell and Olson (1975) state that power can be divided into three domains: (a) power bases or resources that contribute to power, (b) power process such as the amount of time that one talks, or who interrupts whom, and (c) power outcome, such as who makes the decisions in the relationship. Both Gray-Little and Burks (1983) and Sagrestano, Heavey, and Christensen (1999) emphasize the importance of discerning between perception of potential power and the actual control of outcomes in a relationship. A major difference stems from the fact that potential power can be measured in the individual through use of a self-report where assessment of actual control must be measured in an interpersonal context, based on couple interaction (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983).

The construct of dependence power fuses many of the themes related to relational power and dependency and further acknowledges that power and dependency are defined in part by the interdependence of relationship partners. Interdependence arises when relational partners are

dependent on each other to achieve certain needs and goals (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). Formally defined, relational dependence power reflects a composite judgment of an individual's perception of his or her own commitment to a relationship, as well as his or her perceptions of a partner's commitment to the relationship, and that partner's alternatives to the pairing (Solomon & Samp, 1998). Individuals accrue dependence power in their relationships to the extent that they are perceived by a committed partner to be uncommitted to the relationship and have viable relationship alternatives (Cloven & Roloff, 1993).

Prior research has highlighted that dependence power influences both judgments about relational behaviors and how one communicates within their relationships. The bulk of the research has focused on how dependence power influences decisions about a partner's behavior. For example, Roloff and Cloven (1990) argued that people who perceive partners as having more dependence power will withhold complaints about the partner's irritating behavior, so as not to threaten the status of a current relationship. Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, and Lipkus (1991) observed that individuals who had stronger commitment, and poorer quality of alternatives (therefore, having low dependence power) are more likely to accommodate to their partner's dissatisfying actions. Further, Solomon and Samp (1998) argued that dependence power influences judgments about a partner's irritating behavior, such that those low in dependence power will downplay the seriousness of the irritating behavior of a powerful other.

Samp and Solomon (2001) examined how dependence power affects how individuals view and communicate about their own problematic behavior. The authors observed that when people are concerned that their partners will leave a relationship for alternatives, they magnify the severity of their own problematic behavior. This study also detected that if individuals perceive their partners as being committed to the relationship they would more actively

communicate to repair the relationship, whereas if they perceived their partners as having low commitment to the relationship they would avoid communication (practicing the chilling effect).

It is clear to see how the concept of dependence power, can explain certain communicative behaviors. The partner who is less dependent (having higher dependence power) has fewer concerns about the relationship ending and therefore, can take more risks in their communicative behavior. Also, perceiving that his/her partner has lower dependence power allows individual to behave in a certain way, providing him/her with assurance that their partner (being more dependent) will not leave the relationship. It appears that dependence power has the potential to explain a good deal of relational communication and behavior. Overall, studying dependence power allows one to assess and compare each partner's level of dependence in a relationship. The construct of dependence power allows us to examine potential causes or risk factors of violence in relationships even when economic and structural boundaries or constraints (marriage, living together) are not present. Finally, the construct of dependence power highlights the fact that the nature of relational dependency is a natural artifact of all relationships and not merely reflective of those who are "needy" or "weak of will."

A great deal of research has been done examining the potential causes of relational violence, particularly intimate partner violence (Bornstein, 2006; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Kalmuss & Straus,1982; Sagrestano et al., 1999). Gordon (2000) states that most scholars conceptualize violence as "an array of physical, psychological, and verbal acts used to achieve domination and control over an intimate partner" (p. 748). Although violence has not been examined as an outcome of dependence power, research has examined the impact of dependency and power as influences on violent behavior. A variety of findings have been presented for the role of dependency in intimate partner violence. Bornstein (2006) describes a dependency-

possessiveness model, explaining that emotionally dependent people are afraid of abandonment and therefore, show high levels of jealousy and possessiveness in a relationship. He also remarked that emotionally dependent people have difficulty managing anger. Further, he states that the dependency-possessiveness model demonstrates that an individual's fear of abandonment will cause them to become abusive when they perceive potential partner rejection. Babcock, Costa, Green, and Eckhardt (2004) also demonstrate a relationship between jealousy and violence stating that an increase in jealousy precipitates abuse in emotionally dependent men. Bornstein (2006) argued that high levels of emotional dependency in a man coupled with high levels of economic dependency in a woman independently forecast that a man will use physical violence against his female partner. Bornstein (2006) and Kalmuss and Strauss (1982) both observed that the more economically dependent a woman is, the less likely it is that she will terminate an abusive relationship. Kalmuss and Straus (1982) also highlight a difference between objective and subjective commitment. They state that subjectively dependent women tolerate moderate but not severe violence, while objectively dependent women tolerate more severe abuse. Cumulatively, the above research illustrates that men who are emotionally or subjectively dependent are likely to engage in violence toward their female partners and that these partners will feel forced to tolerate the violence when they are financially dependent on the male.

There is contradictory evidence about the role power plays in violent, intimate relationships. Frieze and McHugh (1992) explain that a common expectation is that the use of violence is associated with high levels of power for the male and less power for the females. This would make sense considering if men have the power in the relationship they can use violence to psychologically, physically, and socially control their wives. The authors observed that wives of very violent men did not make many decisions and that a husband's use of violence as a power

tactic was a significant predictor of greater decision making by the husband. These authors also explain that a single incident of violence can permanently alter the power balance of a relationship. Gray-Little and Burks (1983) observed an alternative relationship between decision making and violence. These authors noticed that there was the lowest satisfaction rate among couples where the wife possessed the decision making power or some other aspect of control. This wife dominance-low satisfaction link would suggest that men who have less power in their relationship are less satisfied and therefore may be more likely to use violence. The idea that men who are less satisfied may be more likely to use violence is also supported by data from Gray-Little and Burks (1983) demonstrating that husbands who were dissatisfied engaged in coercive behaviors such as violence. Sagrestano et al. (1999) also observed that husbands who have less power use violence as a coercive means of influence. They suggested that men who lack power use physical violence against their wives to satisfy their need for power. These authors also observed that it was the perceived power of the husband that lead to violence, as opposed to the perceived power of the wife, and that perception of the husband's power was negatively related to the utilization of violence.

The research reviewed above provides contradictory evidence for when violence might be present in a relationship. It seems that violence may occur when one feels that they do not have control over certain aspects of their relationship (e.g. decision making). It also seems, however, that violence occurs when a person is in a position of power knowing their partner would not leave them if they engage in destructive behavior. However, other research stands in contrast to these initial predictions.

In a study on violence in lesbian relationships, Renzetti (1988) witnessed batterers as being more dependent on their partners. The author saw that the victims of violence were more

independent, self-sufficient, and less possessive of their partner and suggests that one reason why this may be is that the batterers feel threatened if the victims earn more money and have more education. This study observed that the greater the victim's independence, and the greater the respondents dependence, the more likely the batterer would inflict severe abuse. Supporting the findings of Frieze and McHugh (1992), Renzetti (1988) also noted that batterers were more likely to have power in the sense that they made most of the decisions, such as how to spend the weekend. Hornung, McCullough, and Sugimoto (1981) argue, however, that women who had attained less education than their male partner were more likely to experience life threatening violence. Although there are contradictions in respect to the level of education that an abuse victim has, the majority of the research seems to indicate that when an individual is threatened by his partners' accomplishments or independence he resorts to violence and other means of control, such as daily decision making, in order to gain some sense of power.

Additional studies also suggest that contrary to expectations, a partner who is more dependent may be more likely to engage in domestic violence. Stanley et al. (2002) explained that women who pay more attention to relational alternatives are more likely to be resented by their husbands, resulting in conflict. Further, Holtzworth-Monroe and Hutchinson (1993) pronounced that violent husbands are more likely to attribute negative and hostile intent to wife behaviors than nonviolent husbands, specifically when the behavior invokes jealousy or rejection. Considering the results of previous studies on dependence power, it would seem that invoking jealousy or fear of rejection would be more likely on the part of the partner possessing dependence power. However, these findings could also be used to support the claim that violent husbands have higher dependence power, since instead of downplaying the severity of the

incident and trying to reduce cognitive dissonance about a partner' s negative behavior, they instead blame the partner in a hostile fashion.

Since dependence power has only been examined using an undergraduate dating population, relationship commitment has been defined as an individual's desire to maintain a romantic relationship with her partner while relational alternatives has been defined as one's alternatives to their current romantic relationship. In this study, however, commitment and alternatives must be identified in an interdependent relationship defined solely by having a child together. Therefore, *perceived father's commitment* can be conceived as a mother's perception of the father's commitment to his role as a parent and to his investment in the family. If the mother perceives that the father is committed to his role as a parent, she can also feel confident that he is somewhat invested in his relationship with her. As evident in EHS/HS families, Allen and Hawkins (1999) explain that mothers, being primary caregivers in their family, often have the ability to play a "gate-keeping" role, having control over the father's access and interaction with his children. In addition, Coley and Hernandez (2006) suggest that close parental relationships are associated with greater parental involvement. Thus, the more a father appears to be invested in his role as a parent by demonstrating his desire to be involved in his child's life, the more committed the mother will perceive him to be. In addition, perceiving the father as committed to his parental responsibilities also leads a mother to believe that the father has less relational alternatives. If a father wants to be involved in the target child's life, the only relationship that can give him that opportunity is his relationship with the child's mother. Overall, the mother, already having physical custody of the child, does not need to have a relationship with the father to be involved in her child's life. Additionally, she is not forced to rely on the father for support given that she could instead to turn to family and/or friends to help her raise the child. In fact,

Coley and Hernandez (2006) explain that mothers with low education and fewer resources are less likely to have a formal contract with the fathers of their children concerning the fathers' responsibilities. As a result, she will perceive herself as being less committed to the relationship and having more relational alternatives. It is therefore predicted that when the father is committed to his role as a parent the mother will have more dependence power than the father. Since the mother is less dependent on the father she will be less likely to tolerate violence than a mother who has lower dependence power and is therefore, more dependent on the father. This prediction is supported by results of the Rusbult et al. (1991) study which observed that the more an individual was committed to her relationship and the poorer alternatives she had, the more likely she was to accommodate to her partner's destructive behavior. In addition, many scholars have studied the demand-withdrawal pattern of interaction present in violent relationships. Berns, Jacobson, and Gottman (1999) state that people are typically demanding when they desire more closeness in their relationship. The authors explain that batterers are typically more emotionally dependent, they fear abandonment, and despite their use of control tactics they don't recognize the power they have. Additionally, Berns et al. (1999) suggest that violent men demonstrate their dependence by demanding more relationship change than nonviolent men. Sagrestano et al. (1999) also note that a person who demands more (seeks more change) has less structural power in a relationship and observed that couples that experience more husband demand-wife withdraw interactions were more likely to engage in violence. Babcock et al. (1993) emphasize that observations of husband-demand wife-withdrawal are contrary to typical sex stereotyped patterns and suggest that domestically violent men are compensating for a lack of marital power. Finally, Solomon and Samp (2001) explain that the more individuals perceive their partners as being committed to the relationship the more they will actively communicate to

repair the relationship rather than just practicing the chilling effect. In this thesis project, it seems reasonable that although fathers who are committed to their role as a parent may make demands, such as having a say in parenting decisions, their perceived commitment to the relationship will increase the mothers' commitment to them, thus making it less likely that the demand-withdrawal pattern of communication will occur. Consequently, partners should be willing to communicate about problems in their relationship as opposed to tolerating a violent relationship. From the above rationalization the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Dependence power will be negatively associated with the mother's tolerance of intimate partner violence.

H2: A mother's perception of the father's desire for involvement will be negatively associated with her tolerance of intimate partner violence.[2]

The following hypotheses suggest a relationship between the current involvement of the father in his child's life, or *father's presence*, and dependence power, as well as between father's presence and the likelihood that a mother will tolerate violence. It seems that if a target child's father is present in his child's life, the mother will see him as being more committed to their relationship than if he was not present. In addition, if the father is present in his child's life the mother will view him as being aware of the fact that other relationship alternatives would not provide him with as great of an opportunity to be present or involved. Therefore, it is predicted that if the target child's father is present in his child's life the mother will have more dependence power in their relationship than a mother whose target child's father is not present. Since previously discussed research suggests that the less dependent an individual is the less likely she

[2] This hypothesis initially read "A mother's perception of the *father's desire for involvement* will be negatively associated with her *tolerance of intimate partner violence* from the child's father"; however, not enough participants completed the portion of the questionnaire asking them to indicate which partner had engaged in any of the specific abusive behaviors toward them so the original hypothesis could not be tested.

will tolerate abuse, having higher dependence power should result in the mother being less likely to tolerate abuse. Some of the EHS/HS mothers are in romantic relationships with people other than the father of their children. When the target child's father is not present, it seems more likely that the mother will rely on her current romantic partner to share some of her stresses and life burdens, strengthening her commitment to her partner. The mother's dependence on her current partner may put her at risk for tolerating intimate partner violence. On the other hand, when the target child's father is present in the child's life the mother can view him as a relational alternative, knowing that she can count on him for necessary support, and therefore she may be less committed to her current partner. Overall, the mother's perception that she has relational alternatives and does not need to be dependent on her current romantic partner, signals that a mother whose target child's father is present will have higher dependence power in her current romantic relationship than a mother whose target child's father is not present. As previous literature on power and dependence would suggest, it appears that people with more dependence power (and are therefore, less dependent) will be less likely to tolerate intimate partner abuse, because they feel that they have other options or alternatives to being in that abusive relationship. On the other hand, mothers who do not feel that they have relational alternatives (e.g. the father not around to bear the burden of parenting) may be more likely to tolerate intimate partner abuse because they have no alternatives from whom they can gain the support they need. As a result it is hypothesized that

> H3: Mothers whose children's fathers are present will report higher dependence power in their relationship with the children's fathers than mothers whose children's fathers are not present.

H4: Mothers whose children's fathers are present will report higher dependence power in current romantic relationships than mothers whose children's fathers are not present.

H5: Mothers whose children's fathers are present are less likely to tolerate violence than mothers whose children's fathers are not present.[3]

Finally, it is suspected that when a mother has low dependence power in her relationship with the target child's father, she will desire to increase her sense of power in whatever ways possible. Since the mother does not perceive that she has power in her intimate partner relationship, she must emphasize her structural power in her relationships where she knows she possesses the control. A realistic possibility is that the mother will attempt to highlight her own structural power by enforcing her physical power over her children. In addition, the previous hypotheses predict that a woman with lower dependence power will be more likely to tolerate violence. If women with low dependence power do have more experience with violence than women with high dependence power, it could mean that they are less aware of the alternatives to managing conflict. Without knowledge of the alternatives ways to handle conflict or solve problems, mothers with low dependence power may feel compelled to use violence as a means of disciplining their children. Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

H6: The lower the mother's dependence power in her relationship with the father of the target child, the greater likelihood that she will engage in violence toward her child(ren).

To review, prior research demonstrates the complexity of the role that dependency and power play in promoting intimate partner violence. Past research has shown both that violence occurs when one partner possesses specific sources of power (e.g. resource power like financial

[3] This hypothesis initially read "Mothers whose child(ren)'s fathers are present are less likely to tolerate violence from current romantic partners than mothers whose child(ren)'s fathers are not present"; however, not enough participants completed the portion of the questionnaire asking them to indicate which partner had engaged in any of the specific violent behaviors toward them so the original hypothesis could not be tested.

control) but also when an individual feels that he lacks power or control. Research has also demonstrated that partners who commit violent acts are typically high in dependency but also that partners can usually get away with performing violent acts because their partner is highly dependent on the relationship. Taken cumulatively, past research indicates a need to be more clear and consistent when assessing the conditions under which violence may take place. By examining violence using the construct of dependence power we can study dependence in a way that is broad enough that it allows us to examine relationships that are not necessarily marriages or dating relationships. The following chapter will detail the method utilized in this study to examine the relationship between dependence power and violence.

CHAPTER 4

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 74 of the total 174 adult mothers participating in Athens-Clarke County's Early Head Start and/or Head Start (EHS/HS) programs. Participants ranged in age from 18 years old to 43 years old ($M = 28.24$, $SD = 7.05$). The ethnic breakdown of the sample was: 64% African American ($N = 48$), 17.6% Hispanic ($N = 13$), 2.7% Caucasian ($N = 2$), 2.7% Asian ($N = 2$), and 2.7% Other ($N = 2$). Seven participants (9.5%) did not report their ethnicity. Participants reported having between 1 and 3 children ($M = 1.29$, $SD = .56$) enrolled in EHS/HS at the time they completed the questionnaire. While completing the study, participants were asked to focus on their youngest child enrolled in EHS/HS; these children ranged in age from 2 months to 60 months or 5 years old ($M = 36.53$, $SD = 19.00$). Mothers had been enrolled in EHS/HS for a minimum of one month, with some enrolled as long as 121 months ($M = 20.69$, $SD = 24.89$). They reported that the fathers of their target children ranged from 18 to 54 years of age ($M = 31.06$, $SD = 8.64$). Fifty-three (71.6%) of the participants reported that child's father was present in his child's life, 17 (23%) reported that the father was not present in the child's life (4 participants did not respond to this item). Fifty-one (68.9%) participants were involved in romantic relationships when they completed the questionnaire; 31 (60.8%) of those participants were in romantic relationships with the father of the target child, while 18 (35.3%) were involved in romantic relationships with someone other than the father of the target child. Two participants did not specify who they were in a romantic relationship with. The age breakdown of the

participants' current romantic partners included: 18-22 years, *N* = 10 (19.6%); 22-25 years, *N* = 6 (11.8%); 26-30 years, *N* = 12 (23.5%); 31-35 years, *N* = 6 (11.8%); 36-40 years, *N* = 10 (19.6%); 41-45 years, *N* = 5 (9.8%); 46-50 years, *N* = 1 (2%); 56-50 years, *N* = 1 (2%).

Procedure

The data was collected via a 105-item questionnaire (see Appendix A). During the 2007-2008 academic year, I volunteered in a Head Start Pre-K classroom for nine months in order to get acquainted with the teachers and staff involved in the EHS/HS programs of Athens-Clarke County, GA. At the end of my volunteer period, I worked with the EHS/HS Family Engagement and Community Partnerships Manager to distribute over 200 questionnaires and McDonald's free meal coupons valued at five dollars to various EHS/HS classroom locations and at numerous EHS/HS events. Multiple points of data collection were necessary in order to obtain as much access to the EHS/HS population as possible. The first locations to which the questionnaires were distributed were the Head Start Pre-K classrooms in the H.T. Edwards building in Athens, GA. Next, questionnaires and McDonald's meal cards were distributed to the one Head Start classroom, and two Early Head Start classrooms located at Little One's Academy on the West side of Athens, as well as the one Head Start classroom and two Early Head Start classrooms located at Little One's Academy on the East side of Athens. Family engagement specialists in charge of visiting the home based families also received questionnaires and free McDonald's meal cards. At a staff meeting the EHS/HS teachers were instructed to distribute their questionnaires to adult mothers during parent teacher conferences and the family engagement specialists were told to distribute their questionnaires during their home visits throughout the month. Attached to the questionnaires was a Letter of Informed Consent (see Appendix B) which informed mothers about the nature of the project. All the teachers and engagement specialists

were told to collect completed questionnaires in a sealed envelope, to compensate the mothers who participated with a McDonald's free meal card, and finally, to return the envelopes containing completed questionnaires to the Family Engagement Manager. Data collection took place over the period of a month. Throughout the month, I visited all of the EHS/HS classrooms during drop-off and pick-up times and answered any questions or concerns the parents or teachers had about the questionnaire. In addition to classroom locations and home visits, I also distributed questionnaires at the parent-child field day organized by Athens-Clarke County Office of Early Learning. The final sessions of data collection occurred at last day of school celebrations held for Head Start children and parents at both a local Chuck-E-Cheese and a local park. At these data collection sessions, McDonald's free meal cards were again distributed as incentives for completing the questionnaire. At the end of the month, the remaining completed questionnaires were obtained from the Family Engagement Manager.

Measures

Father's Perceived Desire for Involvement. There was no adequate existing measure to evaluate the mother's perception of the father's desire to be involved in the target child's life. As a result, I developed the following items to act as a measure for *father's perceived desire for involvement*: (i) 'The father of my child does not want to be involved in our child's life' (reverse scored); (ii) 'The father of my child wants me to let him help raise our child'; (iii) 'The father of my child wants to see his child more often'; (iv) 'The father of my child wants to play a part in making decisions that involve our child'. Items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Responses were averaged (M = 5.03, SD = 2.11, range 1.00 – 7.00, α = .91).

Father's Presence. To determine whether or not the father was present in the child's life one close-ended item was used that asked participants: "Is the father of your youngest child enrolled in EHS/HS involved in his child's life?" Respondents circled either "yes" or "no". The majority of participants indicated that their child's father was present ($N = 53$, 71.6%), leaving only 17 participants (23%) who reported that the child's father was not present (4 participants did not complete this item). Participants who stated the father was present rated the *level of father involvement* on a scale ranging from 1 (Not Very Involved) to 7 (Extremely Involved). The Mean score for level of father involvement was 5.60 ($N = 53$, $SD = 1.81$, range = 1.00 – 7.00). Finally, I was curious as to whether the mothers were concerned about the father's presence in their children's lives, specifically regarding how they disciplined the children. Therefore, participants were asked: "Are you concerned about how the father of your child is disciplining your child?" Fifty-seven (77%) of the mothers were not concerned about the way the fathers disciplined their child but 11 (14.9%) mothers were concerned about the father's discipline tactics (6 participants did not respond to this item). The concerned mothers reported an average concern level of 4.0 ($SD = 2.53$) on a scale ranging from 1 (Not Concerned) to 7 (Very Concerned).

Discipline Tactics. A literature review did not reveal any relevant, established measure of child disciplinary techniques; therefore, it was necessary to create a new measure for this variable. The new measure asked parents to circle an estimate of the frequency with which they use specific disciplinary tactics (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often). Eleven specific disciplinary tactics were included in the measure. Principle components factor analysis using varimax rotation indicated that 6 items defined a factor of *constructive discipline tactics:* (i) 'Put your child in time out'; (ii) 'Raise your voice to your child'; (iii) 'Take

away a possession that your child values (e.g. favorite toy, cell phone, etc.)'; (iv) 'Take away one of your child's privileges (e.g. watching tv, eating with the family)'; (v) 'Send your child to his/her room'; and (vi) 'Speak to my child about his/her behavior (explain why it was a bad choice)'. Responses were averaged (M = 2.72, SD = 1.17, range = 1.00 – 5.00, α = .88). Three items defined the *destructive discipline tactics* factor: (i) 'Slap your child', (ii) 'Kick your child', and (iii) 'Threaten your child'. Responses were averaged (M = 1.21, SD = .55, range = 1.00 – 3.67, α = .84).

Tolerance of Intimate Partner Violence. In order to determine how much tolerance the participants have for intimate partner violence, an adapted version of Shepard and Campbel's (1992) Abusive Behavior Inventory was utilized. The 30-item measure targets females with current or former intimate partners and contains two subscales, one measuring the *tolerance of physical violence,* and one measuring the *tolerance of psychological violence.* Since Gordon (2000) explains that both physical and psychological acts comprise intimate partner violence both of these subscales were appropriate for measuring intimate partner violence. Due to the vulnerable nature of the population and after advisement from staff at EHS/HS who were concerned about the nature of some of the items, the measure was reduced to 27 items. Further, since the population is vulnerable and often has trouble trusting people enough to honestly disclose about their experiences, attempts were made to make the scale less personal and invasive. For instance, instead of asking participants to disclose how often they had experienced a certain behavior they were instead asked to rate how often they might put up with certain violent behaviors before leaving a hypothetical relationship. In particular, participants were given the following instructions: "Everybody gets mad sometimes and all couples fight. We can fight all different kinds of ways. We want to know which ways of fighting are okay and which

would make you leave a relationship." Participants indicated how much they would tolerate a variety of behaviors on a 5-point scale (1 = never; 5 = very often).

Principle components factor analysis using varimax rotation suggested the two abuse factors but with fewer items. Items that composed the *tolerance of physical violence* subscale included: (i) 'Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you'; (ii) 'Slapped, hit, or punched you'; (iii) 'Made you do something that embarrassed you (e.g.: begging for forgiveness, having to ask his permission to use the car or do something)'; and (iv) 'Threw you around'. Responses to those four items were averaged (M = 1.48, SD = .87, range = 1.00 – 4.50, α = .93). Items that composed the *tolerance of psychological violence* subscale included: (i) 'Called you a name and/or criticized you'; (ii) 'Gave you angry stares or looks'; (iii) 'Stopped you from having money for your own use'; (iv) 'Put down your family and friends'; (v) 'Said you paid too much attention to someone or something else'; and (vi) 'Put you on an allowance'. Responses to those six items were averaged (M = 1.90, SD = 1.01, range = 1.00 – 5.00, α = .91).

Notably, upon completion of the items, participants were also asked to put a star next to the things that their current partner had done to them and a check mark next to the things that the father of their target child had done to them. Unfortunately few participants completed this additional step (N = 9); therefore, this data was not included in the analyses.

Dependence power. Dependence power is a multi-dimensional construct comprised of an individual's commitment to her relationship, her perceptions of her partner's commit to the relationship, and lastly, her perceptions of her partner's relational alternatives. Due to the multi-dimensional nature of the construct, Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew's (1998) measures of commitment level and quality of alternatives has been found to be a popular and successful measure of dependence power (Samp & Solomon, 2001). As a result, this measure was adapted

for the purpose of measuring dependence power in this study. Responses were obtained from a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Do Not Agree at All; 7 = Agree Completely). Some repetitive items were deleted to maintain a questionnaire length that was reasonable for the population. In addition, some of the language was altered to adapt to the reading level of the population. All participants' dependence power was measured first with respect to the father of the target child. Although participants were not necessarily in a current romantic relationship with the father of their child, they still answered questions about their dependence on their relationship with the father. Participants received the following directions:

> *Now we want you to think about the father of your youngest child enrolled in the Early Head Start/Head Start program. These questions are meant to help us understand the relationship you have with the father of this child. Some questions will ask about "alternatives", which refers to other relationships that you have or could potentially have with people other than the father of your child. We understand that you may not presently be in a romantic relationship with the father of your child. If this is the case consider your relationship as parents working to raise a child. For example, if you are not currently romantically involved with the father of your child, relational "alternatives" can be considered relationships with people other than the father (e.g. another dating partner, friends, family) who could share parenting duties (e.g. discipline, childcare) with you. With this in mind please answer to what degree you agree with the following statements.*

The first dimension of dependence power examined the participant's commitment to the relationship. *Participant's commitment to father* was measured using the following 6 items adapted from Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998): (i) 'I am committed to having a relationship with the father of my child'; (ii) 'I want the relationship with the father of my child to last for a

very long time'; (iii) 'I am very strongly attached to the father of my child'; (iv) 'It is likely that I will date someone other than the father of my child within the next year' (reverse coded); (v) 'I think I will still be connected with the father of my child several years from now'; and (vi) 'My relationship with the father of my child is likely to end soon' (reverse coded). Responses to the 6 items above were averaged (M = 4.69, SD = 2.18, range = 1.00 – 7.00, α = .92).

The second dimension of dependence power examines the participant's perception of her partner's commitment. Two items adapted from Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) measured *perceived father commitment*: (i) 'The father of my child is committed to being in a relationship with me'; and (ii) 'The father of my child is committed to being in a relationship with his child'. Responses to the 2 items above were averaged (M = 5.19, SD = 2.08, range = 1.00 - 7.00, α = .79).

The final dimension of dependence power examines the participant's perception of her partner's alternatives. The following 7 items adapted from Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) measured *perceived father alternatives*: (i) 'The father of my child's alternative relationships are attractive to him (Like dating another person, spending time with friends or on his own, etc.)'; (ii) 'If the father of my child was not with me, he would do fine-He would find another person to be with'; (iii) 'The father of my child is interested in people other than me'; (iv) 'The father of my child's needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be met in other relationships (e.g., another dating partner, friends, or family)'; (v) 'The father of my child's needs for friendship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be met in other relationships'; (vi) 'The father of my child's needs for security (feeling safe, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be met in other relationships'; and (vii) 'The father of my child's emotional needs (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another person feels good,

etc.) could be met in other relationships'. Responses to the 7 items above were averaged (M = 3.67, SD = 2.07, range = 1.00 – 7.00, α = .94).

In addition to measuring a participant's dependence power in her relationship with the child's father, the study also measured a participant's dependence power in a current romantic relationship with someone other than her child's father. Participants were instructed to complete this measure *only* if they were currently involved in a romantic relationship with someone who was *not* the father of the target child. Although only 18 (35.3%) participants reported that they were in a current romantic relationship with someone other than their child's father, 25 participants completed the additional dependence power measures. This discrepancy is due to the fact that not all participants completed the item asking if their current romantic relationship was with the father of their child. Additionally, some participants completed the additional dependency measure about a current romantic partner they had with someone other than the father of their child but they did not want to identify their romantic involvement as a "relationship". Participants were then prompted to think about their current partner and disclose his/her age and gender in hopes to redirect and engage the participants' focus for this additional dependence power measure. Instructions for this additional dependence power measure were as follows:

> *The questions below are meant to help us understand the relationship you have with the person you referenced above. Some questions will ask about "alternatives," which refers to other relationships that a person could possibly have with people other than their current partner (e.g. another dating partner, friends, or family). With this in mind please answer the following questions.*

Participant's commitment to current partner was measured using the following 6 items: (i) 'I am committed to my relationship with my current partner'; (ii) 'I want the relationship with

my current partner to last for a very long time'; (iii) 'I am very strongly attached to my current partner'; (iv) 'It is likely that I will date someone other than my current partner within the next year' (reverse coded); (v) 'I would NOT feel very upset if my relationship with my current partner ended in the near future (e.g. we stopped talking, or broke up)' (reverse coded); and (vi) 'The relationship I have with my current partner is likely to end soon' (reverse coded). Responses to the 6 items above were averaged (M = 5.39, SD = 1.28, range = 3.83 – 7.00, α = .79).

Two items assessed *perceived partner commitment*: (i) 'My current partner is committed to being in a relationship with me'; and (ii) 'My current partner is committed to being in a relationship with his child'. Responses to the 2 items above were averaged (M = 5.40, SD = 1.74, range = 1.00 – 7.00, α =.78).

Finally, *perceived partner alternatives* was measured with the following items: (i) 'My current partner's alternatives to our relationship are attractive to him (Like dating another person, spending time with friends or on his own, etc.)'; (ii) 'If my current partner was not with me, he would do fine - He would find another person to be with'; (iii) 'My current partner is interested in people other than me'; (iv) 'My current partner's needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be met in other relationships (e.g., another dating partner, friends, or family)'; (v) 'My current partner's needs for friendship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be met in other relationships'; (vi) 'My current partner's needs for security (feeling safe, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be met in other relationships'; and (vii) 'My current partner's emotional needs (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another person feels good, etc.) could be met in other relationships'.

Responses to the 7 items above were averaged ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.57$, range = 1.00 – 7.00, $\alpha = .86$).

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSES AND RESUTS

Preliminary Analyses

Zero-order correlations were computed between all dependent and independent variables. The correlations are reported in Table 1. Due to the nature of the constructs being tested in this study, it was expected that numerous significant correlations would be observed between variables.

Dependence power indicators. Due to the multi-dimensional nature of dependence power it was expected that the variables comprising dependence power would be associated with one another. For example, it was predicted that that there would be a significant correlation between how committed an individual perceives her partner to be and how many alternatives she perceives her partner as having. If an individual perceives that her partner is committed to the relationship, meaning that he wants the relationship to last a long time and has no foreseen desire for the relationship to end, then it seems likely that she would presume that he does not have many relational alternatives that would equally satisfy his needs. The suspected negative association between *perceived father commitment* and *perceived father alternatives* was supported in the zero-order correlations $r(71) = -.50$, $p < .01$. It is surprising however, that there was not a significant correlation between *perceived partner commitment* and *perceived partner alternatives*, $r(25) = -.13$. A potential explanation for this correlation not reaching significance could be the small number of participants that were in a current romantic relationship with someone other than the child of their father. In addition, it could be that mothers feel more

certain of the father's commitment level and number of alternatives since they share both the connection and responsibility of having a child together, and that they feel less certain about both or either of these variables when non-parenting relationships are concerned.

Commitment indicators. It was expected that an individual should be more committed to their relationship when they believe that their partner is committed to the relationship as well. Experience and human nature indicates that we are less likely to be seriously involved or invested in a relationship if there is a substantial concern that our partner may leave us. It could also be the case that the more committed an individual is to her relationship, the more she wants to believe that her partner is equally committed. Preliminary analyses did produce a significant positive correlation between *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father commitment*, $r(72) = .82$, $p < .01$, as well as a significant negative correlation between *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father alternatives*, $r(71) = -.67$, $p < .01$. The positive correlation between *perceived father commitment* and *participant's commitment to father* demonstrates that the more committed the mother perceives the father of her child to be, the more committed she feels, whereas the negative correlation between *perceived father alternatives* and *participant's commitment to father* demonstrates that the less alternatives a mother views the father as having, the more committed she is to their relationship. Expected correlations were also observed with respect to the participant's current romantic partner with someone other than the child's father. A significant positive correlation was found between *participant's commitment to current partner* and *perceived partner commitment*, $r(25) = .47$, $p < .05$, and a significant negative correlation was found between *participant's commitment to current partner* and *perceived partner alternatives,* $r(26) = -.58$, $p < .01$.

Table 1

Correlations Among Independent and Dependent Variables

	Participant's Commitment to Father	Perceived Father Commitment	Perceived Father Alternatives	Participant's Commitment To Current Partner	Perceived Partner Commitment
Participant's Commitment to Father	___				
Perceived Father Commitment	.82**	___			
Perceived Father Alternatives	-.67**	-.50**	___		
Participant's Commitment To Current Partner	-.20	-.01	.27	___	
Perceived Partner Commitment	-.20	.07	.36	.47*	___
Perceived Partner Alternatives	.18	-.07	.14	-.58**	-.13
Father's Perceived Desire for Involvement	.68**	.61**	-.45**	.01	.03
Tolerance of Physical Violence	-.11	-.05	.22	-.18	-.39
Tolerance of Psychological Violence	-.17	-.13	.19	-.21	-.31
Constructive Discipline Tactics	.01	.09	.19	.21	.36
Destructive Discipline Tactics	.00	-.03	.14	-.20	-.35

Table 1

Correlations Among Independent and Dependent Variables (Con't).

	Perceived Partner Alternatives	Father's Perceived Desire for Involvement	Tolerance of Physical Violence	Tolerance of Psychological Violence	Constructive Discipline Tactics	Destructive Discipline Tactics
Perceived Partner Alternatives	___					
Father's Perceived Desire for Involvement	-.02	___				
Tolerance of Physical Violence	.27	-.30*	___			
Tolerance of Psychological Violence	.40*	-.34**	.71**	___		
Constructive Discipline Tactics	-.21	-.07	.11	.15	___	
Destructive Discipline Tactics	.13	-.16	.57**	.41**	.11	___

Note. N ranged from 74-69 on most measures. For items with reference to a current romantic partner (not the father), *N*s ranged from 26-24.

*. $p < .05$, two-tailed. **. $p < .01$, two-tailed.

This study acknowledges the possibility that the EHS/HS mother may not be involved in a romantic relationship with the father of her child. It was previously discussed that when measuring a mother's dependence power with respect to her child's father the relationship may be purely that of a mother and father sharing parental responsibilities. As a result, it was explained that *perceived father commitment* may solely represent the father's commitment to being in a parenting relationship with the participant, and that *perceived father alternatives* may refer to relationships he could find that would not involve sharing those parental duties for that particular child. Therefore, it is logical to expect that a *father's perceived desire for involvement* in his child's life would be related to how committed the father is perceived as being to the relationship and how many alternatives he is perceived as having. There was, in fact, a significant positive correlation between *father's perceived desire for involvement* and *perceived father commitment*, $r(70) = .61$, $p < .01$, as well as a significant negative correlation between *father's perceived desire for involvement* and *perceived father alternatives,* $r(69) = -.45$, $p < .01$. A significant positive correlation was also found between *father's perceived desire for involvement* and *participant's commitment to father*, $r(71) = .68$, $p < .01$, illustrating that the more a mother perceived the father as wanting to be involved in his child's life, the more committed she was to her relationship with the father. This observation again demonstrates that an individual may feel more committed to a relationship when she is confident that her partner is committed.

Associations among indicators of violence. Another expected correlation was that between *tolerance of physical violence* and *tolerance of psychological violence*. Unfortunately, it seemed safe to assume that an individual who is in a relational situation where they feel obligated to remain in an abusive relationship will probably tolerate multiple types of violence.

Results supported the presumed positive correlation between *tolerance physical violence* and *tolerance of psychological violence*, $r(71) = .71$, $p < .01$, demonstrating that the more psychological violence a mother would tolerate, the more physical violence she would tolerate and vice versa. One potential explanation for the association between tolerance and physical violence and tolerance of psychological violence might be that an individual who tolerates one type of violence has practice in justifying her partner's destructive behavior and is therefore, more prepared and willing to justify other negative behaviors.

A significant positive correlation was also found between *perceived partner alternatives* and a mother's *tolerance of psychological violence*, $r(25) = .40$, $p < .05$. The positive correlation was expected considering if an individual perceives that her partner has relational alternatives she may be willing to put up with more abusive behavior in order to maintain the relationship and ensure that he does not leave her. If the individual's partner did not have alternatives, she may be willing and able to challenge her partner's abusive behavior in hopes that he would cease engaging in such behavior. There was not, however, a significant correlation between *perceived partner alternatives* and *tolerance of physical violence*, $r(25) = .27$. A potential explanation for this correlation not reaching significance could be that due to its social stigma, many people view physical violence as more severe than psychological violence. As a result, it may be that the mothers are willing to tolerate psychological violence to keep a partner from potentially turning to relational alternatives, but they are not willing to tolerate the seemingly more severe physical violence. It should also be noted that there were no significant correlations between *perceived partner commitment* and *tolerance of psychological violence,* $r(25) = -.31$, or *tolerance of physical violence*, $r(25) = -.39$. One speculation is that the mothers do not base their concern of abandonment solely on their partner's commitment level since there are instances when an

individual is not entirely committed to a relationship but will not end the relationship unless he feels that there is a better relational alternative. It is also interesting to note that *perceived father alternatives* did not significantly influence *toleration of psychological violence*, $r(68) = -.19$, or *toleration of physical violence*, $r(69) = .22$. Since some of the participants are solely in parenting (non-romantic) relationships with the fathers of their children it may be that they are not as threatened about the father terminating the relationship (potentially because they are less emotionally and/or financially dependent on the father). Being less concerned about the termination of the relationship with their child's father, it is understandable that the father's perceived alternatives has less of an impact on whether or not the participant would tolerate violence. Some mothers, however, are in a romantic relationship with the father of their child. In this circumstance, the correlation may have failed to reach significance due to the fact that when a participant is in a romantic relationship with the father of their child, relational alternatives are less of a threat than when she is in a romantic relationship with a partner other than the child's father. When a mother is in a relationship with the father of her child, she and her partner share a bond that could not be replaced in any alternative relationship as well as reap the benefits of maintaining a traditional, cohesive family unit. In this circumstance, if the father were to walk away he'd be leaving more than a romantic relationship. Preliminary analyses also revealed significant negative correlations between *father's perceived desire for involvement* and *tolerance of physical violence*, $r(71) = -.30$, $p < .05$, as well as *father's perceived desire for involvement* and *tolerance of psychological violence*, $r(70) = -.34$, $p < .01$. These correlations between father's perceived desire for involvement and tolerance of violence were expected, assuming that if a mother did not perceive the father as wanting to be involved in the child's life she would also not perceive the father as being very committed to their relationship and therefore, she would

feel that compelled to tolerate violence in order to maintain the relationship. She also may willing to tolerate violence from a current romantic partner (who is not the father of her child) because if the father does not appear to be committed she may be more dependent on her current partner to provide her emotional, financial or physical support. Finally, preliminary analyses suggest that there was a significant positive correlation between a mother's *tolerance of physical violence* and her use of *destructive discipline tactics*, $r(69) = .57$, $p < .01$, as well as between *tolerance of psychological violence* and use of *destructive discipline tactics*, $r(68) = .41$, $p < .01$. The association between the variables might suggest that a mother who tolerates violence from her partner, does so due to a lack of power in their relationship, and that in order to compensate for that lack of power she exercises a severe form of control over her children (e.g. using violent discipline tactics). Another explanation for the correlation between tolerance of violence and the use of destructive discipline tactics is that a mother who tolerates violence might be less knowledgeable about the more constructive options for handling conflict and therefore, she uses violence as a means of disciplining her child(ren) because she is not experienced in the other means of communication or conflict management.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis stated that dependence power would be negatively associated with a mother's tolerance of intimate partner violence. This hypothesis was examined by considering the relationship between dependence power and general tolerance of violence in both the participant's relationship with the father of her child as well as her relationship with her current romantic partner, if she had a partner who was not the child's father. The first analysis investigated the relationship between dependence power in the mother's relationship with the child's father and tolerance of violence. Since dependence power is a multi-dimensional

construct, step-wise regression was used to evaluate the combined and interactive effects of *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, and *perceived father alternatives*. In step-one of the regression each of the above variables was entered to look for main effects. Step two of the regression required entering all possible two-way combinations of the above variables (*participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father commitment*; *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father alternatives*; and *perceived father commitment* and *perceived father alternatives*). Lastly, the three-way interaction, representing the construct of dependence power, was entered in the third step of the regression to test its association with tolerance of violence. Although our sample size is somewhat limited, making it difficult to obtain substantial power for the three-way interaction analysis, it is necessary to test this interaction because dependence power is a muli-dimensional construct representing how an individual's commitment to her partner, her perception of her partner's commitment, and her perception of her partner's alternatives cumulatively impact her level of power. Since there were two subscales of violence (physical and psychological), it was necessary to run two separate regression analyses. The results for the regression analyzing the association between dependence power and tolerance of physical violence are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Step-Wise Regression of the Tolerance of Physical Violence on Participant's Commitment to Father, Perceived Father Commitment, and Perceived Father Alternatives

	B	*SE B*	β	*R*	$R^2\Delta$	FΔ
Step 1: Main Effects				.23	.05	1.21
Participant's Commitment to Father	.03	.10	.07			
Perceived Father Commitment	.00	.09	.01			

	B	*SE B*	β	*R*	R²Δ	FΔ
Perceived Father Alternatives	.12	.07	.27			
Step 2: Two - Way Interactions				.39	.10	2.42
Participant's Commitment to Father × Perceived Father Commitment	-.07	.04	-1.46			
Participant's Commitment to Father × Perceived Father Alternatives	.09	.05	.82			
Perceived Father Commitment × Perceived Father Alternatives	-.08	.05	-.95			
Step 3: Three - Way Interaction	.00	.02	.23	.39	.00	.04

N = 69.

Analyses indicated no significant main or interactive effects for the association between *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, or *perceived father alternatives* and the *tolerance of physical violence*.

Next, the association between dependence power and tolerance of psychological violence was investigated. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Step-wise Regression of the Tolerance of Psychological Violence on Participant's Commitment to Father, Perceived Father Commitment, and Perceived Father Alternatives

	B	*SE B*	B	*R*	R²Δ	FΔ
Step 1: Main Effects				.21	.04	.98
Participant's Commitment to Father	.07	.11	.15			
Perceived Father Commitment	-.07	.10	-.15			
Perceived Father Alternatives	.10	.08	.22			
Step 2: Two - Way Interactions				.38	.10	2.38

	B	*SE B*	B	*R*	R²Δ	FΔ
Participant's Commitment to Father × Perceived Father Commitment	-.03	.04	-.57			
Participant's Commitment to Father × Perceived Father Alternatives	.13	.05	1.15*			
Perceived Father Commitment × Perceived Father Alternatives	-.11	.05	-1.17*			
Step 3: Three - Way Interaction	-.02	.02	-1.22	.40	.02	1.25

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. $N = 68$.

No significant main effects were observed for the influence of *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, or *perceived father alternatives* on *tolerance of psychological violence*. There was, however, a significant two-way interaction between *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father alternatives* on the mother's *tolerance of psychological violence* $\beta = 1.15$, $p < .05$. To evaluate the form of this interaction, procedures specified by Aiken and West (1991) were utilized. The most parsimonious explanation of the interaction involved centering the *participant's commitment to father* variable with respect to the mean value. Then, high and low values were computed for *participant's commitment to father* by subtracting or adding the standard deviation to the centered value, respectively. These procedures allowed for a test of the significance of the slope of *participant's commitment to father* at high, average, and low values with regard to *father's perceived alternatives*. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Slopes for the Regression of Tolerance of Psychological Violence on Different Levels of Participant's Commitment to Father and Perceived Father Alternatives

	Participant's Commitment to Father		
	Low	Average	High
Perceived Father Alternatives	.12	.23	.46*

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. $N = 68$

Results indicated that the two-way interaction involving *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father alternatives* was best defined when *participant's commitment to father* was high; *perceived father's alternatives* was positively associated with a woman's *tolerance for psychological violence* only when she was highly committed to a relationship with the father. Also observed was also a significant two-way interaction of *perceived father commitment* and *perceived father alternatives* on a mother's *tolerance of psychological violence*, $\beta = -1.17$, $p < .05$. Again, the slopes were probed for significance; see Table 5.

Table 5

Slopes for the Regression of Tolerance of Psychological Violence on Different Levels of Perceived Father Commitment and Perceived Father Alternatives

	Perceived Father Commitment		
	Low	Average	High
Perceived Father Alternatives	-.16	-.17	-.41[a]

[a] $p = .06$, two-tailed. $N = 68$

Analyses indicated no significant effects to explain the interaction of *perceived father's commitment* and *perceived father's alternatives* on mother's *tolerance of psychological violence*; however, a near statistically significant result should be noted for the negative association of *perceived father alternatives* on mother's *tolerance of psychological violence* when *perceived father commitment* was high.

There was not a significant association between the three-way interaction, representing dependence power, and a mother's tolerance of psychological violence, demonstrating that *H1* did not receive support with respect to a mother's relationship with her child's father.

Next, the relationship between dependence power and tolerance of violence with respect to the mother's current romantic partner was considered. Again, step-wise regressions were run to discover the main, combined, and interaction effects of *participant's commitment to current partner*, *perceived partner commitment*, and *perceived partner alternatives* on *tolerance of violence.* First, a regression was run to determine the association between the independent variables and *tolerance of physical violence*. In the first step, each of the independent variables was entered to test for main effects on tolerance of physical violence. In the second step all possible two-way interactions were entered (*participant's commitment to current partne*r and *perceived partner commitment*; *participant's commitment to current partner* and *perceived partner alternatives*; *perceived partner commitment* and *perceived partner alternatives*). Lastly, in the third step the three way interaction was entered. Results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Step-wise Regression of the Tolerance of Physical Violence on Participant's Commitment to Current Partner, Perceived Partner Commitment, and Perceived Partner Alternatives

	B	*SE B*	β	*R*	$R^2\Delta$	FΔ
Step 1: Main Effects				.47	.22	2.01
Participant's Commitment to Current Partner	.13	.17	.21			
Perceived Partner Commitment	-.21	.10	-.45			
Perceived Partner Alternatives	.18	.13	.33			
Step 2: Two - Way Interactions				.71	.29	3.50*
Participant's Commitment to Current Partner × Perceived Partner Commitment	-.02	.10	-.35			
Participant's Commitment to Current Partner × Perceived Partner Alternatives	-.08	.10	-.67			
Perceived Partner Commitment × Perceived Partner Alternatives	-.15	.05	-1.87*			
Step 3: Three - Way Interaction	-.17	.09	-9.07	.77	.08	3.47

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 25$.

Results indicated no significant main effects. There was, however, a significant combined effect of *perceived partner commitment* and *perceived partner alternatives* on a mother's tolerance of physical violence, $\beta = -1.87$, $p < .05$. The most parsimonious evaluation of this interaction involved computing the centered value of *perceived partner commitment* and then computing high and low values from the centered value. As seen in Table 7, the results of this procedure indicated that *perceived partner alternatives* was associated with mother's *tolerance of physical violence* particularly when *perceived partner commitment* was low or average. The

three-way interaction of all dependence-power related variables failed to produce a significant effect on tolerance of physical violence.

Table 7

Slopes for the Regression of Tolerance of Physical Violence at Different Levels of Perceived Partner Commitment and Perceived Partner Alternatives

	Perceived Partner Commitment		
	Low	Average	High
Perceived Partner Alternatives	.86**	.33*	-.12

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 25$.

Finally, the association between dependence power in a current romantic relationship and tolerance of psychological violence was investigated. The step-wise regression was performed, with main effects entered in step one, two-way interactions entered in step two, and the three-way interaction entered in step three. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Step-Wise Regression of the Tolerance of Psychological Violence on Participant's Commitment to Current Partner, Perceived Partner Commitment, and Perceived Partner Alternatives

	B	*SE B*	β	*R*	$R^2\Delta$	FΔ
Step 1: Main Effects				.51	.26	2.48
Participant's Commitment to Current Partner	.14	.16	.23			
Perceived Partner Commitment	-.16	.10	-.36			
Perceived Partner Alternatives	.26	.12	.48*			

	B	*SE B*	β	*R*	$R^2\Delta$	FΔ
Step 2: Two - Way Interactions				.62	.12	1.16
Participant's Commitment to Current Partner × Perceived Partner Commitment	-.01	.11	-.10			
Participant's Commitment to Current Partner × Perceived Partner Alternatives	-.10	.11	-.80			
Perceived Partner Commitment × Perceived Partner Alternatives	-.08	.06	-1.00			
Step 3: Three - Way Interaction	-.08	.11	-4.36	.63	.02	.55

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. **$p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 25$.

Results indicated a significant main effect for the association between *perceived partner alternatives* and *tolerance of psychological violence*, $\beta = .48$, $p < .05$. There were no significant results for any of the two-way interactions, nor the three-way interaction.

In total, although there were a number of interesting significant results, *H1* was not supported given the fact that none of the three-way interactions representing the construct of dependence power produced significant effects on tolerance of violence.

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis proposed that a mother's perception of the father's desire for involvement would be negatively associated with her tolerance of intimate partner violence. This hypothesis was tested via two bivariate correlations, one testing the association between father's desire for involvement and tolerance of physical violence and the other testing the association between father's desire for involvement and psychological violence. As seen in Table 1, there was a significant negative correlation between *father's perceived desire for involvement* and *tolerance of physical violence*, $r(71) = -.30$, $p < .05$. As the zero-order correlations also indicated, there was a significant negative correlation between *father's*

perceived desire of involvement and *tolerance of psychological violence, r*(70) = -.34, $p < .01$. These results indicate that *H2* received support.

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3 stated that mothers whose children's fathers were present in their children's lives would have higher dependence power in their relationships with the father than mothers whose children's fathers were not present. Results of a *t*-test indicated that participants whose children's fathers were present ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 2.02$) scored significantly higher on *participant's commitment to father* than participants whose children's fathers were not present ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.79$), $t(68) = 4.16$, $p < .0001$. In addition, participants whose children's fathers were present ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 1.70$) reported significantly higher *perceived father commitment* than participants whose children's fathers were not present ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 2.38$), $t(67) = 4.48$, $p < .0001$. There was not a significant difference found for *perceived father alternatives* between participants whose children's fathers were present ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 2.05$) and participants whose children's fathers were not present ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 2.24$), $t(66) = -.86$, $p = .39$. A *t*-test indicated, however, that there was a significant difference in dependence power, represented by the interaction of *participant's commitment to father, perceived father commitment,* and *perceived father alternatives*, when comparing the participants whose children's fathers were present ($M = 87.81$, $SD = 55.57$) with those participants whose children's fathers were not present ($M = 48.10$, $SD = 50.12$), $t(66) = 2.49$, $p < .05$. Considering the results for each of the individual variables it appears that the variable dimensions that drove the relationship between father's presence and dependence power were probably *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father commitment*. Therefore, it appears that when a father is present in his child's life, it allows the mother to feel that he is committed to their relationship thereby, increasing her sense of power in the relationship. These results support *H3*.

Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 stated that mothers whose children's fathers were present would report higher dependence power in a current romantic relationship than mothers whose children's fathers were not present. The hypothesis was examined two ways: (a) with each measure of dependence power as a separate dependent variable, and (b) with a multiplicative measure of dependence power. First, *t*-tests examined the relationship between *father's presence* and each of the dimensions of dependence power independently. There was no significant difference in the scores on *participant's commitment to current partner* comparing participants whose children's fathers were present (M = 5.82, SD = 1.23) and participants whose children's fathers were not present (M = 4.82, SD = 1.19), $t(22) = 2.00$, $p = .06$, two-tailed. There was also no significant difference in the scores on *perceived partner commitment* between participants whose children's fathers were present (M = 5.57, SD = 1.59) and participants whose children's fathers were not present (M = 5.10, SD = 2.06), $t(22) = .63$, $p = .53$, two-tailed. Finally, there was also no significant difference found in the scores on *perceived partner alternatives* comparing participants whose children's fathers were present (M = 3.22, SD = 1.40) and participants whose children's fathers were not present (M = 3.69, SD = 1.72), $t(22) = -.72$, $p = .48$, two-tailed.

Next, *H4* was examined in a rather unique manner, with the dependent variable defined as a multiplied value of *participant's commitment to current partner, perceived partner commitment,* and *perceived partner alternatives.* A *t*-test indicated that there was no significant difference in dependence power comparing the participants whose children's fathers were present (M = 93.89, SD = 35.63) with those participants whose children's fathers were not present (M = 92.56, SD = 52.74), $t(22) = .07$, $p = .94$, two-tailed. Since there were no significant differences found between interaction levels based on father's presence in his child's life, results from this study do not support *H4*.

Hypothesis 5. Hypothesis 5 stated that mothers whose children's fathers are present are less likely to tolerate violence than mothers whose children's fathers are not present. A *t*-test was used in order to test this hypothesis. There was no significant difference in *tolerance of physical violence* scores between participants whose children's fathers were present (M = 1.50, SD = .91) and participants whose children's fathers were not present (M = 1.39, SD = .76), $t(67) = .47$, $p = .64$, two-tailed. There was also no significant difference in *tolerance of psychological violence* scores between participants whose children's fathers were present (M = 1.86, SD = .99) and participants whose children's fathers were not present (M = 1.78, SD = .74), $t(66) = .28$, $p = .78$, two-tailed; therefore, *H*5 was not supported.

Hypothesis 6. H6 stated that the lower the mother's dependence power in her relationship with the father of the target child, the greater likelihood that she would engage in violence toward her child(ren). This hypothesis was examined via two step-wise regression analyses to evaluate the main effects as well as the combined and interactive effects of *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, and *perceived father alternatives*. One analysis utilized the measure of *destructive discipline tactics* as the dependent variable and another analysis used the measure of *constructive discipline tactics* as the dependent variable.

Results of the analysis examining the measures contributing to dependence power on destructive discipline tactics are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Step-Wise Regression of the Use of Destructive Discipline Tactics on Participant's Commitment to Father, Perceived Father Commitment, and Perceived Father Alternatives

	B	*SE B*	β	*R*	$R^2\Delta$	FΔ
Step 1: Main Effects				.18	.03	.73
Participant's Commitment to Father	.06	.06	.21			
Perceived Father Commitment	-.02	.06	-.08			
Perceived Father Alternatives	.07	.05	.25			
Step 2: Two - Way Interactions				.36	.09	2.14
Participant's Commitment to Father × Perceived Father Commitment	-.04	.02	-1.23			
Participant's Commitment to Father × Perceived Father Alternatives	.05	.03	.72			
Perceived Father Commitment × Perceived Father Alternatives	-.03	.03	-.60			
Step 3: Three - Way Interaction	.00	.01	.44	.36	.00	.15

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. **$p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 67$.

In step one of the regression, *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment,* and *perceived father alternatives* were entered to test for main effects. There were no significant main effects for the association between *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment,* or *perceived father alternatives* and tendency to use *destructive discipline tactics.* In step two of the regression the following interactions were entered: *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father commitment*; *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father alternatives*; and *perceived father commitment* and *perceived*

father alternatives. There were no significant relationships between any of the two-way interactions and a mother's tendency to use *destructive discipline tactics*. In step three of the regression the three-way interaction was entered. The three-way interaction between *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, and *perceived father alternatives* served as the indicator of dependence power. Unfortunately, no significant relationship was found between dependence power (represented by the three-way interaction) and a mother's tendency to use destructive discipline tactics; therefore, the results provide no support for *H6*. Although not hypothesized, the relationship between dependence power and a mother's use constructive discipline was analyzed. Results are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Step-Wise Regression of the Use of Constructive Discipline Tactics on Participant's Commitment to Father, Perceived Father Commitment, and Perceived Father Alternatives

	B	*SE B*	B	*R*	$R^2\Delta$	FΔ
Step 1: Main Effects				.28	.08	1.83
Participant's Commitment to Father	.05	.14	.09			
Perceived Father Commitment	.10	.12	.18			
Perceived Father Alternatives	.20	.09	.35*			
Step 2: Two - Way Interactions				.44	.12	3.01*
Participant's Commitment to Father × Perceived Father Commitment	.04	.05	.68			
Participant's Commitment to Father × Perceived Father Alternatives	-.17	.06	-1.19**			
Perceived Father Commitment × Perceived Father Alternatives	.13	.06	1.08*			

	B	*SE B*	B	*R*	$R^2\Delta$	$F\Delta$
Step 3: Three - Way Interaction	-.00	.02	-.12	.44	.00	.01

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. **$p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 68$.

Once again, main effects for *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, and *perceived father alternatives* were entered as the first step. Results indicated a significant positive main effect for *perceived father alternatives* and use of constructive discipline tactics $\beta = .35$, $p < .05$, such that the more alternatives a mother perceived the father to have, the more often she reported using constructive discipline tactics. In step two of the regression the two-way interactions were entered. Results indicated a significant negative association among *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father alternatives* on a mother's use of constructive discipline tactics, $\beta = -1.19$, $p < .01$. To evaluate the form of this interaction, procedures specified by Aiken and West (1991) were again utilized. The most parsimonious examination of the interaction involved computing the high, low, and average values of *participant's commitment to father* and evaluating these values in combination with *perceived father's alternatives*. As seen in Table 11, *perceived father alternatives* was associated with mother's use of *constructive discipline tactics*, particularly when *perceived father commitment* was low or average.

Table 11

Slopes for the Regression of the Use of Constructive Discipline Tactics at Different Levels of Participant's Commitment to Father and Perceived Father Alternatives

	Participant's Commitment to Father		
	Low	Average	High
Perceived Father Alternatives	.61**	.32*	.03

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 68$.

Results also indicated a significant positive association among *perceived father commitment* and *perceived father alternatives* on a mother's use of constructive discipline tactics, $\beta = 1.08$, $p < .05$. Once again, the slopes of the two variables considering the high, low, and average values of *perceived father commitment* were computed. The slopes are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Slopes for the Regression of Mother's Use of Constructive Discipline Tactics at Different Levels of Perceived Father Commitment and Perceived Father Alternatives

	Perceived Father Commitment		
	Low	Average	High
Perceived Father Alternatives	.35	.25	.14

$N = 68$.

An analysis of the slopes suggests that there was no one significant pattern of associations between *perceived father commitment* and *perceived father's alternatives*. Thus,

although the results of the step-wise regression indicate that the two variables work together to influence the mother's use of constructive discipline tactics, no isolated degree of *perceived father commitment* helped to explain how the addition of *perceived father's alternatives* interacts to affect the use of *constructive discipline tactics*. Such a pattern is not suggested by previous work on dependence power. Further, there was not a significant relationship between the three-way interaction (representing dependence power) and the use of *constructive discipline tactics*.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Relationship Between Dependence Power and Tolerance of Intimate Partner Violence

This investigation examined the influence of dependence power on EHS/HS mothers' likelihood of tolerating intimate partner violence. Although the study did not find many significant effects regarding dependence power, a number of interesting results were observed. The first hypothesis, which stated that dependence power would be negatively associated with tolerance of intimate partner violence, was not supported. This hypothesis was first examined considering the mother's relationship to her child's father and then considering her current romantic relationship with someone other than the child's father. Since the tolerance of violence measure had two subscales, physical and psychological, it was necessary to test the tolerance of each of these types of violence in both relationships. Regression analyses indicated that there were no significant main or interactive effects for *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, and *perceived father alternatives* on tolerance of physical violence. A potential explanation for why no significant effects were found regarding tolerance of physical violence may be due to the social stigma associated with physical violence as well as the vulnerable nature of the population. Presently, society emphasizes the severity of physical violence, while understating the severity of psychological violence. As a result, members of a population who are already in need of assistance to improve their health and well-being might have felt ashamed or even afraid to identify that they would tolerate physical violence to the extent that they realistically may. Another potential explanation for the lack of significant results

could be explained by the difference in severity of abuse that women are likely to tolerate. Hanley and O'Neil (1997) explain that behaviors classified as *severe violence* are acts that have high chance of causing injury. Kalmuss and Straus (1982) explain that subjectively dependent women tolerate moderate but not severe violence, while highly objective dependent women tolerate more severe abuse. Since these participants are enrolled in a government program for assistance and many are not reliant upon the father of their children, it may be that these women are objectively independent enough from the child's father that they would not consider tolerating severe violence no matter what their level of subjective dependency.

When examining the influence of dependence power on a mother's tolerance of psychological violence, no main effects were observed, however, there was a significant two-way interaction between *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father alternatives*. Further investigation revealed that the two-way interaction was best defined when participant's commitment to the father was high, indicating that perceived father's alternatives was positively associated with a mother's tolerance for psychological violence only when she was highly committed to her relationship with the father. Although speculated, one explanation for this positive association is that mothers who reported high commitment were determined to maintain the relationship with the father of their children and were, therefore, more worried about the father pursuing potential relational alternatives, causing them to tolerate violence. This willingness to tolerate violence in order to save a relationship is supported by the Roloff and Cloven (1990) observations that people in lower positions of power were willing to withhold complaints about their partners irritating behavior so as not to threaten the status of their relationships. Results of this thesis project also support the prior research of Rusbult et al. (1991) which noted that individual's who had high commitment and saw their partner as having

substantial alternatives were more likely to accommodate to their partner's dissatisfying actions. Considering the items that measured commitment on my questionnaire focused primarily on emotional commitment, such as having a strong bond with the partner, they revealed a more subjective dependency as opposed to revealing an objective dependency like financial dependence. Taking into account the work of Kalmuss and Straus (1982), Roloff and Cloven (1990), and Rusbut et al. (1991) it seems that a mother's high level of commitment (contributing to her subjective dependency), coupled with perceiving that the father had a number of relational alternatives, could cause her to tolerate a more moderate form of violence in order to save the status of her relationship with the child's father. In addition, Samp and Solomon (2001) explain that when people are concerned that their partners will leave a relationship for other alternatives, they magnify the severity of their *own* problematic behavior. If the father has low commitment and a number of relational alternatives, it is safe to assume that he may leave the relationship for an alternative. With this knowledge, the mothers may be likely to intensify the severity of their own problematic behavior, and thereby justify their partner's use of violence, making them more likely to tolerate it.

A significant two-way interaction was also observed among *perceived father commitment* and *perceived father alternatives* on *tolerance of psychological violence*. Further investigation identified only a near significant ($p = .06$) result for the negative association of perceived father alternatives on mother's tolerance of psychological violence when perceived father's commitment was high. This two way interaction is rather puzzling and falls out of line with the dependence power framework. Prior research would suggest that if a partner is very committed to the relationship, the fewer alternatives he has, the more dependent he is on the relationship, granting the mother more dependence power and allowing her to challenge the abuse. The

observed negative association indicates, however, that when a father is very committed, the fewer alternatives he has, the more likely the mother is to tolerate violence. One potential explanation is that the measure of tolerance of violence may be related to the amount of violence a mother has actually experienced. If this is the case, mothers may be reporting more tolerance of violence when the father was perceived as having fewer alternatives because these mothers have actually experienced more violence in this situation. Results of Hanley and O'Neill (1997) demonstrate that the more committed an individual reports her partner to be, the more she is likely to maintain a violent relationship. The authors also explain that the woman's perceptions typically don't match her partner's level of commitment but that she may be trying to reduce cognitive dissonance about remaining in an abusive relationship by emphasizing her partner's commitment. As a result, it may be that our mothers reported tolerating more violence when their partner were highly committed and had as few relational alternatives, because it was easier for her to justify tolerating violence if she perceived her partner that way. By reporting high partner commitment and low partner alternatives a mother can tell herself that since her partner is committed and doesn't want to leave her she should maintain their relationship even if it is abusive. Another potential explanation for the unexpected two-way interaction is that the more committed a father is to the relationship and the less relational alternatives he has, the more he may try and restrict the mother's social network and restrict her relational alternatives (Murphy et al., 1994) thereby, leaving the mother with few options to tolerating the abusive relationship.

Dependence power was represented in these step-wise regressions as a three-way interaction between *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, and *perceived father alternatives*. Since no three way interaction was found when examining a

mother's tolerance of psychological or physical violence, *H1* was not supported in the examination of a mother's relationship with her child's father.

Interestingly, results were somewhat different when examining the relationship between dependence power and tolerance of both psychological and physical violence in a mother's relationship with her current partner. First, a step-wise regression using *participant's commitment to current partner*, *perceived partner commitment*, and *perceived partner alternatives* tested the effects of the variables on tolerance of physical violence. No significant main effects were found. This examination did, however, reveal a combined negative effect of perceived partner commitment and perceived partner alternatives on a mother's tolerance of physical violence. Slope tests displayed that particularly, when *perceived partner commitment* was low or average, *perceived partner alternatives* was negatively associated with mother's tolerance of physical violence. Results of the slope test seem to indicate that when perceived partner commitment is high, the amount of perceived alternatives is less essential for determining how much violence one will tolerate, potentially because the participant feels the partner's high commitment is enough assurance of the stability of the relationship. The dependence power framework would suggest that if a partner was not very committed, the more alternatives he had, the lower the mother's dependence power would be and the more violence she would be willing to tolerate to keep her partner around. The observed two-way interaction however, demonstrates that when a mother perceived her partner as being low or average in commitment, the more alternatives she perceives him as having, the less she tolerated physical violence. It may be that if the partner is not very attached and has many alternatives the mother never grows dependent on him, due to her awareness of the fact that he may leave the relationship. The EHS/HS population is generally not a trusting population (A. Moon, personal communication, September, 2007) and

therefore, it would be reasonable to believe that mothers who were not confident about the exclusivity of their relationship would not allow themselves to become reliant on their partners. On the other hand, if the partner was somewhat committed and did not have many alternatives it is more likely that the mother could have grown dependent on him thinking he was not going anywhere; this dependence would force her to tolerate violence in order to keep him around.

It was discussed above that there were no associations with physical violence when relationship with the father's child was considered. It was argued that the mother's type of dependency on the father may not have justified such severe abuse. The study's procedure required all participants complete a dependence power measure considering their relationship with the target child's father. Many of these participants were no longer in a romantic relationship with the child's father and therefore, were not necessarily objectively dependent on them. Participants who completed the dependence power measure regarding their current partner, however, were presently in a romantic relationship with this partner. As a result, it is more likely that these participants could have been objectively dependent on their partner and therefore, would tolerate the more severe forms of abuse under certain conditions. Again, no significant three-way interaction was found demonstrating that there was no significant association among dependence power and tolerance of physical violence in a mother's relationship with her current romantic partner.

Finally, tests of *H1* examined the relationship between dependence power in a mother's current romantic relationship and psychological violence. The step-wise regression did not reveal any significant interactive effects, only a main effect for perceived partner alternatives on mother's tolerance of psychological violence, such that an increase in perceived partner alternatives was associated with an increase in tolerance of psychological violence. The past

research described above would explain that if a mother perceived her current partner as having relational alternatives she would *not* challenge his problematic behavior out of fear it would cause him to pursue alternative relationships. Specifically, perceived partner alternatives may have played a significant role in tolerance of psychological violence considering current romantic partners, due to the fact that the mother's do not have the unique connection of having a child with this partner. In the mother's relationship with her child's father there may be perceived alternatives, but no alternative relationship provides the opportunity to jointly parent their child. In the mother's relationship with the current partner she does not play such a unique role and therefore, she may perceive her partner's alternatives as being more comparable or even more attractive if she thinks her partner considers the child(ren) a relational cost. Also, Samp and Solomon (2001) suggest that mothers who see their partners as possessing alternatives, are likely to magnify the severity of their behaviors, therefore these mothers are likely to justify their partners' use of violence.

Overall, contrary to *H1,* dependence power did not have significant associations with a mother's tolerance of violence when considering a mother's relationship with her child's father or her relationship with a current romantic partner. It was predicted that if a mother perceived her child's father or her current partner as being more dependent on the relationship than she was, she would be able to challenge the father/partner's behavior in hopes that he would change and/or she would be willing and able to walk away from the relationship. It may be that the nature of the population made it difficult to observe the expected results. Samp and Solomon (2001) justified their use of an undergraduate dating population, explaining that the three perceptions that form the core of dependence power (participant's commitment, partner alternatives, and partner commitment) are particularly relevant in intense, yet voluntary,

romantic relationships. The authors suggest that the exclusivity in college dating relationships, coupled with the ability to leave the pairing at minimal cost, makes the undergraduate population an easy one in which to study the construct of dependence power. The purpose of this study was to extend the construct to use with other populations however, characteristics of the EHS/HS population and their relationships may have prevented a successful observation of the effects of dependence power. For instance, when completing the measure for dependence power mothers were told that if they were not in a romantic relationship with the father of their child they should answer the questions regarding *commitment* in reference to their relationship as parents and *relationship alternatives* as alternatives to jointly parenting (e.g. turning to family or friends for parenting support, or abandoning their duties as parents). Since many of the EHS/HS mothers have not received much education and therefore, have a low reading ability, it may have been difficult for them to interpret the questions in the necessary manner. In addition, some of the mothers' romantic relationships may not involve the same level or type of exclusivity as the previously studied undergraduate population again influencing the measurement dependence power and/or its effect on violence. Also, the fact that we only looked at power from one person's perspective may have been problematic. Measuring dependence power in relationships, it is often the case that an individual gains power when their partner loses power. For example, if an individual's partner grows more committed to the relationship then the partner loses dependence power and she gains it. Le and Agnew (2001) suggest the importance of examining the overall dependence dynamic between partners as opposed to examining an individual's position relative to his or her partner. The authors found that it was the overall dependency dynamic between partners that depicted one's positive emotional experience within a relationship, not the individual's position relative to her partner. Hanley and O'Neill (1997)

argue that violence may not necessarily be predicted by levels of commitment but instead by agreement in perceived levels of commitment. The authors noticed that individuals in violent relationships were more likely than individuals in nonviolent relationships to think that their partners were not at the same commitment level that they were. In addition, the Hanley and O'Neill (1997) study observed that the estimated partner commitment levels that individuals in violent relationships reported did not match what their partner actually reported. Overall, it may have been more effective to measure the effect of dependence power on use violence or tolerance of violence by investigating both partner's dependence power scores and the agreement of these scores among partners.

Relationship Between Father's Desire for Involvement and Tolerance of Intimate Partner Violence

Results of the study supported Hypothesis 2, which stated that a mother's perception of the *father's desire for involvement* would be negatively associated with her *tolerance of intimate partner violence.* Bivariate correlations indicated significant negative associations between a mother's tolerance of physical violence and the father's perceived desire for involvement as well as between a mother's tolerance of psychological violence and the father's perceived desire for involvement. These results suggest that the more a mother perceived that the father wanted to be involved in his child's life, the less violence she was likely to tolerate. As discussed in Chapter 3, Allen and Hawkins (1999) explain that mothers often have the ability to play a "gate-keeping" role, having control over the father's access and interaction with his children. As a result, it is probable that when a mother perceived the father as desiring to be involved in his child's life, she was granted a means of power or control in the relationship, providing her with a greater opportunity to influence his behavior.

Relationship Between Father's Presence and Dependence Power in a Mother's Relationship With her Child's Father

Hypothesis 3, which predicted that a mother whose child's father was present would have higher dependence power in her relationship with the child's father than a mother whose child's father was not present, was supported by the present investigation. Results of a *t*-test revealed that dependence power, represented by the interaction of *participant's commitment to father, perceived father commitment,* and *perceived father alternatives*, was significantly higher for participants whose children's fathers were present compared to those whose children's fathers were not present. Coley and Hernandez (2006) and Allen and Hawkins (1999) support this finding by explaining that when a father desires to maintain a presence in his child's life he is often at the mercy of the mother who acts as a "gate-keeper" regulating the father's involvement with his child. Consequently, the father is more dependent on the mother than the mother is on the father, resulting in the mother having higher dependence power. Results of the present investigation also indicated that there were significant differences between mothers whose children's fathers were present and mothers whose children's fathers were not present when their own commitment to the father and their perception of the father's commitment were examined independently. Given that there was not a significant difference observed for *perceived father alternatives*, it appears that *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father commitment* are the variables that drove the effect of dependence power as a dependent variable. As expected, when a father was present in his child's life, he was perceived by the mother as being more committed to the relationship. This observation can be supported by the work of Coley and Hernandez (2006) which notes that early participation in a child's life signifies parental commitment and is related to continued involvement throughout the child's life. Therefore, if a

father is present in his child's life when the child is young, the mother can be more confident that he will continue to be committed to their relationship as parents. Overall, as predicted, when a father was present in his child's life he was viewed as being more committed to the relationship with the mother and more reliant on that specific relationship than a father who was not present in his child's life thereby, giving the mother more dependence power.

Relationship Between Father's Presence and Dependence Power in a Mother's Relationship With a Current Partner

Results of the study did not support *H4*, which predicted that mothers whose children's fathers were present would report higher dependence power in current romantic relationships than mothers whose children's fathers were not present. Originally, it was predicted that when the father of the child is present in his child's life, the mother would consider him a relational alternative to her current romantic partner, because he could carry some of the stresses and burdens in her life related to parenting. It was further predicted that this presence of a relational alternative would allow the mother to be less committed to and dependent upon her current romantic partner, thereby increasing her dependence power in her relationship with her current partner. Unexpectedly, there were no significant differences found between father's presence and any of the dependence power dimensions independently. There was also no significance found between father's presence and the interaction of these dimensions, representing dependence power. One explanation for the lack of significant associations could be the limited number of participants who completed dependence power measures concerning their current romantic relationship with someone other than the child's father (N = 25). Additionally, it may have been incorrect to assume that a mother would consider her child's father to be a relational alternative if he was present. For example, it is possible that even if the father of the child was present the

mother did not rely on him in anyway. It is also possible that even if the father took on some of the stresses or burdens of parenting, this was not enough to qualify the father as a relational alternative. In fact, since the mother is no longer with the father of her child, he probably did not fulfill her relationship needs, and therefore, she does not presently consider him a relationship alternative. In addition, evidence derived from interdependence theory suggests that an individual's level of commitment may affect their perceived relational alternatives. Miller (1997) observed that commitment was strongly and negatively correlated with attentiveness toward desirable alternatives. That study further found that inattentiveness to alternatives was a successful strategy for relational maintenance. Johnson and Rusbult (1989) also detected a strong link between commitment and the tendency to negatively evaluate relational alternatives. Therefore, the mothers may not have perceived the fathers as relational alternatives because they were committed to current partner. It is possible that if we had measured the current partner's dependence power, his perception of the mother's alternatives, and hence his dependence power, would have been significantly altered by the father's presence. Even if the mother considered the father an unsuitable alternative, the current romantic partner may have perceived him as a threatening alternative. Bornstein (2006) suggests that dependent men have increased jealousy and therefore, may misperceive their partner's relationship with another person. Future investigations of the relationship between dependence power and violence may benefit from examining a current partner's dependence power when the mother continues to have a relationship with her child's father.

Relationship Between Father's Presence and Tolerance of Intimate Partner Violence

Hypothesis 5, which stated that mothers whose children's fathers were present were less likely to tolerate violence than mothers whose children's fathers were not present, did not receive

support. The original rationale for *H5* was again based on the idea that when a father was present in his child's life, the mother would see him as an alternative to her current romantic partner and therefore, would be less dependent on her current partner. It was further predicted that this higher dependence power would make the mother less likely to tolerate violence than a mother whose child's father was not present. As discussed above, the relationship between a father's presence and dependence power in a mother's relationship with her current romantic partner did not reach significance, hence it was reasonable that there was no association between *father's presence* and *tolerance of physical violence* or *father's presence* and *tolerance of psychological violence*. If the mother did not consider the child's father a relational alternative, it is not likely that his presence would influence whether or not she would risk that status of her current romantic relationship by refusing to tolerate violence.

Given that there was a relationship between father's presence and dependence power in the mother's relationship with the father, it was expected that there could be an association between dependence power and tolerance of violence that could potentially come from the child's father. Results of this study, however, indicate that a father's presence plays a larger role in determining the father's level of dependence than the mother's dependence level. Although past research (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Coley & Hernandez, 2006) suggests that the more a father wants to be involved the more dependent he is on the mother, it is not necessarily the case that a father's presence means the mother is dependent on him. It appears instead, that a mother's dependence on her child's father is more idiosyncratic than was originally predicted, and is based more on the type of presence and kinds of responsibilities the father assumes. As a result, *H5* tests indicate that a general measure of whether or not a father is present in his child's life is not sufficient for predicting a mother's tolerance of violence. Future research should, however,

investigate the relationship between the current partner's dependence power and his likelihood to engage in violence when the father is present versus when he is not. The dependency-possessiveness model described by Bornstein (2006), explains how emotionally dependent people, will display high levels of jealousy and engage in violence when they perceive potential partner rejection. As mentioned above, Bornstein (2006) also explains that a partner's jealousy need not be based on the actual behavior of the woman but may instead be misperception of the woman's emotional or physical dependency on another person. It is a realistic possibility that dependent partners could be threatened by the permanent link that a mother has with the father of her child. Consequently, if future research examines dependence power from the current partner's perspective, one may observe that a father's presence causes an emotionally dependent partner to feel threatened, thus increasing the likelihood that he will engage in violence.

Relationship Between Dependence Power and Use of Discipline Tactics

Finally, *H6* stated that the lower the mother's dependence power in her relationship with the father of the target child, the greater likelihood that she would engage in violence toward her child(ren). Due to recommendations from the Athens Clarke-County EHS/HS staff, both violent and non violent means of disciplining children were included in the measure of discipline tactics. The staff feared that only measuring the use of violent discipline tactics would cause the mothers to believe that it was a general assumption that they all used violent discipline tactics. Consequently, the discipline tactics measure was found to have two subscales: constructive discipline tactics and destructive discipline tactics. The destructive discipline tactics subscale included the violent discipline tactics, thus this subscale was initially examined to test *H6*. Unfortunately, the hypothesis was not supported given that there was no significant three-way interaction for *participant's commitment to father*, *perceived father commitment*, and *perceived*

father alternatives on a mother's use of destructive discipline tactics. There were also no main effects or two-way interaction effects found. The failure to observe significant associations could again be due to the vulnerable nature of the population. It may be that mothers were afraid to identify that they use violence against their children out of concern that EHS/HS staff would find out and reprimand them. Another potential explanation for a lack of significant results is that mothers were supposed to complete the questionnaire considering their youngest child enrolled in EHS/HS and, as a result, many of the mothers were asked to report the discipline tactics they used with children who were only a few months old. Consequently, mothers may have had difficulty reporting how often they used certain discipline tactics if their children were too young to receive or appreciate specific tactics. In addition, although it was predicted that a mother with low dependence power in her intimate relationship would compensate by using physical force with her children, it appears that she did not place enough value on her relationship with the father for it to have a significant effect on how she manages her power. The mother may have be in a current romantic relationship in which she felt she possessed adequate power, thus making up for any lack of dependence power in her relationship with the father. As a result, there would be no need for the mother to exert physical power over her children.

Although not hypothesized, the relationship between dependence power and a mother's use of constructive discipline tactics was examined. A step-wise regression revealed that there was a significant main effect for *perceived father alternatives* on a mother's use of *constructive discipline tactics*, such that the more relational alternatives a mother perceived the father as having, the more often she would use constructive discipline tactics with her child(ren). It is probable that the more alternatives the father had, the more concerned the mother was that he would abandon the relationship and therefore, she tried to ensure that the child was well behaved

so that the father would desire to sustain his parental relationship. Margolin et al. (2003) stated that often a mother enforces more discipline to give her husband less reason to become irritated. Additionally, the presence of relational alternatives could have heightened the mother's awareness that the father of her child might not be around long to enforce discipline, causing her to increase her own use of constructive discipline tactics. Another explanation for the positive relationship between perceived father alternatives and use of constructive discipline tactics, is that the more relational alternatives the father was perceived as having, the more desirable the mother wanted to be. Considering the relationship with her child's father may be solely defined by their relationship as parents, seeming desirable would have involved being regarded as a good mother. Consequently, it is possible that the more alternatives the father was perceived as having, the more desirable the mother wanted to appear, and the more constructive discipline strategies she used.

The step-wise regression also revealed a significant two-way interaction. The interaction among *participant's commitment to father* and *perceived father alternatives* was negatively associated with a mother's use of constructive discipline tactics, particularly at low and average levels of participant commitment. If a mother was not highly committed to the child's father then she should not be concerned about the father pursuing relational alternatives. As a result, she would not deem it necessary to be as assertive in her discipline tactics as a mother who worried about the father abandoning their relationship. In addition, if the mother was not very committed and the father had a number of alternatives, the family relationship could have been considered unstable which is associated with less effective forms of parenting control (Margolin et al., 2003).

There was also a significant positive association observed among *perceived father commitment* and *perceived father alternatives* on use of constructive discipline tactics. This combined effect demonstrates that the more committed the father was perceived to be, coupled with a mother's perception of the father's relational alternatives, the more often the mother would use constructive discipline tactics. Tests for *H1* observed that the same interaction had a negative effect on a mother's tolerance of psychological violence. Although speculative, it is possible that the less psychological violence a mother is likely to tolerate, the more stable of an environment she lives in, making it more suitable for the greater use of constructive discipline tactics. It was previously discussed that a mother who perceives the father as having relationship alternatives is motivated to increase her use of constructive discipline tactics. It appears however, that this goal is more successfully achieved when relationship commitment allows for a more stable and less uncertain environment. Finally, the three-way interaction investigating the relationship between dependence power and a mother's use of constructive discipline tactics was not significant.

Post-Hoc Discussion

Results of the preliminary analyses revealed significant correlations among the individual dimensions of dependence power which were in line with previous research. A significant negative correlation was found between *perceived father commitment* and *perceived father alternatives* as well as between *perceived partner commitment* and *perceived partner alternatives*. These correlations both indicate that the more committed a father or partner was perceived as being, the less relational alternatives were perceived by an EHS/HS mother. This observation is in line with the dependence power framework. Cloven and Roloff (1993) explain that individuals gain dependence power when they perceive their partner as being more

committed and having less alternatives, demonstrating the predicted negative relationship between these two variables when considering the dependence power construct.

Another noteworthy result observed in the preliminary analyses was the significant positive correlation between *tolerance of physical violence* and *tolerance of psychological violence*. Zero-order correlations indicated that the more a mother is willing to tolerate psychological violence, the more she is likely to tolerate physical violence. Consequently, even though certain main and interactive effects were only found to be associated with either physical or psychological violence, it may be that by they indirectly influence tolerance of the other type of violence as well. For example, the regression performed to test *H1*, which examined the relationship between dependence power and tolerance of violence with respect to a mother's relationship with her father's child, did not reveal any significant main or combined effects of the dependence power variables on tolerance of physical violence, however significant two-way interactions were observed when examining the effects of the variables on a mother's tolerance of psychological violence in the same relationship. Although speculative, we can presume that the interactions may influence the mother's tolerance of psychological violence, which in turn will impact her tolerance of physical violence.

In addition, results of preliminary analyses help to justify observations noted in tests of *H2*, specifically that a father's perceived desire for involvement was negatively associated with a mother's tolerance for violence. For instance, the zero-order correlations revealed that a father's perceived desire for involvement was positively correlated with his perceived commitment, indicating that the more a mother perceived her child's father as wanting to be involved in the child's life, the more committed she perceived him. This correlation can be supported by observations of Coley and Hernandez (2006) which suggest that a father retaining a close,

cooperative, low-conflict relationship with the mother, even if it is nonromantic, is central to him ensuring continued parental involvement. If the mother thinks the father wants to be involved in his child's life, she will also perceive that the father will be committed to having a close and successful relationship with her in order to achieve his goal. Zero-order correlations also indicated that the more a mother perceived the father as wanting to be involved, the more committed she was to their relationship. It was previously discussed that one potential explanation for hypotheses tests revealing a significant relationship between *father's perceived desire for involvement* and *tolerance of violence* was that a father's desire for involvement gave the mother a sense of power or control over the father. Results of the preliminary analyses however, help us to further explain the significant association between *father's perceived desire for involvement* and *tolerance of violence*. Samp and Solomon (2001) suggest that when individuals perceive their partners as being committed to the relationship they will more actively communicate to repair the relationship as opposed to merely avoiding relational problems. Overall, although speculative, one can assume that mothers who saw the fathers as desiring to be involved in their children's lives, also saw them as being more committed, and were more committed themselves, and therefore, they were more likely to communicate in order to repair problems in the relationship, and less likely to passively tolerate violence. Preliminary analyses also revealed a significant negative correlation between a father's perceived desire for involvement and perceived father alternatives, meaning that fathers who were perceived as desiring involvement were not only perceived as being more committed but were also perceived as having fewer relational alternatives. This negative correlation is in line with the dependence power framework. Rusbult et al. (1991) observed that individuals who had stronger commitment and poorer quality of alternatives were more likely to accommodate to their partner's

dissatisfying actions. Therefore, it is sound to believe that mothers who perceived the fathers as desiring involvement had more freedom to protest abusive behavior than mothers whose fathers do not desire to be involved; for even if the father disapproved of the protest, he was likely to accommodate to the mother's requests because of his low dependence power.

The positive correlation between participant's commitment to father and perceived father commitment revealed in the preliminary analyses help to explain results observed in tests of *H3*, which demonstrated that father's presence was positively associated with a mother's dependence power. Since the hypothesis test indicated that fathers who were present were perceived by mothers as being more committed than fathers who were not present, it was not surprising that preliminary analyses revealed that mothers also felt more committed to the father when the father was present. Since Coley and Hernandez (2006) note that early participation in a child's life is related to a father's continued involvement throughout the child's life, we can presume that the mother, ensured of the father's long term commitment, allows herself to become invested as well, sine she does not fear that the father will terminate the relationship.

Finally, although tests of *H6* produced no significant results when examining the main and interactive effects of the dimensions of dependence power on a mother's use of destructive discipline tactics, it is important to note that preliminary analyses did reveal a significant positive correlation between a mother's tolerance of physical violence and her use of destructive discipline tactics as well as between her tolerance of psychological violence and her use of destructive discipline tactics. Casanueva and Martin (2007) explain that positive associations have previously been found between a woman's experience of intimate partner violence and her use of harsh discipline techniques on her children. One explanation for this association, although speculative, is that women who tolerate abuse have weaker communication and problem solving

skills (Babcock et al., 1993; Bond & Bond, 2004) and are less aware of the alternatives to managing conflict than women who do not tolerate abuse. Consequently, women who tolerate abuse might see violence as a necessary means for disciplining children. Margolin, Gordis, Medina and Oliver (2003) suggest that it is the stress of tolerating psychological and physical violence that causes a mother to engage in violence toward her child. These authors also suggest that a woman who experiences intimate partner violence lives in a state of hyperarousal, irritability and exhaustion which may work together to diminish her parenting capacity.

Analysis of the Utility of the Dependence Power Framework

To review, although dependence power was not found to be significantly related to tolerance of intimate partner violence, significant two-way interaction effects were observed showing how combined effects of certain dimensions of dependence power were associated with a participant's tolerance of both physical and psychological violence. A significant association was also found between a mother's perception of the father's desire for involvement and the mother's tolerance of physical and psychological violence. Additionally, a father's presence in his child's life was found to influence a mother's level of dependence power in her relationship with the father. Finally, main and combined effects of the individual dimensions of dependence power were significantly associated with a mother's use of constructive discipline tactics. The combined effects observed in tests of the hypotheses as well as a number of the significant zero-order correlations are in line with Rusbult's Investment Model. As reviewed earlier, the investment model predicts that dependence increases as an individual invests more in a relationship, hence becoming more committed, and as the individual's available alternatives appear to become poor (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). The significant two-way interactions involving commitment and alternatives, as well as the significant correlations between commitment and

alternatives revealed in this thesis are certainly in line with Rubsult's assumptions. Despite the detection of numerous significant effects, there was little support for the influence of dependence power on a mother's tolerance of intimate partner violence and her use of violence toward her children. Discussed below are limitations that may have prevented the observation of significant dependence power effects, resulting in many of the hypotheses not receiving support. Overall, although the dependence power variable was not observed as having a significant effect in most associations, it was beneficial to use the dependence power framework to examine this population. Not only did the use of this framework provide us with a number of interesting and significant observations, but it also paved the way for many future investigations of the EHS/HS population.

Limitations

Although the study produced a number of interesting results, numerous limitations may have inhibited our understanding of the role of dependence power on the EHS/HS population. The reading level of some of the members of the EHS/HS population is extremely low, due to their limited education and/or limited knowledge of the English language. Although the questionnaire items and directions were adapted in an attempt to accommodate the population's reading level, some participants still had difficulty comprehending the meaning of some items. As previously discussed, extension of this framework required the participants to open their minds to different interpretations of the dependence power items but due to their reading level they may have been unequipped to handle that. Future research with this population may benefit from administering the measure of dependence power in an interview format where items could be further explained to the participants. In addition, the nature of intimate relationships, such as romantic relationships, is different in the EHS/HS population than in the undergraduate

population with which dependence power has previously been studied. Consequently, it may be that the EHS/HS population's ideas about exclusivity or relationship intensity make it harder to observe the effects of dependence power. In general, the field may benefit from an adaptation of the Rusbult et al. (1998) measures of commitment level and quality of alternatives making it more inclusive of a wider range of intimate relationships.

In addition to having difficulty comprehending some items, the vulnerability of the population caused participants to experience heightened awareness and concern over the invasive nature of some of the items. Anecdotal reports from Head Start classroom teachers indicated that many mothers were at first reluctant to complete the questionnaire because they perceived the questions as too personal. Although the items and instructions were designed to make the questionnaire as noninvasive as possible and participants were ensured that their answers were anonymous, it remains likely that some mothers did not answer items entirely truthfully due to fear of personal or structural repercussions. A related limitation is that only 9 of 75 participants completed the items that asked them to identify which tactics of violence they had actually experienced from the father of their children or their current romantic partner. As a result, it was necessary to adapt some of the hypotheses and speculate with regard to some of the explanations behind the observed results, specifically when attempting to determine who mothers were likely to tolerate violence from. Again, this failure to acknowledge their experience with violence may be a result of the participants' concerns that their responses would be traced back to them and/or that results from the study may have negative repercussions for them, such as having to complete additional questionnaires or having to attend mandatory meetings. Although another population may not have these concerns, the EHS/HS mothers are used to having to complete a great deal of

paperwork regarding their lives and are often required to attend meetings about improving the quality of their lives.

Another limitation of the study was the limited number of participants who were in current romantic relationships with someone other than the father of their child. This limited number may have made it difficult to detect significant results regarding this relationship context. A related concern is that the study's sample may have been biased. Since it was clear that the study was about intimate relationships and conflict, it is possible that people who felt comfortable completing the questionnaire were people who felt more secure and satisfied in their intimate relationships. Consequently, our sample may not have been accurate representation of the population causing results to be skewed.

Although the sample size of this study was substantial given the nature of the population, it would have been beneficial to have a larger sample when testing for three-way interactions. With a total N of 74, and some regression tests having an even smaller sample, the power of some analyses may be limited. As illustrated by Samp and Solomon (2001), it was necessary to do these three way interactions for hypotheses that involved the construct of dependence power, however, due to the fact that dependence power is a multidimensional construct involving the interaction of the three variables.

An additional limitation could be the fact that data was only collected from the mothers of EHS/HS and not from the fathers of their children or from their current romantic partners. The original justification for only researching the mothers was that it was presumed that whether or not the mother would tolerate violence should only be dependent on how much power the woman perceived herself as having. It is possible however, that some mothers' reports of their tolerance of violence may not represent a rational decision about how much violence she would

accept or justify, but instead may be a direct measure of how much violence her partner decides to engage in. For example, she may have reported that she rarely tolerates violence but that may be because her partner rarely engages in violence. If this is the case, one can not be certain that if the partner attempted to engage in violence more often she would not begin to tolerate the violence more frequently. Consequently, it would be useful to measure and compare the dependence power of both people in the relationship in order to determine the likelihood that violence would occur in a relationship. Hanley and O'Neill (1997) and Le and Agnew (2001) illustrate the importance of not only measuring each individuals' dependence level but also investigating partner agreement about those levels. It was observed that when partners perceive a lack of agreement in levels of commitment it is more likely that their relationship will be violent than when partners perceive themselves as being committed at the same level (Hanley & O'Neill, 1997). As a result, a more insightful examination of the EHS/HS population might have been achieved if the dependence power of both partners was measured, suggesting that this would be a beneficial direction for future research.

One final limitation of the study concerns the measure of discipline tactics. Since EHS serves children ages infant through 3 years old, many of the mothers in the EHS/HS population may have had children that were too young to require or appreciate some of the discipline tactics, such as talking about why the child's behavior was wrong or taking a privilege away from the child. Consequently, some mothers may have had difficulty completing this measure, potentially influencing results of the study. Despite the limitations, the study provides a greater understanding of the EHS/HS population, specifically regarding how dimensions of dependence power influence the population.

Conclusions

Summary. Although relationships are meant to provide people with happiness, satisfaction and support, some become unhealthy and potentially dangerous. People may feel trapped in an unhealthy relationship for many reasons including economic or emotional dependence, or even fear. The purpose of this study was to examine the risk of intimate partner violence using the construct of dependence power, or the power an individual obtains when she compares her commitment to a relationship to her relational partner's commitment and his potential relational altnernatives. This project also advanced the dependence power construct by acting as its first application to a non-student sample, and additionaly by using it to examine an at-risk population. Previous research demonstrates the influence of SES variables such as low income, poor education, and unemployment status, on the risk of engaging in and experiencing intimate partner violence (Cunradi et al., 2002; Gelles, 1985; Magdol et al., 1997; Schumacher et al., 2001). Ultimately, the above average stress and conflict experienced by mothers enrolled in Athens-Clarke County, GA Early Head Start and Head Start programs due to their low SES classification, made it an appropriate population for investigating the relationship between dependence power and intimate partner violence. Mothers enrolled in the program completed anonymous self-report questionnaires which measured dependence power, tolerance of intimate partner violence, and use of various discipline tactics. Hierarchical regression modeling, *t*-tests and bivariate correlations were conducted to analyze the data.

While previous research on intimate partner violence examined the role that power in violent relationships, most research had focused on punitive or resource power that is typically embedded in the structure of marriage. Additionally, past research presented contradictory and complex results regarding the role of dependence in intimate relationships; some observing that

the partner who engages in violence is the more dependent partner and some observing that the victimzed individual is the more dependent partner. To achieve a greater understanding of intimate partner violence it was necessary to study relationships that were not necessarily bound by marriage. Since Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Athens-Clarke County see many instances of parents who are trying to negotiate raising a child together without being married or even dating partners, this study examined the relationship between mothers enrolled in EHS/HS and the fathers of their youngest children enrolled in the program.

The hypothesized relationship between dependence power and tolerance of intimate partner violence was not supported. There were, however, main and interactive effects found between specific dimensions of dependence power and tolerance of violence. For instance, it was observed that when a mother was highly committed to the father, the more alternatives the father had, the more psychological violence the mother was likely to tolerate. Additionally, it was detected that perception of the father's alternatives combined with perception of the father's commitment was negatively assocaited with a mother's tolerance of psychological violence, particularly when a mother's perception of her current romantic partner's commitment was low or average. Perception of the current partner's alternatives was observed as having a main effect on a mother's tolerance of psychological violence, indicating that the more alterantives a mother perceived her current partner as having, the more psychological violence she woud tolerate. Next, the hypothesis examining the relationship between a mother's perception of the father's desire for involvement in his child's life and a mothers tolerance of violence was supported. It was observed that the more a mother perceived the father as wanting to be involved, the less physical and psychological violence she would tolerate. In addition, the predicted relationship between father's presence and dependence power concerning the mother's relationship with the

father was supported, observing that mothers whose children's fathers were present had higher dependence power in the relationship. The hypothesized association between a father's presence and dependence power concerning the mother's relationship with her current partner, however was not supported. Additionally, the hypothesis examining the association between a father's presence and a mother's tolerance for physical tolerance was not supported. Finally, there was no support for the hypothesized relationship between a mother's dependence power and her use of destructive discipline tactics however. There were however, significant main and combined effects of individual dimensions of dependence power on a mother's use of constructive discipline tactics.

Suggestions for designing EHS/HS parent curriculum. One of the benefits of examining an at-risk population is that results of the project can be directly applied to improve the wellbeing of the individuals. With this in mind, I propose a number of suggestions concerning how the Athens-Clarke County Early Head Start and Head Start programs could develop a communication competence curriculum for enrolled parents. To start, results of this study suggest that mothers may tolerate violence when they are committed to a relationship and something causes them to question their partner's commitment, such as the presence of relational alternatives or a father not desiring to be involved in his child's life. Therefore, a curriculum designed for EHS/HS parents first needs to work on improving increasing mother's self-esteem. An increase in self-esteem could alter a mother's perceptions, allowing her to feel less threatened by relational alternatives and perhaps even altering her commitment to the relationship by encouraging that she explore relational alternatives. Overall, improving a mother's self esteem would allow her not to be as concerned about abandonment. As discussed in Chapter 6, one reason why mothers may tolerate violence is that they are afraid that challenging their partners'

behaviors would cause the partners to abandon the relationship. These mothers need to be educated that it is better to stand on their own than be in an abusive relationship but in order to do so we first need to convince them that they can stand on their own.

In addition to improving the mothers' self-esteem, it would be extremely helpful for an EHS/HS parent curriculum to include lessons on constructive conflict management. These lessons could include topics such as ways to moderate conflict, constructive communication formats and practices, and fair fighting techniques. If a mother tolerates violence because she feels that challenging her partner would threaten the status of the relationship, teaching parents to engage in conflict in a constructive manner should allow them to discuss relational problems without fearing that irreconciable damage would be done. In addition, teaching parents how to practice constructive confict management may reduce overall tension and agression in the relationship, reducing the likihood that the relationship would become violent. Finally, it is imperataive to emphasize keeping lines of communication between partners open and honest. Mothers should be taught to understand that perceptions of her father's commitment and alternatives may be misperceptions, and the only way to truly know where they each stand in the relationship is by communicating directly with each other.

After volunteering for over nine months in a Head Start classroom, I witnessed the difficulty that classroom teachers had with teaching children how to successfully communicate their feelings and needs, as well as how to sucessfully resove problems and conflicts. Classroom teachers speculated that the difficulities in teaching these children stemmed from the fact that lessons were not being reinforced at home. The students were extremely violent with one another, and some students stated that their parents had encouraged them to use violence as means of standing up for themselves. The observations noted in this project support the

spectulation that parents were negatively influlencing their children's behavior and communication skills. Preliminary analyses revealed that mothers who were more likely to tolerate physical and psychological violence were also more likely to discipline their children in a violent manner. Therefore, not only are mothers verbally encouraging their children to use violence, but they are also promoting the use of violence through example. As discussed above, a potential explanation for the correlation between tolerance of violence and use of destructive discipline tactics is that mothers are not aware of the alternative means of conflict management. If the women are used to experiencing violence as a reprimand they may not be knowledgeable of, or experienced with, alternative responses. In addition to educating parents in these constructive forms of conflict management and discipline, it is also important to stress how much damage they are doing to their child by using and promoting violence. Gelles (1985) explains that children who experience violence have higher rates of developmental delays, and have troubles with drug abuse, alcohol abuse, criminal behavior and psychiatric disturbances into their adult years. The author also explains that children who have been abused have a higher rate of juvenile deliquency. The mission of Early Head Start/Head Start highlights the importance of informing parents that they are the most important leaders and teachers in their children's lives. As a result, the parents need to be taught the constructive communication skills not only to improve the quality of their lives and relationships but also to improve their ability to be teachers for their children. It is more than feasible to train EHS/HS staff in the instruction of these communication skills in a group setting comparable to the mandatory parent meetings that the EHS/HS host. In fact, Gelles (1985) found that group counseling provided by lay as opposed to professional therapists were most effective in counseling parents about issues like child abuse.

It could be beneficial to utilize the EHS/HS mandatory parent meetings to instruct parents in the communication skills described above, therby directly giving them the tools they need to start changing the way they view themselves and how they communicate. I do feel however, that it is necessary to take additional steps to ensure that the parents actually feel compelled to change their habits and practice their new skills long term. To start, I think that parents would benefit from mandatory visits to their child(ren)'s classroom. I believe that spending some time in the classroom and seeing how violent and destrutive the chidren can be would illustrate to some parents the extent to which children absorb what they see at home. In addition I hope that the parents would witness how the children's behaviors are hurting their development, given that teachers are having trouble getting through educational lessons or teaching them basic skills because they spend so much time handling behavior issues. In order to increase the likelihood that the mothers will not only attempt the new communication skills but practice them long term, I feel it would be useful to provide an instructional DVD that parents could keep at their homes. This DVD would remind them about some of the basic constructive communication skills, as well as provide them with examples of people successfully using the skills. It may also be possible to do an interactive DVD where people are provided with an opportunity to select specific communication responses and witness the outcomes of the situation based on the responses they choose. In addition, I think it would be benefiical to include video clips on the DVD that act as reminders of how destructive parent behavior can have long term detrimental effects on childrens lives. By utilizing instructional classes, classroom visits, and DVDs, I predict that parents will be more willing and able to practice the constructive communication skills necessary to improve their own quality of life and become better teachers and leaders for their children.

Suggestions for improving research with the EHS/HS population. I found it to be an extremely challenging task to collect a substantial sample size working with the Athens-Clarke County EHS/HS population. Even after working in the system for a year many of the enrolled mothers did not know me or trust me enough to spend the time or accrue the risk of filling out my questionnaire. As discussed in the limitations section, even mothers who did complete the questionnaire may not have been completely truthful in their responses, due to the fear of potential ramifications. One important lesson I learned in the data collection process was that it would be helpful to have one large staff meeting where the researcher would get to talk to all of the faculty and staff to explain the nature and the pupose of the research as well as provide them with some helpful hints about how to recruit people to participate. I found that when I distributed questionnaires to various EHS/HS classrooms, teachers were having difficulty getting them filled out, saying that parents refused to complete them. When I went into the classroom, however, I would be able to recruit multiple parents by reassuring them of their anonymity and stressing that they could skip any questions they do not wish to answer. As a result, I think an informational staff meeting would help everyone understand the goals of the project and improve the data collection process. I truly believe that volunteering in the program did benefit the research process by allowing me to form relationships with the staff and get to know what staff members the mothers trusted most and why. It appeared that the mothers had the most respect for staff members who, at one point, had been through the program themselves. Although all of the staff members deeply respected and cared about the mothers in the program, it seems those staff members who had been through the system themselves were able to relate to the mothers on a more personal level and gain their trust quickly. During the data collection process I found it to be very useful to align myself with these trusted staff members and have them accompany me to

the data collection sites to talk to the mothers. Since I had earned the staff members' trust by dedicating myself to the program and showing them that I did have the families best interests in mind, they were more than willing to convince the mothers that I could be trusted and they should complete the questionniare. There are many hurdles to researching a vulnerable population which need to be overcome to reap the substantial reward of improving the well being of the population. My experiences have taught me that the key to collecting reliable data is to form trusting relationships with the staff and members of the population by relating to them on a personal level as opposed to displaying an objective observer persona.

Conclusion. In closing, this study was a successful first application of the concept of dependence power to a non-student sample. It also filled a gap in the communication literature by examining intimate partner violence in a context outside the traditional marital or dating relationships. The study presents numerous significant and interesting results regarding the role of dependence power and its individual dimensions on a mother's tolerance of violence and her use of discipline tactics. Most importantly, results of the study can be directly applied to creating a EHS/HS parent curriculum that will improve the quality of life of the members of the population.

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APPENDIX A

EHS/HS QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1

In the following questions we ask you to please provide us with important background information.

1.)Your gender (circle): Male or Female

2.) Your age:_____

3.) The racial/ethnic identification that best describes you is:_____

4.) How many children do you have enrolled in the Early Head Start/Head Start program? _____

5.) How old is your youngest child enrolled in Early Head Start/Head Start? _____

6.) How long have you been enrolled in the Early Head Start/Head Start program? _____ months _____years

7.) How old is the father of your youngest child enrolled in Early Head Start/Head Start? _____

8.) Is the father of your youngest child enrolled in EHS/HS involved in his child's life (circle one)? Yes or No

**If you circled "YES" to question number seven, please circle the number that shows how involved the father is.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Very Involved						Extremely Involved

9.) Are you concerned about how the father of your child is disciplining your child?

Yes or No

If yes, how concerned are you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not concerned Very Concerned

You may provide additional details here:

10.) Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship? Yes or No

**If you circled "Yes", is this relationship with the father of your youngest child enrolled in Early Head Start/Head Start? Yes or No

11.) How old is your current partner (circle one)?

18-22 22-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45

46-50 51-55 56-60 60 or older

PART 2- ***EVERYONE MAY COMPLETE THIS SECTION***

Directions: Now we want you to think about the father of your youngest child enrolled in the Early Head Start/Head Start program. These questions are meant to help us understand the relationship you have with the father of this child. Some questions will ask about "alternatives", which refers to other relationships that you have, or could potentially have, with people other than the father of your child. We understand that you may not presently be in a romantic relationship with the father of your child. If this is the case consider your relationship as parents working together to raise a child. For instance, if you are not currently romantically involved

with the father of your child, relational "alternatives" can be considered relationships with people other than the father (e.g. another dating partner, friends, family) who could share parenting duties (e.g. discipline, childcare) with you. With this in mind please answer to what degree you agree with the following statements.

1.) My alternatives to my relationship with the father of my child are attractive to me (Like dating another person, spending time with friends or on my own rather than with my child's father, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree At All — Agree Completely

2.) If I weren't with the father of my child, I would do fine – I would find another person to be with.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree At All — Agree Completely

3.) I am interested in people other than the father of my child.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree At All — Agree Completely

4.) Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.

(a) My needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be met in other relationships (e.g., another dating partner, friends, or family).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree At All — Agree Completely

(b.) My needs for friendship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

(c) My needs for security (feeling safe, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

(d) My emotional needs (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

5.) I am committed to having a relationship with the father of my child.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

6.) I want the relationship with the father of my child to last for a very long time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

7.) I am very strongly attached to the father of my child.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

8.) It is likely that I will date someone other than the father of my child within the next year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

9.) I think I will still be connected with the father of my child several years from now.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

10.) My relationship with the father of my child is likely to end soon.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

11.) The father of my child is committed to being in a relationship with me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

12.) The father of my child is committed to being in a relationship with his child.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

13.) The father of my child's alternative relationships are attractive to him (Like dating another, spending time with friends or on his own, etc.).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

14.) If the father of my child was not with me, he would do fine – He would find another person to date.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

15.) The father of my child is interested in people other than me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

16.) Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.

(a) The father of my child's emotional needs (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be met in other relationships (e.g. another dating partner, friends, family).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

(b.) The father of my child's needs for friendship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

(c) The father of my child's needs for security (feeling safe, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

(d) The father of my child's needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All

<u>PART 3-</u> ***Complete this section ONLY if you are in a romantic relationship (e.g. husband, boyfriend, dating) with someone OTHER than the father of your youngest child in EHS/HS. If you are in a romantic relationship with the father or are not in a romantic relationship at all SKIP THIS SECTION and move on to PART 4.***

Directions: When answering the following questions we want you to think about your current romantic partner (e.g. husband, boyfriend, dating partner).

It this person male of female (circle one)? Male Female

How old is this person? _____

The questions below are meant to help us understand the relationship you have with the person you referenced above. Some questions will ask about "alternatives," which refers to other relationships that you have or could possibly have with people other than your current romantic partner (e.g. another dating partner, friends, or family). With this in mind please answer the following questions. .

1.) My alternatives being in my current relationship are appealing to me (Like dating another; spending time or relying on family and friends; being on my own, etc.).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

2.) If I were not with my current partner I would do fine – I would find another person to be with.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

3.) I am interested in people other than my current partner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

4.) Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.

(a) My needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be met in other relationships (e.g. another dating partner, friends, family).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

(b.) My needs for friendship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

(c) My needs for security (feeling safe, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

(d) My emotional needs (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

5.) I am committed to my relationship with my current partner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

6.) I want the relationship with my current partner to last for a very long time.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

7.) I am very strongly attached to my current partner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

8.) It is likely that I will date someone other than my current partner within the next year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

9.) I would NOT feel very upset if my relationship with my current partner ended in the near future (e.g. we stopped talking, or broke up).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

10.) The relationship I have with my current partner is likely to end soon.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

11) My current partner is committed to being in a relationship with me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

12.) My current partner is committed to being in a relationship with my child.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

13.) My current partner's alternatives to our relationship are attractive to him (Like dating another, walking away from his parenting responsibilities).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

14.) If my current partner was not with me he would do fine- He would find someone else to date or be with.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

15.) My current partner is interested in people other than me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

16.) Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.
(a) My current partner's needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do Not Agree
Agree At All Completely

(b.) My current partner's needs for friendship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

(c) My current partner's needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

(d) My current partner's emotional needs (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) could be met in other relationships.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

PART 4-***EVERYONE MAY COMPLETE THIS SECTION***

Directions: Everybody gets mad sometimes and all couples fight. We can fight all different kinds of ways. We want to know which ways of fighting are okay and which would make you leave a relationship. CIRCLE a number for each of the items listed below to show your closest guess of how often you would accept the following behaviors before deciding to leave your relationship. There is no right or wrong answer. This is completely your opinion.

1=Never

2=Rarely

3=Sometimes

4=Often

5=Very Often

1. Called you a name and/or criticized you.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Tried to keep you from doing something you wanted to do (example: going out with friends, going to meetings).	1	2	3	4	5
3. Gave you angry stares or looks.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Stopped you from having money for your own use.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Ended a talk with you and made the decision himself.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Threatened to hit or throw something at you.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved you.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Put down your family and friends.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Said you paid too much attention to someone or something else.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Put you on an allowance.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Used your children to threaten you (example: said he would take the kids away from you).	1	2	3	4	5
12. Became very upset with you because dinner, housework, or laundry was not ready when he wanted it or done the way he liked it.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Said things to scare you (examples: told you something "bad" would happen, threatened to kill himself).	1	2	3	4	5
14. Slapped, hit, or punched you.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Made you do something that embarrassed you (example: begging for forgiveness, having to ask his permission to use the car or do something).	1	2	3	4	5
16. Checked up on you (example: listened to your calls, checked the mileage on your car, called you repeatedly at work).	1	2	3	4	5
17. Drove dangerously (e.g. too fast, out of control) when you were in the car.	1	2	3	4	5

18. Would NOT do housework or childcare.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Threatened you with a knife, gun, or other weapon.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Spanked you.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Told you that you were a bad parent.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Stopped you or tried to stop you from going to work or school.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Threw, hit, kicked, or smashed something.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Kicked you.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Threw you around.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Choked or strangled you.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Used a knife, gun, or other weapon against you.	1	2	3	4	5

****Now put a star next to the things listed above that your current partner has done to you.**

****Now put a check mark (√) next to the things listed above that the father of your youngest child has done to you.**

PART 5-*EVERYONE MAY COMPLETE THIS SECTION*

Directions: Every parent, at one time or another, has to punish her child(ren). Sometimes disciplining children is a hard thing to do and it is normal to get stressed and frustrated. We are interested in understanding how you typically discipline or punish your children when they have done something wrong .CIRCLE *a number for each of the items listed below to show your closest guess of how many times a month you typically engage in each of the following behaviors.*

1=Never

2=Rarely

3=Occasionally

4=Frequently

5=Very Frequently

1.) Put your child in time out.	1	2	3	4	5
2.) Raise your voice to your child.	1	2	3	4	5
3.) Take away a possession that your child values (e.g. favorite toy, cell phone, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
4.) Spank your child.	1	2	3	4	5
5.) Take away one of your child's privileges (e.g. driving, eating dinner with the family, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
6.) Slap your child.	1	2	3	4	5
7.) Hit/Push your child.	1	2	3	4	5
8.) Send your child to his/her room.	1	2	3	4	5
9.) Kick your child.	1	2	3	4	5
10.) Threaten your child.	1	2	3	4	5
11.) Speak to my child about his/her behavior (try to figure out why they did it and explain why it was a bad choice).	1	2	3	4	5

<u>Part 6</u>-*EVERYONE MAY COMPLETE THIS SECTION*

Directions: Again, think about the father of your youngest child enrolled in Early Head Start/Head Start. With him in mind, please circle the number that shows how much you agree with each of the following statements.

1.) The father of my child does not want to be involved in our child's life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

2.) The father of my child wants me to allow him help raise our child.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

3.) The father of my child wants to see his child more often.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

4.) The father of my child wants to play a part in making decisions that involve our child.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do Not Agree At All						Agree Completely

You have completed the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your participation.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

May 1, 2008

Dear EHS/HS Mother:

I am graduate student under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Samp in the Department of Speech Communication at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled "An Examination of Early Head Start and Head Start Mothers on How Relationship Dynamics Influence Expectations for and Experiences of Aggression." In short, the purpose of this project is to understand how your relationship experiences influence your expectations about how your deal with conflicts and problems in your relationships.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. Your participation will involve answering questions on a survey. It should only take about 30 minutes to an hour to complete. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. Since your name will not be anywhere on the responses that you provide, this study is completely anonymous. No one will be able to trace your responses back to you.

The findings from this project may help us to discover ways that people can communicate better to reduce stress, manage conflict and prevent aggression. No risk is expected but you may experience some temporary discomfort or stress when answering questions about aggression and/or violence. Sometimes, these questions may cause people to experience anxiety, fear, or sadness. You will receive a McDonalds gift card as compensation for participating in this study.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (706)-542-4893 or send an e-mail to ABBOTTL6@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

By completing and returning this questionnaire in the envelope provided, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,
Leslie A. Abbott