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Leaving Home for African Americans in the Emerging Adulthood Era: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

There has been limited research regarding how minority culture youth experience leaving home. Eight African American individuals who had “launched” from their families-of-origin were interviewed. By using Moustakas’ Transcendental Phenomenological method, several themes emerged to describe the lived experience of leaving home. The themes included need for independence, a comparison of privilege for others and oppression for self, obligation to family, and pride in self-sufficiency. According to the findings in this study, leaving home for young African Americans is a culturally distinct experience which aligns more closely with traditional patterns of leaving home. Although the emerging adulthood era functions as a context in which the participants exist, the young African American participants in this study identified delayed launching as a “failure.”

Keywords

Moustakas, Phenomenology, Leaving Home, Failure to Launch, Emerging Adulthood, African American

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Leaving Home for African Americans in the Emerging Adulthood Era: A Phenomenological Study

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There has been limited research regarding how minority culture youth experience leaving home. Eight African American individuals who had “launched” from their families-of-origin were interviewed. By using Moustakas’ Transcendental Phenomenological method, several themes emerged to describe the lived experience of leaving home. The themes included need for independence, a comparison of privilege for others and oppression for self, obligation to family, and pride in self-sufficiency. According to the findings in this study, leaving home for young African Americans is a culturally distinct experience which aligns more closely with traditional patterns of leaving home. Although the emerging adulthood era functions as a context in which the participants exist, the young African American participants in this study identified delayed launching as a “failure.” Keywords: Moustakas, Phenomenology, Leaving Home, Failure to Launch, Emerging Adulthood, African American

When and how young people leave home and establish themselves as independent adults appears to be changing. In past decades, young people in their late teens to mid-twenties obtained full time employment and moved out of their parents’ homes, beginning their lives as legally and culturally accepted adults (Garcia-Petro & Blacker, 2011; McGoldrick, Gerson, & Petry, 2008; Waters, Carr, Kefalas, & Holdaway, 2011). However, home leaving in today’s society has become more complex and diverse (Aronson, 2008; Nelson, Bahrassa, Syed, & Lee, 2015; Twenge, 2013). For instance, some researchers believe the home leaving developmental milestone now occurs in the mid to late 20’s, with most individuals living independently by 30 years of age (Arnett, 2007; Kins & Beyers, 2010). Within the framework of typical family development, leaving home is described as a primary task for young adults (Nichols, 2013). Some researchers define it as a stage within the process of human development (Arnett, 2000; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013).

One of the best known family stage models is the 8-stage Family Development Stage Theory by Duvall (1977) in which stages 1-5 represent development from stage one, a married couple with no children; stage 2, childbearing families; stage 3, families with preschool children; stage 4, families with school aged children; and stage 5, families with teenagers. Stages 7 and 8 represent middle aged parents with empty nest and aging family members, respectively. Of most importance to the current study is stage 6, which includes families launching young adults. This stage is defined by the period of time when the oldest child leaves home and ends when the youngest child leaves home. In westernized culture, home leaving is a major component within the family life cycle (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Petry, 2008).

Not leaving home until after one’s mid-twenties is often considered a “delayed launch” by many in Western society (Burn & Szoek, 2016; Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark, & Gordon, 2003). Some members of society, especially parents and grandparents, characterize a delay in launching as a “failure” to launch (Arnett, 2006), and the delayed launchers may perceive themselves to be lagging behind their peers in becoming adults (Kins & Beyers, 2010). The belief is that young adults who do not leave home within the expected age range of 18 to 25 have failed to achieve a normal developmental milestone. That Western society refers to this

now typical phenomenon as “delayed” or “failure” reflects bias within researchers’ and laypeople’s perceptions of the transition to adulthood. This bias may be a generational bias, but it also may be a cultural bias produced, in part, by researchers sampling from primarily White, middle class populations (Syed & Mitchell, 2013).

Although some researchers have examined challenges faced by African American youth, much of their focus is on high-risk populations (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005; Hines, 2011). As a result, numerous aspects of African American minority youth experiences have yet to be explored. Research examining African American young adults’ developmental experience of launching is lacking. This study represents the voices of African Americans engaged in some part of this process. Their experiences will offer the reader insight and understanding for future generation and future research.

Literature Review

Era of Emerging Adulthood

“Emerging adulthood” represents a new developmental stage between adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Developing theory on emerging adulthood brought with it a new era of research and debate regarding young adult development (Gibbons & Ashdown, 2006). This new developmental stage includes an extended time of freedom to explore identity and feelings of ambivalence toward normative adult responsibilities. These concepts imply that there has not been a widespread “failure to launch” phenomenon, but instead emerging adults are taking time to do new and interesting things which can be accomplished only in their twenties (Allison, 2014). In addition, while living at home with their parents, most of these young adults are considering long-term plans for normative adult responsibility (Arnett, 2007). It is this era of emerging adulthood that forms part of the context for African-American youth to leave home, as well as expectations for their experience; however, few studies to date have considered how minority youth experience leaving home in the era of emerging adulthood.

Context of Launching

It is difficult to explore the experience of leaving home without first delineating the context in which it occurs. Researchers agree that the timing, sequence, and variability in home leaving are shaped by cultural norms and economic conditions which work conjointly to influence how this developmental task happens (Kins, Beyers, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2009; Seiffge-Krenke, 2009). The experience of leaving home is a multi-faceted developmental task which can only be understood in the societal context in which it takes place.

The launching experience is unique to ethnic background (Arnett, 2003; McGoldrick, 2007), and is embedded in cultural context and social expectation (Arnett, 2011; Settersten, 2011). Elements within various cultures and ethnicities shape how and when development occurs (Hines, 2011; McGoldrick, Giordano, Garcia-Petro, 2005). McGoldrick (1992) states,

Ethnicity interacts with the family life cycle at every stage. Families differ in their definition of “family,” in their definition of the timing of life cycle phases, and the tasks appropriate at each phase, and in their traditions, rituals, and ceremonies to mark life cycle transitions. When cultural stresses or transitions interact with life cycle transitions, the problems inherent in all change are compounded. (p. 437)

This would suggest a distinct launch experience for young African American adults.

Context of Emerging Adulthood

Because the research on emerging adulthood primarily has utilized middle-class, majority populations, concepts in emerging adulthood theory (i.e., freedom to explore one's identity, feelings of ambivalence towards normative adult responsibilities) may not apply to youth in minority groups (Arnett, 1998, 2000; Hendry & Kleop, 2007; Kins & Beyers, 2010; Settersten & Furstenberg, 2006). For instance, individuals who experience financial problems in their families, lack of educational resources, or have caregiving responsibilities for family members may not be able to afford an identity exploration period in their late teens through mid-twenties. In addition, researchers often generalize findings to African American culture from data sources external to their cultural group (Davis, Williams, & Akinyela, 2010). This can be problematic because the cultural experiences of youth in minority groups often differ not only from youth in majority groups, but also from youth in other minority groups. Culturally embedded phenomena, such as emerging adulthood, therefore, may not be generalizable across cultural groups. It is for these reasons that emerging adulthood should be considered as a cultural context rather than a universal experience (Syed & Mitchell, 2013).

Role of the Researcher

As a young African American woman, I [the primary researcher] was somewhat aware of the “disconnect” between culturally different youth in society. In the midst of the Travon Martin trial, the rampant media speculation, and the racial conflict, I was struck by the gross lack of understanding of young African Americans. There was a saturation of biased opinions, stereotypes, and inaccurate assumptions about the mind set of African American youth, their shortfalls, and the violent consequences of so-called misguided, uneducated young Blacks. Suddenly the country was once again inundated with questions about the future of Black America.

While working on my M.S. in Behavioral Science, I watched a myriad of experts quoting statistical facts about young Black Americans without any experiential evidence. My response came in the form of a single, unyielding thought, “If you want to know about me, ask me.” This thought became an investigative pretext for my research. There was little to no research which provided insight on what it is like to be a Black 20-30 year old in America today. The differences in the way young African Americans speak, dress, think, and behave in their sub-culture leads to more questions than answers for how this group will co-exist with White majority culture and then establish themselves as adults. Some of the same questions surface in emerging adulthood research, but without racial implications. I wanted to understand the overlap of race and emerging adulthood in one phenomenon and my goal was to increase society's understanding of young African Americans as they establish their independence.

Method

Rationale for Qualitative, Phenomenological Investigation

By using phenomenological inquiry, we sought to answer the question, “What is the lived experience of leaving home for African Americans in the emerging adulthood era?” The relatively small amount of research which focuses on young Black adults has heavily relied upon statistical data (Arnett, 2003; Mollenkopf, Waters, Holdaway, & Kasinitz, 2005). While quantitative measures have illustrated the transition to adulthood, quantitative research fails to capture the “critical context” of the experience (Settersten, 2006, p. 3). The authors wanted to use a method that would give voice to those who have lived this experience. Since “Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our

everyday experiences" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9), it seemed an appropriate method to use to answer the research question. In addition, Phenomenology focuses on how people make sense of experiences and transform experience into consciousness (Patton, 2014). Phenomenology provided an intimate description of how leaving home looks, how it feels, and what it means to the young adults in the Black community; hence, the essence of the phenomena.

Data Collection

Data was collected once ethical approval was obtained from the University of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants were recruited by authors placing fliers in a wide range of venues such as retail stores, community recreation centers, convenience stores, vocational and technical colleges, and a mid-southwestern university. Five males and three females participated in this study. Ages ranged from 19 to 29 with a mean age of 18 years. All had been living on their own an average of five years, which ranged from 1-11 years. All participants self-identified as African American. The participants were chosen from those who met the following inclusion criteria:

1. An individual who established independent living from their parents;
2. An individual who was born in 1982 or later (qualifying them as a legal adult (age 18) in the emerging adulthood era);
3. An individual who met the definition of African American and self-identified as African American.

Each participant was required to sign an informed consent, which addressed the parameters for participation in the study, permission to digitally record the interview, and allowed transcription for research purposes. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using guided interview questions. The questions were prepared in advance and field tested to ensure their meanings were easy to understand by the general population.

There was a potential risk of distress for the participants in discussing their launch experience, such as separation anxieties associated with the experience of home leaving (Kins, Soenens, & Beyers, 2013), negative racial events (Graham, West, Martinez, & Roemer, 2016), perceived racism, and negative health consequences (Lumley, Flack, Wegner, Pierce, & Goetz, 2016). Therefore, all participants were encouraged to seek counseling if they felt the need to discuss these difficult emotions with a professional. A list of local mental health providers was provided.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using Moustakas (1994) Transcendental Phenomenology methodology. The main objective was to reduce the verbatim description of what the participants experienced (textural), and the descriptions which explained how the phenomenon was experienced (structural) to a single essence. The researchers followed Moustakas' concepts to employ the methodology of epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, synthesis, and essence. The process of Epoche calls the researcher to suspend preconceived notions and everyday understandings of the phenomenon to gain fresh insight into the essential elements of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The key is to set aside the usual way of seeing the phenomenon. In severing assumptions, the phenomenological researcher purposefully inhibits judgments and biases about the phenomenon. The principle philosophy of Epoché is a

vital process in order to make a “scientific determination” about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85).

The Role of the Researcher in Epoché

As I reflect on the nature and meaning of the Epoché, I see it as,

Preparation for deriving new knowledge but also as an experience in itself, a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time...we are challenged to create... new awarenesses and understandings... [in] a presence that lets us be us and lets [the phenomenon] be, so that we can come to know [it] just as [it] appears to us. (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 85-86)

The process of Epoché required particular attention as it is pivotal in conducting phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013; Mustakas, 1994). As a young, African American adult who has launched, I shared a dual role of a graduate student researcher and a clinician in training. Therefore, I took the necessary step of self-surveying, as there was a potential for bias in having been pre-exposed to knowledge of the phenomenon in question.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) suggests that clinicians and those in training for clinical practice complete the Multicultural Competencies which build knowledge of their own biases and prejudices so that they are able to manage and address them appropriately (Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis, 1992). The researcher completed the self-evaluation as a part of the Epoché experience to purposefully explore potential bias in the study. Patton (2014) suggests that introspection is a necessary step in Epoché as it eradicates personal bias or at a minimum makes the researcher cognizant of preconceived notions. The self-inventory helps to remove the researcher from “personal involvement with the subject material” (p. 485). The role of the researcher is purely to ask questions and remain teachable (without assumption or even hypothesis) about the lived experience for the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenological Reduction

The next step in Moustakas’ (1994) methodology was phenomenological reduction which involves bracketing, horizontalization, and the clustering of meaning from the verbatim responses of the participants. Doing so allowed the researcher to develop textural descriptions of the phenomenon of home leaving for African Americans. What follows are the step in this textural description:

1. Bracketing allowed the researcher to focus on the research question (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher searched for the phrases within the transcripts which contained critical elements and significant components pertaining to the lived experience. These phrases were meaningful statements as each described specifically what the participants had experienced in leaving home.
2. Horizontalization was used to give every meaningful statement the same level of value and deliberation before eliminating outliers and repetition (Moustakas, 1994). This process reduced the data to the “textural meanings

and the invariant constituents” of home leaving for young African American adults (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97).

3. Textural themes were identified from the meaning units as they were clustered into groupings. Any repeating, overlapping, or non-relevant statements were excluded (Moustakas, 1994).
4. Finally, the textural themes were structured to compile a comprehensive textural description for each participant including the meaning units and the researcher’s description of the textures (Moustakas, 1994). The textural description of the phenomenon encompassed the verbatim responses of the participants based on invariant qualities.

Textural descriptions addresses the question of what happened in the experience of the phenomenon in descriptions of the “relationship between [the] phenomenon and [the] self” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90). This description relays every level and state of being relevant to the qualities of the experience in physical, tactile, temporal, sensory and contextual properties. This creates an aggregate conveyance of the experience. Textural language denoted polarities necessary to perceive an experience within light and dark, fast and slow, soft and hard, gentle and abrasive, happiness and sadness and so on and any unique qualities therein. The researcher utilized such descriptions to gain knowledge of what takes place in the studied phenomenon.

Step three in transcendental phenomenology is imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014). The objective is to develop structural descriptions to represent “how” the phenomenon was experienced from the textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The task of the researcher was to “seek all possible meanings and divergent perspectives [and] varying the frames of reference” of leaving home for African American young adults (Creswell, 2013, p. 150). Leaving home was viewed from various perspectives such that anything could be considered. Next, universal structures of time, space bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others, were applied to the textural themes in order to create the individual structures (Moustakas, 1994 p. 181). Structural descriptions were created for each participant.

The final step in phenomenological data analysis is an integrative process of textural-structural compilation and reduction (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher developed composite descriptions of both textural and structural descriptions from the individual participant descriptions. These composites were further synthesized and reduced to a single textural and structural composite. Consistently preserving the invariant elements of the phenomenon the researcher derived a single essence of the phenomenon. The essence was constructed with the underlying meaning of the phenomenon across experiences of the participants.

Findings

The following table represents textural themes with supporting verbatim responses from participants in this study.

Themes	Verbatim Quotations from the Participants
Need for Independence	<p>“It was difficult for me to be like, ‘Mom, Dad, I want to leave home.’”</p> <p>“I felt like I was in a box, basically, when I was at home and that made me unhappy (laughs, then eyes tear up). It made me very unhappy.”</p>

	<p>“I wasn’t able to achieve my own personal thoughts and goals of living on my own and providing for myself when I was at home. That’s what sort of drove me to leave and to get my own. I was doing for everybody else. I felt like I was just doing what I was told to do.”</p> <p>“Life experience is needed, but the thought [of] not leaving home by the time you are 25, that would just be devastating to me.”</p> <p>“[Living with my parents was] kind of strained I guess. There’s a struggle for being an adult while still being a child [in] their house.”</p> <p>“I didn’t want to be at home. It was more of ‘I’m adult and I don’t have to be here so I’m not going to.’”</p> <p>“I knew that I wanted to be myself, I wanted to do things by myself. I wanted to go have different cultural and ethnic experiences that weren’t provided to me when I was growing up.”</p> <p>“I [had] to go find my happiness.”</p>
<p>Comparison of privilege for others and oppression for self</p>	<p>“If you are from a Caucasian population you are going to college whether you flunk out or you fail or you successfully pass you are going to college because you can afford it. Your parents went to college so you are going to college. The expectations for [us] make it out of high school, get a job. You’ll get lucky if you go to college, if you do go to college you’ll get lucky if you do graduate. It’s not everybody, but I think that is what society focuses on African American population in poverty so expectations are very low and it’s sad.”</p> <p>“I feel like if I was Asian, ‘you can be a mathematician at a university,’ but [for] a lot of black men at my age. ‘Just basically advertise yourself physically, the way you look is basically what you are going to do.’”</p> <p>“Growing up people [made] jokes ‘He’s Asian he is going to be a mad scientist or a doctor or he is going to discover something. And Caucasians you know they are going to be successful; their dad is going to pay for college.’ But if you are a Black nothing was ever really said from my experience. Nothing was expected of you. You can be a rapper or play basketball or football.”</p> <p>“Me, I’m tall and Black and [society’s] like, ‘OK you are going to play basketball. Or you’re gonna run track,’ but if I was tall and Caucasian, ‘You need to be a lawyer or a politician’ that’s what people would have told me.”</p> <p>“[As] African American young adults you’re expected to . . . do certain things with your life . . . excel in say sports, but there is a ceiling. . . very rarely do African American males break the ceiling or get further. . .”</p> <p>“Society wanted me to be on welfare, Section 8, baby mama drama two, three baby daddies with eight kids. They wanted that for me. [Society]</p>

	<p>frown[s] upon [delayed launchers] unless your parents are wealthy and can take care of you what is your business at home. Are you scared of launching out, what is your fear?"</p> <p>"Society expects from being a young Black adult, you are going to have problems. You're gonna have deep rooted issues. You're gonna come from a broken home. You're gonna have a lot of situations that keep you from excelling in life. It's that elephant in the room. There's things for you to excel in life but you're not gonna get to this other level because [of] your race or compared to other races."</p> <p>"[The] position doesn't exist for you compared to other races. An employer might not necessarily take you over this other person. If their eyes were closed and it was just on paper, you might have a shot. I've experienced situations like that in the past and I've just gone with the flow like it's no big deal, but it does exist. As a younger African American person, I'm not good for your bottom line. Because, 'You are what you are.' It exists, it really does."</p> <p>"I've dealt with a lot [of people] pushing me down. I think there was more of a microscope on us [African Americans]. Because other demographics are looking for us to just slip up one time. Slip up one time and you are going to jail. Slip up one time and you're out of a job. Slip up one time we don't know what we are gonna do with you but it's not gonna be good."</p> <p>"It's tough dealing with it, to think about it. But deep down inside it bothers me a little bit, if this didn't exist, obviously [I]d be miles and miles ahead. It's very disappointing, but I do recognize that it exists. I would be a fool not to."</p>
<p>Obligation to family</p>	<p>"I felt I could support my family without being in the house."</p> <p>"For you, the oldest person in the family, especially in the Black community [go] out and [do] whatever to bring [money] in."</p> <p>"I sacrificed for my sister who depended on me for a lot of things. So it was a strain to me as well."</p> <p>"My brother, he's 21 going on 22 [and] still at home. He stays at home to take care of my mom."</p> <p>"I had a lot of responsibilities at home and I felt like I should have an equal amount of independence and freedom to go along with it."</p> <p>"Leaving was such a big thing for me 'cause it was the place where I knew mentally I was going to come into myself more and not be shouldering the burden of everyone else and their hardship."</p>

<p>Pride in self-sufficiency</p>	<p>“I am independent and I’m strong and I’m focused.” “I own my own car, I have my own apartment.” “I have different things in my life than I did before.”</p> <p>“[My first job] wasn’t super extravagant but at the same time [I felt] I’m living on my own, I’m doing my own thing. I’m adult, I’m not a full grown adult, but I am an adult. I felt really great”</p> <p>“[I] have my own money so I can do things I want. So compared to when I first [left home], I feel independent.”</p> <p>“You gotta adjust and adapt and that’s the process of moving, that’s the process of being a little more mature and knowing what you have to do to be self-sufficient.”</p> <p>“What I was doing wasn’t gonna be enough so I had to totally learn how to budget on my own. I had to learn how to pay bills.”</p> <p>“There’s me married, child, [the] business manager at the age of 27, making \$100K a year, and I manage my finances, I have my own house, my own everything, everything is taken care of [people say] ‘he’s a decent human being. He’s actually not failing. He’s succeeding.’”</p> <p>“We will get there and everybody can be successful.”</p>
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The Essence

Immersion within the data allowed the essence of the lived experience to emerge. The data revealed the participants’ experience of the transition from living at home to independent living, from their unique cultural and contextual viewpoint. The analysis of the verbatim quotes provided an intimate description of “how” leaving home looks, feels, and “what” it means to these young adults. The essence below answers the question, “What is the lived experience of leaving home for African Americans in the emerging adulthood era?”

Leaving home for African American youth in the emerging adulthood era included 3 themes: a need for independence, a comparison of privilege for others and oppression for self, obligation to family, and a pride in self-sufficiency. Several needs were significant for participants. These were the need for independence, the vacillating need to go but also to stay, and the fact that it felt difficult for them, although necessary for growth.

Moving away was an individual process of separating from home, motivated by an internal and /or external necessity to leave. It was about the relationship to oneself and the struggle that emerged as the desire for independence grew increasingly prominent. Family relationships were seen as too close and at the same time too distant which created complex family interactions. Initially, after having moved out, the young adult felt isolation, loneliness, and a lack of support from their family. Over time, these relationships improved.

Leaving home was described as bittersweet, filled with excitement, fear, and anxiety. However, participants faced the perception that most of their peers would receive greater family support, greater opportunities, and easier access to college due to financial advantages based on race. They reported that, because they were African American, they would be met with stereotypical social expectations, which would lead to decreased opportunities and oppression. These stereotypes included having children without being married, having multiple

children with different partners, having a large number of children, lacking in parenting abilities and responsibilities, and not being responsible for oneself. All of this would leave them at a disadvantage. Additionally, African American males believed that they would be valued only by their athletic abilities. Consequently, this would determine which life goals they were to pursue.

Obligation to family was consistently expressed as a concern because it was defined by a desire to help and take care of family members while trying to live independently. Financial distress was related to personal well-being as well as that of family members. There was also a desire to receive family support, emotional or financial, but that was not always forthcoming. Therefore, the decision to leave home became about timing. For example, one participant stated, “the thought [of] not leaving home by the time you are 25, that would just be devastating to me.” This represented the concept that staying home as a legal adult, without showing some sort of accomplishment, would mean “failure” for them. Regardless of the difficulty at home and the need for accomplishment, strong bonds of affection for the family remained at the forefront of the participant’s statements.

Although the initial launching was fraught with many challenges, once the goal of independent living was achieved, participants expressed a sense of pride in their ability to be self-sufficient. In leaving home, African American youth experienced a personal transformation that created perseverance and inner strength. For example, one participant said, “I am independent and I’m strong and I’m focused. I felt really great.”

Discussion

Findings from this study were inconsistent from the theory of emerging adulthood, aligning more closely with the traditional theory of development (Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005). Findings were consistent with Hendry and Kleop (2007) who contended that emerging adulthood, as an experience of free exploration, is not feasible from an economic standpoint for all individuals in this stage. The obligation to meet basic needs for themselves and family members would not afford the participants the latitude to put off traditional adult responsibility in exchange for self-exploration.

In addition, participants in this study did not express feelings of ambivalence towards normative adult responsibilities, rather they entered into the adult world with few resources pursuing education, employment, and self-sufficiency. These goals were influenced by a belief that peers from the majority culture and some from other minority cultures had more advantages, including financial and family support. In addition, participants in this study reported oppression from social belief systems, perceptions of racism, and stereotypes that did not match their personal values. The participants also described a sense of obligation to care for the family members remaining at home. Unlike emerging adulthood theory, the participants in this study did not view delayed launching as an option, instead, delayed launching represented failure.

This study’s most important finding is the richness of cultural context, lacking in emerging adulthood theory (Arnett, 2000; Syed & Mitchell, 2013). The *experience* of the African American youth, represented within the context of racial tension, feelings of societal rejection, isolation, lack of support, and external judgment, profoundly influenced the launching experience for them.

Areas for Future Research

Considerations for social class and economic differences were not examined in this study. Future research may be helpful in examining whether social class and economic

differences influence the experience of leaving home for African American young adults. In addition, this study only looked at a single racial and ethnic group within minority culture. Further research is needed regarding other specific minority groups. It still needs to be determined if emerging adulthood is a cultural context or a universal experience (Syed & Mitchell, 2013). Additional research on the launching experience for various racial and ethnic groups, as well as male and female differences, would offer valuable insight into these phenomena.

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