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The Impact of the Absent African American Father: Findings and Implications

M.Ed., Educational Administration, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2002

B.S. Biology, Columbia College, 1992

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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Abstract

This study focused on the difficulties and challenges experienced by sons who had absent fathers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers and the effects on them as adults at home, in school, in their neighborhoods, and their decision-making processes. The sample consisted of eight men who grew up with absent fathers. Data were collected using face-to-face, structured and semi-structured interviews. Results indicated that participants' lived experiences of home life were characterized by financial and emotional hardships resulting from not having a father's earnings and care. The meanings or lessons that participants derived from having absent fathers included the importance of being independent, appreciating the people who remained with them, making the best of their situation, and creating a better life for their children. Participants needed their father to be someone to go to for advice, hold them accountable, motivate them, and teach them gender roles. When fathers were unavailable, participants depended on their mothers to meet these needs. Additionally, participants reported that the absence of their fathers impacted their decision-making, relationships, and trusting male authority figures. Participants were also affected in their decision-making patterns by losing a male perspective and a father's guidance. These results are of significance because by understanding the experiences of men with absent fathers, healthcare professionals may provide appropriate assistance to help them cope better with their difficulties and struggles. Recommendations for future research include expanding the study to include the perspectives of mothers and school personnel. Interviewing the mothers would bring insight into their view of fatherlessness

and its impact on their son's social development. Mothers could share their experiences of raising their sons without a father in the home, giving insight into how best to help.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of the study was the lived experiences of African American sons, ages 18-24 who have absent fathers. Young men who grew up without a stable paternal presence are more likely to experience a variety of adverse outcomes such as low self-esteem, psychological disturbances, difficulty with romantic relations, living in poverty, sexual risk-taking, dropping out of school, and teenage parenting (Mendle et al., 2009). Other research has suggested that the relationship between a father's absence and his child's outcomes may be more complex, with Kalil et al. (2014) noting that favorable family structures can offset the adverse effects of paternal absenteeism. Further research on sons with absent fathers may provide insights regarding the lived experiences of adult men who grew up without paternal involvement. Additionally, further research may gauge the decision-making processes of sons who have absent fathers and their perceptions of the influence of father absenteeism on their careers, romantic lives, and other life decisions. Perceptions of the father-child relationship are essential because they can impact the quality of the parent-child relationship and relations between them (Krampe & Newton, 2012). The results of this study can lead to positive social change by helping school administrators, counselors, and healthcare professionals achieve improved insights into the difficulties and struggles of adult sons with absent fathers at home, in school, in their neighborhoods, and their decision-making processes. This chapter includes a discussion of the critical components of the current study. The chapter will include the following topics: (a) historical perspective, (b) background, (c) problem statement, (d) purpose of the study, (e) research questions, (f) theoretical framework, (g)

nature of the study, (h) significance of the study assumptions, (i) definitions, (j) assumptions, (k) delimitations (l) limitations and summary.

Historical Perspective

Over the past 52 years, single-parent homes have emerged as one of the most significant social problems in the African American community (Caldwell & Deloney 2012). For this reason, too many African American males are growing up without a father and have a higher probability of becoming absent fathers themselves (Wasserman & Seracin, 2001). In addition, a father's absence is a direct consequence of society's impact on the African American family; fewer people marry, and more choose to live together instead of marriage (Ownby, 2018). After World War II, the country underwent a transition from the production of goods to providing services; this change in the economy placed fatherhood definitions under extreme pressure (Gillis, 2000). This rise in industrialism afforded white men employment. Many owners refused to hire black workers, resulting in black men performing unskilled labor (Stewart, 1997).

Unfortunately, the absence of a father in the African American home has significantly increased. It seems to be an unexpected social development (Gillette, 2013). Horn (1999) shared how adolescent males harassed, robbed, and victimized helpless citizens in a New York neighborhood park. Consequently, concerned citizens began to demand a more substantial police presence. Horn posed a question in the New York Times, asking, "Where have all the fathers gone? Increasing the presence of police may eliminate some political pressure, but it does little to identify and solve the real social problem behind delinquent behavior" (Macrae, 2012). For these reasons, there continues to be a need to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent fathers from fulfilling their

responsibility of fatherhood (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [DHHS], 2015). Fathers play an emotional role in the family, and their absence can be detrimental to their children's development (Yeung, 2000). Furthermore, fathers are the infrastructure of the family system; they provide uniformity, which keeps the family in order and functioning (Hayworth et al., 1996). Existing parenting frameworks suggest that developmental and social experiences are important determinants of future parenting practices (Cooper et al., 2015).

Background

Around the mid-20th century, Lamb (1967) described fathers as forgotten contributors to child development. This oversight reflected a research bias mirrored perceptions about mothers' and fathers' relative importance in childhood development. As a result, the paternal role has declined to where fathers have little to no bearing on a child's development (Lamb, 1967). In 1965 Moynihan reported that 25% of African American children were born to single mothers; this rate increased to 68% in 1991, 67% in 2011, 66% in 2015 (Bedard, 2017). In addition, Heiss (1996) noted that children in single-parent homes are more likely not to finish school. In the late 1950s and early '60s, creating the "Man-in-the-House" rule restricted two-parent households from receiving government benefits if the father lived in the home. For this reason, many African American fathers moved out for their families to receive financial help (Carten, 2016). The Supreme Court later abolished the rule against omissions in *King vs. Smith* (Gordy, 2011).

The absence of a father can cause damage to an abandoned son's sense of worth, trust, and social competence throughout his life (Balcom, 1998). Furthermore, research

has shown significant evidence linking aggressive behaviors and some evidence of increased attention problems among African American males without a father in the home (King, & Sobolewski, 2006). Researchers have explored the importance of the mother-child relationship, especially during the early years of a child; however, there has been a shift in focus towards the less discussed but vital role of fathers in shaping the development of children (Krampe & Newton, 2012). Tastan (2013) found that a weak father-child relationship is positively associated with constructive and destructive conflict resolution styles. Positive father involvement is associated with various behaviors in children, including less sexual activity, less drunken behavior, lower susceptibility to peer pressure, and more healthy eating attitudes (Choo & Shek, 2013). Other researchers found that paternal rejection and hostility are significantly positively related to more serious behavioral problems and depressive symptoms in adolescents (Najam & Kausar, 2012). The father-son relationship could play an essential role in various aspects or stages of a man's life (Hines & McCoy 2013). Father absence is associated with various outcomes in a man's life trajectories, including education, marriage, and career-related decisions (Hines & McCoy, 2013) Low-quality paternal relationships are associated with decreased marital intimacy, satisfaction, and increased insecurity (Guilamo et al., 2014).

African American fathers interested in their sons' educational achievement directly impact how their sons do on exams, work with others, their attitudes towards school, and their drive for higher academic expectations (Mandara et al., 2005). In 2016, the Department of Justice reported that approximately 740,000 African American men are incarcerated in either state or federal prison, leaving 57.2 % of African American children without a father in the household. In addition, the Department of Justice (2016)

found that African Americans were harassed more often during a traffic stop and were likely to experience force during encounters with the police. These racial disparities are more prevalent amongst African American men than women and younger men rather than older ones (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Greene and Biddlecom (2000) believed that a father adds something unique to the family, thus, making a valuable impact on a child's life; in the father's absence, children suffer emotionally, intellectually, socially, and behaviorally.

Consequently, the African American community must realize an absence crisis and begin to raise more involved, responsible, and committed fathers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a). There continues to be a need to significantly expand and enhance efforts to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent fathers from fulfilling their paternal responsibility. The gaps in the literature that this study addressed were the lived experiences of adult men who grew up without paternal involvement, the decision-making processes of sons who had absent fathers, and their perceptions of the influence of their fathers' absence on their careers, romantic lives, and other life decisions (Baggett et al., 2015). While studies have contributed to understanding how fathers' absence lacks their children's lives (Baggett et al., 2015), more studies are needed to better understand their experiences at home, school, neighborhoods, and decision-making processes. Flouri and Buchanan (2003) explored communication patterns but did not articulate how the father's absence affected the sons' lived experiences and decision-making patterns. Lincoln (1995) recommended a qualitative study that explores communication and decision-making patterns with absent fathers. Lincoln (1995) recommended that future studies explore the qualitative descriptions of the sons' identities as they lived without the

presence of their fathers. Given the research evidence on the negative impact of the absence of fathers (Kruk 2019), this study contributed to a better understanding of the lived experiences of adult men who grew up without paternal involvement and how their father absence influenced their decision-making process and their perceptions of his absence on their careers, romantic lives, and other life decisions. The study also contributed to understanding the sons' difficulties and struggles in various aspects of their lives, both as children and adults. Consequently, researchers have identified themes that emerged from the examinations of males who grew up with an absent father. For example, Wilson et al. (2015) provided nine themes of successful Black men in the absence of their father. They included:

1. Having a strong relationship with their mothers,
2. An awareness of father's absence,
3. Interacting with mentors and role models,
4. Being exposed to activities and programs,
5. Their vision for themselves as fathers,
6. Extended family support,
7. Religion,
8. Not speaking ill of their fathers, and
9. A desire to give back to help others. (p. 196)

In a study of males with absent fathers, Adewale (2013) identified four categories: a) the experience of growing up without a father, b) perceptions of paternal absence, c) feelings towards father, and d) coping without a father, which explained the participants' "overall experience and perception of growing up without a father" (839). These and

other studies discussed further in chapter two will help provide helpful information about males who grew up without a father.

Problem Statement

As the rate of divorce in the United States increases, the frequency of children with absent fathers has expanded (Glass & Levchak, 2014). The consequences of divorce have detrimental effects on children's lives, particularly for their sons, when they perceive abandonment (Lu et al., 2010). Researchers have shown that young men without stable fathers were more likely to engage in inappropriate sexual behavior, have low self-esteem, drop out of school, poverty, failed marriages, and demonstrate psychological issues (Mendle et al., 2009). Other studies revealed that sons with absent fathers experienced psychological effects such as insecurities, difficulty establishing intimate relationships with the opposite sex, development of attention-seeking behavior, and negative perceptions of male authority (Lee & McLanahan, 2015). While previous studies have explained the social and psychological dilemmas of sons with absent fathers, minimal research has examined the lived experiences of these men in the context of their life decisions (Bryan, 2014).

The dynamics of the fathers' roles in all ethnic groups—especially African Americans have changed dramatically over the years. However, much of the research on African American fatherhood focuses on the father's inability to parent and fully commit to his child's well-being. It challenges African American fathers as economic providers and scrutinizes nonresident African American fathers (Coleman, O'Neil, Caldwell, & Ferris, 2019, p. 175). Many African American fathers are away from their children because of external factors, such as unemployment, imprisonment, economic isolation,

and homicide (Taylor et al., 1990). Several factors can contribute to a father's absence, including his cultural history, natural histories such as mental illness, alcoholism, health, employment, age, personality, death, and imprisonment (Allen & Daly, 2007).

Historically, African American men are incarcerated at a higher rate than any other race and are subsequently more likely to be victims of police harassment and violence (Copper, 2015). Although these issues have been ongoing, several African-American males' sudden deaths have refocused the attention to the African-American males' socio-ecological risks (Fatherhood Initiative, 2010). Violent homicides continue to highlight the direct linkage between social experiences, educational attainment, and overall well-being affecting African-American men (Peffley & Hurwitz, 2013). According to the Center for Disease Control (2014), being a victim of homicide is the highest cause of death for African American men ages 15 to 34.

Nevertheless, few qualitative studies have been conducted that highlight the lived experiences of fatherless African American males. This oversight leaves a gap in the information necessary to influence program implementation, policy changes, or the need to continue research on the issue of fatherlessness. The father and sons' bond is one of the most significant bonds a father can have; however, that bond has been neglected and understudied (Renshaw, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of African American sons who grew up with absent fathers and the effects his absence had on them as adults at home, in school, in their neighborhoods, and their decision-making processes. The main objective of this study was to explore how absent fathers

affect the overall functioning of sons in various aspects of their lives. I captured the lived experience of sons with absent fathers using structured and semi-structured interviews. Renshaw (2005), states that paternal modeling is significantly essential when teaching young men the behaviors necessary for good fathering and male citizenship in society. The concern for the next generation, theorized by Erikson (1998), is nurturing and guiding younger people and contributing to the next generation.

Research Questions

This study answered the following research question:

What are the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers at home, in school, and in their neighborhoods?

What are the meanings of these experiences to the sons' lives as children and as adults?

How do the struggles of sons with absent fathers shape their decision-making skills?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Vygotsky's social development theory (1998) and Bandura's social learning theory (1977). These theories contributed to the understanding of the role of fathers in the lives of their sons (Kearsley, 2011). Vygotsky's social development theory was applied by looking at the participants' lack of social interactions with their fathers. Bandura's social learning theory was applied by investigating the opportunities for imitation and identification that the participants did not receive due to an absent father. The study was qualitative and employed a phenomenological design. Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the

nature or meaning of everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1990). It helps attach meaning to experiences from those who have experienced the phenomenon (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorenson, 2006). A phenomenological design enabled the interpretation and understanding of the participant's lived experiences.

This section will briefly discuss each theory's main principles and assertions, including the theories' appropriateness to the theoretical framework. Social development theory and social learning theory address social interaction and development of cognition and the significance of observing and patterning behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions to others (Kearsley, 2011). Social development theory argues that social interaction contributes to cognitive development; regarding a father's absence, this theory helped identify how an absent father's interaction contributes to a son's development. The social learning theory argues that people learn from one another by observing, imitating, and modeling, which helped me to identify the effects of growing up without a father in a single-parent home on a son's development. Both the social development and social learning theories are appropriate components of the theoretical framework; these theories recognize the critical role of fathers in possibly influencing the development of their sons, particularly during the early years. Paternal investment theory explains that low paternal investment, such as father absence, hastens children's introduction to adolescence and sexual initiation. This low paternal investment exposes children to weak bonds that usually manifest as romantic ideals and result in unfavorable relationships marked by commitment issues and sexual behavior outside of committed relationships (Ellis, 2004).

Nature of the Study

The current research study was qualitative. Qualitative research does not include a specific set of analyses or variables but instead provides an in-depth understanding of a group of individuals' subjective experiences and perceptions regarding a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The qualitative research approach was appropriate because the methodological principles of collecting in-depth data aligned with the purpose of the study (i.e., to explore the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers, and the effects on them as adults at home, in school, in their neighborhoods, and their decision-making processes). As noted by Marshall and Rossman (2014), qualitative researchers utilize interviews as an appropriate way to explore the subjective lived experiences of a phenomenon. This study explored the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers using a phenomenological research design. The selection of phenomenological research design was appropriate because of the emphasis on exploring the lived experiences of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers use phenomenological research when the subjective perceptions and experiences of a group of people are central to understanding a specific phenomenon. I conducted interviews to collect first-person perspectives of the experiences of sons with absent fathers. I used snowball sampling techniques to identify and recruit eight sons with absent fathers (Yin, 2012). I conducted interviews with African American males 18-24 who grew up with absent fathers.

Significance of the Study

Much of the latest research on nonresident fathers have focused on paying child support and frequency of contact (Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2007) rather than on the effects of a father's absence on the child's experiences. This research study investigated the perspective of African American males with the first-hand experience in coping with a father's absence. According to Irving Seidman (2007), "So much research is done on schooling in the United States, yet so little of it is based on studies involving the perspective of students, teachers, administrators, . . . whose individual and collective experiences constitutes schooling" (p. 10). Unfortunately, the United States is the world leader in father absenteeism (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). This study may help educators, school administrators, and counselors understand the challenges African American males face daily. Results from this study may promote positive social change and provide information to educators regarding factors that influence academic behavior as it relates to African American males with absent fathers. Findings may also influence mothers to be more proactive in involving fathers in the lives of their sons. Counselors, administrators, and policymakers may also adjust how they address behavioral, academic, and social concerns observed in fatherless African American males. Policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels may find this research helpful in understanding those impacted by fatherlessness.

This phenomenological study was distinctive because it focused on the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers, which may be the basis of engagement in social behaviors that affect them socially and economically. Most studies about father absence are centered on the child's psychosocial effects, cognitive development, character

development, and academic difficulties (Lee & McLanahan, 2015). Furthermore, the results of this study provided insights into how men with absent fathers function in terms of their careers, romantic lives, and other life decisions. In light of the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers, the investigation of this process provided phenomenological information concerning the meaning of their feelings towards and perceptions of life, which are essential in explaining their social behaviors. The information from this study can lead to positive social change in many ways. By understanding the experiences of African American sons with absent fathers, healthcare professionals may provide appropriate assistance to help these men cope better with their difficulties and struggles.

The results of this study may help sons with absent fathers have a healthy sense of self-esteem and psychological well-being, which may help them avoid unhealthy and unstable relationships and the development of negative, attention-seeking behavior. As stated previously, this study's purpose was to understand the lived experiences of fatherless African American males ages 18-24. The literature review concluded that fatherlessness impacts children in different ways. According to the literature, among the ways that sons without fathers are affected includes lower academic achievement, increased behavioral issues, delayed social-emotional development, and psychiatric problems. Additionally, the research questions helped investigate the impact that fatherlessness had on the participants. The literature also revealed interventions that could help support fatherless sons. These interventions include mentoring programs, activities to increase parental involvement, and implementing programs that help meet the various needs of fatherless sons.

Definition of Terms

The following key concepts and terms were central to the basis of the current study.

1. Absent fathers- fathers who are absent are defined as lacking in involvement in their children's lives as a result of a divorce (DeBell, 2008).
2. Abandoned - Refers to an emotional state in which a child feels undesired, left behind, insecure.
3. Emotional impact – How strong one's feelings are. Lived experience- refers to the subjective perceptions of a group of people involving a unique and complex phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).
5. Father-son relationship- relationship pertains to the quality of the relationship based on the perceptions of the adult children (Gallarín & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012).
- 6 Father absent- A term used by researchers to indicate that a child has lived for part or all of their childhood in a house without their biological father (Amaro, 2010)
7. Fatherlessness- The state of having no father because he is deceased or absent from the home.
8. Father figure – Paternal role not limited to the biological father.
9. Fathering – Bringing up a child as a father.
10. Social learning behavior - People learn by observing others (Bandura, 1977).

11. Social Learning Theory - a theory of learning process and social behavior that proposes that new behaviors may be acquired by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1971)
12. Social development - The process by which a child learns to interact with others around them. As they develop and perceive their individuality within their community, they also gain skills to communicate with other people and process their actions.
13. Social impact - The effect an organization's actions have on the well-being of the community.
14. Single-parent household - Households with children in which only one parent is present.

Assumptions

The first assumption was that the participants would be honest and detailed with their responses during the interview. Because father absenteeism may be sensitive for some participants, they were reassured of a safe and empathetic environment during the interview to make them comfortable enough to share their inner feelings and thoughts. I also emphasized to the participants that all data would remain confidential and could not be traced to their real identities. The second assumption of the study was that the interviews would be sufficient to capture the participants' lived experiences. I expected that the interviews would produce rich and detailed responses relevant to African American sons who have absent fathers. I asked follow-up questions to further expound on the participants' initial responses.

Delimitations

Participants in this study were African American males 18-24 years old, limiting the ability to generalize to a female population or a more aging male population. In addition, the study focused on a small community of adult African American males in a large Midwestern city.

Summary

The African American population has experienced the highest level of absent fathers in the last decade (U. S. Census Bureau, 2011). This increase in absence has brought about feelings of guilt, blame, and anger (Allen &, 2007). Unfortunately, fatherlessness in the African American community is a significant crisis, requiring intervention (U.S. Census, 2017). However, studies of fatherliness and its impact on a child's social development, thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes are limited. This qualitative exploration offered insight into why some African American males transition into adulthood negatively. Typically, these men struggle to become effective parents and models for their children. Chapter two presents a literature review that supports the study, and chapter three gives the research design, the population, sampling, instruments, and procedures for the data collection and analysis.

This study focused on the difficulties and challenges experienced by African American sons with absent fathers. The gaps in the literature addressed in the study were the lived experiences of men who grew up without paternal involvement. Additionally, this study addressed how such an absence affects his sons' decision-making, perceptions of the paternal role, career, romantic relationships, and other life decisions (Baggett et al., 2015; Bryan, 2014; DeBell, 2008). Lastly, the purpose of the current qualitative

phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers and the effects on them as adults at home, in school, in their neighborhoods and their decision-making processes. The theoretical framework for this study was based on Vygotsky's social development theory, Bandura's social learning theory, and paternal investment theory (Vygotsky, 1998). The results of this study provided insights concerning the lived experience of men with an absent father. In addition to an expanded discussion of the theoretical framework, the literature review will include general positive and negative child outcomes relating to father engagement. Furthermore, the literature review focuses on the specific area of the influence of father absence in terms of psychological, academic, social, and sexual functioning and the sons' decision-making, career, lifestyle, and other aspects of their lives. Finally, the literature review concludes with a discussion of the research gaps, which serve as the rationale for the study.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The impact and significance of fatherlessness are not a new phenomenon, and more than ever, children are growing up in single-parent households. In the majority of cases, the single parent is the mother (Gottfried, 2007). Citing the findings of Freud regarding fathers, Jones (2004) identifies that "the loss of a father can be the single greatest loss a person can experience" (p. 334). This research explored the absent father's social and historical contexts to provide a voice for the participants. Much of the past research on the influence of absent fathers on their sons' have focused on tangible factors such as psychological, social, and sexual development and used surveys and quantitative analysis. Previous quantitative studies have provided great information for comparison purposes, but not for understanding the lived experiences, perceptions, and decision-making processes associated with father absenteeism, which is the gap this research study aims to fill. Scholars have pointed to a need for more in-depth qualitative research focusing on males' experiences, decisions, and attributes with absent fathers (DeBell, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the lived experiences of African American sons who grew up with an absent father. Although previous studies have expanded the knowledge regarding psychological and social difficulties with absentee fathers (Lu et al., 2010), little research is available investigating the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers, as well as their perceptions of the influence of growing up without a father (DeBell, 2008). Chapter two begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework, followed by the general positive

and negative outcomes of a father's lack of engagement. In order to better understand the lived experiences of African American men who grew up with absent fathers, I utilized the following theories: Vygotsky's social development theory (1978) and Bandura's social learning theory (1977). According to the National Center for Fathering (2016), 66% of African American children live in absent-father homes. Thus, single African American mothers have proved their resilience over time by continuing to be the backbone of their families (Brodsky, 2000). Brodsky (2000) found that religion in conjunction with support from an extended family were essential factors about single motherhood among African American women. Religion plays a crucial role for many single African American mothers; it helps to cope with stressful life situations and serves as the foundation for personal growth, happiness, and parenting values (Brodsky, 2000). In addition, the extended family has supported, encouraged, and assisted single African American mothers with their daily responsibilities (Wilson, 2014).

Moreover, children raised in fatherless households may be more likely to exhibit behavioral problems at school, leading to their expulsion (DeBell, 2008). However, other researchers have discovered that children can overcome the challenges of being raised in an absent-father home and can thus become successful, regardless of the father's absence (DeBell, 2008). Several researchers have conducted studies to determine common denominators about the success of African American men raised in absent-father homes (DeBell, 2008). One of the critical factors found was the resilience of single mothers who raised their children despite the absence of fathers (Carson, 2004). Not only does growing up in an absent-father home affect the children, but it affects single mothers (Celico, 2009). For example, African American women are frequently viewed as the leaders of

their households and must carry the weight of being both mother and father to their children (Wilson, 2014). According to Hilton and Desrochers (2000), the resiliency of single mothers is apparent through their ability to support their families both financially and emotionally. Furthermore, Robinson and Warbelow (2012) called attention to the lack of information surrounding the single African American mother and the steps taken by those mothers to assist their sons with achieving success. For this reason, Robinson and Warbelow challenged educators and the community to support single mothers and their children with the hopes of helping young men “beat the odds” (p. 65).

Theoretical Framework

In order to better understand the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers, I utilized the following theories: Vygotsky’s social development theory (1978) and Bandura’s social learning theory (1977). Both theories focus on how the process of social interaction impacts cognitive development, the role of observation in emotional reactions, behaviors, and attitudes towards others (Kearsley, 2011). There are differences between these two theories: while social development focuses on the cultural and social aspects of learning, social learning theory focuses on the rewards and sanctions for behavior. The social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978) is a cognitive framework under which social interaction occurs before development. In this model, cognition is achieved after social interactions and socialization. ” According to Vygotsky (1978), “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people and then cognitively (Vygotsky 1978). Social development theory is a socio-cultural theory of learning;

individual development can only be understood within the cultural and social context in which it takes place. A combination of learning and social interaction works together to produce higher cognitive processes, which would not be possible without the necessary social processes involved in learning. A pioneering psychologist with diverse interests, Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was interested in how cultural elements which a particular society deems essential – for example, customs, beliefs, skills, and values – are passed on to new generations. His sociocultural theory declares that social interaction within the family and knowledgeable community members is the primary means by which children acquire behaviors and cognitive processes relevant to their society. Paternal intervention is an essential part of the development process. Vygotsky (1978) established "the zone of proximal development," which refers to the difference between a student's current developmental level and his or her potential level of development that could be achieved through social interaction with others. Lev Vygotsky's (1998) social development theory focuses on the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. In this study, social development theory is applied to the lack of social interaction participants had with their fathers and its impact on academic achievement and cognitive development (Fleer & Hedegaard 2010). Social development theory provides theoretical support for approaches to learning, including the interaction between a student and mentor, rather than the traditional lecture model of teaching. Social learning theory, a cognitive-behavioral framework, established the importance of intrinsic reinforcement and observational learning on behaviors by modeling and imitating others' behaviors, emotional responses, and attitudes (Bandura, 1977).

In Bandura's (1977) well-known Bobo doll experiment, children exhibited more aggressive behavior towards a Bobo doll if they had first observed an adult acting aggressively toward the doll. This focus on observation and imitation of learning makes social learning theory explain how having an absent father impacts his sons' life decisions. Social learning theory has been applied to various topics, including drug use (Ford, 2014) and police shootings of unarmed individuals (Maskaly & Donner, 2015). Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling others' behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions. Social learning theory and social development theory helped to understand the lived experiences, behavioral patterns, and attitudes of sons whose fathers were absent while growing up. It follows, then, a lack of sufficient interaction with their fathers could be associated with more difficult lived experiences and life outcomes compared to children who grew up with both parents present (Surrey, 1985). As Popenoe (2009) proposed, fathers are role models for their sons. Children with absent fathers are at a marked disadvantage in human relationships. Social learning theory suggests that socialization and development are established through imitation and identification. Additionally, the social learning theory suggests that male adolescents benefit from parental involvement; despite living apart from their fathers, fatherless sons can positively identify and imitate their fathers during development (Mitchell & King, 2009).

The African American Family

According to Ruggles (1994), there are two characteristics of the African American family; "African Americans "are more likely to become single parents and reside in extended families" (p. 136) and" The majority of African American youth are raised in single-parent households." From 1880 through 1960, Slavery in the United States traumatized and devastated millions of people, and African American children

residing without their parents was not a new phenomenon. Additionally, African Americans could not legally marry since they were considered property and could not enter into marriage contracts; slavery made it difficult to establish a stable, secure family life (Moynihan, 1996). During slavery, it was common for owners to separate the male slaves from their wives and children. The purpose of this process was said to ensure that future generations of Negroes would lack the unity and solidarity required for any group of people to achieve lasting prosperity (Alexander, 2018). During this time, female slaves were forced to raise their children alone, fostering a tradition of independence and self-reliance among "colored" women. As the singular caregiver to her children, the female slave would intuitively summon feminine and masculine energy while serving her role as both mother and father in her spouse's absence. Consequently, stable African American families appeared to be fading with exceptional quickness, raising the odds of a much-needed rebuild within the African American community. This phenomenon had gotten progressively worse since the days of old when African American couples operated as a team amid staggering oppression and dehumanizing racism (Thomas, 2008). African American families existed within a supportive network of friends, churches, other family members, and the community (Hatchett et al., 1991).

Impact of Family Assistance Programs

Social welfare policies over the past 50-years have been discriminatory (Carten, 2016). From the beginning, each system had two stages that intended to protect families from loss of income. One stage provided income support to workers' surviving dependents in their death or incapacitation and Social Security for retired older Americans. The second stage was made up of public assistance programs called "Aid to

Dependent Children" and was eventually changed to "Aid to Families with Dependent Children" in 1962 (Gordon, 2011). During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (ADC) program was created to subsidize families' income where fathers were deceased, absent, or unable to work. For this reason, families with fathers in the home under financial distress had to choose between starvation and survival, and many mothers and fathers decided to live separately to qualify for federal benefits, which included \$18 per month for one child and \$12 for a second child (Gordon, 2011). Unfortunately, these services geared towards support to those in need proved problematic for African Americans because of racial discrimination in employment during the 1930s and 1940s.

The National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) was an active American activist organization from 1966-1975, which fought for people's welfare rights, primarily women and children. However, most welfare recipients were white, and most African American female recipients continued to work (Murray, 2008). Despite several obstacles, in the 1960s, African American women experienced steady employment gains. Simultaneously, unemployment rates for African American men increased, along with the pace of non-marital childbearing and paternal absence (West, 1981). In 1967, some states such as Missouri, Illinois, and Alabama enacted a "man-in-the-house" rule, which denied low-income families welfare payments if a man resided under the same roof, disqualifying single mothers (Grossbard, 2003). The foundation of marriage disappeared in low-income communities. In part, this was because the U.S. welfare system actively penalized low-income African American women who were married (Grossbard, 2003).

African American Fathers

Fatherhood can be a daunting role for any man (Gamboa & Julion, 2019). Over two decades ago, McAdoo (1997) noted that fathers' positions had been ignored too long in family studies. The crisis of the absent father in the African American community has created emotional and financial trauma for the family and the community. The role of the mother has shifted to compensate for the absence of the father, and women in the African American community have become the managers of the households. Slavery, oppression, and disenfranchisement have created a dynamic in the African American family. The man is sometimes unsure about where and how he fits in the family system (Hammond & Mattis, 2005). The cycle of absent fathers produces a population of young men who may struggle to define themselves as men and fathers (Lareau, 2011). As men who lacked appropriate manhood models have children, some many carry on fragmented ideas of fatherhood. Weaver (2012) states that this matriarchal family organization has created a dynamic that prevents the African American father from fulfilling his role as a man and father. The father's relationship with the mother and maternal grandmother appears to be the direct predictor for levels of involvement with children (Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

Researchers specifically refer to this as gatekeeping, defined as the mother's beliefs, controlling behaviors, criticisms, and high standards directly minimizing the father's involvement with his child (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). As mentioned previously, findings suggest that African American father involvement looks different from the typical western fathering ideals of breadwinner, disciplinarian, and protector (Coles, 2001). These differences are the direct effects of structural barriers like unemployment, incarceration, discrimination, racism, and education (Weaver, 2012). As a result, African

American men have constructed their normative realities based on lived experience (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000). The research is remiss because we know that the ability to provide is a construct used to measure involvement for the last decade but to observe involvement somewhat, fathering itself must be contextualized differently (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000). We must consider a sociological perspective, specifically the economic and social factors conditioned by race patterns that directly affect how African American fathers think, feel, and act as fathers. In the evolution of fathering measures, fathering has been evaluated from an ecological perspective, allowing researchers to explore the African American father's historical, political, and social influences, allowing them to be understood from a much less biased perspective (McAdoo, 1993). However, research tells us that a father prioritizes his involvement with his children based on his relationship with his father (Doherty et al., 1998). Specifically, if a father had a positive relationship with his father, he is more likely to interact with his child positively; those with negative experiences will more likely display negative skills (Floyd & Morman, 2000). Theorists LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) add that shared norms across cultures influence behaviors. Stryker (2000) states that identities result from individuals locating themselves within these social categories and negotiating the associated behaviors (Burke & Reitzes, 1999).

The more prominently the individual identifies with the role, the more likely they will attempt to adapt to the positive expectations assigned to that role. Still, the less prominent the position, the less likely the individual will identify with the role (Burke, 1980). History, culture, and context have forcefully shifted the structure of the African American family and fathering within the African-American community. In evaluating the experiences that African-American men face in poverty, altered family structures, and

the higher incidence of fatherlessness within the community, it is essential to understand how they perceive their roles as fathers and what informs their role based on these unique experiences. Researchers have noted that the multigenerational role of fathering contributes to role identity, commitment, and efficacy for fathers (Snarley, 1993). Stryker (2000) states that identities result from individuals locating themselves within these social categories and negotiating the associated behaviors (Burke & Reitzes, 1999).

Impact of Absentee Father

To determine the absent father's influence, one would need to understand the African American adult male's social characteristics and perspectives affected by the absent father. Such research would help understand how their post-adolescent experiences and their continued development have led to their state of absence and impact on society (Kruk, 2012). One parent, namely the mother, is raising over half of society's adolescent African American males, and the family structure directly influences an individual's social status (Kruk, 2012). African American fathers play a vital role in the family home and are more likely to be absent. Additionally, the absence of a father affects the development of the African American male negatively (US Census 2017). Overall, a fathers' absence may be the underlying cause of many problems facing young African American males today, such as drugs, crime, poverty, and being absent from their children. Children growing up without a father are more than twice as likely to commit suicide and are at a greater risk of emotional problems and engaging in harmful, risk-taking behaviors such as crime, early sexual activity, and illegal drug and alcohol use (USDHHS, 2012). The American Academy of Pediatrics (2016) notes that fatherless

children will, unfortunately, experience behavioral and mental health concerns such as depression, obesity, and rebellion against authority.

Additionally, children's identity, psychosocial development, and emotional distress are impacted when a father is absent from the home (Caldwell et al., 2012). Kimmel (2012) stated, "The quest for manhood- the effort to achieve, to determine, to prove masculinity, is one of the formative and persistent experiences in a man's life" (p. 3). Unfortunately, men raised without a father negatively create their perception of masculinity. Some of those perceptions can be unhealthy, adding to the underlying reason fathers are absent (Larcher, 2007). Many children are being raised without a father because of divorce, imprisonment, out-of-wedlock births, and death (Horn, 2002). Most research results indicate numerous undesirable outcomes for children raised by their biological father (Lamb, 2004). However, findings suggest that as long as children have loving parents, they are more likely to be well adjusted (Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok 1997). Fatherlessness can lead to depression, behavioral difficulties, disobedience, drug and alcohol use, emotional disturbances, school dropout, earlier sexual behavior, academic challenges, low self-esteem, and incarceration (Horn, 2002). A father's absence negatively affects children in many ways that primarily fit into the following three categories; (1) academic performance, underachievement, truancy, (2) physiological problems, such as low self-esteem and depression; (3) and behavioral difficulties, such as disobedience (Horn, 2002). When examining fatherlessness, three explanations exist for why a fathers' absence affects his children's lives (Lamb, 2004). First, the lack is seen as having only one parent in the household, ultimately leading to a less pleasant environment for socialization.

Furthermore, economic disadvantage and conflict have been known to impact a child's development. Furthermore, much of the literature shows a high expectation that the behavioral consequences of fatherless sons vary. Aggressive behavior has been noted in young males who have grown up without a father in the home. Santrock (1977) proposed that males who grow up without a father display abnormally high rates of aggressive anti-social behavior. Males without fathers have been described as more vulnerable with aggressive tendencies; these boys have been compared to males of the same age whose fathers are in the home (Montare & Bonne, 1980). They feel the need to defend themselves against imagined threats due to a sense of heightened eternal awareness caused by their father's absence (Biller 1992).

Perceptions of the Absent Father

Researchers have examined the perceptions that men have regarding the absence of their father in their life. In a study of males from various ethnicities, including Latino, African American, and American Indian, Adewale (2013) identified four categories and 22 themes describing the participants' experience and perception of growing up with an absent father. The first category, the experience of growing up without a father, included six themes: a) relationships with the mother, b) discussions about absent father, c) childhood experience without a father, d) talking about absent father, e) experiences in school, and f) significant adults who were supportive. The themes showed how the participants could "experience the same event yet internalize it, perceive it, and react to it in different ways" (p. 1250). Another category was the perceptions of paternal absence and consisted of four themes: a) significant memories of father, b) changes in perceptions and feelings, c) current perception of father's absence, and d) acquired values

related to absent father. The perceptions were identified as positive, negative, or neutral. The third category was feelings towards the father. Some feelings were negative, while others were positive.

In some instances, both feelings existed for the father. The majority felt anger. The themes in this category were a) dynamics of current feelings toward father, b) perceived effects related to fathers absence, c) feelings towards father, d) childhood feelings towards father, and e) feelings regarding father's absence, f) connecting with absent father, and g) current desire for one's father. The fourth and final category, coping without a father, consisted of six themes. They were a) childhood behaviors, b) perceived effects related to fathers' absence, c) Feelings of self, d) Parenting, e) what makes family, f) Father's Day, and g) understanding the male role. "Participants discussed the impact their father's absence had on their lives and their behavior" (p. 1330). Adewale (2013) further stated, "Participants explained much of their behavior to be a coping mechanism which allowed them to manage their feelings" (p. 1330). While some experience the negative consequences of an absent father, some men find success despite their fathers' absence. In a study of 14 African American men described as successful and who grew up in absent-father homes, Wilson et al. (2015) identified nine themes that "captured the essence of the successful African American men's experiences" (p. 196). They included:

1. a strong relationship with their mothers
2. awareness of father's absence
3. interaction with mentors and role models
4. exposure to activities and programs,
5. their vision for themselves as fathers,

6. extended family support,
7. religion,
8. not speaking ill of their fathers, and
9. desire to give back and help others.

It appears that despite their father's absence, these men have positive experiences and exposure during their childhood. While their father's lack could have harmed them, the "external forces" enabled them to not dwell on the absence and be successful.

African American Fathers' Incarceration and Mortality

Since the 1970s, African American male incarceration rates have increased beyond that of any other nation in the world (U.S Census, 2010). This rate increase harms the African American family and community, damages the family ties, and negatively affects family relations and a man's sense of masculinity (Dyer, 2005). Incarceration further affects the family structure, as studies show that paternal incarceration may contribute to children's behavioral problems and lower performance in school (Wildeman, 2010). This barrier affects the African American family and can manipulate several routes into fatherless households, thus creating significant long-term effects. On August 9, 2014, a police officer shot and killed an unarmed teenager named Michael Brown. As a result, protests and riots ensued and soon spread across the country. The shooting ignited long tension between the African American community and the police, growing the Black Lives Matter Movement. In the years since the premature death of Michael Brown, there has been attention to the detrimental treatment of African American men at police's hands. A shocking number of African American men killed in

police encounters has increased in the year since Michael Brown's death in 2014 (Rothstein, 2014).

Consequently, this harsh treatment and unfair practices can affect the African American community's overall stability, starting with the absence of a father by either death or incarceration (Rothstein, 2014). Unfortunately, African American fathers often struggle to engage with their children's education, even though they are interested in being involved (Sparks, 2018). However, when fathers are concerned, the outcomes are positive in academic, social, and emotional issues (Sparks, 2018). Children of fathers who assumed 40% or more of the family's responsibilities have better academic achievement than children whose fathers are less involved (Palkovitz, 2002). Furthermore, if a child's father is affectionate, supportive, and active, he can contribute significantly to his child's cognitive, language, and academic achievement, as well as social development (NICHD-CDC, 2014).

Attachment

Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory describes how a father's interactions affect his sons' development and how the father plays a vital part in his child's life. Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory is based on understanding the relationship between children and their parents. More importantly, how children are significantly treated affects their pattern of attachment and how they will develop. So stated, the parent influences the child's development of attachment. Essentially, paternal absence represents disruptions in the child's attachment process that can contribute to mistrust (Senior, 2010). The attachment theory details how the lack of a father's interaction may adversely affect his

child. The influence of fatherhood is one of the most significant roles in an individual's life; it makes goals important that transcends an individual's self-worth (Clausen, 1986).

Summary

Overall, one of the most important influences a father can have on his child is indirect; fathers influence their children mainly through the quality of their relationship with their children's mother (Lamb, 1967). Other aspects of this indirect influence flow from the son watching the father go about his routine, work, social interactions, offering advice, and demonstrating a paternal presence in the home. In short, African American fathers have a powerful and positive impact on their sons' development and health. Unfortunately, an absent father in the African American community has reached an alarming rate; for this reason, African American men are in a state of crisis educationally, financially, socially, emotionally, and judicially (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Absenteeism affects not only the children but also the entire African American community. Many African American fathers are away from their children due to incarceration or death. As the African American community struggles with high death rates, death by police, unemployment, and mass incarceration, it is also essential to look at the social factors a fatherless home creates. This issue touches African Americans' lives and all those who seek to create a society of emotionally healthy African American men. By understanding how social learning theory works, we can appreciate the influential role that observation can play in shaping what we know and what we do. African American men face many hardships and a lack of belongingness within society (Thomas, 2013).

African American men face difficult circumstances are limited paternal guidance, which leads to violence, drug abuse, low self-esteem, early sexual activity, behavioral difficulties, and life adversity (Dubowitz et al., 2006). Additionally, the African American father is more likely to be absent than fathers from other ethnic groups (Thomas, 2013). For this reason, many fathers are away from their children due to incarceration more than any other race, and his absence negatively affects his son's social development into adulthood.

The literature reviewed in this study suggests that it is far better for African American males to grow up in a home with both mother and father in a loving relationship. The absence of a father in the African American family has been the cause of many problems facing African American men today. The literature reviewed for this study validates the theory that the absent African American father harms his son's social development. Research indicates that the presence and absence of the father in the home reveals positive and negative consequences. The role of the father is of great importance in the well-being of his children. Across studies in the literature review, it is apparent that a father's absence can affect the well-being of the African American males' social development (Moffitt 2003). New developments in neuroscience are expanding our understanding of how the presence of a father impacts childhood experiences. The absence of a father has consequences, and sociologists would benefit from a better understanding of these dynamics related to a wide range of potential outcomes (Miller et al., 2011). Chapter 3 will outline the methodology and data collection methods.

Chapter III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study began with a fundamental interpretive analysis interested in learning how individuals experienced and interacted within their social world and the meaning they assigned to it (Woodard, 1982). The central phenomenon explored was the lived experiences of African American sons who grew up with absent fathers and the effects on them as adults at home, in school, in their neighborhoods and their decision-making processes. This framework proposed that individuals interpret their experiences and create meaning out of those experiences. Based on the problem identified and the corresponding purpose, the research questions of the study were:

1. What are the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers at home, in school, and in their neighborhoods?
2. What are the essential meanings of these experiences to the sons' lives as children and as adults
3. How do the struggles of sons with absent fathers shape their decision-making skills?

A qualitative research design was used to explore lived experiences of African American sons who grew up with an absent father. According to Glesne (2011), qualitative research allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences through in-depth interviews. Qualitative research offered visions to different problems and helped develop concepts to look deeper into issues; the qualitative approach helps discover new thoughts and personal views (Glesne, 2011). This approach provided an opportunity to understand the underlying reasons many African American men are raised without a

father. Sandelowski and Barroso (2003) stated, "Because the researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research, analysis and interpretation will vary with the orientations of each investigator" (p. 807). Qualitative research is conducted due to the existence of a problem or issue (Creswell, 2007). Because fatherlessness is a complex issue, hearing the participants' stories was the best way to gain a better insight into their lived experiences. Stories and the details of people's lives are a way of knowing and understanding (Seidman, 2007).

This research gained the perspective of African American men who experienced fatherlessness. In addition, this research provided insight into the challenges African American men face and revealed perspectives that can help others in similar situations. These perspectives may help teachers and administrators identify areas of need that may contribute to the school environment and the community. Researchers use qualitative research to guide studies where the goal is to understand a phenomenon using tools that elicit detailed information that cannot be uncovered in standardized instruments (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). A phenomenological research approach was used to explore the phenomenon. Phenomenological research provides an in-depth understanding of individuals' subjective experiences and perceptions (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The selection of phenomenological research design was appropriate because the emphasis was on exploring the lived experiences of sons who had absent fathers (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research is used in studies where people's subjective perceptions and experiences are central to understanding a specific phenomenon.

In this chapter, a discussion of the rationale of the qualitative research will be given. This rationale will be followed by a description of the participants, research site,

procedures, and researcher's role. Next, a detailed explanation will be given of the methods used to collect, interpret, and report the data. Finally, this chapter will discuss the validity, reliability, and ethical considerations of the research.

Participants

The population for the study included eight African American sons with absent fathers. Potential participants were asked to complete a personal data form to determine eligibility (See Appendix B). One hundred personal data forms were completed; of the 100, 20 eligible participants were randomly selected; from the 20 randomly selected, eight were randomly chosen to participate in the study. The sample size for this qualitative research study was a smaller sample size than in a quantitative research study (Creswell, 1998). However, the sample size was sufficient because it allowed the researcher to understand the effect an absent father has on his son's lived experiences (Creswell, 1998). Crouch & McKenzie (2006) proposed that less than 20 participants in a qualitative study help a researcher build and maintain a close relationship and thus improve the "open" and "frank" exchange of information. A purposeful sampling and snowball technique was used in selecting the participants. Purposeful sampling indicates that the researcher selected the individuals for the study because they could purposefully inform an understanding of the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007). Purposeful sampling is a non-probability technique that focuses on crucial participant characteristics that need to be satisfied to be eligible to be part of the study (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2013).

Purposeful sampling was appropriate because of the importance of ensuring that all participants satisfy the essential criteria of the sample. When describing purposeful sampling, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) advise to "choose particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory" (p. 3). Along with purposeful sampling, participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method (Dimitros, 2010). Snowball sampling consisted of two steps: (a) identifying potential participants in the population then, (b) soliciting participants to recruit other people, and then asking other individuals to recruit. Steps were repeated until the needed sample size was found (Dimitros, 2010). Because all the individuals were at least 18 years of age, parental consent was not needed. Eight randomly selected participants were willing to share their lived experiences of growing up without a father in the home. Additionally, examining multiple perspectives on the same situation allowed generalizations of the experiences.

Participants selected for this study met the following criteria:

- Raised without a father in the home from age 3
- African American male age 18-24.

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, face-to-face contact was limited, and recruiting participants was a challenge. Contacts were made thru students, staff, faculty, and community organization. When more participants were needed, contacts were made with additional friends, family members, and staff who worked in adult education throughout the city. The research study was explained to everyone who wanted to support, such as; coworkers, friends, and family. Once potential candidates were recognized, friends or family members shared the introduction information listed in the consent form and

distributed the personal data form. The personal data forms were either scanned or sent via postal service. After collecting 100 personal data forms, the researcher randomly selected 20 to review. From the 20 reviewed forms, eight potential participants were selected. Each potential participant was contacted through email or phone to confirm the invitation to participate in the study. The phone conversations were brief and consisted of a quick introduction and summary of the research. If the participant was interested in learning more about the study, the researcher arranged a Zoom meeting to introduce and explain the research. The initial zoom meeting or conference was not an interview. The initial contact determined the potential participant's interest, eligibility, commitment to two interviews, and the informed consent process. The informed consent form (see Appendix C) was explained but was not signed until the first interview. A follow-up call was made to potential participants who agreed to take part in the study. The purpose of the follow-up call was to answer any additional questions, confirm participation, and establish a date and time for the first interview. Before the first interview, informed consent documents were explained and signed by both the participant and the researcher (Appendix C). According to Francis et al. (2010), data saturation is often reached at approximately 20 participants. However, data saturation is unique to every study and may occur earlier or later than the sample size of 20 participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Participants included eight African American males ages 18-24 from in a large Midwestern city without a father present in the home. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity. Pseudonyms were also used for the names of the participants' fathers. All documents were filed in a secure cabinet in a private location. Data was gathered through two in-depth interviews. The length of each interview was approximately 45 to 60

minutes. Forty–five to 60 minutes was sufficient time for participants to reconstruct their experiences, place them into the context of their lives, and reflect on their meaning (Seidman 2007). The interviews were spaced one week apart; this allowed each interview to build on the preceding one and sufficient time to listen to the previous video recording. Each interview was recorded to collect the interview data. This practice ensured that the interview details were preserved for analysis (Merriam, 2009). Taking notes provided an additional source for gathering data; this included notes made during the interview and after the discussion. Notations of the participants' nonverbal cues, my thoughts, and additional interview questions were also recorded. Additionally, the notes were essential for follow-up questions or comments that needed clarification while not compromising the interview flow (Merriam (2009).

Informed Consent

In adhering to ethical standards of research practice, participants read and completed an informed consent document before participation. Informed consent was also verbally explained to each participant. The informed consent document specified the scope and sequence, goals, objectives, purpose of the study, confidentiality safeguards, and contact information for the researcher. Informed consent was completed at a private space where confidentiality could be guaranteed. In order to assure participants' anonymity, pseudonyms were used throughout the study. Each participant approved and consented to video-recorded interviews. Participants were advised that the information obtained through video recordings and transcriptions would be safely locked in a secured file cabinet within the principal investigator's office. In the event a participant encountered an emotional risk, he received referral information for counseling services.

Additionally, all participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they had the option to withdraw without consequences. Furthermore, participants were made aware that the recordings and transcriptions will be kept for three years after completing the dissertation defense. Three years after completing the process, information obtained (i.e., informed consent documentation, personal data form, video recordings, and transcriptions) will be destroyed to protect the participants' anonymity.

Data Collection

Seidman (2007) stated that the interview is one of the most frequently used methods in qualitative research. The basis for in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experiences of others and how they make meaning of their experiences (Seidman 2007). Seidman explained that a researcher could approach people's experiences through observation, exploring history, experimentation, personal data form, surveys, and existing literature reviews. This study's primary data collection was a personal data form (See Appendix B) and interview questions (See Appendix D). Based on a review of the literature, 30 questions were developed to address the research question. They consisted of nine variables; participants' age, race, educational level, parental status, the total number of children, income, marital status, income, employment. During the interview, there was a reciprocal exchange between researcher and participant. The researcher tracks the conversation, noting aspects of the experience being explored (Polkinghorne, 2005). Moustakas (1994) explained that "the interview is an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions" (p. 114). The interview typically begins with a social conversation to create a relaxed environment

for participants (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) contended that the method for data collection is an interview within a phenomenological study.

Interviews were scheduled depending on the participant's availability. Each participant determined the day and time of the interview, keeping in mind confidentiality concerns of public places. The researcher was responsible for the data collection process, which means that the researcher conducted the interviews. The duration of the interview was approximately 45-60 minutes. Data were recorded via Zoom. The participants were informed that the interview recordings would not be accessible to anyone and would only be used for the data analysis. Even though the target sample size was eight participants, the final sample was determined by data saturation. After the interview, participants were informed that they would be contacted through email for member checking during the data analysis phase to ensure the credibility of the findings. The process of member checking did not involve follow-up interviews but a request from participants to review the accuracy of the preliminary data through electronic mail. I provided a summarized report before the formalization of the analysis, providing short feedback about the accuracy of the summary in capturing their lived experience.

Interviews

In qualitative studies, the researcher is often considered the essential instrument (Walker et al., 2013). The researcher has an active role in the research process and makes decisions integral to the study. As the main instrument of the study, the researcher is responsible for the recruitment of participants, collection of data, analysis of results, and dissemination of the findings. An interview guide was created in order to contain critical

questions to ask participants. To enhance the credibility of the interview guide instrument, the researcher conducted an expert review to assess the appropriateness of the questions. Two experts in the field reviewed the interview guide and provided feedback to enhance the instrument's effectiveness. The researcher analyzed and integrated the two experts' feedback to determine the necessary changes that should be made to finalize the interview questions in the guide. Each recording was filed electronically and assigned a unique code consistent with the corresponding code given to each participant. The interview questions were designed to encourage discussion, explore the topic, and understand the son's lived experience (Seidman, 2007). Two interviews helped saturate the data as much as possible and place the participants' experiences into context. The interviews' format established the context of the participants' experiences, allowing them to reconstruct the details of their experiences and reflecting on the meaning of those experiences (Seidman, 2007). The questions were descriptive, allowing the research to gauge verbal descriptions from the participants (Spradley, 1979). Participants were asked questions to determine the perceptions they have regarding their absent father.

According to Edward and Holland (2013), the structured and semi-structured interview is a research method used most often in the social sciences. While a structured interview has a rigorous set of questions that do not allow one to divert, a semi-structured interview is open, allowing for new ideas during the interview. Semi-structured interview questions are loosely structured, which will enable participants to express themselves. A semi-structured interview gives the interviewer space to clarify answers and build a personal bond with participants in a friendly atmosphere (Smith 2020). During the interviews, there was a reciprocal exchange between researcher and participant, and the

researcher tracked the conversation, noting aspects of the experience being explored (Polkinghorne, 2005). A key strategy for qualitative interviewers is to avoid questions with yes or no answers (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, interviews consisted of several open-ended questions. Although the interview questions were open-ended, the process was focused on the fundamental research question. The interview prompted the participants to discuss their lived experiences regarding the effect of not having a father present at home. The participants were asked to reconstruct their experiences from childhood to adulthood, including memorable positive and negative experiences in particular family gatherings, relationships, school, times when they were in trouble, or time involved in extracurricular activities.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative studies, researchers strive for trustworthiness in place of validity and reliability. Researchers can enhance trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln, 1995). The researcher ensured that each of these was met. Credibility or internal validity pertains to the accuracy of the results, reflecting the actual experiences or perceptions of the participants (Houghton et al., 2013). Member checks and the process of reflexivity were used to enhance the credibility of the study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). To enhance the credibility of the findings, the researcher conducted member checks by providing the participants a summarized report of their interviews through email and eliciting the help of two coders; each coder independently analyzed the same qualitative data set, and later compared their findings which provided an essential check on selective perception and interpretive bias.

The codes and themes were then discussed and compared as a group to confirm the assigned themes.

Data Analysis

For this study, the Atlas Ti software package was used to manage and organize the coding, comparison, and analysis data. This categorization of information was used to transform data into a form suitable for computer-aided analysis. A two-step process was used, beginning with coding to prominent themes, followed by a more in-depth, interpretive code in which more specific trends and patterns were interpreted (Hay, 2007). Personal data forms, interviews, and notes were used to meet the triangulation of the data. Given the emerging qualitative research design, collecting and analyzing data helped identify possible questions for future interviews and helped recognize emerging themes to be explored further (Merriam, 2009). Following each interview, the video recording was reviewed for clarity. While listening to the recordings, notes were kept, which helped to capture thoughts and ideas as they occurred (Ary et al., 2006). The notes included potential coding categories, possible themes, and additional interview questions. The organization of research material made it more easily accessible. After organizing the data, the coding and recoding process began using the ATLAS Ti software program. Codes were labeled and used for assigning meaning to descriptive information gathered during the interviews. The Atlas Ti software package managed and organized the data for coding, comparison, and analysis.

The ATLAS Ti software program stores and organizes large volumes of qualitative data for analysis (Braun and Clarke (2006). ATLAS Ti was helpful in the

coding process and categorizing data into codes. For the three research questions, data analysis involved coding the data into themes. The analysis process was based on the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): The six stages of analysis included: (a) transcribed the interactions and read the transcripts, (b) identifying preliminary codes, (c) sorted codes into themes, (d) review and elegant themes, (e) define themes, and (f) produce a report. Based on the developed codes, the data was put into clusters of themes based on their similarities. Several categories represented the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers and the effects on them as adults at home, in school, in their neighborhoods, and their decision-making processes. Lastly, a summarized report was transcribed of each participant's lived experience based on the interview analysis (Hycner, 1999). The summarized narrative contains direct quotes from the participants to strengthen the findings. Transcriptions were checked for accuracy by comparing the video version to the transcribed version of each conversation. The responses were then processed for individual interview coding, utilizing a thematic analysis as the first step in coding the data. This process included checking for consistency and verifying whether the software code has been translated according to requirements. Guba and Lincoln (1981) stated that all research must have "true value," "applicability," "consistency," and "neutrality" to be considered worthwhile.

Ethics and Human Relations

The documented consent form contained essential information about the study, such as purpose, nature of data collection, and contact details. Informed consent forms are necessary for ethical research because participants need to be aware of the nature of the study. The participants' signature indicates acknowledgment of the terms detailed in

the consent form. The treatment of human participants in the study could involve some minor risks of emotional and psychological discomfort, given that the nature of the topic is father absenteeism. When participants became emotionally overwhelmed during the interviews, licensed mental health assistance was immediately referred. Ethical issues relevant to the recruitment of participants involved inadvertent coercion in being part of the study. Participants refusing participation or requesting early withdrawal from the study were immediately relieved of their participation in the study. Participants who wished to withdraw were not forced to continue participating in the study, even if data were already collected. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from participation in the study at any time without any penalty. All data derived from participants who wish to withdraw were removed from the data analysis. The informed consent form can be viewed in the Appendix section (see Appendix C).

The data collected from the participants were treated as confidential, and information was protected during data storage by assigning unique names to the participants to hide their identities. Instead of using the actual names of the participants, unique codes were assigned to conceal the participants' identities. In terms of disseminating the results, no third-party individuals had access to the raw data, but the study results as presented in the dissertation are accessible to the public. The results presented in the dissertation did not contain the actual names of the participants or any confidential information that would compromise the identities of the entire sample. Research ethics obligates the researcher to maximize the possible benefits and minimize harm and risk to the participants. All ethical considerations were enforced according to

the Human Research Ethics Committee's satisfaction, including informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy protection. Pseudonyms were used to protect identities.

TimeLine

2-3 months	Submission /Approval from IRB
2-3 months	Study duration
2-3 months	Personal data form, Interviews, Data collection
2-3 months	Review, coding, analysis of data

Summary

This chapter aimed to explore the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers. A discussion of the procedure, participants, data collection, and interview questions outlined the specifics of how this study was conducted and who participated. A phenomenological research design was appropriately used because of the emphasis on exploring the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers (Moustakas, 1994). Three research questions were used to guide the study. The first research question was: What are the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers at home, school, and neighborhoods? Results indicated that participants' lived experiences of home life were characterized by financial and emotional hardships resulting from not having a father's earnings. Some participants reported that their academic performance in school was affected by their fathers' absence and that they missed their fathers' support in extracurricular activities. Family members and peers influenced participants' experiences in their neighborhoods. Knowing other friends with absent fathers normalized their situation; however while observing or hearing about other children's relationships with their fathers, participants

reported feeling envy, anger, or sadness. The second research question was: What are the essential meanings of these experiences to the sons' lives as children and as adults?

Participants reported confusion regarding their fathers' absence during their childhood, such as longing questions and self-blame. As adults, most participants achieved some form of acceptance by understanding their fathers' absence may have been due to conflict with their mothers, illness, or irresponsibility, such that they could feel that they were not responsible for their fathers' departures. The abstract meanings or lessons that participants derived from having absent fathers included the importance of being independent, appreciating the people who remained with them, and making a better life for their children. The third research question was: How do the life struggles of sons with absent fathers shape their decision-making skills. Participants reported that the absence of their fathers shaped their decision-making skills in their relationships and their distrust of authoritative men. Participants were also affected in their decision-making skills by losing a male perspective and a father's guidance.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of African American men raised without a father in the home. The influence of fatherhood is one of the most significant roles in an individual's life; it makes goals important that transcends an individual's self-worth (Clausen, 1986). More than ever, children are growing up in single-parent households. In the majority of cases, the single parent is the mother (Gottfried, 2007). Chapter IV includes (a) qualitative procedure overview, (b) demographics, (c) participant descriptions, (d) emerged themes, and (e) a summary. I used three methods to collect information from participants: a personal data form with nine questions, interview notes, and two interviews. Upon completion of each interview, the data were analyzed to identify themes using steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Descriptions of the experiences represent the emerged themes.

Additionally, this phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of a son who grew up with absent fathers and the effects on them as adults at home, in school, in their neighborhoods, and their decision-making processes. Three research questions were used to guide the study, including

1. What are the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers at home, school, and their neighborhoods?
2. What are the essential meanings of these experiences to the sons' lives as children and as adults?

3. How do the life struggles of sons with absent fathers shape their decision-making skills?

Next, the chapter includes a brief description of the study participants' demographics, followed by descriptions of implementing the data collection and data analysis procedures described in chapter 3. The chapter then includes a discussion of the evidence of this study's trustworthiness. This evidence is followed by a presentation of the study's results. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

Participants

In the first step of the semi-structured interview, I asked participants to complete the personal data form. The unique data form contained nine variables (participants' age, race, educational level, parental status, number of children, income, marital status, presence of a biological father, and employment status. As shown in Table 4.1, participants ranged in age from 18 to 24. Two participants did not complete high, one attended trade school, and five had some college. Only one of the participants had a child, and he had only one. Three participants were employed 1-39 hours per week; three were not employed but looking for work, while three were not employed and not looking for work. Five participants averaged less than \$20,000, and three had an annual household income between \$21,000 and \$30,000 per year—none of the participants identified as being married.

Table 4.1

Demographics

Participant	Age	Employment Status	Income	Children	Marital Status	Educational Level
Nick	24			0	Single	Some College
George	22	Employed		0		Some College
Marvin	23	Employed		1		Some College
Oscar	20			0		Some College
Daren	20	Employed		0		Some College
Ernest	18	Employed	<\$20k	0		Some high school
Steve	21		<\$20k	0		Some College
Lamont	23		<\$20k	0		Some high school

Participants Description

Nick is a 24-year old single African American male. Nick identified as having some college education he was pursuing a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Currently, he is unemployed and looking for work. Nick has no children and makes less than \$20,000 a year. His father has been absent from his life over 20 years. Nick disclosed that his father did not provide any emotional or financial support to him or his three siblings. When asked about his household growing up, Nick stated, “My mother and father divorced when I was three, being the oldest I became responsible for my younger siblings. I cooked, cleaned, and helped with homework while my mother worked three jobs. George is a 22 year-old single African American male. He has some college experience, currently employed and living with his mother. George has no children and stated that his father has not been around since his birth. When asked about his home life while growing up, George shared that his mother worked a full-time job, and his father was married and taking care of another family. “Mother provided for us”.

Marvin is a 23 -year-old single African American male. Marvin identified as having some college as he was pursuing a degree in accounting and was only short 12 credit hours. Marvin is currently employed and working full –time and he is the father of one child. Marvin disclosed that he is actively involved in his son’s life financially and emotionally. Marvin had his first child at the age of 20-years-old. He described his household growing up as single parent household, “my mother, my sister and me, that’s all that was there. Oscar is a 20-year-old single African American male. He has some college education, but is currently unemployed and homeless. Oscar has a no children. His father has been absent from his life for 18 years. Oscar disclosed that his father was not around to provide support for him and his siblings, emotionally or financially. When asked about the composition of his household, Oscar described his early life as “Hard, I am the youngest of 11 kids, my mother was a single mother and struggling, we barely had

a decent meal to eat. My mother passed away when I six, my sister and brother took care of me.” Darren is 20-year-old single African American male. He has some college experience, and working towards bachelor degree in education. Darren is currently employed full time and living on campus. Darren has no children. He indicated that his father did not provide any emotional nor financial support, but his father is currently attempting to rebuild their relationship. When asked about the composition of his household growing up, Darren explained, “I grew up in a single parent house with my younger sister. My mother eventually married my stepfather and had my little brother. They divorced a little after my brother was born, then I was the man of the house again.”

Ernest is an 18-year-old single African American male. Ernest has some high school education, is currently employed with an annual household income less than \$20,000. Ernest has no children. Ernest disclosed that his father did not provide emotional or financial support to his children. When asked about his household growing up, Ernest pointed out, “It was difficult growing up without a dad, it was just me and my mother. I was basically teaching myself how to do things”. Steve is a 21-year-old single African American male. He has some college experience and is currently unemployed; his annual household income is less than \$20,000. Steve has no children. He disclosed that his father did not provide emotional nor financial support. When asked about his household growing up, Steve explained, “I grew up with my mom and my sister until my mom married my stepdad. When he came into the picture I was 19 years old, however, everything seemed to get better.” Lamont 23-year-old single African American male. He has some high school education, currently working towards obtaining his diploma. Lamont is currently unemployed with an annual household income less \$20,000. Lamont

has no children. His father did not provide any emotional or financial support. When asked about his household growing up, Lamont stated, “I wish I had a father to give me guidance and support during difficult times, I had to figure things out on my own”.

Themes

After each interview was transcribed, every expression—common words, ideas, thoughts, and feelings—that was relevant to the experience was noted. Each expression was given equal value in understanding the meaning of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). During this process, the researcher looked for patterns and similarities. Only statements or phrases that were relevant to the lived experience of fatherless sons were marked and coded. Below are the categories that were formed with each category. The themes identified are categorized as emotions, behaviors, needs, and acceptance.

Perspective themes identified by the fatherless sons detail their particular point of view regarding their father’s absence. The fatherless son’s experience of being raised without a father is discussed in the four recognized themes:

1. Emotions - feelings and memories connected to the father’s absence
2. Behaviors—actions related to the phenomenon
3. Needs—perceived needs that were not met
4. Acceptance—how fatherless sons viewed themselves despite being raised without a father

Emotions

The emotions theme helped describe the memories connected to not having a father. This theme will be interrelated to the behaviors, needs, and acceptance themes because emotions determine how individuals respond (McDevitt & Ormrod, p. 419). As

previously mentioned, the themes that were identified during this research were (a) emotions, (b) needs, (c) behaviors, and (d) acceptance. The four themes are interrelated and are common ideas found throughout social learning literature (O’Conner et al., 2013).

The following interview questions applied to the emotions theme:

1. How would you describe your experience of having an absent father as a child?
2. How would you describe your experience of having an absent father as an adult?
3. How did having an absent father affect your home life? (As a child?)
4. How did having an absent father affect your school life?
5. How did having an absent father affect living and playing in your neighborhood?
6. As a child, how did you understand, or make sense of having an absent father?
7. How do you cope with you fathers absence now as an adult?

All of the participants were able to clearly conceptualize what an absent father meant to them. Additionally, two out of eight participants identified having a male figure later in their life that served as an example of a father. Several of the participants conceptualized a father’s absence as being the norm in their community. Marvin disclosed that his father’s absence made him feel unsupported. “A father should be a provider before anything else, someone who makes the money and provide for his children.” Marvin explained that his maternal grandfather served as an example of fatherhood since “He taught me what hard work looks like, and he was very wise, good with money and well respected in the community. George described his father’s absence as feeling abandoned. “My father could have taken care of us, instead he chose to take care of another family.” He was loving and caring to his family, but acted as if we didn’t

exist". When asked who he went to for advice, George explained, "My oldest brother, I watched him take care of his family, he struggled, but he did the best he could. Steve identified his father's absence as being unaccountable. "He stated that his stepfather served as an example of a father, even though my mother married when I was 18. He made my mother happy, until she found out he was wasting money at the casino. Despite his gambling habit, he seemed responsible as a father." Five of the participants viewed their father's absence as a lack of responsibility. Lamont detailed, "A father is a man who supposed to be responsible for his family, someone who doesn't run from difficulties, but embraces it, it's not a challenge to him, it's a gift. You don't make excuses for your responsibilities you just do them; you meet them no matter what." Lamont's ideas of fatherhood was formulated by his biological father's absence. "My father's absence taught me what not to do" Lamont stated, "My father was never around, but, when he did come around he was on a drugs." Ernest felt the same way, "a father should take care of his responsibilities, like teaching his son how to play football or basketball, buying clothes and providing emotional support for his kids." Ernest uncle served as his example of fatherhood, "My uncle taught me about family. He not only talked, but he listened to my feelings; I'm going to do the same for my kids one day." Darren viewed his father's absence as, "being unforgivable, a man should take care of his kids, provide and protect them, a father should be around for guidance and advise." Oscar identified his father's absence a making him feel empty and neglected, "It bothered me to see others kids with their fathers at basketball games or even playing basketball. It was something rare to see, but it made me wonder what it would be like to hang out with my father. Nick explained,

“My father should’ve protected me, guided me, and taught me how to be a man and how to tie a tie. The little things can make a big difference in a kid’s life.

Behaviors

According to Kruk E. (2019), fatherless children have more difficulties with social adjustment and are more likely to report problems with friendships and manifest behavior problems; many develop a swaggering, intimidating persona to disguise their underlying fears and resentments, anxieties, and unhappiness. Among the participants' actions and behaviors associated with an absent father were seeking attention, being rebellious, learning by trial and error, some aggressive behaviors, and growing up faster than other kids. The following questions apply to the behavior theme:

8. How did having an absent father affect coping with life struggles and decision-making?
9. What are some specific examples where having an absent father affected your decision-making?
10. What are some specific examples here having an absent father affected your decision making?
11. Have you ever received therapy, counseling or life coaching for issues related to your fathers' absence?
20. When, if at all, did you realize your fathers' absence affected your level of commitment?
21. Do you feel like you would have accomplished more in your life if your father had been around?
22. What was the hardest thing you went through as a child? How did you overcome it?

23. What are your best memories of holidays or family gatherings as a child?

With regards to the fatherless son's best memories growing up, they all indicated they never missed their father during the Holidays. All of the participants disclosed they have endured emotional pain as a result of their father's absence. When asked if they think about their fathers, three of the participants became angry and didn't want to elaborate. Lamont, 23, explained: "I think about my father every day, especially when I hear the name Lamont Sr. I can remember my mother taking me to the doctor and the doctor's name was Lamont, I imagined he could be my father, someone who was smart and took care of his family. I believe I have anger issues towards authority because of my hatred for my father. I have trouble with someone telling me what to do. All through elementary school, I stayed in trouble, I was fighting all the time and didn't want to listen. My middle school football coach was able to reach me, he seemed cool and he didn't take any back talk, I respected that about him. Marvin, a father of one child, began to tear up when reflecting on how much he thinks about his father. Marvin stated, "I think about my father every day, I wish we could have been close. I was very lonely and sad as a kid. Sometimes I would think about my father and I just cry. It was hard for me growing up especially with all the gangs in my neighborhood, I didn't want to be a part of the crowd, but it's hard to get away from it. My father could have stepped in and protected me from that, I would have made a better decision about getting involved in gang activity. My grandfather did what he could, and I respected him for that".

George, who has some college, also disclosed: "As a kid growing up, I thought about my father, that part never left me although he wasn't around. I still wanted to know what's he was doing with his life and how things were going with him. I loved to play

baseball, and when I watched games on television, I imagined my father and me at the game together, I was mad as hell about that. It made me question if something was wrong with me.” Darren, who is employed and also has some college, explained, “Thinking about my father hurts man. I don’t know how to forgive him for not being around. He was never around for my birthday, when I broke my arm, when I had chicken pox or when I hit puberty. I can remember looking out the window wishing he would pull up to the door with presents in his arm, only to realize it was only a dream.” Nick stated,

My father never remembered my birthday. I would call him a few days before to remind him and he would still forget. For this reason, I made a big deal out of my little brother and sister’s birthday because I knew how it felt when no one remembered. I was committed to making sure, my siblings didn’t feel neglected on their birthday. I was a better father to my siblings growing up, more so than our biological father. I made sure, I had enough money to get them a card for their birthday and Christmas, I always remembered.

Oscar described his childhood as being a rebellious kid, who stayed in trouble and terrorized the neighborhood. “I can remember a time when my mother would tell me she was going to call my father, I would get nervous when she said that, but after a while, I knew he wouldn’t show up. I thought about my father a lot as a kid, I wondered if he could show me how to play sports and make me a better athlete.” Steve stated that he thinks about his father, and how disappointed he is in him. “Coming here I checked the date and realized his birthday is coming up. It makes me mad to think about him. I actually try to forget that he exists, because it pisses me off.” Ernest described his childhood as being peaceful in spite of his father’s absence. “I wish my father would have

tried to be with us, and make better decisions. I wish he would have fought for his family and not the streets. I use to pray that God would bring him back to us. Steve, 21 and with some college, stated, “I struggle with authority, particularly male authority. “I can’t cope with managers at work, I got fired from my last job and haven’t worked for the last year! I think everybody in authority hates me and are only out to makes things harder for me. I get very defensive and it’s hard for me to deal with authority figures.”

Needs

The US Census Bureau (2011) stated that when fathers are absent, children lack discipline, are more likely to be poor, become involved in drug and alcohol abuse, drop out of school and suffer from health and emotional problems. All participants in this study believed that discipline would have been more effective if their fathers were present. The participants felt there was a need for a father to teach them how to be a man. All of the participants acknowledged that they were sometimes too aggressive and found it difficult to express their emotions and that their fathers’ absence made them feel that they have unmet needs. Additionally, participants expressed financial stress due to their father’s absence and stated that a father’s financial contributions could have provided food and a chance to live in a better neighborhood. The following questions apply to the needs theme:

12. Do you wish to connect with your father? Why/Why not?
13. Describe how your fathers’ absence affected your decisions about intimacy/sex?
14. If you have children, has your fathers’ absence affected you as a parent?
15. What kind of relationship did you have with adult males?

16. If you have siblings, how did your fathers' absence affect your relationship with them?
17. How often do you think about your fathers' absence?
18. Have you ever received therapy, counseling or life coaching for issue related to your father's absence?
19. What do you think it means to be a father?

Some of the statements made by the participants represent their view of a father, which assumes that he would have been a good father and that many of their problems would have been non-existent. For example Oscar stated that, "If I had a father, I would listen to what he had to say." Nick stated that, "things would have been easier in our house if my father was around, a lot of stuff would not have happened." Marvin stated that: I would have a better relationship with mother if my father was around. Each participant perceived that they would have benefited from a father in the home. Marvin stated, "My father should have known about my life, interests, and schoolwork. I needed guidance and someone to send me in the right direction and help me live a better life". Steve indicated, "I wanted my father to help me build my confidence as a man, and to teach me what it takes to survive in the world. Ernest remembers wondering if his temperament and interests were the same as his father's. "I wanted to know what type of person he was, did he fish, swim, play basketball, I needed answers that I never got." Darren stated, "I was upset at first because my father wasn't around when I needed him. I wanted his guidance and protection, and I felt that he hadn't give me that". George and Lamont stated they didn't need their fathers, nor did they long to have them in their lives. Both stated that their mothers compensated for their father's absence.

Acceptance

No matter the exact circumstances, an absent father's son is at a disadvantage in life. Growing up without a father can be a traumatic event that follows a person throughout their life, the kind of trauma that can leave emotional scars (Dvorak, 2006).

Each participant's view of acceptance varied and was unique to the individual. Although the responses are unique, the commonality amongst the participants was how they moved on from their father's absence. They accepted the fact that their father was absent. The participants thought about themselves, and what was important to them was influenced predominantly by their attachments, influences, feelings, and behaviors. Participants explained that their father's absence did not bother them, once they became an adult.

The following questions apply to the acceptance theme:

24. If you became a father, how would you want to be perceived by your children?
25. What are you most afraid of?
26. How would you describe yourself today?
27. What do you remember about the houses you lived in as a kid?
28. Which family member has been your greatest coach in life? How did he/she coach you?
29. When you were a teenager, which family member did you go to for advice?
30. Has your father's absence affected your ideas about being a father?

Nick indicated that once he grew up and made a life for himself, he was okay with his father not being around and he would make sure not to make the same mistakes.

Steve stated "I'm was 19 years old, when I started having a relationship with my father.

During my childhood years, I would see him every now and then even though he lived less than three miles away. I never spent birthdays, holidays, family vacations, or even just hung out with my father, so you can't miss what you never had; my father never understood his role as a parent". George accepted his father's absence and stated that "initially, I was upset about my father not being around, but found peace within myself. I accept that he made a mistake, we all do. Accepting the situation has help me adjust to reality, and I let go of the negative emotions. Marvin stated, "My response to my father not being in my life was to be the best father I could be to my son. As the saying goes, any fool can be a father, but it takes a real man to stick around, any man can make a baby, but every man doesn't have the capacity to love, raise, and protect their children". Oscar explained, "Every man needs a father, no matter how old he gets. My relationship with my father was always broken, and I was ok with that. Several years later he's attempted to have a relationship with me, but I don't want a relationship with him, he should've been there from the beginning, I'm not trying to hurt him, it is what it is". Darren on the other hand said, "I think I was caught up in my emotions, and I expected my father to be someone other than himself. As a result, I caused myself a lot of unnecessary pain and suffering. I had to forgive my father. We talk sometimes, he's cool". Ernest let go of his "expectations and focused on appreciating his effort to be in my life now, even if it took him 18 years, this is how I found peace". Steve recently saw a post on Facebook with his father and his other family. He went on to say. I looked at them and they seemed so happy. Why couldn't I get that? Was it because of my mother? Was it because of his wife? What is wrong with me that I couldn't get the same level of love and attention? My emotions and feeling of neglect got the best of me, and I had to

let it go. Lamont, who does not have any children was separated from his father due to his father's incarceration and he has no memories of him. He further explained, My mother would take us to go visit him, but I don't remember, I was so young. I'm a grown man now and I've learned to stand on my own two feet. Life really beat me up; it was like going through a fight. I had to work on me and let go of my father.

Some participants shared that speaking of their fathers brought up feelings of inadequacy that they had never recognized. The feeling of inadequacy for some of the participants influenced their decisions to become mentors, role models, and better fathers. There are three types of acceptance (1) unconditional self-acceptance, (2) unconditional other acceptance, and (3) unconditional life acceptance. Each of these types of acceptance is based on the belief that: (1) I am a human being; I have my point of view, I have flaws, (2) Other people will mistreat me from time to time. There is no reason why they must treat me fairly. (3) Life does not always work out the way I would like. Life is not always pleasant.

Sub-themes

Sub-themes emerging from the data analysis related to the research questions included participants' descriptions of childhood and adulthood. Participants reported experiencing confusion during their childhoods about what the absence of their fathers meant. As a result, the meaning of their father's absence was unclear. However, participants reported that they achieved a sense of peace and closure when they grew into adulthood. Participants came to understand why their fathers had been absent in a way

that allowed them to excuse or at least understand his departure. They accepted themselves as they were and refused to require validation

Summary

This chapter aimed to explore the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers. A discussion of the procedure, participants, data collection, and interview questions outlined the specifics of how this study was conducted and who participated. A phenomenological research design was appropriately used because of the emphasis on exploring the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers (Moustakas, 1994). The absence of a father in the home impacts the African American male's social development into adulthood. For the participants in this study, the effect was determined by the relationship with their mother, siblings, and other supportive family members. There were some specific needs that sons expected their fathers to meet; those expectations were support, guidance, advice, discipline, and accountability, motivation, teaching gender roles, and sharing father-son experiences. The absence of a father affected the participants socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. Some participants experienced resentment and anger because their fathers were absent and not around to help meet their needs. Participants also experienced additional financial issues and the stress of doing more due to their father's absence. The participants' emotions affected their actions and behaviors. Participants who shared a lack of discipline in their lives were rebellious and disrespectful toward authority. Participants who felt angry and resented their fathers often got in fights, lashed out, or allowed other aggressive behaviors to get them in trouble. The

participants had to learn by trial and error instead of having a father teach them. The effect of fatherlessness was different for each participant. The difference was based on the support system they had surrounding them.

Counselors, administrators, and policymakers can help meet the needs of fatherless African American males in similar situations. Counselors and administrators can help by getting to know the young men personally to understand their needs better. Each participant's voice was heard by analyzing their responses regarding their father's absence. As a result of the data analysis process, four categories of themes and sub-themes were reported. The themes of this study captured the essence of what it means for an African American male ages 18-24 to grow up without a father in the home. In Chapter V, a discussion of the findings is presented. Finally, implications and recommendations for practice when working with fatherless sons are reported.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Chapters' I-IV presented the analysis and reported data. Chapter V consists of a summary, discussion of findings, implications for practitioners, recommendations for future research, and conclusions. Rationales and factors are presented to understand the population and offer further research that may assist those impacted by absent fathers. Research has indicated how significant a father's presence is for his children in their early developmental years (Balcom 1998). Furthermore, research has shown considerable evidence linking an increase in aggressive behaviors and some evidence of increased attention problems among African American males without a father in the home (King, & Sobolewski, 2006). African American fathers interested in their sons' educational achievement directly impact how their sons do on exams, work with others, their attitudes towards school, and their drive for higher academic expectations (Mandara et al., 2005). Although there is extensive information about the effects of a father's absence, there is little research regarding the son's perspective. In addition, few studies have been conducted from the son's point of view. Understanding the son's attitude regarding his father's absence will add to the current body of literature (Cabrera et al., 2007a).

The concern for the next generation, theorized by Erikson (1998), is to nurture and guide younger people and contribute to the next generation. This qualitative research study utilized an integrated theoretical approach to analyzing African American males' lived experiences into adulthood. Four themes and sub-themes emerged due to data analysis employing the Braun and Clark (1994) Method. My study was taken from research literature related to the impact of a father's absence, defining father absence, and

examining his absences on his children. Additionally, this study proposed understanding the dynamics of African American males raised without a father and the effects of his absence. Additionally, when a father is present, his children are positively impacted, and research has found that a father's presence is needed during the early stages of a child's development and throughout their childhood (Eliezer et al., 2012).

Conversely, a father's absence can harm his children's educational outcomes, behaviors, and well-being (Cabrera et al., 2007b; McLanahan, 2004; Mandara et al., 2005). Assessed literature on paternal participation, theoretical perspectives, and models helped define what it means to grow up without a father (Palkovitz, 2002). Participants were aware and able to explain their views of having an absent father. This study helped explain why African American fathers are missing and how that absence impacts their sons. This study was conducted to give insight into the sons' lived experiences and provide a voice to a population that has not been thoroughly studied to understand their perspective. More research can be done by completing this study from the sons of absent fathers', which will shed light on their lived experience. Counselors and educators may benefit from gaining knowledge about the sons' experience of being raised without a father. Additionally, the research question was guided by the integrated theories focused on understanding the lived experiences of sons with absent fathers. To answer the research questions, eight sons of absent fathers from a large metropolitan area located in St. Louis, Missouri, were interviewed. A personal data form, interviews, and interview documentation were used.

Braun and Clark's (1994) Thematic Analysis method was applied. Using the TA method helped to analyze each participant's transcript verbatim. I examined all statements for significance and made a record of each description. The combination of textual and

structural descriptions allowed four themes to two sub-themes to emerge that were universal to all eight participants. The four themes served as the basis for my discussion of the qualitative data obtained. In addition, participants conducted member checks, where they were able to examine the verbatim transcriptions of their interviews to guarantee the validity of their statements. Black's (2008) study on the developmental characteristics of absent fathers served as an influence for further exploration and expansion on the topic of absent fathers. My goal was to fill a gap in the literature by detailing the perspective of the fatherless son. By gaining a firsthand account of the son's lived experiences, four themes emerged from data analysis: (a) emotions, (b) behaviors, (c) needs, and (d) acceptance. Two sub-themes emerged, meaning of absent father as a child and as an adult. All participants were able to articulate their father's absence. Although each response was unique, there were similarities. For some of the participants, they did not recall their parents ever having a romantic relationship. Their father's employment and residency frequently changed, and they were not a part of their lives. Two participants expressed statements consistent with the literature. One participant stated: "My father was absent due to incarceration. We would go and visit now and then until he was transferred out of state. My mom said she would not wait for him". Wildeman, C. (Sept. 2010) found that incarceration was a factor for a father's absence. Another participant shared this story: "My parents broke up right after I was born." Other participants rationalized their fathers' absence was due to poor choices (Gamboa & Wrenetha, 2019).

For some participants, their relationship with their father was affected by their fathers' obligation to another family. Participants expressed feelings of anger towards

their father for not being around. In addition to feeling "left out," five participants felt that they needed their father to help them become a man. Not having a father around made them feel inadequate. One participant explained: "I will do better as a father; my children will know that they can depend on me." This finding is consistent with Black (2008), who found that men feel that their role is to provide for their family and that a financially incapable man should not be around his children. Another participant specifically stated, "I do not want to see my father right now; what is the point?" Several participants detailed how their father's presence is not needed, "too little too late." Although most participants shared how they felt about their father's absence, two were defensive regarding their father's absence. One of the participants shared that he did not know if his father was dead or alive; he stated, "My father may be my next-door neighbor, I do not know, and neither does my mother." The other participant explained how he felt that his father did not love him, so in turn, he would not be concerned about them. He stated: "He never visited me one time! "Why should I have time to think about someone who never thought about me? These participants did not recognize how their father's absence had affected their ability to connect, establish, and maintain relationships with others. The rationales for the fatherless son's perspectives are consistent with previous literature.

Most of the participants exhibited wanting to have a relationship with their father. Some wanted to have a close relationship with their father and know more about him as a man. However, none of the participants experienced the type of relationship with their biological father that they desired. The participants expressed a range of feelings to describe how they felt affected by their biological father's absence. One participant explained his hurt, "I hated it! I hated it! Furthermore, it hurt for years. I did not stop

crying for my father until I was 23.” Others did not understand why their biological father was absent. “I was confused. I did not understand why he was not there. I never got an explanation; that is what made it hard.” Participants also expressed resentment and anger about growing up without their fathers. “I needed someone in my corner. I grew up with all women in the house! I resented him for leaving me.” The participants did not experience fathering activities, nor did they get their need for a connection with their father met. One participant identified the connection between his father’s absence and the need to be present in his child’s life. He expressed an understanding of his father’s decision to become absent. “I can honestly say I did not understand until I had a child. After that, I understood a little better why he was never around and just gave up because he had too much going on. It was too difficult for him to deal with; I promised myself I would not do my kid the way my dad did me”.

The themes that emerged through data analysis captured the essence of the lived experiences of fatherless sons. First, sons who experienced growing up without their father are likely to repeat the same behavior by becoming absent fathers. The study has implications for individuals working with children and families affected by a father's absence; they may benefit from learning the varying rationales for a father's absence and understand that some absent fathers are more than financial providers. Second, practitioners should encourage absent fathers to engage in fathering activities with their children. Their availability and responsibility for their children should be stressed and engaged in caretaking activities (Lamb, 2000). Palkovitz (2002) explained that fathers could become involved with their children by engaging in any of the following activities: communicating, teaching, monitoring, engaging in thought processes, providing, showing

affection, protecting, supporting emotionally, running errands, caregiving, engaging in child-related maintenance, sharing interests, being available, planning, and sharing activities. Absent fathers must be made aware of the various activities they can readily do to be active in their children's lives. Fathering activities may vary across races (Shears, 2007), but good fathering consists of love, availability, and serving as a good role model (Mormon & Floyd, 2006). Overall, the information gained from my study is intended to assist practitioners in understanding more about the thought process and perspective of fatherless sons. A deeper understanding of the son and the impact of his father's absence may assist practitioners in gaining a better view of young African American men. It is essential to remove personal biases and judgments about fatherless sons before building a therapeutic relationship. The practitioner must view the fatherless son through an empathetic lens and accept him with unconditional positive regard.

Implications

When participants perceive that their needs are not being met, there are emotional and physical effects. Participants missing their fathers felt they had unmet needs, and they would seek other ways to meet those needs through family members, mentors in the community, teachers, counselors, or administrators. Implications for this research include, but are not limited to the following:

- Supporting individuals based on perceived needs;
- Communicating perceived needs to teachers, administrators, and counselors
- Implementing mentoring programs;

- Working together with programs in the community, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs; WILD Inc., and the Urban League
 - Encouraging teachers, counselors, and administrators to build relationships
 - Encouraging involvement in extracurricular activities; and
 - Implementing a class that teaches responsible parenting practices.

Each participant indicated that they would have benefited from a mentoring program; however, none knew of a mentoring program. Suggestions for mentors ranged from older students to community members to teachers. The participants mentioned the perceived benefits of mentoring programs: someone to help with schoolwork, someone to talk to, someone who was there for support, and someone to help guide them and give advice when needed. Participants acknowledged how a program similar to the Boys and Girls Club would have been helpful to them. Each participant expressed that the teachers who got to know them best as individuals positively impacted them. Not only were they the most important influences, but participants also performed better in those classes.

Limitations

There were limitations due to using interviews as the sole source of data collection. The descriptions that tell each participant's story are limited to the participants' data and how it is presented. Another limitation is the difficulty of understanding lived experiences with two in-depth interviews. No matter how thorough the research was, it is impossible to reduce years of experience into two interview segments. Although the in-depth interview approach helped to minimize these limitations, they still exist.

Recommendations

The study uncovered the perspectives of a fatherless son; however, more research should be explored. Additionally, conducting studies with a younger generation of fatherless sons may yield different results. More research on fatherless sons will give voice to a marginalized population and fill a void in the literature. It is further recommended that the participant pool be expanded to gain more insight into growing up without a father in the home. Furthermore, future researchers could extend the research of absent fathers by examining the lived experiences of single mothers. Doing so may advance the understanding from the fatherless sons and the mother's perspectives. Interviewing the participants' mothers would bring valuable insight to the mothers' perspective of fatherlessness. Mothers could share their experiences of raising their sons without a father and giving insight into how schools could help. Interviewing school personnel such as teachers, counselors, and administrators could help further the research by providing information about working with fatherless students. Conducting a study with focus groups would also be a way to expand the study and gain valuable insight from a group discussion.

Conclusion

A father's absence affects his children and disrupts the family unit. The National Fatherhood Initiative (2011) explained how the father's absence affects poverty, child health, incarceration, crime, teen pregnancy, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, and education. In order to address the social issues, the absent father must be at the center of the discussion and research. More research from the absent father's perspective is needed

for a more concise depiction of the factors that impact his children. The absence of a father at home has an emotional impact, and the impact is determined by the strength of attachment with his mother and the relationships he establishes with other influences. The stronger these attachments and relationships, the more needs are met, resulting in an absent father having a less negative emotional and behavioral impact. When fathers are absent or unavailable, it is left up to the mother and other influences to help meet the son's needs. When the mother or another influence meets these needs, they may not have the same impact as if a father had met them.

The participants in this study expected their father to be there for support, offering guidance and advice, providing discipline and accountability, providing motivation, teaching gender roles and skills, and sharing father-son experiences. When these needs were not fulfilled, it affected the participants emotionally. Participants sometimes felt alone, and they put up barriers to close themselves off from others. Some participants experienced resentment and anger because their fathers were absent and not around to help meet their needs. Participants also felt additional stresses such as financial issues and the stress of doing more around the house due to their father's absence. The participants' emotions affected their actions and behaviors. Participants who felt alone often acted out and misbehaved to seek attention from others. Participants who conveyed there was a lack of discipline and accountability in their lives were rebellious and disrespectful toward authority at times. Participants who felt angry and resented that their fathers often got in fights, lashed out, hit things, or allowed other aggressive behaviors to get them in trouble. Most participants believed that their mother's discipline was ineffective. They thought that punishment at home usually did not correct the misbehavior when they did

get in trouble. The participants had to learn by trial and error instead of having a father teach them. The effect of fatherlessness was different for each participant. The difference was based on the support system they had surrounding them. The absence of the father had more of an impact on participants who had minor support. Participants with more support experienced a lesser impact due to their father's absence. Even with robust support systems, the father's absence still affected each participant.

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APPENDIX A

Flyer



The Impact of the Absentee Father on the Social Development of the African Male: Findings and Implications

Principal Investigator: Tambra Cross

Contact Information


To find out more about this study, please contact

Tambra Cross
314-332-6769
tb2af@mail.umsl.edu

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the absence of an African American father and his son's social development into adulthood.

To Participate in this research you must:

- * Be an African American Male
- * Be 18 years old or older
- * Complete Survey



Participation in this study requires:

- * A time commitment of two, 45 minutes, one to one interviews

*You will receive a gift card for your participation

The Impact of the Absentee Father on the Social Development of the African American Male: Findings and Implications
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APPENDIX B

Personal Data Form

INSTRUCTIONS: Fill in the information in the spaces provided. Please answer every item.

NAME _____

Date _____

CONTACT INFORMATION:

CELL: _____

EMAIL:

ZIP CODE: _____

1. What is your age?

2. Please specify your ethnicity.

- A. Caucasian
- B. African-American
- C. Latino or Hispanic
- D. Asian
- E. Native American
- F. Other/Unknown

3. What level of education have you completed?

- A. Some High School
- B. High School
- C. Trade School
- D. Other _____

4. Are you a father of a child?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. I do not know

5. How many children do you have?

- A. None
- B. 1
- C. 2-4
- D. More than 4

6. **Which income group does your household fall under?**

- A. Less than \$20,000
- B. \$21,000 – \$30,000
- C. \$31,000 to \$40,000
- D. \$41,000 to \$50,000
- E. \$51,000 to \$60,000
- F. Above \$60,000

7. **What is your marital status?**

- Single, (never married)
- Married or domestic partnership
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated

8. **Has a biological father or stepfather been physically present in your home from age three to the present time?**

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Some of the time

9. **Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?**

- A. Employed, working 1-39 hours per week
- B. Employed, working 40 or more hours per week
- C. Not employed, looking for work
- D. Not employed, NOT looking for work
- E. Disabled, not able to work



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Department of Education

and Professional

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

The Impact of the Absentee Father on the Social Development of the African American Male: Findings and Implications

Participant: _____ HSC Approval Number

Principal Investigator: Tambra Cross PI's Phone Number: 314-332-6769

Summary of the Study

This is a brief description of the project

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Tambra Cross, and Dr. E. Paulette Isaac-Savage. The purpose of this research is to add to the current body of knowledge and to examine the impact the absence of a father has on his son's social development into adulthood.

The purpose of this research is to examine how the absence of an African American father impacts African American males' social development into adulthood. Additionally, this study proposes to understand the dynamics of African American males raised without a father and the affect such absence has on their learning socialization.

2. Your participation will involve

a) Your participation will involve completing a personal data form, and participating in two one-to-one interviews. The findings from the study will be used to identify the possible types of training needed by counselors, school administrators, parents and community leaders in order to meet the social and academic needs of African American males. The personal data form and interviews will be conducted by phone or Zoom

Approximately 12 participants may be involved in this research.

b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 15 minutes to complete the personal data form and 45 minutes to 1 hour for the one-on-one interviews.

3. There may be minimal risk or discomforts involved associated with this research. They may include feeling uncomfortable from answering certain questions. Counseling referrals are available
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge necessary to support young men raised without a father and possibly break the cycle of absenteeism in the African American community.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. If you want to withdraw from the study, you can contact me at tb2af@mail.umsl.edu or 314-332-6769. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator Tambra Cross 314-332-6769 or the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Paulette Isaac-Savage at 314-516-5303. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I hereby consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Impact of the Absentee Father Page 2 of 2

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your experience of having an absent father as a child?
2. How would you describe your experience of having an absent father as an adult?
3. How did having an absent father affect your home life? (As a child?)
4. How did having an absent father affect your school life?
5. How did having an absent father affect living and playing in your neighborhood?
6. As a child, how did you understand, or make sense of, having an absent father?
7. How do you cope with your father's absence now, as an adult?
8. How did having an absent father affect coping with life struggles and decision-making?
9. What are some specific examples where having an absent father affected your decision-making?
10. What else would you like to add that you think is important in understanding your experience of having an absent father?
11. Have you received therapy, counseling or life coaching for issues related to your fathers' absence?
12. Do you wish to connect with your father? Why/Why not?
13. Describe how your fathers' absence affected your decisions about intimacy/sex?
14. If you have children, has your fathers' absence affected you as a parent?
15. What kind of relationship did you have with adult males?
16. If you have siblings, how did your fathers' absence affect your relationship with them?
17. How often do you think about your fathers' absence?
18. Have you ever received therapy, counseling or life coaching for issues related to your fathers' absence?
19. What do you think it means to be a father?
20. When, if at all, did you realize your fathers' absence affected your level of commitment?
21. Do you feel like you would have accomplished more in your life if your father had been around?
22. What was the hardest thing you went through as a child? How did you overcome it?
23. What are your best memories of holidays or family gatherings as a child?
24. If you became a father, how would you want to be perceived by your children?
25. What are you most afraid of?
26. How would you describe yourself today?
27. What do you remember about the houses you lived in as a kid?
28. Which family member has been your greatest coach in life? How did he/she coach you?
29. When you were a teenager, which family member did you go to for advice?
30. Has your father's absence affected your ideas about being a father?

That concludes our interview. I would like to thank you for allowing me to ask you some personal questions. Also, thank you for answering my questions honestly. Have a nice day!