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Perceptions of Student Experiences in Secondary Education Without the Presence of a

Biological Father

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by

Bradley Scott Herrell

May 2020

_____

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Student Experiences in Secondary Education Without the Presence of a

Biological Father

by

Bradley Scott Herrell

This qualitative study examined the perceived impact of absent fathers on students' emotional,

social, and academic constraints. Many factors can contribute to the loss of a father; so, for the

purpose of this research, the researcher examined the impact of the absent father through

incarceration and divorce. The research may enable educators to identify the challenges,

celebrate victories, and explore what it the phenomenon of an adolescent without the presence of

your biological father in our community, from the perspective of the educators.

Information gathered through the administration of educator perception interviews was utilized

to identify how an absent father manifests in our secondary students. The educators answered the

questions based solely on their perceptions of students without a father they have encountered

throughout their careers. The analysis of the data collected for the study allowed the researcher to

develop an understanding of the social, emotional, and academic effects of father absence. The

data collected could be utilized to teach educators how to recognize and react to the perceived

implications of an absent father on a secondary student.

The educators perceived that these students without a father are consistently searching for a

father-figure to fill the void left by the absent father. The participants tended to perceive that this

lack of a family structure can also lead to disciplinary, relational, academic, emotional, and

communication struggles for these students. The perception of poverty and sadness or emptiness

often exists, leading to low confidence, low motivation, and a lack of accountability. The

perception of the educators was that the lack of security led to overall concern for responsibility and work ethic.

The lack of structure outside the school can contribute to questioning authority or being disrespectful. The lack of discipline at home is perceived to equate to a poor work ethic, low amounts of responsibility, and a low quality of work. These students sometimes have a low self-esteem, thus low expectations and little attention to detail. It may not be the priority of the student to complete all work and therefore they become apathetic with low confidence and expectations for academic success.

DEDICATION

Psalms 127: 3-5

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

This dissertation is dedicated to my two lovely daughters, Ariana and Addison. Always remember that while life has hills and valleys so stay strong and focus on the positive. Never stop dreaming or believing that you can be anything you want to be, that you can attain anything you set your heart to. While I will forever be sorry that as your father I cannot be present every day in your life, I promise to make the most of my opportunities. I promise to be there as support in any way you need it, to love you unconditionally, and to treat you with the respect that you deserve. Unless God takes me from this earth, you will never have an absent father. You are my angels, I am proud of you, and I love you more than you will ever know. My love for you will transcend any circumstance and I will always be here for you.

Further, I would love to dedicate the completion of this research to my wife, Betsy. You have truly been an answer to my prayers in so many ways. Even though I did not know you at the time I have prayed for you for many years. I asked God to provide the perfect person in His time and I believe you were a gift from Him. I am so thankful for your support and motivation to complete this dissertation even when I did not have the energy to continue. I am so grateful to get to see your smile every day. You are the sweetest, kindest woman, with such impressive character and integrity. You are an inspiration with your drive and your selfless nature. Thank you for the opportunity to do life with you and I cannot wait to see what the future has in store for us.

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I would like to thank my family for their support and the life lessons learned throughout my time on earth. I have learned what struggles are and how to persevere and overcome situations and to hold your head high. I would not be here today if it were not for the lessons learned from my family. Thank you, Mom, Dad, and Robbie for always pushing me, supporting me, and loving me even in times when I did not deserve it.

I would like to thank my nieces and nephews for being the incredible blessings they are in my life. When times are tough it provides a different perspective to see myself through your eyes. I am thankful for your smiles, your hugs, and all of our time together. You are each unique and each very special. You all mean the world to me.

I would like to thank all of the educators who have influenced my life. This would include those that were my teachers, colleagues, and friends along the way. As we continue to grow professionally, we must be constantly learning. I have learned so much more than curriculum from each of you. I feel truly blessed and very appreciative for opportunities to continue to learn from and with such fantastic educators.

I would like to thank all of the students, athletes, and parents that I have been blessed to work with over the past 15 years of life. It has truly been an honor to teach and coach some of the most phenomenal individuals the world has ever seen. Sometimes students, players, parents may not realize the impact they have on us, but I can only hope I have impacted a child in the way the child impacts me. Thank you for entrusting me with your most prized possessions. It has been an honor to serve you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of the American family is changing and often biological fathers are absent in education. Loose (2002) revealed that fathers can be absent due to a multitude of reasons including, but not limited to: never being involved/aware, divorce, incarceration, death, career, military service, etc. This research focused on two primary factors relating to absent fathers: divorce and incarceration. May (1996) identified that while divorce is more prevalent, there is also a cohort of adolescents that do not have access to their biological father due to incarceration. Markowitz and Ryan (2016) associate having a nonresident father with increased difficulties in adolescence. McLanahan, Tach, and Schneider (2013) have revealed a link between father absence and adolescent internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The intent of this research is to tell the story of how the absence of fathers is affecting students in our community. This phenomenological study may assist our educational leaders with understanding and response to this societal crisis.

There are many factors or circumstances as to why students are without biological fathers and how this can impact students. May (1996) indicated that fathering is the single most creative, complicated, fulfilling, frustrating, engrossing, enriching, depleting endeavor of a man's adult life. It was further surmised that many fathers find it difficult to balance full participation in the workplace and in their families. According to May, "men are being confronted by inadequate role models, a lack of child-rearing information and education, and a set of values needing reevaluation and revision" (p. 244). The results of May's research may be utilized to support constructs that indicate men need to invest more into learning the processes and the importance

of the time and interaction that fathers have with children. Loose (2002) concluded that, even in the happiest relationships, there is little argument that fathers are not always as involved as they could and should be. Ward (2008) indicated that children without fathers for any reason tended to complete a year less of school than children living with two parents. Ward continued to note that children with absent fathers have lower rates of graduating high school and college when compared to children with two parents. Ward found that both male children and African American children with fathers absent had lower GPA scores than students with two parents. Ward further noted that children in single-parent households do not have the same rates of desired outcomes as their counterparts in homes with two parents present. Fu et al. (2017) investigated paternal absence and found students would have negative individual outcomes. Hwang et al. (2014) noted that adolescent academic underachievement can negatively affect postsecondary life as well. The work of Loose (2002), Ward (2008), Fu et al. (2017), and Hwang et al (2014) point to the fact that the absence of a positive male role model negatively impacts the lives of adolescents in multiple ways. Loose and Ward also support the assertion that children reared in single-parent or father absent households tend to have lowered educational achievement outcomes overall.

Diamond (1998) identified that for an adolescent the father is a real and internalized presence. Xiaofeng et al. (2018) identified the absence of the father can impact a child's comprehension ability. The father can portray many roles in the life of an adolescent including container, protector, challenger, and mentor. Diamond further noted the father can be a parental image from which offspring can draw from throughout life. Diamond concludes that the absence of the father can be detrimental to development and have lasting consequences. Krohn and Bogan (2001) found that a present and supportive father cannot be replaced. Available fathers

who talked to, praised, and responded to their children boost the social responsiveness and positive feelings about self beyond the levels of children whose fathers were uninvolved. The authors identified that secure foundations provided by father along with their influence provides children with a confident base, allowing them to be successful. Krohn and Bogan identified specific areas of child development in which the father is extremely influential:

> Fathers encourage independence; they are generally less protective, promoting exploration and risk taking and model aggressive or assertive behaviors. Fathers expand the child horizon; they are the link to the "outside world" through their jobs. Fathers serve as the "alternative parent"; they can improve the quality of a mother's parenting by reducing her stress and stepping in to give the mother a break during crisis. Fathers are strict disciplinarians; they accept fewer "excuses" and demand more of their children at each stage. Fathers are men; treating their children respectfully can put the child at ease with other men throughout his or her life. (p. 606)

Krohn and Bogan (2001) imply that children need the example of how a man is supposed to act. Krohn and Bogan found that children can develop confidence from positive releationships with their father. Further, this confidence may well lead to long-term success and effort towards reaching their goals. Stahlschmidt et al. (2013) concluded that children experience more positive outcomes and fewer negative outcomes when they experience positive father-child relationships, regardless of whether the father resides in the home. Stahlschmidt et al. indicated children tend to have fewer behavior problems, less psychological distress, and are less likely to engage in risky or antisocial behaviors compared to children who experience negative father-child relationships. Krohn and Bogan (2001) and Stahlschmidt et al. (2013) found that high-quality father involvement was positively associated with academic achievement, independent of mother

involvement for academic outcomes, and that father involvement is directly related to delinquent behaviors. High-quality father-child relationships tend to produce positive outcomes for children.

Wineburgh's 2000 findings indicated that the last few decades have seen a dramatic increase in the number of children raised in homes without the biological father. Heard (2009) discovered that there are over 13 million single parents in the United States today. Heard continued to note that the majority of single parents are single mothers rather than single fathers. Amato, Patterson, and Beattie (2015) noted that the percentage of single parent homes in our country has increased from 9% in the 1960s to 28% in 2012. Wineburgh (2000) noted these children are "mired in secrecy, guilt, and family conflict, are left with unanswered questions and self-doubts about this absence. Depressions and behavioral problems often result" (p. 255). Wineburgh goes on to define a concept of father hunger as it pertains to the child's desire to maintain or develop a relationship with the biological father. The term is defined by Wineburgh as "the complex of feelings, desire, and longing for the absent father" (p. 256). Wineburgh noted the number of children living without their biological fathers has multiplied 1 out of every 3 children in America largely due to a high divorce rate. These children can experience repeat cycles of poverty and less education. Wineburgh concluded:

> Fatherlessness is the primary ill of our society, and it is linked to everything from the increase in juvenile crime, teen suicide, even to the decline of SAT scores. While such assertions are simplistic there can be no doubt of the social and psychological effects of father absence on children. (p. 256)

These children often latch on to any male in their life to satisfy the absence and explore a fantasized relationship with their own father due to his absence. Wineburgh identifies that there

are several factors crucial to an understanding of the effects of father absence on children

including:

> Developmental stage of the child at the time of the loss, reason for the father's absence,
> state of the child's relationship to the father prior to the loss, mother's relation to the loss,
> the environment provided for the child subsequent to the loss. What is perhaps most
> striking at the outset is the huge psychic importance and negative impact of the absent
> father on even those children who never meet their fathers or were directly disappointed
> or rejected by them. These children will often create "ghost fathers" and blame
> themselves for their absence. Seventy-seven percent of those kids feel that their fathers
> view them negatively. (p. 257)

Fatherless children may create a fantasized father who is idealized and maintained as a myth,
largely separate from the situation. Wineburgh stated that this scenario is derived from the
child's wishes for a father and insecurities about him or herself.

Wineburgh (2000) indicated that children with highly involved fathers were characterized
by increased cognitive capacity, empathy, were less stereotyped, and exhibited higher levels of
internal control. The author goes on to state that when the father is absent:

> There is an absence of reality. The absent parent becomes endowed with magical power
> either to gratify or to punish; aggression against him, and the remaining parent becomes
> repressed. The child may then fear the loss of the remaining parent. Normal aggressive
> feelings, unable to be discharged against the parents, may be turned against the self
> resulting in depression and low self-esteem. Many children tend to idealize the absent
> father, displacing their anger and disappointment toward him onto the present mother
> whose efforts are aligned. It is she who is often unfairly held responsible for the father's

absence. Family denial around the missing father may also lead to impaired cognitive

functioning as the child may feel compelled to restrict curiosity and knowledge for fear of

greater danger and damage they could inflict. (p. 262)

Specifically focusing on adolescence, Wineburgh (2000) found that this is often a second

playing out of the separation and individuation from the biological father and feelings towards

the mother. This can create a highly unmanageable situation for the single parent and often result

in aggressive acting out for the child. The author also concluded that fatherless girls tend to

idealize the absent father, leading to disappointment, anger, and self-hatred in their subsequent

dealings with men, often leading to a repetition of earlier abandonment of the father. Further,

Wineburgh identifies that too often the outcome results in conduct disorders, underachievement

in school, disregard for authority of the mother, teachers or other adults, sexual implications may

arise, and the child may tend to become involved with the use of drugs and alcohol. This can lead

to a point where the school and the parent feel helpless to deal with the child and juvenile

petitions begin to play a role. Mandara et al. (2005) indicated there is a philosophy argued that

the actual physical presence of the father is not as important as the added financial resources he

brings to the family. This implies that the father's primary role is a financial provided, and, if the

father's income producing role is somehow supplemented, then the children living in the average

father-absent family will be the same as those living in the average father-present family.

Mandara et al. go on to state that it is, however, clear that the socioeconomic status may account

for some differences, but the psychological development issues resulting from an absent father

far outweigh the variances in the financial resources brought into the family. Carlson and

Magnuson (2011) noted that children fare better on a host of social-psychological, behavioral,

and cognitive outcomes when they spend their entire childhood living with both of their

biological parents. This research point to the paternal involvement as being much more than a financial contribution.

McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, and Ho (2005) found that the importance of parental involvement has been acknowledged by researchers, policymakers, and educators alike. The research of McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, and Ho suggests when parents participate in the education process there is higher outcomes and more positive attitude. McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, and Ho identified data which indicates that, when men do assume an active role in raising and educating their children, their involvement may enhance and facilitate offspring growth and development. When looking at father involvement or absence on the children's cognitive, social, and emotional functioning and development, this would indicate that "children who are deprived of father involvement are more likely to have adjustment problems in school, lower academic achievement, challenges forming peer relationships, and exhibit delinquent behavior" (p. 203). This research suggests that:

Fathers play a critical role in child development and bring strengths to the parenting situation. Despite the documented contribution made by fathers in the cognitive, social, and emotional development of their children, there has been a lack of initiatives to encourage father involvement in school settings. (p. 203)

Sullivan (1989) detailed the increasing relationship between officially female-headed households and poverty has prompted much speculation that absent fathers are a major cause of concentrated and persistent poverty in the inner cities. Official statistics do not convey the accurate picture of the extent to which officially absent fathers are really absent from the households and the lives of their children or the extent to which these men are actually able to support their families. The result of this is the association between poverty and absent fathers is

apparent, but not proven to be a causal relationship. Brown (2019) suggested that children raised in single-parent households experience more physical and psychological problems compared to those raised in two-parent households. A social context to the inner city poverty problems and context is that in these communities no honor is given to fathers who do try to support their children. Leving (2012) found that having a father in the child's life greatly reduces the likelihood of a child growing up to join a gang in adolescence. Within these communities it does not seem viable that a solution to poverty and the absence of the father seems impending. Poverty continued to be an issue in fatherless homes and the impact on adolescents will continue to be a problem.

Statement of the Problem

Increasing numbers of students in secondary schools today have an absent father. Increasing numbers of students do not even have a male role model or mentor. This phenomenon could or could not lead to academic issues such as underperformance, discipline issues, attendance issues, respect issues, etc. This research focused on students who do not have the biological father present in their lives. The absence of the father potentially can manifest in many ways through the secondary experience, it can be anger, hurt, depression, resentment and it can look very different depending on each individual student. The researcher sought to synthesize how the absence of the biological father manifests itself among students in our community, to better serve these students in the future. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because the absence of the biological father seems to be a phenomenon that is increasing. Debell (2007) surmised that the widespread absence of fathers from children's homes has been called a *social disaster* and is arguably the most consequential trend of our time. Debell indicated that there is evidence that children living without fathers may be disadvantaged on a wide range of indicators of well-being, including health, educational experiences, and academic performance. Children with single mothers are also more likely to become sexually active at a young age in addition to experiencing less academic success. Debell (2007) and Pougnet et al. (2012) agree that some of the outcomes associated with father absence are explained by income differences. Pougnet et al. suggested that there are both short- and long-term effects of divorce on children's well-being. The absence of the father does not necessarily imply that the child has experienced a loss of the father from the home, for example, there are cases where parents were never married and never cohabitated. Therefore, divorce, and the absent father can have different implications on student outcomes because of the exposure to marital conflict, changes in living arrangements, and economic decline. Socioeconomically disadvantaged children of absent fathers might display behavior problems such as aggression and could lead to further problems such as premarital cohabitation, young age at marriage, and negative interpersonal relationships, resulting in continuity in the cycle of fathers' absence. Pougnet et al. (2012) identified that specifically, individuals who have experienced divorce as children have been found to demonstrate more childhood externalizing behaviors, hyperactivity, and interpersonal aggression, delinquency, and conduct problems and were more likely to be expelled from school than individuals whose parents did not divorce. Krohn and Bogan (2001) surmised that fatherlessness is a social problem brought on by the breakdown of the traditional

family. The victims of this social problem are innocent children who have little voice in changing public attitude and policy. The researchers stated that the "epidemic of fatherless America is our most urgent social problem. This epidemic weakens the family, harms children, causes or aggravates our worst social problem, and makes individual adult happiness harder to achieve" (p. 607). This study detailed the educator perceptions as it relates to secondary education students without the biological father active in their lives. The conclusions from this research will be able to be utilized by educators in combatting challenges faced by fatherless children. Utilizing this research as a tool to understand students that experience the phenomenon of an absent father, educators can understand, empathize, and rationalize with students. This research will potentially be useful to assist educators to serve students from multiple perspectives of emotional health, social behaviors, and academic performance more effectively and efficiently.

Research Questions

To explore the educator perceptions of the impact of the absence of the biological father, the following questions were posed:

Research Question 1: What are educator perceptions of student emotions in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Research Question 2: What are educator perceptions of student social behavior in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Research Question 3: What are educator perceptions of student academic performance in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Definitions of Terms

The definition and relevance of the following terms in relation to this study is necessary to make connections between the literature and the research itself. Knowledge of these terms aided in the meaningfulness of the research.

Academic Impact. The Influence or effect on a student's academic performance.

Fatherlessness. The lack of a father figure as man, economic provider, care provider, playmate, teacher, disciplinarian, protector, mentor, and trusted guardian (Kohnke, 2005).

Limitations and Delimitations of Study

The study was limited to focus on students that did not have the biological father involved in their life due to divorce or incarceration. The study was limited in that it did not include all of the educators within the particular educational setting. Other limitations could be that the researcher is employed in an administrative role in the participating district, to minimize this we only utilized educators who were not directly evaluated by the researcher.

The study was delimited to educators within one educational setting. The perceptions of the educators is delimited by the population being utilized being from one educational setting. The results of this study are credible and trustworthy to the population for this study and may or may not apply to other communities.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 includes an introduction of the concept of the absence of the biological father. Context and history was presented with research to support that this is a phenomenon worthy of exploration for this study. The statement of the problem, significance of the study, research

question, definition of terms, and limitations and delimitations were identified. Chapter 2

contains a review of available literature surrounding the absence of the biological father and how

it that could potentially impact students from emotional, social, and academic perspectives.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Absent Fathers

Fathers are absent for a variety of reasons but the focus of this literature review is on two main implications for youth, particularly adolescent males pertaining to the issue of the absence of the biological father: divorce and incarceration. Kalil et al. (2011) note that nonresident fathers not only have a right to maintain regular contact with their children but also that doing so will likely improve those children's developmental outcomes. The input of a father is viewed as an important component in the development of a child. There is substantial U. S. evidence that children of divorced parents have poorer academic, behavioral, and health outcomes than comparable children in intact families. Kalil identified father involvement is conceptualized as a multifaceted construct with three parts: father's accessibility to, engagement with, and responsibility for his child. Accessibility reflects a father's contact with and the availability to the child, irrespective of the quality of their interactions. Kalil further noted that engagement is defined by a father's interactions with his children—including caregiving, play, and teaching activities—and includes both the quantity and quality of the father-child interactions. Responsibility is conceptualized generally as a father's involvement in the management of the child's daily routines, health, and child care, as well as his role in making major decisions about the child. Kalil also conceded that nonresident father-child contact builds affection and provides opportunities for fathers to engage in active forms of parenting. Wineburgh (2000) noted that proximity to the child following divorce should be a positive predictor of fathers' active support and involvement in children's lives and could alleviate some of the problems faced by children of divorce. Wineburgh also identified that frequency of contact with nonresident fathers has a

statistically significant association with child outcomes, including higher levels of academic success and lower levels of behavior problems, such as depression and sadness. Wineburgh implied the impact of the father's absence varies for each child depending on the individual circumstances of their relationship with their father.

Wineburgh (2000) found that, for children of incarcerated fathers, the quality of the child's relationship with the remaining parent, and the coping capacities of the family were indicators to the success of the child. The author concluded that the above scenario is more the exception than the rule and it is his experience that children typically have more periodic and inconsistent homes and find difficulty in coming to terms with the absence of the biological father in their life. For children of divorce, Wineburgh (2000) surmised that there is a significant connection between low self-esteem and depression in the child who continuously experiences disappointment with the father's infrequent or erratic visiting. This often leads the children into feeling that they have done something wrong, hold themselves responsible for the father's absence, and develop a low self-worth as a result. In divorce, Wineburgh (2000) found:

> These kinds of intermittent father contacts are often fraught with conflict between the parents, in which the children are used as pawns for revenge against the old mate, or conflict between the mother who wants to protect the child from the irresponsible father and the child who still hungers for him despite several prior disappointments. Disputes around child support payments, visitation, and different child-rearing practices and value systems of the parents, serve as further sources of conflict, sadness, and anger for all involved. (p. 259)

Wineburgh (2000) suggested the children who feel more unloved and abandoned are ones whose fathers suddenly cut off contact when they relocate for a job, become incarcerated, remarry and

have other children who become their main focus, or who quietly disappear so they will not be held accountable for child support payments. Divorce can be detrimental to students in many ways as Berman (2004) states that divorce is extremely common in society today and for many students this remains the focus of their lives and it drastically impacts their daily existence. Anderson (2014) stated divorce has been shown to diminish a child's future competence in all areas of life, including family relationships, education, emotional well-being, and future earning power. This daily existence can be altered differently depending on the circumstances and the emotional status of the child.

Father Absence due to Divorce

Berman (2004) surmised that approximately 40% of young American students do not have their biological father in thehome. This creates a difficult dealing with betrayal and can have far-reaching consequences. The portrait of the American family looks much different today than it did 50 years ago. Divorce rates began to climb during the 1960's and came to an all-time high during the 1980's where it has remained. Berman continued to indicate since most men and women remarry, and because second marriages end in divorce more than first marriages, many children experience multiple parental divorces. The concept of the "starter marriage" is identified as being a demographic phenomenon since many are beginning to experience divorce prior to the age of 30. Lowenstein (2010) indicated that various national studies list the impact of divorce on children leading to poor school performance, low self-esteem, behavior problems, distress, and maladjustment often associated with divorce. Adolescents from divorced families experience more instance of delinquent behavior, early sexual activity, and continued academic issues and problems. These children can also suffer from sleep problems. It is unfortunate that in divorce

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one of the parents loses his or her position in the family and the attachment to the children is often damaged or destroyed. The child is powerless and might also have formed a negative impression of the absent parent during the trouble between the parents. This can contribute to the alienation process conducted by the custodial parent against the now absent parent, most typically the father. Garber (2004) suggested that the custodial parent can encourage, by word and action, good contact with the noncustodial parent can increase the child's security and attachment to the other parent. This is often difficult to achieve when there is ongoing alienation being practiced by the custodial parent while therapy is taking place.

Berman (2004) suggested that children growing up in single-parent families are twice as likely as their counterparts in two-parent families to develop serious psychiatric illnesses and addictions later in life. One study noted tracked a million children for a decade, into their middle-twenties, that found double the likelihood to suffer from depression or schizophrenia, suicidal thoughts and/or attempts, and to develop an alcohol related disease. The high divorce rate has created a new societal phenomenon: the absent father. Popenoe (1996) noted:

Fathers in America today are living apart from their biological children more than ever before in our history. Close to 40 percent of all children do not live with their biological fathers, a percentage that is steadily climbing. Of children born in the past decade, the chances that by age seventeen they will not be living with both biological parents stand at over 50 percent. Many studies have shown that the typical nonresident father neither supports nor even sees his children on a regular basis. And, to make matters worse many men who do live with their children are often removed from the day-to-day upbringing of those children. The new, nurturing fathers certainly exist, but in overall numbers they remain in short supply. (p. 19)

Wallerstein (1980) implied that "one of the major legacy of divorce is discontinuity in many parent-child relationships, in which the changes of separation, divorce, and its extended aftermath are reflected in the unexpected and far-reaching alternations in the child's relationship with both parents" (p. 99). Wallerstein (2000), in a later work alluded that we have redefined American culture by creating a culture of divorce. Amato and Booth (1997) indicated a conflict present in this new culture where the public is embracing the ideology that a father should take on a greater role in parenting responsibilities, but changes in our current family structures mean that fathers are actually less involved with children today than were fathers of previous generations. Lee, Kushner, and Cho (2007) noted that more than half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce and millions of children every year enter into a new category of family structure. This shift in family demographics has a direct influence on the life of children, including their education. The new familial structure led to a trend in education where families consistently indicate negative effects on a child's school achievement, completion, behavior, and social development.

Lowenstein (2010) details the attachment theory and alienation. The researcher states that attachment to the mother is important initially but attachment to the father is equally important. The child needs that attachment to the father for positive emotional and behavioral development. The researcher concludes the introduction by stating that fathers and mother have equally important roles to play and should both be responsible for the rearing of the children. Lowenstein's theory is often utilized by mothers to inflate the importance of the connection with the mother and prevent children from developing meaningful relationships with fathers post-divorce, because the mother typically has the feeling that her role is more important to the children in the early phases of life. While this theory accepts the customary primacy of the

mother as the primary caregiver, there is nothing in this theory to suggest that fathers are not equally likely to become principal attachment figures if they happen to provide most of the child care. Divorce between parents can, but need not necessarily lead to detached attachment bonds and the possibility of the process of alienation. Parents who put the welfare of their children first do not practice alienating the children against the other parents. Parents should encourage attachment, not towards only themselves, but towards the other parent as well. The attachment theory should not be used to obliterate the contact between the children and the nonresident parent. Lowenstein states:

> The family courts often listen to and adhere to the advice provided by inexperienced and unprincipled experts who are not truly independent, but favor on of the parents who has custody and who benefits, at least in the short term, by obliterating the guidance and love that could be provided by the absent parent. That absent parent being deprived of contact resolves despite the fact there was in the past very often a positive relationship between the child and that now absent parent. Hence attachment theory used and hence misused and abused in the manner described helps the custodial parent unfairly and unjustifiably to retain total control of children, leading to what is not in the best interest of these children. (p. 162)

Children lose a degree of contact with one of their very few attachment figures when this occurs. It is a confusing and stressful time for children, regardless of whether the divorce was amicable or not. Booth, Clarke-Stewart, McCartney, Owen, and Vandell (2000) refer to various national studies when concluding that poor school performance, low self-esteem, behavior problems, distress and adjustment difficulties are associated with divorce.

Father Absence Due to Incarceration

Hairston (1998) identified that family roles and responsibilities of an incarcerated father is seldom the focus of institutional policies. Few family-oriented services are provided for incarcerated fathers or their children and father-child relationships are generally dismissed as irrelevant or simply ignored in broader efforts to strengthen families and promote children's welfare. The author found that young males aged 14 to 22 who grow up in homes without fathers are twice as likely to end up in jail than those who grow up in two-parent families, even where other factors such as race, income, parents' education, and residence were controlled (p. 89). Males whose parents separate during their adolescence were roughly one and one-half times as likely to end up in jail as children from two-parent families, faring only slightly better than males born to a single mother. Luo et al. (2011) suggested that the absence of fathers can lead to poor cognitive achievement, behavior problems, and that boys suffer from the absence of the father more. The research indicated that the relationship between fathers and their kids can predict the anxiety of children more than the relationship between mothers and their kids and those children with a father absence have a higher probability of having an anxiety disorder. This research has focused on the absence of a father and the link to self-esteem indicating that the missing relationship between adolescent and father can lead to self-esteem issues that are persistent throughout life.

Cartwright et al. (2012) surmised that 25% of children are being raised in homes led primarily by mothers and grandmothers, only 50% of divorced fathers see their children, and even fewer never married fathers see their children. In a more telling statistic, 69% of African American students in K-12th grade live in fatherless homes. The absence of fathers is a major factor in crime and delinquency, premature sexual behavior, poor educational achievement, and

poverty, which have all negatively impacted society. Cartwright found the majority of prisoners, juvenile detention inmates, high school dropouts, pregnant teenagers, adolescent murderers, and rapists come from fatherless homes, and the effects of growing up in absent father homes can last for a lifetime. African American males are identified as one of the most at risk populations in education, researchers have demonstrated that familial support is a crucial factor for these children overcoming adversity. Bushfield's 2004 research suggested recent data indicates that the number of men in jail doubled between 1987 and 1997. In the year 2002, the prison and jail population exceeded 2 million for the first time. There is a cyclical nature to crime and low educational attainment. Children of incarcerated parents who are in prison are more likely to have low educational attainment. Bushfield indicated the importance of fathers in children's lives is not limited to contact and access; it is the quality of the father involvement that is crucial. Children are negatively impacted by the lack of a father role model. With the large number of fathers in prison, fatherlessness has become more than a "private agony" and is now a very public issue with educational, social, cultural, and economic consequences.

When dealing with an absent father due to the issue of incarceration children struggle more than children specifically dealing with similar fatherless issues due to divorce. While children in divorce typically have some type of access to their father, children of a father who has been incarcerated do not. There are various implications in the role of the absent father due to incarceration. Visher (2013) concluded several studies have found that prisoners with close family ties have lower impacts than those without similar attachments. In 2008 about 2.3% of all minor children had a parent in state or federal prison. The vast majority of incarcerated parents are fathers, as 92% of all incarcerated parents are men. Children are affected by the loss of income when a parent is incarcerated and may also suffer a range of emotional effects, such as

depression, low self-esteem, emotionally withdrawal from family and friends, and disruptive

behavior patterns. Studies on the relationships between incarcerated parents and their children

conclude contact with the parents is beneficial to parents but impacts on the children are mixed.

Porter and King (2015) suggested that children of incarcerated parents are worse off than

similarly situated peers. The researchers found some possible conduits that generally coalesce

around the concepts of separation, attachment, and strain. Fathers who were incarcerated have a

history of criminal behavior, raising the possibility that any association between paternal

incarceration and delinquency is due to a child's exposure to paternal criminality, rather than

paternal incarceration. It is also possible that criminally involved fathers exercise relatively harsh

disciplinary practices and poor supervision—each of which may increase a child's delinquency.

The separation of a father from his family for some period of time can have negative

consequences, can weaken a child's attachment, and can limit a child's supervision, each of

which is associated with delinquency. Separation also matters because it can influence affective

relations between parents and children. Time invested in children is associated with child well-

being and the classic control theory suggest that relations with parents exert a strong influence on

delinquency.

Alltucker et al. (2006) found that youth with a family member convicted of a felony are

two times more likely to be early-starting delinquents than youth with no family felony. Barrett

et al. (2010) suggested that family attributes, such as parental incarceration, are strong predictors

of juvenile delinquency. The two factors above can negatively impact academic performance and

are both strong predictors of future delinquency. These factors lead to early childhood behavioral

problems, special education placement for an emotional or behavioral disorder, and school

mobility that lead to academic failure. This indicated that high-school dropouts compose 82% of the adult prison population and 85% of juvenile justice cases.

Father Absence and Male Adolescence

An implication on the youth of society dealing with fatherlessness and/or the absence of a positive male role model is the impact that the absence of a positive male has on a young man's masculinity, self-esteem, and educational attainment. Mandara et al. (2005) argued that fathers are important to the psychosocial development of children and adolescents. The general trend in this study suggested that boys not primarily raised with their fathers were more passive and exhibited more feminine and fewer masculine traits, such as rough and competitive play. The researchers indicated in a study of 40 boys who had been arrested for various delinquent acts, the 20 father-absent boys were significantly higher on femininity than were the 20 father-present boys. The rough and tumble play, stricter discipline, and focus on achievement and overcoming obstacles that is typical of father-son relationship may produce an increase in self-confidence in their masculinity, and it may actually impact hormone levels. Testosterone influences observable differences in characteristics such as physical strength, growth of facial hair, voice changes, and other signs of physical and behavioral masculinization. Testosterone may directly influence self-perceptions of masculinity. The authors conclude that father-present boys are significantly more masculine than the father-absent boys. Markowitz and Ryan (2016) found there are three ways the absence of the father impacts adolescent behavior in males. First, it influences adolescent behavior through adverse behavioral modeling, secondly, youth may act out to the emotional disruption due to the familial conflict, and third, you may experience reduced parental supervision, providing them with greater opportunity to engage in delinquent behavior. Beaty

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(1995) suggested that paternal absence in the home is a much more frequent occurrence than

maternal absence. This is true due to many factors including divorce and/or separation, death,

career demands, and incarceration. There is a differential effect of age on the severity of impact

of father absence on children versus adolescents. This may well be due to the inferior coping

mechanisms of children as compared to those of adolescents, who have achieved increased

emotional maturity and access to supportive social networks in the form of peer groups. Children

who become father-absent before the age of five suffer more debilitating difficulties than do

children who become father-absent after the age of five. The potentially debilitating effects of

father-absence which occur in middle childhood and subsequent to middle childhood seem to

become equalized. Beaty (1985) suggested that father-absence can seriously affect the sex role

development of boys. The masculine role model provided can determine the relationship

between aggressive behaviors, delinquency, and poor educational outcomes.

Beatty (1995) surmised that without a present father, a child may reject the male role

model, fixating himself on the maternal figure which could have detrimental outcomes. The boy

may have identity confusion, impacting his ability to identify with the male figures in his world.

Without the father figure to act as a balance, the child may develop an unhealthy attachment to

the mother. Beatty (1995) concluded that boys who become father deprived before the age of

five have more psychological and relational difficulties. Stevenson and Black (1988) found that

adolescent father-deprived children were more stereotypically male in their behavior than their

counterparts, particularly with aggression. The idea that their peer groups are modeling

stereotypical masculine behavior, coupled with the father-deprived boy's sense of father hunger,

could explain these tendencies. Mandara et al. (2005) that suggested the general trend for boys

who were not primarily raised with their fathers were more passive and exhibited more feminine

and fewer masculine traits, such as round and competitive play. Father-present boys, even after other variables were controlled, had higher levels of masculinity than did father-absent boys. Balcom (1998) contended fathering in contemporary America includes some degree of abandonment, and that fathers are normally absent from family life and from emotional relationships with their sons. This father absence impairs the sons' ability to develop and sustain positive self-worth and to form lasting relationships throughout life. Men originating from this type of background often experience difficulties initiating and sustaining intimate relationships. Balcom further surmised:

> Abandoned sons often have intense feelings related to their absent fathers, typically in one or two variations. The first is emotional reactivity, characterized by the statement "I'll never be like him!" The emotion the son experiences is directly caused by his father's absence. The son's reaction leads him to reject the importance of his father. In so doing, he fetters himself to a position of denial and unresolved grief. Until the son acknowledges his unfulfilled needs and longing for his father, he can remain in turmoil about himself. (p. 283)

The author states that the second form of reaction is emotional intensity, described as:

> Over-identification with the father. In this form, the abandoned son idealizes and worships the absent father. The son may base his worship on the actual father he experienced, or the fantasy father that he wishes or wished for, in spite of the father's apparent lack of contact, interest, commitment, or feelings for his son. The son ultimately creates a fantasy image out of discontinuous pieces of information about his father. (p. 285)

Balcom (1998) found the absence of the father is pathological and can severely affect the abandoned son's capacity for self-esteem. During the mid-nineteenth century fathers came to spend less time in a parental role and became more as economic providers. This change resulted in a variance from the father being active, present, and a dominant influence to being an intermittent influence. As a result, fathers lost the regular opportunity to parent and children lost their fathers. Fathers can be absent in a variety of ways, both physical and emotional and this results in alienation in both directions—the father from the family and the family from the father. Fathers can abandon their sons for a number of reasons, the most impactful are those that are disgracing and stigmatizing such as incarceration.

Land et al. (2014) conducted a study of six successful African American male high school students and detailed the challenges faced by them as a result of absent fathers. The students all experienced challenges and barriers as a result of not having access to the biological father in the home. Not having a father figure in the home caused them to have to fend for themselves in ways other student would not if they had a father there to guide and instruct them. The students in the study admitted that they did not know how to be a man because they were never taught. By the time of the study all six of the students did know who their father was by this point in their lives but that he was not a factor in their growing into the person they are today. The students were forced to take on responsibilities others did not. They had to contribute to the financial stability of the family as quickly as possible. All admit that when they started high school they were not mentally prepared for the journey and had to develop those skills by themselves. The lack of the father's involvement in their lives often manifested itself by exhibiting inappropriate behaviors in school while interacting with their teachers and authority

figures. The participants also conveyed that they longed for a father figure in the home and wondered why their life had to be this way. Land et al. (2014) further stated that:

There is a direct relationship between a male's education and their behavior. Males who are raised by their father tend to do better in school. Mother-only households caused difficulties for the children. However, this study found that while those same negative experiences often caused by a missing father created barriers, these six young men were able to build on this negative and turn it into positive behavior. All of the participants were dissatisfied with their home life. They had no real stability, parental involvement, or financial support in the home. These students never had someone at home waiting for them when they got home from school. Essentially, these students had no parental support when it came to their home life. (p. 150)

The participants in the study demonstrate that the outcomes resulting from an absent father are not always negative. Students can overcome challenging issues with personal resilience. Males in this circumstance are to be successful they must rise above the status quo and meet the everyday barriers and the myriad of negative stereotypes voiced by society. They must seek to succeed at a high level of expectation.

Slocumb (2004) noted the role of fathers in the home and the relationship that exists, or does not exist, between fathers and sons is key in helping the boys shape their personal definitions of manhood. Between 1970 and 1994 the percentage of black children living in single-parent families nearly doubled and these students typically did not have the father present and involved in their lives. This phenomenon created a myriad of problems for boys including:

Boys are 3 times more likely to be in special education than girls. Boys are more likely to be retained and drop out of school. Boys are 4 times more likely to be referred to a school

psychologist. Boys make up 73% of the emotionally disturbed population in school. Boys

make up 76% of the secondary special education population. Boys lack emotional

language, empathy, ethics, and integrity. Boys experience anger at higher level, often

turning into rage with misdirected energy. Boys consume 80% of the world's supply of

Ritalin. (p. 11)

These challenges result in the conclusion that adolescent boys need caring adults who interact

with them and solicit dialogue. They need adult intervention to communicate, ask questions, and

be involved. They need fathers who are actively involved with their sons from infancy to be less

aggressive, less overtly competitive, and more in control of their emotions and resulting actions

(Slocumb, 2004).

Father Absence and Female Adolescence

La Guardia et al. (2014) indicated that divorce and the creation of stepfamilies are all

common occurrences in the United States, and professional counselors must adjust their ideas

about familial structure to be helpful to clients. Children are impacted by how the family is

configured according to decisions adults make regarding the structure of the family. According

to the Attachment Theory, La Guardia et al. stated that "the mother provides love and security,

while the father provides engagement in exciting and challenging experiences. Both roles are

essential in the development of children who excel in social situations, and both roles are

primary attachments" (p. 339). Lamb (2004) found the father could have significant positive

impact on the development of a child and the loss or unavailability of the father figure would

presumably have a negative impact. La Guardia et al. (2014) stated fathers "interacted less

frequently with their children, engaged in different types of interactions, were less involved in

caregiving, were more involved in play, and displayed less affect to their children" (p. 340). Father absence due to divorce appeared to have a greater negative effect on the father and daughter relationship than on the father and son relationship. Girls growing up without fathers have hurt feelings and a lack of respect for their fathers, and the feeling that the fathers were not able to provide the daughters with the relationships they needed. Fathers also have a significant impact on their daughters' ability to trust, appreciate, and relate to others in their lives. Daughters with absent fathers can have a feeling of discontent and often feel misunderstood.

La Guardia et al. (2014) identified how father absenteeism can have numerous repercussions on various areas of daughter development throughout her life. Absenteeism that occurred during the elementary and secondary stages of education negatively affected how females performed on standardized achievement tests and IQ tests. This indicated lower academic performance which can have lasting impacts on future learning experiences and opportunities. The researchers further identified that early father absence increased the likelihood of lower performance in school and cognitive development, specifically in math and verbal skills. Specifically, during high school, females in the study without fathers disliked subjects with perceived masculine traits such as math and science and can even be instructed against pursuing math and science courses. This is attributed to the lack of encouragement and support that a father, acting as a male role model, could provide. According to Nielson (2011), daughters in father-absent families, caused by divorce, are often leaned on emotionally by the mother. The researcher states that:

> The mother may present damaging messages to daughters about the father's parenting
> during the marriage and how the father feels about parenting after the divorce. Daughters
> may not be aware of how the legal system works against fathers or how distressed fathers

are when they are allotted so little time with their children after a divorce. The result of

the mother's messages about the father may be an attitude of resentment, distance, and

sadness which may impact the way the daughter will relate to future intimate partners.

(p. 78)

The research by Nielson (2011) further identified women from father-absent homes may

experience an earlier onset of menarche and could become involved in sexual intercourse at an

earlier age. The families that experience healthy divorces in which parents continue to cooperate

in parenting and where fathers continue to be involved in their daughters' lives may help avert

poor choices in sexual behavior.

Krohn and Bogan (2001) conducted research on absent fathers and female development

that indicated females who lack father figures have diminished cognitive development and poor

school performance. They have weaker mathematical skill and find it difficult to adjust well with

others. When looking specifically at secondary education, father absence can impact how

children perform on achievement tests that can shape their academic career. The age at which a

daughter loses her father is meaningful since it influences her perception of males and her ability

for academic advancement. The absence of the father can discourage females from pursuing a

career in mathematics due to the absent father not stimulating interest in this area.

Females can have a diminished sense of security since the father shapes their

development. The females can lack a sense of protection and become discouraged leading to

teenage pregnancy, dropping out of college, never attempting college, and low self-esteem.

Stability is another important aspect for females and the absence of the father hinders their

ability to make sound decisions. Krohn and Bogan (2001) stated "Daughters obtain secure

foundations knowing what their fathers believe in and stand for. A confident base enables

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females to be successful in their endeavors and accomplish what they attempt" (p. 599). Females who lose their father to divorce or abandonment seek much more attention from men and had more physical contact with boys. These females tend to be more critical of their fathers and the opposite sex. Krohn and Bogan stated:

> There was no noticeable difference in the girls' behavior before adolescence, but then daughters of divorce sought more attention from men and more physical contact with boys their age than girls from intact homes. The adolescent girls of divorce had the most contact and were more critical of their fathers. (p. 600).

Adolescent girls raised in fatherless households are far more likely to engage in promiscuous sexual activity before marriage, to cohabitate, to get pregnant out of wedlock, and to have an abortion. These girls miss the day-to-day experience of attentive, caring, and loving interactions with their father and it results in a lack of value, stunted emotional development, and intensified separation anxiety. The father absence can impact the learning process of a child, making it difficult but not impossible for them to excel academically. The lack of cognitive development can impact how children perceive and interpret information. This gap is attributed to an intellectual disadvantage among father-absent children. Children who had absent fathers scored significantly lower than did those who had a father academically. This resulted in "father-absent children, at least from lower class backgrounds, are less likely to function well in intelligence and aptitude tests than are father present children" (p. 602). Father absence due to divorce was particularly detrimental and could be related to negatively impact intellectual competence. This absence of the father created family instability, financial difficulty, and paternal deprivation as primary factors interfering with the child's cognitive functioning. Father absence, or lessened

paternal attention, can impact social adjustment, peer relationships, and mental and physical health difficulties.

Emotional Implications of Father Absence

Wood and Lambin (2013) indicate that fathers are vastly important in the lives of their children. Fathers have a significant impact on the emotional well-being of children from infancy to adolescence and lasting into their adult life. Wood and Lambin also report that there is compelling evidence that fathering has a significant positive effect on the mental health of children. Rohner and Veneziano (2001) state that "overall, father love appears to be as heavily implicated as mother love in offsprings' psychological well-being and health" (p. 11). The transition through puberty into adolescence can be a challenging time for many young people. Wood and Lambin (2013) implied that during this period, the father-child relationship can be a significant protective factor. The researchers noted that youths who spend more one-on-one time with their father have been found to have higher general self-worth. Allgood et al. (2012) noted that young adult females found that father involvement during childhood positively correlated with self-esteem and satisfaction in early adulthood.

Gadsden (1995) found that students with absent fathers are more likely to experience chronic stress resulting from low levels of support. Later in life these students could experience chronic stress from major life events. Gadsden (1995) further discovered that the negative effects on the self-esteem and emotional well-being of the child may lead to long-term behavioral changes. Further, in single-parent homes that lack the proper social networks, children may feel vulnerable and insecure about the emotional family support that they are receiving. Alami et al. (2014) studied adolescent self-esteem on single-parent families with only the mother present.

The researchers found that the mean score for adolescents' self-esteem was lower in homes where the father was absent. The study suggested that the stigma of being a member of a father absent home can be destructive, but it also depends on other factors as well. Some communities may not have the same stigma from father absence because father absence may not be abnormal in that community. Balcom (1998) found that the absence of the father can ultimately result in the child having a more negative view of self.

Bernier and Larose (1996) studied the impact of the absent father and loneliness for adolescents. The study showed that the attachment to bot the mother and the father is critical as it pertains to loneliness. Adolescents without a father clearly experience more loneliness and separation anxiety. Booth (2000) noted that children with absent fathers appear to have higher rates of psychological distress, including depression. Zill (1998) reported that the percentage of adolescents with an absent father to receive mental health care is nearly double that for children with intact families. Larson and Gillman (1999) found that single mothers are more likely to transmit negative emotions to adolescent children, potentially creating an atmosphere of hostility and rejection.

Hoskins (2014) studied the involvement of parents and discovered that adolescents without a father scored lower on self-esteem compared to others with active parents. The absent father was found to be associated with higher levels of child-reported depressive symptoms during adolescence. The research indicated that individuals with an absent father performed most poorly in all emotional and behavioral outcomes including lower self-esteem, higher delinquency, and more depressive symptoms. Villatte et al. (2017) conducted research to determine risk factors for post-secondary students to determine depression risk factors. While their research determined that females were twice as likely to suffer from depressive symptoms,

both were found to have an increase in tendency when the father was absent. This research also identified that anxiety can be attributed to familial factors, including the absence of the father. Culpin et al. (2014) found that the absence of the biological father in early childhood can be linked to depressive symptoms of adolescents. The results of the research was that father absence was linked to a significant increase of depressive symptoms during adolescence. Culpin et al. (2014) noted that girls may have a more "specific psychological vulnerability to family dissolution and father absence when compared to boys" (p. 921). The study concludes that father absence appears to result in a negative effect on adolescent mental health.

Kuo and Wu (2003) surmised that single-parent families suffer from a financial burden, deviation from the norms of child nurturing, role burden, work-related problems and psychosocial pressures. Brooks (2010) found that low self-esteem among young African American males evoked feelings of worthlessness. It has also been recognized that children who grow up without a father are more likely to have emotional, academic, and financial problems and were more prone to behavior associated with social exclusion: offending, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse or joblessness. Further, the researcher suggested that the mental state of children that grow up without a father can be impacted by poverty, hopelessness, low self-worth, and a bleak outlook on life. Hummer and Hamilton (2010) noted that Children who did not possess a father often had a grim view of success due to the obstacles they may have faced by only having one parent. Emotional stress further reminded youth they were at a disadvantage. Coley and Medeiros (2007) found that emotional stability and feelings of trust and love can be difficult for children living without a father. Hetherington and Stanley-Hagen (2002) reported that distress at the lack of a father can manifest in anxiety and depression.

De Lange (2010) indicated that there is a large number of studies focusing on the association between father absence and self-esteem in adolescents. The outcomes of the studies pertaining to father absence and self-image can lead to lower self-esteem, especially in the short term following the separation, if it occurred during adolescence. The researchers indicated that this relationship can and will decline over time. Further, De Lange (2010) noted that happiness or unhappiness in the family structure was a consideration. It can be a predictive factor in how resolute the family is in overcoming the absence of the father. Rohner and Veneziano (2001) examined elements of paternal parenting and how that can be associated with self-esteem in boys and girls. This research found that the self-esteem of boys was best predicted by sustained contact with a father. The researchers concluded that since the contact with the father plays a role in the boys' self-esteem, this could indicate that the absence of the father can be associated with a negative self-image.

Furstenburg and Harris (1992) found the absence of fathers in the family are contributing to the rise of emotional disturbances in children. As absentee fathers often settle with new families, their wives and biological children are often left alone to care for their own lives. This is creating a nation of absent fathers in the United States. Nearly a fourth of all U.S. children are born to unmarried women and many more are born into marriages that ultimately end in divorce. When specifically analyzing single-parent families it is found that nearly 87% of them exist where the single parent is the mother. Fathers who do not live with their biological children spend little time with them and do not offer them much in the way of material or emotional assistance. Nearly half of the children in the United States living apart from their father have not seen them in the previous year. Absent fathers tend to show little interest in their children because they have moved on to a new marriage, acquiring stepchildren or having more

children of their own. As marital loyalty shifts so does paternal loyalty and the focus may be on the new children. Many men can be biological fathers and sociological fathers, but a growing proportion are not both at the same time. Furstenburg and Harris conclude:

> The increasing instability of marriage bodes ill for fatherhood. In the meantime, while children are waiting for "good dads," we ought to think of a way as a nation to insure children's futures are not so tightly linked to the parental choices of whether or not to live together. (p. 58)

Sikweyiya et al. (2016) indicated that studies have shown that the absence of the father negatively impacts the mental health and emotional state of these adolescents. The boys and girls impacted by the absence of the father can be emotionally absent due to a feeling of neglect and abandonment. The literature presented by Sikweyiya et al. suggested that growing up without a father is a risk factor for emotional abuse on others later in life as well. Further, the researchers noted that children who grow up without a father is at an increased risk for delinquent behavior at some point later in life. Luo, Wang, and Gao (2011) found that adolescents without a father have increased anxiety and lower self-esteem when compared to other subjects that do have a father. The researchers surmised that those that lived without a father predictably will have anxiety and self-esteem at some point during adolescence. These researchers also identified that this can manifest itself in adult outcomes including poor cognitive attainment, behavior problem, sexual difficulties in addition to the anxiety and low self-esteem.

Popenoe (1997) stated that:

The collapse of children's well-being in the United States has reached breathtaking proportions. Juvenile violent crime has increased sixfold, from 1,000 arrests in 1960 to 96,000 in 1992. Eating disorders and rates of depression have soared among adolescent

girls. Teen suicide has tripled. Alcohol and drug abuse among teenagers continues at a

very high rate. Poverty has shifted from the elderly to the young. Of all the nation's poor

today 28 percent are children. (p. 6).

The research further suggests that the evidence is strong that the absence of fathers from the lives

of children is one of the most important causes. Fu et al. (2017) conducted a study on suicide

ideation among adolescents that concluded there is a relationship between paternal absence that

can be linked with suicide ideation and other emotional disorders including depression, social

anxiety, and physical anxiety. In short, the researchers surmised that father absence is a

worldwide pervasive issue that can be negatively correlated with emotional disorders in

adolescents. Fu et al. (2017) stated that "left-behind children are at higher risk of having

emotional disorders" (p. 8).

Social Implications of Father Absence

Wood and Lambin (2013) identify that father engagement positively affects the social

outcomes of children. The researchers identified various areas in which high levels of father

involvement contribute including higher levels of social competence, increased social

responsibility, positive self-control and self-esteem, and positive interactions with siblings and

peers. Harris (1998) indicated that "supportive parenting behaviors in which the father provides

expressive and instrumental affection, nurturance, interest and companionship enhance

children's self-esteem, life satisfaction and social competence" (p. 202). Wood and Lambin

explain how fathers play a critical role in fostering social skills and an integral role in children's

socialization. More time with the father creates social competence in adolescence. Conversely,

Wood and Lambin noted a poor paternal relationship and fathering behaviors can have a lasting negative effect on social adjustment and relationships.

Barrett et al. (2010) studied individuals who had at least one referral to the juvenile justice system. Of the sample, 69% lived in families without the biological father present. When predicting multiple offenses, father absence and special education status were strong predictors in this study. Barrett et al. (2010) completed a portion of this study directly related to father absence and found "adolescents with father absence tend to commit more offenses and have more encounters with the juvenile justice system. This finding is consistent with findings of prior research indicating that adolescents suffer from higher incarceration risks in father-absent households" (p. 273). Among participants in the study this is a major problem, especially for the African American community as there are more single-mother families among this group. Barrett et al. (2010) further surmised "single-mother families experience economic hardship, and increased negativity about mother-adolescent relationships may also affect youths' social-emotional functioning" (p. 273). Adolescents from African American single-mother families report higher anxiety, more cognitive distress, and lower self-esteem than adolescents from two-parent families. The researchers further conclude that within this population it is widely agreed that father presence is critical for adolescent development as the father provides an important role model and guidance to youngsters in their normal development. Children without access to this role model tend to be less disciplined and exhibit inappropriate and aggressive behaviors.

Gardner et al. (2006) found that high levels of parental warmth are associated with fewer conduct problems. Higher parental support and frequent communication can decrease the risks of the child being associated with adolescent delinquency. Conversely the researchers found that lower levels of parental support are associated with increased adolescent delinquency. Thomas

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and Sawhill (2005) noted that paternal absence may influence adolescent behavior by placing the youth at an economic disadvantage. The researchers found that father absence substantially increases the likelihood of poverty. The link between single-parenting and delinquency may exist because of the relation between the economic strain and single-parent households.

Gottfredson and Hirshi (1990) found yet an additional issue that accompany paternal absence is the inability to provide the same level of affective support. Strong attachment to two parents has been shown to have a protective effect against delinquency. Simons et al. (2004) discovered that single-mothers may place fewer maturity demands on their children. These children will receive less monitoring and less effective discipline strategies. That combination could lead to a decrease in accountability and an increase in delinquent behaviors.

Mandara and Murray (2006) revealed that father-absent boys were more likely than any other group to use drugs. The results of this study suggest that father-absent African American boys might be at risk for drug use problems in relation to other African American adolescents. The researchers identify adolescent drug and alcohol use continue to be pressing social problems for educators and parents alike. One of the most studied potential contributors of adolescent drug use is living in a father-absent home. The researchers found that single-parent adolescents were consistently found to smoke more marijuana and cigarettes, use more illicit drugs, drink more alcohol than those living with both biological parents, even when economic status, peer drug use, and several other factors were controlled. Mandara and Murray (2006) identified other factors, such as socio-economic status of varied familial structures, but the recurring theme was drug use and the impact on academic expectations. Mandara and Murray conclude:

> The results suggest that knowing the whereabouts of the boys, having high academic
> expectations for them, and keeping them away from peers habitually using drugs and

alcohol can minimize the father-absence effect, lead to lower rates of drug and alcohol

usage, and increased academic achievement among the participants of the study. (p. 9)

Kann et al. (2014) identified that adolescent alcohol use is a normative health risk behavior that

increases with age and is associated with numerous dangerous consequences. Moss et al. (2014)

identified hat adolescent alcohol involvement is also significantly associated with the use of

other drugs, predominantly starting with marijuana. A significant risk factor associated with the

use of alcohol is the ability to monitor a child. Clark et al. (2012) identify that parental

monitoring of adolescents is associated with lower self-reported use of alcohol,

marijuana and other illicit drugs.

Father absence can lead to early sexual behavior as Brumbach et al. (2009) noted a life

history theory that attempted to explain individual differences. The researchers found that

differences in the environments may trigger alternative sexual strategies because individuals

develop different expectations about the nature of other people and relationships. Draper and

Harpending (1982) suggested that whether biological fathers were present or absent influences

the reproductive strategies of their offspring. In particular, girls with absent fathers will be more

likely to begin sexual activity earlier and have more sexual partners. Boothroyd et al. (2003)

concluded that stressful childhood environments can result in accelerated puberty and increased

adult promiscuity for females. In fact, most relevant studies suggest that for girls, earlier puberty,

earlier sexual activity, and early pregnancy are all associated with father absence. Sheppard and

Sear (2011) suggested that father absence affects the sexual behavior of both males and females

and that these effects are sensitive to the timing of the absence.

Dittus et al. (1997) suggested that adolescents are least likely to have early sexual debut if

they are reared in a two-parent household with both biological parents. Kaufman (2006) noted that growing up in a single-parent family, without the stability of parenting from both parents has been associated with early sexual debut for both male and female adolescents. Moore et al. (2001) noted that the presence of the father is one of the main protective factors in delaying the sexual debut among girls. Mendle et al. (2009) observed children from father absent homes as experiencing unstable, conflicted or stressed parental relationships. It is also expected that these youth mature in such a way that their reproduction is geared toward mating rather than parenting, tending to have accelerated sexual onset, multiple sexual partners and erratic relationships. Moffit et al. (1992) suggested that the longer duration of father's absence, the higher impact it may have towards growth and development of adolescents. This is due to stress associated with the father's absence that may alter the cortisol levels that trigger early puberty. The longer the father is absent from home, the higher the cortisol level will be in adolescent girl which then may predict the tendency of having early sexual debut. Lopez and Corona (2012) found when the love of a father is absent, the daughter may experience grief and seek to find that love by searching elsewhere, which can lead to risky sexual behaviors. This could explain why girls that feel emotionally rejected and unsupported by their fathers are more susceptible to engage in unprotected sexual intercourse, engage in sexual intercourse with multiple partners, and participate in risky sexual behaviors (p. 718). Further, Lopez, and Corona (2012) noted that some fatherless daughters will engage in these risky behaviors as a way to deal with the pain they feel from being rejected by their fathers. This early sexual behavior can be a way to enhance self-esteem that is negatively impacted by the rejection from the father.

Relationships can also be difficult due to trust issues that are related to the absence of the father. Bowlby (1988) noted that a relationship with his or her parents provides the foundation of

a child's working idea of relationships, including expectations for others, which carries into adulthood. Amato (2000) found that children who experience a father absence due to divorce or poor parental interpersonal behavior could have difficulty trusting others in adulthood, especially after learning through bitter experiences. Shulman et al. (1994) found that if a child has an absent father opportunities arise for increased psychological distress, which may have implications for interpersonal relationships. As the child grows into an adolescent, his or her ability to attach is thought to influence his or her expectations and actions in interpersonal relationships later in life. Rice et al. (1995) noted that secure parent and adolescent attachment relationships hold tremendous importance for interpersonal relationships.

Appleton (1981) surmised that Studies show that girls from father-absent homes often experience problems in their intimate relationships with men. Krohn & Bogan (2001) discovered that girls from father-absent homes who had little contact with their fathers, particularly during adolescence, had difficulty as adults maintaining romantic relationships with men. Wallerstein and Corbin (1989) concluded that women from father-absent homes often experience immense anxiety while in a relationship with a man because their development has stalled due to fears of abandonment and dishonesty.

Academic Implications of Father Absence

Kim and Hill (2015) detailed accumulating evidence to suggest that there might be a positive relation between father involvement and academic outcomes. Fathers are more cognitively stimulating, challenging, and encouraging. Fathers teach children to be competitive, independent, and to take risks that could lead to increased academic outcomes. Kim and Hill indicated:

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Our findings demonstrated that, overall, in spite of the fact that fathers' mean levels of

overall involvement are lower than mothers', the relation between fathers' involvement in

education and children's achievement is not only positive, but just as strong as mothers'

involvement. This might be due to distinct gendered parenting roles that are largely

complementary. Whereas mothers tend to be more frequently involved in all aspects of

children's educational lives, warmer, and more supportive, fathers are more likely to

expose children to the outside world and to use challenging and cognitively stimulating

strategies. (p. 928)

Conversely, Kikas et al. (2014) surmised although the role of the father's involvement in

upbringing their children has been highlighted in recent years, fathers are still less engaged in

this process.

Tan and Goldberg (2009) conducted research leading to the identification of an important

role for fathers. The findings indicate that children of highly involved fathers have "increased

cognitive competence, increased empathy, less sex-stereotyped beliefs, and a more internal locus

of control" (p. 443). Increased participation by the father can be associated with a greater

likelihood of getting an A in a given class, students having a greater enjoyment of school, and a

decrease in misconduct. The findings indicated that an increase in paternal involvement equates

to increased academic outcomes. Flouri, Buchanan, and Bream (2002) noted that a lack of

emphasis on fathering is especially unfortunate given that father involvement has been shown to

make a contribution to positive child outcomes. Children with involved fathers are more likely to

have participated in educational activities, more likely to have resources at home, and could have

increased cognitive development and educational outcomes. Father involvement is important and

educational policies and practices should be directed towards this end.

Dufur et al. (2010) stated that "fathers' contributions to parenting are growing and that parenting cannot be considered a molith" (p. 1093). Dufur et al. noted:

Mothers often do the majority of day-to-day child-care tasks, but fathers are more likely to participate in recreational behaviors, including high-intensity activities that require considerable commitments of time and interaction. Growing literature on fathering has suggested that the fact that fathers do not engage in exactly the same child-care behaviors as mothers does not necessarily mean that fathers are not parenting, but rather that mothering and fathering are two separate components of parenting. (p. 1093)

There are multiple theories that could provide a potential explanation for why differences in mothering and fathering exist, but typical fathering tasks can be linked to broader societal norms about appropriate behavior. For example, Abel (2012) suggested that fathers, in general, are less involved than mothers. Nonetheless, the limited research that has been conducted suggests that father involvement has a significant relationship on a variety of academic outcomes for children and adolescents. It is of particular importance in the African-American communities where fathers are more likely to be classified as non-residential, have lower levels of educational attainment, and may face greater challenges to being involved with their children. The educational level of the father, his knowledge and skills, time spent on parental involvement activities, and communication surrounding activities will lead to increase involvement and higher expectations and outcomes for students. Schools need to find a way to keep dads involved and appreciated, find ways to include them and engage them to foster this relationship and the positive educational outcomes resulting from such.

Martin, Ryan, and Brooks-Gunn (2010) suggested "there is a growing body of evidence about the important contribution fathers can make to the school preparedness and performance of

their children" (p. 146). Wilson and Prior (2011) noted that positive fathering contributed to fewer school adjustment problems, better academic progress, and enhanced occupational achievements in adulthood. Wood and Lambin (2013) found that both positive and negative school outcomes have been linked to father beliefs, perceptions, school involvement, and child attachment. As it pertains to father absence, Wood and Lambin noted this is linked to higher incidence of negative outcomes including academic performance, school suspension and expulsion.

Kruk (2012) surmised that absentee fathers may be a predictor of students failing to earn a high school diploma and students engaging in behavior resulting in long-term suspensions. Students raised in a home with no father increase their chances of not completing high school, among other concerns including teen pregnancy, health issues, and higher rates of suicide. Conversely, students raised in a two-parent household are more likely to persist in graduating high school. Skiba (2006) found that students raised in a home without a father are more likely to participate in behaviors that may result in out-of-school suspensions. Researchers found out-of-school suspensions can increase the likelihood of future disciplinary problems and academic concerns resulting in students dropping out of school. Hetherington (1999) found absent fathers are considered to have many adverse effects on children. From an academic standpoint, research suggests children living in a home with no father present are more likely to not complete high school compared to a child living with both parents. Further, students from fatherless homes who do graduate high school do not perform as well with regards to college enrollment and graduation.

Nord and West (2001) found a renewed emphasis is now placed on parental involvement in education and the attention to the gender gap in schools. More research is looking at father

involvement and the outcomes of the absent father. O'Neil (2001) discovered that there are

concerns that many students come to school with a disadvantage when living with a single parent

and that fathers or father figures may be more influential than mothers in teaching boys about

appropriate school and social behaviors. O'Neil (2001) conducted research to support the

importance of father involvement in educations. This research indicated that students without a

father suffer from more stress and depression, more health problems, more problems when

interacting with other children, more trouble in school, a greater chance of suffering from abuse,

and are more likely to run away from home. Klinger (1989) claimed the absence of a father can

be linked to violent behaviors in schools. This research indicated that teenage boys need the

affection and approval of adult men. Boys without fathers become angry because they feel

hopeless and desperate. This leads to misbehavior in school. O'Neil (2001) noted that males

without a father are 3.3 times more likely to have academic problems and 50 percent more likely

to have difficulties associated with the classroom discipline of some teachers. Nord et al. (1997)

reported that one-third of students get A's when fathers are involved compared to 17 percent

when there is little father involvement. Children are less likely to be suspended from school

when fathers are involved and less likely to be disrespectful to adults.

Lang and Zagorsky (2001) concluded that children who live without their biological

fathers often have lower academic achievement scores than children living with both biological

parents. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) conducted a comprehensive review of multiple data

sets and indicated that overwhelmingly that children living without their biological fathers scored

lower on personal assessments of academic competence, were more likely to drop out of school,

and were less likely to go to college than children living with both biological parents. Fraenkel

(1999) noted father figures may be more influential in teaching boys about behavioral control

and in preventing the development of violent or antisocial behaviors. Father figures can play a role in fostering assertiveness and achievement orientation in children of both genders.

Kreider and Ellis (2011) concluded father absence can have a profound and devastating impact on children. In 2009, 23 million children were reported to be living in homes without the biological father present. The consequences of such a situation can include, but are not limited to, poor academic performance, low self-esteem and negative attitudes toward school and teachers. McBride et al. (2005) conducted a study of 1300 children and found the likelihood of achievement increases when fathers participate in the academic life of an adolescent. Flouri et al. (2002) noted that adolescents with a father present exhibit a more positive attitude towards education. These students also exhibit pro-social behaviors that extend beyond the classroom, including a higher rate of participation in extracurricular activities. Nord and West (2001) conversely found that students are twice as likely to repeat a grade when there is an absent father. These students experience more behavioral problems in school, get suspended more frequently and miss a greater number of school days.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Phenomenological Qualitative Research

Putnam (1996) categorized qualitative research is considered realistic, with the origin of the methodology set in realism. Putnam indicated qualitative research uses independent data for the determination of discovery. This research can vary between what may be factual for one individual may not be factual for all participants in the study. Putnam indicated that there is an impartiality to realism founded on the theoretical framework of the single experience. Qualitative researchers seek to operate in the realm of social reality resulting in the research attempting to distinguish between what is actual and what is conceptual. Qualitative research can be beneficial in a number of situations. This research employs subject information to investigate questions that would not be possible in the quantitative research design. The researcher, in qualitative research design, is able to explore new areas of research in addition to dealing with value-laden questions (Creswell, 2008). Moore (2002) found qualitative studies are used to understand and describe the world of human experience. Further research from Ary et al. (2013) implied that the goal is to provide a holistic picture with a depth pf understanding, rather than a numerical analysis of data.

Cohen et al. (2011) defined phenomenology as the study of phenomena including the appearance of thing, things as they appear in our experience, ways we experience thing, thus the meaning things have in our experience. Phenomenological research design allows for an understanding and conceptualization of the perceptions of educators as it pertains to absent fathers in the secondary education setting. This researcher detailed how human beings

experience this phenomenon—the absent father. Eddles-Hirsch (2015) identified a key component of phenomenological research is how the participants experience or perceive the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) noted that this research design requires the researcher to listen to the participant descriptions of the phenomenon with an open mind. Eddles-Hirsh (2015) that in phenomenological research the researcher "purposefully sets aside any preconceived knowledge or everyday beliefs he or she regards might be used to explain the phenomena being investigated" (p. 252).

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father. This phenomenological qualitative research will explore the perceptions of educators who work with students that do not have a biological father involved due to divorce or incarceration. Data collected from this study will be analyzed to determine educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father.

Research Questions

To explore the educator perceptions of the impact of the absence of the biological father, the following questions will be posed:

Research Question 1: What are educator perceptions of student emotions in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Research Question 2: What are educator perceptions of student social behavior in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Research Question 3: What are educator perceptions of student academic performance in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Researcher's Role

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father.The researcher will conduct interviews with twelve educators to determine the perceived outcomes that manifest due to the absence of the biological father. After interviewing each educator, data will be collected, coded, and analyzed. The data collected from the interviews will be analyzed to synthesize educator perceptions on emotional, social, and academic outcomes as it relates to the secondary education student without the presence of the biological father.

Each department in the school is divided among administration. This is done in conjunction with our PLC coaches and departmental oversight, including personnel matters and evaluations. For the purposes of this study the researcher will not utilize any participants from any department that is a responsibility of the researcher.

Sources of Data

This research will utilize information obtained from the interviews of twelve educators for this phenomenological qualitative research. The data from this study will be utilized to determine the perceived impact the absence of the father has on the student's emotional, social, and academic outcomes. The in-depth interviews will be used as a means of data collection. Through the interviews, the researcher can ascertain the perceptions of each educator based on the population they serve. Gall et al. (2003) stated that open-ended interviews involve unstructured questions in a prearranged order with the same wording. It is essential that each interview be conducted in the same manner, in the same location, with the same observational tools.

Interviews

The data source for this research will be interviews conducted with twelve educators to identify their perceptions of this phenomenon of absent fathers. The researcher utilized the interview protocol (Appendix B) for this study. Creswell (2011) noted that interview questions should be open ended and non-threatening to respondents. Gerson (2009) found that interviewing as a conversation is an opportunity for respondents to reflect on their experiences. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) identified in-depth interviews as a way to discover details about individual lives and the context in which they make decisions.

Population/Sample

Purposeful sampling of educators within our community will be utilized to narrow the focus of the study. The educators that received the invitation to participate in the study were all professional level educators. This means they have experience teaching for five years or more and will understand the phenomenon of the absent father based on their experiences. The invitations were sent solely based on experience level. There was no need to go to beginning level educators because the sample size was sufficient with professional level educators. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father. This study will focus on educator perceptions of students that do not have the biological father in the home due to incarceration or divorce. The sample size will consist of twelve educators. Through data collection the researcher can identify educator perceptions to examine the impact of the absence of the father on secondary school students. Gerson (2009) noted that interviewing as a conversation is an opportunity for respondents to reflect on their experiences.

Data Collection

Interviews will be conducted at the school where the interviewees work. This will be done to provide a comfortable setting for the interviewees. Creswell (2011) indicated that each interview should be face-to-face with the researcher and should be recorded. Data collected from this study will ascertain educator perceptions based on serving students an absent biological father within our community. Data from the interviews will be analyzed to determine the overall perceived impact for this phenomenon in the community. We will seek to identify trends though synthesizing the data from the educator perceptions if possible. It is extremely important to keep the identity of the participants confidential. Names of the participants and all identifying information was addressed by the researcher.

Trustworthiness

Through the interview process, each educator will be presented the opportunity to express perceptions on the absence of the biological father as it pertains to secondary education. Due to the anonymity of the interviews the educators should be comfortable to express themselves freely and honestly. Cohen et al. (2011) found that asking questions in the same order will reduce potential bias and increase the comparability of responses. Handwritten notes will also be taken throughout the interview as a credibility check and compared to the audio recorded transcripts will ensure mistakes are minimal. The comparison, noted by Creswell (2013) is established to not confuse or take the meaning of words out of context. The interviews will be transcribed as quickly as possible following the interview.

Credibility

Polit and Beck (2012) identify credibility as it refers to the truth of the data or the participant views. Polit and Beck further noted credibility lies within the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher. Sandelowski (1986) noted that a qualitative study is considered credible if the descriptions of human experience are immediately recognized by individuals that share the same experience. Silverman (2004) declared the importance of providing a complete account, with a detailed explanation of the background and circumstances impacting the study, the setting, and those who undertake it. The researcher presents this study with truth in data and refuses to misrepresent the information provided by the participants. Each participant has the experience of teaching and mentoring adolescent students as a chosen career path. Further, the researcher provides, with great detail the background and circumstances that impact this study.

Transferability

Houghton et al. (2013) and Polit and Beck (2012) both identified transferability as referring to findings that can be applied to other settings or groups. These studies note that a qualitative work has met this criterion if the results are meaningful to outside individuals not involved in the study. Transferability lies within the ability of the readers to associate the result to their own life experiences. The researcher can identify transferability in two instances regarding this study. Readers can relate to their own adolescent educational experiences, even possibly identifiying with a current or former classmate that is dealing with the phenomenon of an absent father. Second, educators can definitively relate to teaching children facing this challenging home environment.

Dependability

Tobin and Begley (2004) defined dependability as the constancy of the data over similar conditions. Koch (2006) noted that a study would be deemed dependable if the study findings were replicated with similar participants in similar conditions. Lincoln and Guba (1986) identify dependability as the ability to ensure the findings of a qualitative inquiry are repeatable if the inquiry occurred within the same cohort of participants, coders, and context. The researcher filed and stored all data and documentation with fidelity. The information was coded multiple times to organize it into recognizable themes. Interviews were verified by the participants and the information was deemed dependable prior to inclusion in the study. The researcher is confident that the findings of this stud would be repeatable given similar circumstances.

Confirmability

Byrne (2001) identified that confirmability equates to dependability of the research process. Further, confirmability refers to the ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participants' responses and not researcher biases (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Cope (2014) notes that this can be demonstrated by describing how conclusions and interpretations were derived. Cope further identifies that providing rich quotes from the participants to identify the themes can enhance confirmability. The researcher in this study confirms the dependability of the research and that it is a full representation of the responses of the participants. Themes can be identified through the responses and interview data presented will enhance the confirmability of this study.

Ethical Considerations

The strength in qualitative research is based on whether the results are accurate from the point of view of the researcher and participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The interview participants will be provided a confidentiality and purpose statement and an educator consent document that will include a confidentiality statement and the purpose of the study (Appendix A and Appendix C). Patton (2014) indicated that it is essential for researchers to address ethical issues in qualitative research. Each participant is assured of confidentiality and anonymity for their responses in the interview.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained information regarding the type of research, the methodology, sources of data, the research questions, as well as other information regarding credibility and ethical considerations. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father. This research will focus on students who do not have the biological father present in their lives. The absence of the father potentially can manifest in many ways through the secondary experience. The researcher seeks to synthesize how the absence of the biological father manifests itself among students in our community, to better serve these students in the future. Krohn and Bogan (2001) surmised that fatherlessness is a social problem brought on by the breakdown of the traditional family. The victims of this social problem are innocent children who have little voice in changing public attitude and policy. The researchers stated that the "epidemic of fatherless America is our most urgent social problem. This epidemic weakens the family, harms children, causes or aggravates our worst social problem, and makes individual adult happiness harder to achieve" (p. 607). This study will detail the educator perceptions as it relates to secondary education students without the biological father active in their lives. Debell (2007) surmised that the widespread absence of fathers from children's homes has been called a "*social disaster*" and is arguably the most consequential trend of our time.

Data was collected from interviews with teachers. Information obtained through the administration of the interviews with twelve educators to identify perceptions of the absence of the father on the students' emotions, social behavior, and academic outcomes. This study was utilized to collect data used by the researcher to identify these educator perspectives. The three research questions below guided this study:

Research Question 1: What are educator perceptions of student emotions in educational

experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Research Question 2: What are educator perceptions of student social behavior in

educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Research Question 3: What are educator perceptions of student academic performance in

educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Descriptive Data

This phenomenological qualitative study utilized data that were obtained through

interviews with faculty members of an East Tennessee high school. The interviews conducted

obtained information regarding the educator perceptions of father involvement in a school that

serves students in grades nine through twelve. This school consists of approximately 1,500

students. The minority population of this school is 29% and the free or reduced lunch rate is

42%.

Participants

As a component of agreeing to participate in this study no demographic information will

be shared regarding each individual participant. This is due to the nature of the research and the

participants all working at the same school and it is a level of protection for the identities of the

participants. This study collected information from interviews of faculty members only. The total

number of interviews conducted for this study was twelve. These twelve participants who were

interviewed for this research study were all professional level educators as recognized by

Tennessee state educational licenses. Two of the participants were Administrators, three were

members of the School Counseling department, two were teachers in the Math department, two were teachers in the English department, one is a graduation coach, one teacher was in the Social Studies department, and one was a member of the College, Career, and Technical Education department. Seven of the interview participants were either current or past athletic coaches as well. Of the twelve participants, seven were female and five were male. Each participant agreed to the maximum of a one hour interview which consisted of eight questions regarding absent fathers in general, followed by eight questions for each of the three research questions for a total of thirty-two questions for each interview.

Results

Interviews were conducted to analyze teacher perceptions and identify themes that may exist among this group of twelve educators. Once each interview was conducted each interview was transcribed and prepared for analysis. Each interview transcription was placed in a secured location prior to coding. Creswell (2009) indicated that the process of coding involves organizing qualitative date to categorize it into phrases, words, and recurring themes.

This is a summary of the data collected through interviews, transcriptions, and coding. Data from this was analyzed to identify commonalities in educator perceptions. Results were organized by the research questions that guided this study. The tables in this section will identify questions to which each participant communicated a strong perspective regarding the absence of the father and significance to student success.

Research Question 1

What are educator perceptions of student emotions in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Table 1 below identifies the strongest perspectives to questions in the interview that pertained to student emotions. Each participant was asked eight questions related to student emotions and the strongest perceptions are noted in the table below. The educators had strong perspectives regarding mental health, anxiety and/or depression, belongingness, personal relationships and overall student stability.

Table 1

Educator Perceptions on Student Emotions

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Blake			X		X			
Caroline	X		X		X	X	X	
Dan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Elizabeth	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Freddy	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
George	X					X	X	X
Heather	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Julie	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Kelly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lilly	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Sara Jane			X	X	X		X	X
Tom	X			X	X			X

Mental Health

Caroline stated:

> Speaking as a person who did not have a father from the time I was 13 and from the
>
> perspective of kids. It seems as if there is always a piece missing. Even if the students say
>
> they were not close to their dad and it is fine, there is always that underlying piece where
>
> you can tell they struggle some emotionally because they do not have that person in their
>
> lives. I see this especially if it is a situation where the dad is absent by his choice that has
>
> lingering impacts on these kids where every once in a while it will come out. They have

resentment, anger, frustration, confusion, and question why is he not here and why did he leave.

Dan added:

I think a lot of times it has to do with how strong the other parent is. I have had some students who had a very strong mother that had a good grip on them, but I think sometimes if they had a stronger older brother or uncle as a presence it makes a difference. I have also seen where, unfortunately, the father was in prison and the mother did not have a lot of control. I have had this on a few occasions and the mother would sometimes just throw their hands up and say that they cannot do anything with the child.

Elizabeth stated:

I think it contributes very negatively when their father is not involved. I am thinking of one unparticular, he has no idea who his dad is. He is a sophomore, he is 15, and I think he is longing for that male role model. His mom great, his mom is supportive but she is not dad.

Freddy added:

Well, number one I think they lose a connectedness to the overall family structure and overall when you have lost that connectedness you don't feel a part you always feel withdrawn. You don't feel supportive. You don't have that person to lean because our society says that we are supposed to have a mother and a father. Whenever something is missing you fill like you are missing. So you already started of feeling that you are inadequate.

George stated:

> I think our families are designed to have a father and a mother. So, when that is not there many times there is something lacking. It is hard to pin point because every child reacts differently. But there is something missing there. Whether that's a girl or a boy their going to need that attention. They need that. Many of them search for it in different ways.

Heather added:

> I think this is really, really hard. I see this a ton. I am thinking about a situation where a student just broke down. Dad is not here and I do not have someone to talk to. This was a boy saying this he said he does not have anyone to look up to, no example. On the flip side for a girl, if the dad is not in the picture, there is a level of rejection and this can effect relationships that they could possibly have.

Julie stated:

> I would probably say the biggest one would be a lack of confidence. Depending on, especially depending on, "Why is the father absent?" A lack of confidence and anger. There is some, "What is the word?" I guess, like the support of the want too. I want to do well because. I want to show my dad this. So that I guess that reason for doing something, doing well is missing too.

Kelly added:

> The students that I have known to struggle manifests from a behavioral standpoint. I do not know if that could be considered mental health. I do not see this often from the standpoint of depression per se but I do see students acting out. I view this more as a discipline issue where they struggle with adherence to societal norms. I do not know specifically if having an absent father plays into mental health.

Lilly stated:

> I feel like in the last few years. I have gotten some awesome kids who have been able to
> overcome that. When I look at my lunch group that used to be in here last year, the group
> that just graduated, I don't know they were all just really good kids. Who overcame that
> obstacle I feel. But then when I look at my kids this year, one student, she's having a
> really hard time still with it. Because I feel the emotional distress she had when her father
> overdosed she is having a hard time making up for the gap she got at that time. While I
> am thinking of it, and don't forget it later. I know it doesn't tie into this question. One
> thing I have seen is just more of a hard to keep up with the kids who have not necessarily
> the absent of a father but maybe like a split home situation just little things like, "Oh I left
> my calculator at my mom's and I can't get it until Tuesday" or something like that. But
> then, I understand your situation I can't get mad at the kid for that so that just becomes a
> thing in class I have noticed. I deal with it. I don't have a formal policy set forth. That's
> just been a little day to day thing I have noticed from people who share a home between
> grandma and mom, or mom and dad. But the mental health, another student this year has
> lost both parents. He is a head case, really angry and that use to be a common thing the
> anger especially among the boys. I notice the anger more with boys than with girls.

Tom added:

> The big thing is students are constantly looking for that male role model whether it be a
> teacher, a coach, a friend's father. They are looking for someone so they can model
> behavior. This comes out in behavior in school to get attention, even though it be
> negative.

Student Confidence

Dan stated:

>I do and, matter of fact I have a situation in my classroom this year where a student is
>
>getting ready to move in with his mother and may wind up having to leave our school in
>
>the next few days. This student is very frustrated and you can see it. He was actually
>
>going today to get his stuff and was going to have to have a police escort and this is very
>
>hard on him. He is very hurt and bitter at his father at this point and I have seen his
>
>attendance deteriorate in the last 15 days or so.

Elizabeth added:

>Absolutely ,it can play a role. And then In some ways it can be a negative then it can be a
>
>positive because I can think of a couple of other kids that I worked with that goes the
>
>opposite way to prove them wrong, because I am going to do well despite of you.

Freddy stated:

>Absolutely! Once again having that role model that person who is the leader part it helps
>
>you to feel that security that is within yourself.

Heather added:

>Absolutely, this is related, there are a lot of reasons why the father is not around but in
>
>the situation where the father chooses not to be around there is a lower self-esteem. The
>
>kid is typically innocent in this type of situation but they blame themselves.

Kelly stated:

>It would be me supposing but if confidence is measured by motivation, participation in
>
>class, completion of homework, or attendance to school-if those are a measure of

confidence then yes I would say that students without a biological father at home are lacking in that area.

Lilly added:

I would say so. I think that I notice it especially if something happens to their father during the high school age. I feel like those kids have a much harder time mentally, and confidence wise then a kid who has dealt with it for a longer period of time. You know a kid who it happened younger they have had the time to grieve and adjust and they can see life as going to go on and be okay. But for those who it happens to in the high school I think it us really hard on them.

Anxiety and/or Depression

Blake stated :

Unless you ask as a teacher you will never know that answer. You may identify that there is something wrong, but it takes a deep relationship to get them to open up and talk about what is bothering them. To get to the point where they will say I do not have a father it takes a strong relationship of trust. In regards to my own mother who did not have a father she did not know what the role of a man was.

Caroline added:

This is definitely present in our students. They do not have that security there that others may have especially if they have not seen dad for a long time. Students complain that he missed my birthday, he didn't call for this, he didn't call for that, he didn't come to this and it has noticeable impacts on their security. This all leads to them having more anxiety so I see that depression and anxiety seem to go up when there is not a dad in the picture.

Dan stated:

There are different instances where there is not a father present or the father is deployed in the military, I have had students who have had mothers deployed. These students are very worried and anxious about how their parent is, where they are. I have had situations where students do not even know their fathers and have maybe never met their fathers, as a social studies person this is almost like Social Darwinism or survival of the fittest at that point. I do believe that you can overcome anything if you attempt it. Students cannot change who their parents are but as long as they learn right from wrong they can adapt to be able to achieve the things you want in life. As a teacher we wear a lot of different hats with mentoring kids and a lot of times we are that surrogate parent.

Elizabeth added:

Again it goes back to mental health. If they are anxious and that is sadness. There is something missing at home possibly. That is going to contribute to their overall well-being as a whole student.

Freddy stated:

I think it is very impactful. Once again everything that I am saying it all leads to that connectedness of the family structure, and because society says and that its supposed to happen this way then it can effect it. Now it doesn't happen to tall kids. Nothing is universal. Nothing is direct in a direct link but I think it does effect.

Heather added:

This goes back to what I was saying. I have heard people say that kids are resilient, they will adjust, but I do not believe that because I do not always see that. We have students in here daily with breakdown after breakdown, once something starts for them it is just a

spiral. Students need to be loved and nurtured but inside they also want rules, boundaries, and discipline. Students are smart enough to know what they are missing and when they do not have a father, they know that is not normal. They know something is supposed to be there and it is not so the anxiety and depression begins with what is wrong with me, why does my dad not want me. The father could have moved away so there can always be that anxiety about someone is going to leave me.

Julie stated:

I do see that. Especially if it's kids going through a divorce or a custody battle. There is a child on my mind this term. There is a custody thing been going on but she has no idea why she can't talk to her dad. So it's like, there is depression there, a lot, and so it is effecting her socially, which per teenagers is huge which she don't feel like talking to people. So she doesn't have many friends right now, because she is also new to the school. So it is compounding a lot of that. And then, I think that lack of confidence is of course going to be, is a jumping off point for anxiety to be about anything. Like if they feel a little threatened, like they don't feel comfortable, like I don't understand this what we are doing in class, they don't feel confident in myself so I am automatically going to anger or to checking out, you know, distraction, whit's all connected to that confidence I think.

Kelly added:

I have definitely see this in one student that I have been dealing with recently whose depression can be tied back to the absence of the father. That stems from this student in particular feeling abandoned and unworthy so they sink into that hole of depression.

Lilly stated:

> I think it goes more from what I've seen, and these are my perception kind of like what I said with the last questions, where, those that it happened at a young age, I don't necessarily know that they actually have anxiety and those types of issues. I don't know that was a result of that or if it is just how their brain is wired. But for the kids who something happens with their father at a high school age, I think it really does affect them.

Sara Jane added:

> I have seen and heard that many times. Where kids who don't feel like they have stability or they don't feel supported, or they feel like, male students especially, if they have to step into that role if they have younger siblings, they kind of become the father in the household. I think that becomes a huge stressor and can take an emotional toll over time.

Self-esteem

> Dan stated:

> I mentioned a few minutes ago about having some kids who their fathers were incarcerated and they would have issues we would have to deal with. We have had some hard conversations about getting their act together so they do not end up right beside their father. I have a former student serving a life sentence in prison and has been in there for about 15 years and I tried to reach out to him and get him headed in the right direction. For him, not having a strong role model and mom was a single parent with multiple children and she just wrote him off. She felt she had lost that one so she began to focus on the other ones to keep them away from him. It is important for youth to have a strong female and male model in the home.

Elizabeth added:

>It goes hand and hand, the lack of esteem and self-confidence. If they don't think they are good enough, they doubt and do self-negative talk. I am thinking of one kid there is not a dad at home, the hygiene is awful, that maybe a mom, I know the mom has talked to him. But somethings the dad has to step up. In other situations like you need to shower and things I think as sometimes we adults in the building we take for granted.

Freddy stated:

>It lowers it. I think they feel inadequate. If you take students that do have fathers involved, when those other students are around them you can tell. You can see that they feel inadequate. I have heard students say before, I wish my father was involved.

Heather added:

>Sometimes this can depend on the kid and what they are involved in. Sometimes you can have that kid that has good grades regardless. Those students have high self-esteem because they have taken ownership of themselves. Sometimes you have kids that are not connected. Some of them because of an absent father cannot connect because their self-esteem is so low.

Julie stated:

>I think especially when in my subject area when we are trying to connect what we are reading to their lives and their experience and things like that. When they make comments about things, like, "Well they don't care about me." or like, even just something as simple as names and culture and saying, well, nick names. Well what are the nicknames your parents call you? Or whatever. 'They don't call me anything." " I don't have any." Or just, a lot of blaming themselves for that parent not being there.

Kelly added:

> Those two things go hand in hand, if you think of the root cause of depression it has to do with hopelessness which ties to confidence which ties to self-esteem, self-efficacy all of those things. So, if a student is questioning their adequacy or why their father is absent and they are blaming themselves or not feeling loved or abandoned this would begin to impact their self-image which would lead into all of the things we have been talking about.

Sara Jane stated:

> I think if a kid feels like he or she has been abandoned, that could really hurt their self-esteem. If they feel like they've done something to drive the parent away or that the parent doesn't care enough to be involved. I think they can really be hindered.

Tom added:

> The confidence and self-esteem are related. For a student without a father figure it has been my experiences where a dad would not be at a game and the dad would be listening on the radio, but the kid would want to be in on a tackle or make some type of play so that his dad could hear his name on the radio, TV, whatever.

Belongingness

Blake stated:

> It seems that these students are looking for a role, a place to fit. They need a model of how a male is supposed to be. This can be misleading because some of them do not have an idea of what a male persona looks like and how they are supposed to interact.

Caroline added:

> Yes, especially if they are in a certain friend group where all of the other friends go home
>
> to mom and dad. Even things like going to games or events, father/daughter dances, etc.
>
> While students do not outwardly verbalize this they may always have that feeling that I
>
> don't really belong in this group because I do not have a dad.

Dan stated:

> I would definitely say so as far as how to react in social situations. How they deal with
>
> girlfriends in high school and knowing how they should treat someone. They have had
>
> that absence of a father, take into account that what separated the parents could have been
>
> the father's behavior and this can become learned behavior.

Elizabeth added:

> The one I was talking about a minute ago, that longing for his dad, I think that
>
> belongingness would also go along with that. He feels like something is missing. I think
>
> it is the father role. I don't necessarily know if he admits it but that is what I pick up from
>
> talking to him.

Freddy stated:

> I think, once again with them being the head or the head of the house hold are the
>
> signified as that whether, depending on, not depending on sex that is very important. I
>
> think that knowing that they notice or that you are accomplishing because that fathers
>
> name is what you are representing.

Heather added:

> That seems to be the same, there are many kids that do not have a father and they have
>
> trouble finding their place. There can be a lot of confusion, a lot of difficulty finding

themselves because they question who they are and where they belong. These students do not feel normal and they compare themselves to other kids that have that and these student do not always find where they fit in.

Julie stated:

I do. Again, because I think parents are how you figure out how to fit in with other people. Not just like in relationships. As a model of relationships, but just how to be around other people. And so, when one of those examples is gone, or that breaks down they have even more too like scramble to figure out. About how they are supposed to behave. How they are supposed to act. How they are to talk to their peers. Or like, and their romantic relationships, just like how is that supposed to work. It's even more unknown on top of what's already unknown, which is a lot.

Kelly added:

Especially for adolescents, their brain chemistry shifts through puberty and what becomes most important is this need to belong and to be normal, whatever "normal" is. If a student is concerned that everyone else has a dad at home and I don't then this can impact their sense of belonging and they can have a desperate need to be accepted and be normal. I see that anytime you have a broken home or divorce this is all about timing. From personal experience I have seen how divorce or the separation of the family plays out differently for different kids at different developmental stages.

Lilly stated:

I think I have seen it go both ways depending on the class. You get some class where there's most the kids have a father present. The one that doesn't they are excluded. But

you go down to some other classes where everyone doesn't and it's not a thing that is any

different than anyone else in that class

Sara Jane added:

I do. I think everybody wants to belong and feel like they are wanted. So kids will seek

that out and they will try to find that somewhere, whether its sports, or a club, or in

academics, or where ever it might be. They may try to feel that void.

Tom stated:

Yes, they are looking for a sense of belonging. The fact that the role of the father is

absent and they are not getting behavior modeled then the student will have nothing more

than maybe a friend's dad to look at as to how things are supposed to work in the family

structure.

Sense of Accomplishment

Caroline stated:

Sometimes students have external motivation to do well so that they can keep mom and

dad happy. Like I said earlier sometimes dad is the strict disciplinarian and that desire to

please gives students a sense of motivation to accomplish at higher levels. Students will

do things to keep their parents pleased and so they do not get grounded and things like

that. If there is no dad there sometimes the students lose that motivation to achieve.

Dan added:

Students need someone to acknowledge success and that is when they will typically

approach a teacher. Sometimes they will come up and say that they did really well on the

test to seek out praise. Sometimes students will come and share an athletic

accomplishment in the same manner as they are typically looking for someone to share the moment with.

George stated:

That one I think can go different was because I have seen the tough biological dads that their kids still down all the time but I think its important that you have that everyone has that cheerleader. Especially that male role model cheerleader so that the kids do feel accomplishment.

Julie added:

I think, there is kind a like somebody to perform for a kind of a deal and if you don't have that person in your life who cares whether or not you do well in school or you know, you got on the team, all of these other things. It lessens the value of it to you. I think there is some of that. What's the reason to do well, they don't care if I do well, so there is no reason too.

Lilly stated:

I do perceive that it is my CP classes where it is more prevalent than in my AP classes to not have a father period. I am not talking about a split family situation. I mean like no father listed in skyward or no parents listed in skyward. I find that to be more of something we see in more of our lower level classes. Where as in AP, I feel like there is usually if their parent aren't listed in one address they are both listed and involved. And there is documentation showing that both get permission to have skyward. Where even if a father is not present a lot of times there is a step-father listed there where it is obvious that person has been a father figure in their life. People calling and they say that's my dad

and you find out 3 months later that no that's not their dad it is their step dad. A father figure maybe opposed to a biological figure.

Personal Relationships

Caroline stated:

> I do not want to use stereotypical idea that the females seek male attention but I do see that first hand. Often times the girls with dysfunctional relationships or get extra clingy with boys and things are those that do not have a dad at home. We may not always discuss that but we go in and check the family structure and there is not a father present in most of these cases. These students will seek out male attention to fill a void.

Dan added:

> Sometimes it is almost where they do not want to establish a personal relationship because of feeling that the hurt of losing that relationship that does not exist. Sometimes you will see the opposite effect of trying to latch on because they do not have that relationship that they desire with a role model in their life.

Elizabeth stated:

> Yes. I have seen some boyfriend, girlfriend relationships, I have some boys come and ask me questions. I don't know why they decide to come and ask me questions about girlfriends. But they don't feel comfortable going to their dad because: A) They don't have a relationship or their dad's not there. Or, if the dad is there it is not a healthy relationship.

Freddy added:

> Yes, once again we go back to the emotional status, states, and we go back to connectedness, and being able to connect with other people. Having security within

themselves. Having a strong structure that has a base to it. So yes, I think it has a lot to do with it.

George stated:

Yes. We have all seen the girls that are constantly searching for male attention Many times you look at the girls that are doing that don't have a father at home.

Heather added:

With girls, specifically this is hard because they have trouble making connections with the opposite sex. They may not trust them, they may not feel secure, and they may not feel confident. Males, on the other side, they do not respect females, this could be stereotypical but it depends on what they have seen. Or they could be over the top with girls and have to have a girlfriend all of the time to the point where they are smothering. This can be like two extremes because they do not have that example of what it should look like.

Julie stated:

Yes, I think especially in their relationships with a like a partner or boyfriend, girlfriend, whatever, I see that. I could see girls who haven't been given that confidence from their father. That respect, then kind of, just like just wanting that attention no matter how they can get it. From other boys, from girls, just any kind of attention, even negative attention. Into a degree I see that in boys too, from each other or from authority.

Kelly added:

I have seen so many different ways this can manifest. I am dealing with a student a lot lately who does not have a father, suffers from depression, and suffers with personal relationships. This student is very co-dependent and does not want to disappoint anyone.

I think this all depends on the father I have seen students that have abusive fathers who have struggled with relationships. In my mind I am describing a male student to you because I think this has a different effect on boys than it does on girls. From my experience this has a larger impact on boys than it does on girls. I have seen girls who feel abandoned by their father who become more promiscuous as a way to gain attention from males.

Lilly stated:

I don't think I have. But, again like I said the kids that I have in my mind right now are a group were they all went on to a four year college. They have been really successful. Honestly my kids I have this year are struggling the most this year with the mental and emotional side of it all come from two parent homes working, like middle class like higher life style. That doesn't seem to be a factor that I have noticed of late and it is hard to go back and think 10 years ago of who the kids were in my class. I am making these assumptions off of what I seen last year or two.

Sara Jane added:

I have. I think sometimes kids will act out when they are trying to get attention. They'll get it in a negative way instead of in a positive way and I think that it can cross over into all aspects of their social well-being here at school. Then they kind of group up with other kids that may act out or other kids may either except them or ostracize them based on that behavior. I've seen kids go the opposite route, I've seen kids get completely apathetic because they have sort of given up on school because they're trying to do too much at home to fill a role and it's too much responsibility.

Overall Stability

Dan stated:

> We are a transitioning society in that most previous generations grew up with two parents
> in the home. If they did not the parents were normally civil with each other in trying to
> make sure that they were there for the children. Now the dynamics have changed and we
> are seeing a lot of the absence of the father. We are also seeing sometimes the presence of
> two mothers and seeing how that impacts our students. Parents are typically like good
> cop bad cop and most of the time the mom is the good cop and the dad is the bad cop or
> the disciplinarian. That relationship is a good balance for the kids because they need to
> understand right from wrong and that there is a fine line that exists.

Elizabeth added:

> It is everything. The kids need a strong present person to help ground the kids to keep
> them on the right path. Sometimes you just need that male influence. That positive
> influence and just to be present.

Freddy stated:

> It goes back once again to connectedness. They lose, when I think back to kids that are
> fatherless kids they search for that figure to feel like they belong too and sometimes
> through that search they lose focus on their own identity and who they are. Having very
> emotional state. Your emotional state is determined about how you see yourself and I
> think when you feel like you have lost something or you don't have that strong
> connection as family with father being one of those structural pieces then you don't have
> your emotional state is not consistent or not maintained.

George added:

>   The ones I have, the ones I can picture right now without stability I think, those are
>
>   students that could over react at any moment. I am thinking about a group of students
>
>   ones have a father at home they may get into trouble they may do something but they are
>
>   not going to over reaction, a fight, a yelling, a losing control as much as the ones without.

Heather stated:

>   There are definitely kids that have an absent father that thrive and do fine, but in general,
>
>   they seem to be on a constant roller coaster ride of emotions. The self-esteem will, the
>
>   confidence will drop, their interactions drop. The choices they make are different from
>
>   those of other students.

Julie added:

>   I think if the fathers absent and it's a single parent home, there are a lot of things that go
>
>   with that. That could be cause of instability for the student. Even if it's just divorce,
>
>   there's the going back and forth of having stuff at this house, having stuff at this house.
>
>   Do I have help with school here but not here? Being able to, If there is only the one
>
>   parent period like are they going to able to support them, get them to school on time
>
>   depending on work schedule. Depending on how many jobs they have got in order to
>
>   carry the family themselves, means less and less attention for the kid.

Kelly stated:

>   The idea would be that I am not the same as everyone else. That can shake stability.
>
>   Since students do not feel the same as everyone else they can compensate in some ways
>
>   to try to be like everyone else.

Lilly added:

I think that is an obvious yes. Just from having that extra person to be checking in on things. I think everything kind of goes hand and hand. If a kid is able to be academically stable and have that parental support at home, that emotional support at home it all, in my mind meshes together. So I think just having that extra parent just to be around to keep an eye on you and make sure you are staying out of trouble and not pulling a fast one on your mom when you say you are going here and you are really going there. You know being the parent. Not always being the good guy but being a parent. I called home a couple of weeks ago on a kid and then the mom relayed the message to the dad and they had a good old family meeting. The kid told me when he got home he was told when he goes to class he needs to shut up and stay shut up for the whole thing.

Sara Jane added:

I think a lot of it depends on the relationship with the mother and some other issues as well, maybe like economic factors might come into play. I think it is hard for kids that are bounced around a lot. I think that's easier, then for kids who don't have a father who is involved at all.

Tom stated:

From an emotional standpoint the students will be less confident, have lower self-esteem and be under a lot more stress. These students will experience insecurities which will lead to them not leading as healthy of a lifestyle. This impacts emotions, specifically with personal relationships this will not be as successful. They may be in a vicious cycle of break-ups because that is all they have seen.

Research Question 1 Summary

Educator perceptions regarding the absence of the father and student emotions contained some common themes in the interviews as well. Educators perceive that students without a father struggle more emotionally, they may suffer from anxiety or depression more than their peers. Further, these students will possess anger and resentment as to why the father is not present in their lives. These student often appear frustrated, withdrawn, and lack motivation partly due to the fact that they seem to lack attention and feel rejected. Educator perceptions were that these students hurt, suffer from bitterness, and have lower self-esteem and a more negative self-image. The students may struggle with confidence due to the lack of security and sense of abandonment or hopelessness. These students often have trust issues as a result of the absence of the father. Educator perceptions revealed that this may lead to relational problems with staff, peers, and specifically as it pertains to dating and the understanding of relationship rules.

Research Question 2

What are educator perceptions of student social behavior in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Table 2 below will display the educator perceptions from the interview questions that were the strongest pertaining to student social behavior. Each participant was asked eight questions regarding student social behavior while experiencing the phenomenon of an absent biological father. The table below will detail the strongest answers to the eight components of social behavior in their secondary students. Educator perceptions were stronger regarding the student without a father and the ability to follow rules and regulations, accountability, respect, communication, and collaboration.

Table 2

Educator Perceptions on Student Social Behavior

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Blake	X		X				X	
Caroline	X		X	X	X	X		X
Dan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Elizabeth	X	X	X	X				
Freddy	X		X	X	X			
George	X		X	X	X			
Heather	X			X	X	X	X	
Julie	X	X	X	X	X			
Kelly	X			X	X			
Lilly		X	X	X		X	X	X
Sara Jane		X		X				
Tom			X					X

Ability to Follow Rules and Regulations

Blake stated:

> There is no question about that. If they get this at home from a male they understand the
>
> hierarchy. Everyone is subject to some boss whether it be the police, a teacher, an
>
> administrator, or whomever. They have to understand and respect the hierarchy and it
>
> does make a difference.

Caroline added:

> I think so because students know if dad gets mad it is a big deal. This absence would
>
> impact how they would behave in social situations because they would typically not want
>
> to feel the wrath of dad if they had gotten into trouble at school.

Dan stated:

> A lot of times student behavior is that they are accountable to someone when they have a
>
> father outside of school. The father is typically the traditional disciplinarian and students

may not want to disappoint them and also they could have a bit of fear of what they may have to deal with when they get home. I think there is definitely an influence on a students behavior by the father.

Elizabeth added:

Possibly. I can think sometimes we sometimes joke, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree and we got maybe dads that are in prison and we got the boys so that it is an absent dad doing very, I don't want to necessarily doing criminal type behavior but being they are following in dads footsteps, almost being oppositional and being non-compliant on purpose.

Freddy stated:

Yes and no, I think it depends on the father. I think it depends on the home environment. I think it depends on how that father was raised himself and expectations that was put on him and the expectations that he put on the family.

George added:

Yes. I think that really makes sense, because when you have a father at home more than likely you know, if they are still there they are going to follow the rules. It goes back to the responsibility even though they may not have done the right things, they take responsibility. I think a child sees that and learns from it.

Heather stated:

Yes, students learn discipline and structure from their dad. This is not just from the dad but it is a component of what the typical dad brings to the table. For students without a father this is missing, and this is the case with a lot of students.

Julie added:

> I do. I think in a lot of the students I am thinking about, male is seen as more of the authority figure than female. The mom being like, kind of over worked or busy or being considered weaker. Even down to I have some students that have had or have now that I can tell that they blame their mother for there not being a father there. So that there applied to all women.

Kelly stated:

> I do, I think for whatever reason single moms are tired and do not discipline as much. I see that homes that have a father or even just a father-figure that is truly a father figure not just mom's boyfriend that is there for a while, enforces rules at home and that bleeds over to the school setting. As a whole, students who have that at home are more likely to adhere to societal rules and norms.

Hygiene and Overall Presentation

Dan stated:

> I would say yes because by the time we get students in high school and we deal with only one parent with no father the mom may not be able to control what they wear. There could be issues with grooming, shaving, or hygiene because the students will just tell their mother no and the mom does not feel as if she has power over the child any longer

Elizabeth added:

> Absolutely. Negatively. Typically, I am thinking of two boys right now and there is not a father in the home and multiple, multiple talk about hygiene. I don't really deal the girls, the female hygiene issue as much it is typically boys. I would contribute that to nobody

really telling, the mom maybe not feeling comfortable talking to their sons about what they need to wash.

Julie stated:

I think that comes into play more when there's is either just a father or just a mother, a single parent situation. Through maybe just from you know you're just too busy like working a job or something like to tell them, like, "Hey, you got visible dandruff, you need to do something about that." Or at some students, who says there is a stepdad but the stepdad isn't like an authority figure to them at all and they just kind of discount whatever the mother says, so if their mothers not gonna like, to get on to them because they feel powerless. I've seen a number of times like mom says, "I don't know what to do anymore."

Lilly added:

I can say sometimes the ones that are raised with just a father the hygiene is maybe not where it should be. But I have also seen those without a father and the mother doesn't know how to say anything to boys. The mother doesn't know how to say to him you need some deodorant, you need some shampoo, and soap. I think the absence of a father sometimes for a mother makes it hard to have those conversations. I have seen that with the boys. If the boy does not have a father in his life those are often I find smell boys. That we have to refer to guidance or someone to have that conversation. There has been a handful of times that maybe that those boys have been from a single dad situation and the dad just doesn't, it may not bug the dad. Because I know that you have been in the football locker room to me that is the worse smell on the face of the earth. If someone can sit through that I know their nose is dead.

Sara Jane stated:

> I think that one depends on the mother's circumstances and if the father is contributing at
> all or the type of employment the mother has, so in some cases that could be true and in
> other cases maybe not.

Student Accountability

Blake stated:

> If the student does not have that home life where a father holds them accountable for
> what they are doing. A father should be asking questions when the students come home
> to see what needs to be accomplished and tries to be involved in their lives.

Caroline added:

> It really depends on the mom and how much the mom is working, is she home and
> present when the kids are home from school. A lot of these students when I talk to them
> they share that mom is working 2nd shift and there is no one at home to hold them
> accountable since there is no father present. When you think of co-parenting when mom
> is gone dad is home and they can alternate but in these cases without a father they are not
> held as accountable. Some of the students take full advantage of having a single mom and
> do not hold themselves accountable either because they do not have two parents and
> someone at home to watch over them.

Dan stated:

> If I perceive there is a problem or there are consistent problems and you know there is not
> going to be any home discipline students just say this is the way I am going to be so you
> can either accept that or not but this is the way I am. There becomes times where
> discipline does not change behavior. Discipline has to continue to come but it is probably

misfiring. For example, students will say no one is making me come to school on time or no one is making me come to school at all. We deal with these issues at school but because we do not get a lot of support outside of school it is almost as if we are spinning our wheels.

Elizabeth added:

With absent dads, we have kids that will always blame somebody else. They don't really take responsibility for what they have done. It is always somebody else's fault. One in particular was in here the other day and ranted for 30 minutes about how everything that was wrong with him was because of somebody else. He was not talking any responsibility despite he was the one sitting in class and he was the one not doing his work.

Freddy stated:

Fatherless students have learned in regards to accountability to become entitled kids. Meaning that the societal expectations are not being met by what society says. Where I am living at today, so because those expectations are not being meant they are going to search for it somewhere. In that search I think if effects it greatly.

George added:

That goes back to responsibility. That is what I have found most of all trying to put the blame on somebody else anytime something goes on instead of being able to step up and take it.

Julie stated:

Well if it is a single parent and they don't feel like there is good solid attention there or support, there is no accountability then. Or even if it is sporadic, it's still not, if it's

sporadic support or attention then its more they just seem kind of like it is unfair all of a sudden you're looking at my grades and you care about what I am doing. So it just kind of to them it completely negates all of that attention to begin with. So there is some of that. And then, of course, even if the parent cares if the father's like depending on what reason, or how the father exited their lives, if they feel rejected by them, and like they want to be accountable to that person who is not there. Even if their parent is, like wants to be there it is not enough.

Lilly added:

I have had a few and now that I think about it they possibly did not have a father. Who I have been told they don't listen to women. There are just a few kids that that I feel over-all respect level is not present if they don't have a father. There is a kid who just got expelled this week and it is only ever the mom's name that is brought up. I have never heard anything about his father. I never had huge issues with him, but I know the administrators down stairs have had huge issues with him.

Tom stated:

This is probably impacted but the whole thing about the lack of a father they will have trust issues, or lack of trust. They may not be as accountable because they have issues from the lack of a father and this can come out in their relationships with their classmates and/or teammates.

Student Respect

Caroline stated:

The students in this setting are generally respectful in our setting because it is one on one and they are not in trouble. I imagine this would look different in the classroom, but they

are generally respectful in here. If it is a situation where a student has had some discipline issues and we have been asked to talk with them about being disrespectful in class I have noticed that a lot of those cases come from single parent homes where there is not a dad present.

Dan added:

Respect is a two way street, we need to show them respect and, in return they need to show you respect. It is about the environment that you create as we cannot control their entire life but we can make their 49 minutes per day respectful and pleasant. Unfortunately we do not see them long enough to impact them as much as they used to. We understand that students have bad days but we have 180 students come through our doors each day and we do not know that when they arrive so we need to always have that environment of mutual respect.

Elizabeth stated:

I think sometimes when there is an absent father, I will go back and I kind of touched on this, about how adult men treat adult women. If there is not a father involved, we got kids that don't see a healthy relationship so I feel that can run over into the school on a negative way. As far as being disrespectful to teachers, especially females.

Freddy added:

The biggest thing once again has to do with connectedness, connections. Those kids that are fatherless, they seek pseudo fathers and if you meet that role and fit that role then they will show you that respect. Overall with a typical person they don't know to respect them. I think a mother, I know some mothers that we grew up with that were called big mamas that they demanded respect. But, there is something about fathers being there. There is something about the father. My grandfather did not say much but I understood

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he meant what he meant, I understood the parameters to where I could go and where I couldn't.

George stated:

Respect is a learned behavior. I think many fathers that are at home are good at teaching is respect. When you've not seen that modeled for you it is hard to learn.

Heather added:

The level of respect for adults goes down. There is a negativity, not in all of the students, but in a bunch of them without a father they have anger issues. This comes out as a lack of respect and attitude.

Julie stated:

Like I said, I think a lot of girls, learn what type of respect they deserve from their father's treatment. So I think that is definitely a component there. And then, I think sometimes with those boys who have absent fathers there is some compensation going on there being like tough. You can kind of see that with being really sensitive about any perceived disrespect on the part of anybody else. Especially like being, like, strong or tough or something like that.

Kelly added:

Depending on what is going on at home, the family dynamic at home, the presence or absence of the biological father, I have had male students who just could not behave in a man's classroom. On the flip side I have had boys who just could not behave for a woman in the classroom. In my experience that is usually boys that have a gender issue with a teacher. This could be based on the dynamic at home whether it is anger at mom because dad left or they are mad at dad for leaving and hate men and do not want to be

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around them. It typically has to deal with the family dynamic at home and a separation

between mom and dad. Typically this is mom raising the dad without a kid.

Sara Jane stated:

Honestly I think it's so common now, that other kids don't typically tend to think much

of it, because it is so pronounced, that maybe a long time ago it might have been more of

a stigma, because if was more rare. But, I think in this day and age with so many kids, it's

just the norm. I think occasionally you will get a kid who may have a specific issue.

Maybe either with a female teacher or a male teacher and they have difficulty. I mean,

I've definitely had male students who have had difficulty with female teachers and I have

had female students who have had difficulty with female teachers and vice versa. But, I

couldn't say that is necessarily is related to the absence of the father.

Communication and Collaboration

Caroline stated:

This ties back to if they are struggling some with issues like respect, communication, and

accountability this can all go back to what is going on at home. There is no one at home

to teach them respect or accountability, the role that a dad would typically be playing,

they do have a harder time communicating with classmates, peers, and teachers.

Dan added:

Growing up and not having that person in their life we have to model for them what is

appropriate for them. We are dealing with young adults and they have to know how to

survive in the real world. We have to learn to work together and this is why athletics and

such are so important because it teaches teamwork and how to work together. Things that

we talk about in the classroom that we want to see in evaluations and things you see them

in athletics all of the time. We have to model the appropriate behavior and lead them on

how to work as a group member.

Freddy stated:

Connection equals trust. Without that connection they don't have trust. Most fatherless

kids don't have that connection of that authority figure or that trust or that security. So

they don't trust in the opening up to other people.

George added:

I think it goes back to just the relationship of what kind of relationship, how you talk to

each other. I think without the father I see kids that are a little more brass with each other.

It's really talking in a disrespectful way even though they may not see it that way.

Heather stated:

This depends on the kid and where they are at with this missing parent. Some of them can

overcome this, but most have anger and negativity and it can impact their ability to work

with others. Sometimes students have internal issues with this and it prevents them from

getting along with others or working well with others because there is something missing

there. I have seen others that can work well with others, but in most cases some are

immature, but this really depends on the kid.

Julie added:

Nothing that just wouldn't just apply to that same idea of respect and how you talk to

other people. Like if you don't have accountability, or don't think it doesn't really matter

if I do well in school, like that or your depressed and anxious and all those things. I mean,

that's going to affect how you interact with other people. Being withdrawn or being more

focused on, being seen as tough or manly, or getting some validation from each other that

they are missing.

Kelly stated:

Other than being able to do work at all to feel effective, feel confident, place value on

education. People who are collaborative group members, who work well in a group or

communicate well are those that have to have a value for education and what they are

participating in. If value does not exist they are not going to participate. If they do not

respect the other members, or a particular gender, they will not participate.

Tom added:

Students are more disrespectful when they do not have a father-figure.

Delinquent Behaviors

Dan stated:

When you look at it, sometimes kids are just going to be a behavioral problem. A lot of

times it is just a lack of parenting at home and not having a father at home would

definitely lead to this. At the same time, this generation has a lot more single parenting

but sometimes this can be helped if there is another role model or another male figure in

their life at all. I would definitely say you would see an increase of delinquent behavior in

our students without a father. Recently I have seen an increase of students that were

delinquent having a missing male figure in their life.

Heather added:

I think this again goes back to a father having the ability to hold kids accountable at a

certain level. When the father is missing that ability to hold students at a certain level

does not exist. In these students there is not a fear-factor of concern that the father would

get mad at me. I have heard students talk about this a lot, stating that they can do what

they want to because they do not have that discipline at home.

Lilly stated:

Probably, if I think back. Were you the administrator the year all those kids got expelled?

That I had? I think there was like 17 of them. Well when you think back like that year, at

that list. I mean all of them, like on all of those meeting only just a mom a few had dads.

Early Sexual Behavior

Blake stated:

You can see how a student conducts themselves in relationships with others, whether it

be a male or female, these students tend to be more active. The way they conduct

themselves and how they want to be perceived by others can be seductive in a way.

Caroline added:

I have 7 years of juvenile justice experience, working with kids that have charges and are

in foster care. It was my experiences there when a dad was in the home I was shocked

because it was so rare. It was uncommon for them to have two parents, if I received a file

and there were two parents I was shocked. I know that sounds awful but it was true.

Dan stated:

I don't get into those type of situations but what I have seen more over a few generations

but I see more of the mother having these types of conversations with their children

because she is more comfortable having those types of conversations. There are

opportunities for student to be more educated on this topic than in the past but I wouldn't

know specifics about when it occurs.

Heather added:

This one is difficult because the day and time we live in early sexual behavior is across the board. Or you can see the students who know who the father is but that man is a poor example, sometimes having kids by multiple women. These students miss the sense of a family so that can also be a factor in early sexual behavior.

Lilly stated:

Maybe. I mean you hear things. I have never, I don't know that I hear it more from that group than other groups. There are some who maybe again we are talking high school boys. How much is talk verses fact and fiction. Right, sometimes you maybe hear things because they are more boisterous about it. I don't know. I don't want to know.

Drinking and/or Drug Use

Caroline stated:

Yes, I hate to say this but I can think of first hand examples of kids that I worked with that are impacted by sexual behavior and drinking/drug use. My daughter has a friend now that is 13 and pregnant and she was raised without a father. I definitely think the absence of the dad leads to those types of behaviors.

Dan added:

Yes, on this one. We already deal with this one. I have not seen drinking be an issue as much in recent years but drug use has returned. With the opening up of vaping and some of the different things that are out there now to get the kids started. In these instances the best thing that can happen to them is to get caught and to have people in conversation with them in regards to this behavior. Definitely not having a strong male presence to answer to at home is definitely a contributor.

Lilly stated:

> Again, I don't know how much is fact or fiction based off what I hear. My first instinct is to say, yes. But then it is also kind of that same kind of when I think absence of a father and my kids have no father listed a lot of times it is from a particular class or group and sometimes that group is more inclined to do it regardless. Sometimes I think it might be more of a social economic life style then a father not being present.

Tom added:

> I would say yes if that is the same pattern that happens at home. If there is drinking and drugs in the home currently and that is what modeled then I have seen that become a problem with students.

Research Question 2 Summary

Educator perceptions regarding student social behavior and the absence of the father revealed some common themes. Educators perceived these students to have discipline and behavioral problems, lacking accountability, being oppositional and non-compliant. Educators perceived that the lack of structure and support at home can lead to trust issues, disrespect, anger, a lack of responsibility, and a disregard for societal rules and norms. These students can often be quick to anger and struggle with communication skills and recognition of authority. The perception that students without a father will engage in early sexual behavior and increased drinking and/or drug use was prevalent among the participants. Overall, the lack of modeling and social emotional issues were perceived by the educators to lead to negative behaviors.

Research Question 3

What are educator perceptions of student academic performance in educational experiences as a

secondary student without a biological father?

Table 3 below identifies the strongest responses to educator perspectives during the interviews as it pertained to student academic performance and the absence of the father. Each participant was asked eight questions related to the academic performance of their secondary students that do not have a biological father present. The table details the strongest perceptions of each educator. The strongest perceptions existed on the topics of reading/writing skills, student confidence, apathy and empathy.

Table 3

Educator Perceptions on Academic Performance

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Blake	X							
Caroline	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Elizabeth								X
Freddy			X	X	X	X	X	X
George	X	X		X			X	X
Heather		X	X	X	X	X		X
Julie	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kelly				X		X		X
Lilly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sara Jane	X		X	X	X	X		X
Tom								X

Daily Tasks/Classwork

Blake stated:

> If a student does not have a father-figure what I see is that they do not stay on task. The
>
> students are not held as accountable. I am sure the mother does her very best but it is the
>
> difference between a mom's love and a dad's love-those things are totally different.

Caroline added:

> This is going to depend on whether the student struggles with authority figures and being
>
> respectful, sometimes they can be successful here at school because of the structure here
>
> and then they go home and they do not have that support system. They may appear to be
>
> OK here at school but once they get home it falls apart.

Dan stated:

> Students will work during class time but they do not have accountability outside of
>
> school so what is not done just does not get done. So, usually what does not get
>
> completed in class just does not get completed. Students have a carefree attitude about
>
> this and do not seem to care very much if they did not get the work done and typically
>
> they are not worried about getting anything done until the next time they come to class
>
> again.

George added:

> I think there is a work ethic. I think there is a small. I can't say I really notice it. I think
>
> there is a small, small amount of work ethic that goes along with it. I think it is very
>
> marginal.

Julie stated:

> Well, I think if their home situation, if it is single parent, and it's unstable enough

to where, like there's no accountability at home, then why even do it in the class, like nothing's going to happen. There's no reason to, if they feel like mom's not going to do anything. What can she do? Why even do it in class? Some of that, depending on how unstable their home is because of the school parent situation, just engagement and just the desire to even get a grade. Like the grade is not important, it's not, "Do I feel like it today?" "Is this interesting to me?" "Okay, maybe I'll do it."

Lilly added:

I think I do mostly when I put everything in skyward. I am one of those teachers, you put it in. If you do anything within 24 hours it is in skyward and those parents who check it regularly they can see it. But when it is a single mom or a grandma who is busy and is doesn't always have the time I think it is a lot hard and I think we see more of those kids ending up on our lists, our F lists because their missing assignments and there not getting turned in and it's really hard for one person to be on top of all of that.

Sara Jane stated:

I think it comes down to the kid, so every kid is different. But I do think for many, many kids, who are taking on rolls that might otherwise be done by a father, such as, providing an income, helping mom with chores, helping take care of brother and sisters that are younger, I think a lot of times that leads to interference with getting school work done and I think I said this earlier maybe, but not having two parents there to supervise and you know, double team the kids, so to speak, I think it can really cause some issues with certain kids.

Completion of Homework

Caroline stated:

> I think this is huge struggle for these kids without a father. It is hard enough to be present and a good parent for your children if you have two parents in the home much less if you are there trying to do all of this alone. Parents are trying to pay bills, manage their jobs, and be on top of their children and whether they are doing homework or not. I think sometimes a single parent has to let things slide so they can accomplish everything else they have to do and monitoring homework is something that falls by the wayside.

Dan added:

> Absolutely, they do not have any accountability and they want to go work on their trucks or whatever they want to do, but most approach school now like a job. They treat it as if they are clocking in and clocking out and they do not see the importance of taking the work home with them.

George stated:

> Yes, that definitely. I've seen the kids many of them work in the class outside of this but the quality of work and being able to take the responsibility to self-regulate. You know many of them do when they have a teacher over them doing it but the quality of work I don't think is as good.

Heather added:

> As a woman I cannot tell you how many times I hear them say they cannot make the students do this because they are bigger or the father is absent. We hear all of the time about students going home to play video games or go to the civic center because they do not have that strict disciplinarian at home teaching responsibility.

Julie stated:

> Yes, if the in the home and that culture in their family, if father is of the authority figure
> then that is the person that could tell them, no, you have to do this. And if it is just a
> single parent like, "Are they working?" "Are they having to babysit instead of do this?"

Lilly added:

> The influence I have seen on that with juniors and seniors is if the dad is totally out of the
> picture and mom is 100 percent doing everything or grandma doing everything. I have
> noticed them having to get jobs and provide for their family. I feel like junior year
> especially the ability to do homework is a luxury. You know, if you got to go home
> because your family can't afford to give you your needs and wants so you work 30 to 40
> hours a week as some of them do. You can't do homework because you are helping to
> provide because you have a single income household. With no other form of child
> support or alimony or anything like that coming in.

Classroom Testing

Caroline stated:

> With some of the kids the anxiety and self-esteem issues come into play during a testing
> setting. They are supposed to be focused on something, it is quiet in the room, and their
> thoughts can drift off course. The students can begin to become anxious and their
> thoughts can carry them away from the test. Students like this can get really distracted in
> the test setting because they are dealing with emotional issues.

Dan added:

> I think so because the hardest thing that I have seen in education over the past 10 or 15
> years is how students approach testing. The attitude now is what I do not pick up in class

I just don't pick up. The idea of going home and studying for tests seems limited at this

point. There are some students that will do this and some that are motivated by two

parents in the house questioning what you have to do and the other making them sit down

and do it. So, not having the father's authority to make them do it at home is simply not

going to get accomplished.

Freddy stated:

I think it can for the good and for the bad. Once again you go over the expectations of

some kids. When they have expectations put on them they tend to tense up. Go back to

my kids, and thinking my kids and of the expectations put on them but I know without

me being there I don't think that they would care as much.

George added:

The ones that I have seen don't care as much but at the same time they don't get stressed

out as much. I do see a lack of attention to detail.

Heather stated:

I am not in the classroom, but this goes back to the emotional piece and the anxiety piece.

If they have anxiety from the father not being around this could put them under pressure

and increase that anxiety level. They could have pressure for testing or even having a bad

day, but those emotions that exist from not having a father can impact them and flare up

at any moment. This is how this would be linked from my perspective because that it

what I hear from students.

Julie added:

I think testing especially affects their confidence. So if they do lack confidence because

of the situation with an absent father or anxiety, like that would definitely like come up

and be an issue at that point, because that's a stressful point like testing. I think also it's

that, am I trying to like to make somebody proud? NO! Does somebody care if I do well

on this test or not? Comes into play and if I feel less confident anyway, then it's a lot

easier to say that nobody cares, so I'm not even going to try. It's not because I am dumb.

It's because I'm not going to try.

Lilly stated:

If they are not doing their homework they are not prepared for the test. In math, that is

just the way it works. My homework prepares you to be ready for your tests and if you

haven't practiced it. Yeah you are affected on your classroom testing.

Sara Jane added:

Other than if it is like maybe a like direct bleed over or correlation from not doing the rest

of the work and then not being prepared for test. But then in a TN Ready type situation or

a state test, ACT or something like that. I'm not sure that I could say, that I could pin

point that.

Reading and/or Writing Skills

Caroline stated:

I would think that ultimately their reading and writing skills would be higher if they had

both parents in the home. This would create more time for the parents to balance life

better and give more time for focus on the children. I know from my experience when

one parent is cooking dinner, which my husband loves to do, I will sit down and help the

kids with homework. If you only have one person there then you can be spread too thin as

a parent and academics can suffer as a result.

Dan added:

> Having four children of my own my wife and I both read to our kids so I believe it would take a very strong person at home and not see those skills deprived a little because the duties are typically split. It is so important in a child's development to read to them at an early age and to get them to enjoy reading. If they miss out on that some kids absolutely hate reading because they were not exposed to this. Sometimes when students are behind they do not have the motivation to close the gap because you struggle to admit to the fact that you are lacking in that skill.

Freddy stated:

> Increase. All these questions, it depends on that father. In some cases fatherless would be better because of that father not instilling certain things.

George added:

> I would say increase just because overall if education is seen as important and many fathers that are home see that as important and I think pretty much over-all not just specifically in reading and writing.

Heather stated:

> The reading and writing skills are effected at an early age, but it can go along with what I have said previously. Kids are distracted by any number of things in education and reading and writing is not something that they want to do. If kids do not want to read and they are missing a parent they are not pushed and this could be a distraction due to the social emotional aspects they deal with.

Kelly added:

> This would depend on how literate the home is. If mom had the ability to spend time
> reading with them, consuming literature with them as a small child then they are probably
> going to be fine in reading and writing. If the mom is a single mom and working multiple
> jobs and not at home or just barely at home to get kids fed and to bed this is where you
> see a lower reading level.

Lilly stated:

> Like I said it goes back to in my mind when they are little. That's when you learn to read
> and write. I read somewhere or someone told me the other day if you can't hit a certain
> level by 3rd grade on the reading scale. It is really hard to move beyond it at that point. I
> wish I could state that more scholarly than I just did. If by 3rd grade if you can't get to a
> particular thresh hold. Then it is hard to get beyond this other threshold regardless how
> much intervention and stuff that you get in life. So early on in life, I see why they say
> now why reading and writing is so important. If you don't have someone on top of you
> making sure that is happening then when we get here, your name comes up every single
> year in the intervention meeting. I use the parental involvement in general but it so much
> harder and I am just saying this is someone here at times who feels like a single mom this
> time of year, because I do all that. I know there is a lot of days when I say, "You know
> you are just going to have to read that book tomorrow." "We just can't do it tonight."
> You know if that is an everyday thing for someone, I could see the ramifications of it
> would have and then looking on down the road when I get them in my class 10 years
> later. If that were happening every day for 10 years that would really affect their reading
> and writing skills.

Sara Jane added:

> I think it has potential to decrease depending on the other supports that maybe in place in
> the home. There is one less person, if the dad left really early there is one less person to
> hear spoken language from in the household. That is fewer words spoken. So the
> language development might be delayed. Somebody is not there to read to the child. To
> help them get their homework when they're children and to stay on grade level. So I
> think it could be unless there are other supports in place, like maybe grandparents who
> are there or other people that can help, when that kid is real young.

Time Spent Reading

Caroline stated:

> I hate to keep generalizing things but I would think that if you do not have a father, both
> parents in the home, then there is not someone monitoring what they are doing. A father
> would tell the students to get off the Xbox or the phone and read, but a single parent is
> not able to monitor this as effectively. For the single parent there is twice as much to
> manage and academics are not held as a priority.

Dan added:

> Reading is not something that goes away, to strengthen reading you have to continue to
> read. This starts a a young age in the early stages of development and it is a lifetime skill
> of keeping the mind sharp. Some of the issues we see is not reading and learning and
> losing the challenge of reading. This needs to be reinforced at a young age and made
> enjoyable and not feel like it is a burden. This is so hard to recoup at an older age if they
> did not pick it up when they were younger.

Freddy stated:

No doubt because I think without a father it would be tougher because if they were without a father that would be their second income source. When you don't have enough income sources than that mother has to double to get it. Which takes time away from the children. All these things with these questions is with the father that one that the connection and all those that is one thing you got to remember also the double income is also an advantage it give more resources but without those resources I should of added it adds more time.

Heather added:

When they have all of these things going on in their mind, reading is not a priority. When you read you cannot have a ton of things going on in your head and process it. Sometimes you can read and not comprehend at all because you are thinking about other things.

Julie stated:

I think that is as well would depend. I definitely have some students whose reading is, their escape from home situation that is horrible. The student I'm thinking about this term right now, like reading is something she goes to, in order to not think about being pulled away from her father and that she can't see him, she can't talk to him and things like that. It really depends. I don't think that it is specifically.

Lilly added:

Again from a secondary stand point, I don't want to say it is too late but it's hard to make up for then. You know from a young age, you know this too, they tell always tell you as soon as they are born they tell you to start reading to them. I don't know how much help

that actually is. There is a level on the first two years of life when they start knowing

what a book is and how to interact with it. Reading with them I think at that age is not

necessarily about them learning to read it is more about the relationship building. That

time when you are sitting, close together, cuddling with your child, reading. It is a great

bonding experience. So imagine like growing up never having that. That would be a

really hard thing not having that part of relationship with someone and the things that we

talked about that follow as a part of that.

Sara Jane stated:

I think it would be pronounced for kids in high school, particularly juniors and seniors,

which I have the most experience with, simply because, a lot of times those kids will

have to get jobs to contribute to the home and that contributes to less time for anything

else including reading.

Student Confidence on Standardized Testing

Caroline stated:

Back to what we already said, the confidence does suffer a bit even in general school

work. So when the confidence is lacking in general it would be something that creates

anxiety that could be amplified when students have to sit in a standardized test setting.

Sometimes asking them to reproduce the knowledge that they know, when they didn't

pick it up in class because they were feeling anxious can compound the issues associated

with self-esteem and confidence in a test setting.

Dan added:

Naturally, when we have kids take the ACT or end of course type of exam we try to

review but this has to be self-motivation to get students to study for these things.

Sometimes needing to get a certain score to qualify athletically or something like that can be the motivating factor they need. Not having parents at home nagging on them to prepare for the exams the students will feel like this is not that important and will not prepare accordingly.

Freddy stated:

Once again it goes back to the structure of the family home. If the father is in that home most the time more than not then there is some hierarchy or structure. I think it effects it in the fact that not just with the expectation of achieving but also being to put things in a perspective. I think with standardized testing a father being in the home no matter if he's and intellectual in academia or not I think you still going to have those resources and things in place that will help you maintain or improve.

George added:

It is the same, this has pressure, they feel it from teachers that pass it to kids. These tests are important to get into college. If they are an athlete they have to get a certain score it can make students anxious. When they get anxious they can begin to wonder why and this can be a number of things including resulting from the absence of the father.

Julie stated:

I think it is even more so because then there is not even necessarily, they don't, they maybe can't see its application into what they did. At least, in a class test like, we've covered this work, we talked about it, we worked on this, we practiced these skills and then they can see the direct connection between what we did and the test. Where, as the standardized tests, seems less connected and so it's not even like they're trying to please a teacher even if they wanted to please a teacher. Then it becomes a confidence issue

again just like with testing in a classroom can be, and then nobody really cares if I do well, so it doesn't really matter.

Kelly added:

I can see how it impacts confidence but I do not see how that plays out in regards to this specifically as it could be on anything. This could be on turning in daily work or class assignments that is going to impact testing. I don't know if I have ever seen this result in test anxiety. Usually the ones that I have seen are the ones from two parent homes as it seems the other ones do not care as much.

Lilly stated:

I think that would be really interesting. I don't know. I am not saying its causation but I know there is correlation between the lack of a father and a child. You know academic level and stuff like that. But I think it's just kind of all the domino effect at some point. If they can't read and write they really struggle in secondary schools and if they struggle in secondary school and have to get a job then there in a position not to be successful at school then the ACT comes and their just got gaps and you know, we've seen this story play out.

Sara Jane added:

I think if a kids confidence overall is down because of that factor in their life, then absolutely that could translate into a test situation, overall self-esteem, and just overall well-being. But I would have no statistical evidence for that.

Critical Thinking

Caroline stated:

> I would hope that their critical thinking skills would be high because of what they have experienced. Often they will think things through so much because of what they have been through where a parent could be incarcerated or they have gone through a divorce, or a parent dying suddenly these things typically have to think through things more. I would hope there would not be a major negative impact in regards critical thinking in life but as it pertains to academics I could see it being a struggle.

Dan added:

> You learn how to critically think at a young age as far as problem solving. This can be as simple as working outside with your dad and having to figure out the size of a wrench or a certain type of a screwdriver. When you are young you do not know those things but it is trial and error. When you start getting tasks and learning how to do things this helps promote kids to try things. When they get to the classroom, when you throw a question out and student have to think at higher levels then someone has questioned them to do that at home. It is important to have a relationship as to where kids do try to do things on their own.

Freddy stated:

> I think it effects it a lot. The reason why, I think that having that male there. I think with their father being around that it would improve their critical thinking skills.

George added:

>That's another thing that is like respect that is a learned. You have to learn how to critical think. So yes I have seen that, because I think the kids with fathers have seen father's critical think in a household setting. You have to.

Julie stated:

>I think in situations where there is some emotional baggage that goes with that absent parent, that, that kind of clouds their ability to think critically. The kind of emotional regulation that you need to calmly think about a problem and address it step by step. There is some missing pieces there. It goes straight to frustration, anger, shutdown a lot more often. Yeah, I think that emotional regulation gets in the way.

Lilly added:

>I think there is a lot less perseverance. You know I think, again perceptions here. If someone has seen someone just walk out or leave when things got hard and they turned out okay, like why would I sit here and keep trying on this, that or the other. When things get hard I quit. That's perception I have nothing to back that up. I have seen that. I just think having that lack of someone there could top that perseverance. I see that being a thing. They don't like to try. Kids in general. I could see if I dove into it being more prominent.

Apathy and/or Empathy

Caroline stated:

>I see the apathy all of the time. I see apathetic students who will verbalize that their father does not even care enough to be around so why should I care about school work. It can become difficult to explain to a kid that they are important and they are loved when the

parents actions did not show that. With empathy it depends, I have some students who

have younger siblings and they seem to have an abundance of empathy for the younger

siblings because they are like a caretaker.

Dan added:

I can definitely see sometimes where students are not very motivated, they just want to

get out of high school, they just want to walk across the stage. Sometimes they will just

be trying to make mom happy to walk across the stage, but they do not understand and

realize that there is much more to learn in life. As educators we are very empathetic to try

to reach out to these kids to help them get an understanding of why education is

important and that they will continue to learn for the rest of their life. A lot of times

students will be very skilled at one thing or another but they do not see the value in what

they are learning in certain subject areas so they are apathetic. Anytime a kid says I don't

need this or I don't need that it all ties in.

Elizabeth stated:

I think a lot of our kids lack empathy but I think our students with absent fathers

definitely have a lot more apathy than other kids. Like I said before, where they are kind

of trying to survive, they don't have the relationships modeled for them at home so

probably all of their emotion needs are not being met at home.

Freddy added:

I think it is hard for them to be empathetic. I can see them seeing things in other people's

eyes, but I don't think it warrants their concern as much. When you have men involved

males involved they live in that man box, many of us do. So there is a standard or

expectation that we have for men and women and sometimes it is not favorable for

women. But I do think, I am looking at me personally and with my father it caused me to care more for people and their feelings and be respectful to them, because I can see, I am thinking of some of my friends who are good guys I can see them, they respect other people and love other people but they always feel withdrawn and pulled away. Their emotion is not tied to anyone else emotion.

George stated:

Yes. I don't know why. You see the relationships and the way they talk to each other and they don't seem very empathic. It is hard to say if that is just a cover up or it maybe they don't see that husband and wife interaction all the time.

Heather added:

I think students lack empathy because they are in a situation where they develop anger as opposed to empathy. Instead of processing and dealing with the situations that exist in their lives, they get angry because they do not want to talk about it.

Julie stated:

I think apathy, especially if they feel like, my father doesn't care about me or so that's less of a reason for me to care. I definitely think that is a factor. Empathy, I think if they find another student in conversation, whatever it is that we're doing share that they have a similar situation, then they are more-quick to empathize or especially like if the situation in the story is like that. I think, for instance we read a story recently that there is no father in the story. It's just the mom that is mentioned and there grown kids, grown daughters but there is no father. Only some of the kids still ask, "Where is the father?" "Where is the father?" it's just the number of kids who have a missing parent, single parent home , that's kind of there norm. I don't know if, I don't think affects their empathy, necessarily.

Of course this is me thinking that. Underneath there some of that rudeness to each other if it is like someone is really in pain, that they, that they would care about that. If they could actually get through, cut through that, through the brashness that they would see that. I think that's true.

Kelly added:

Apathetic, they lean more toward apathy in most cases because this is a defense mechanism to appear that way. There is research around students who do not have an attachment to a biological parent at a very early age they can have difficulty empathizing with others. I do not know if I have seen a specific example but I know there is research and you see this more often in the foster care system where there was not an attachment to either parent at birth or during the early years.

Lilly stated:

I feel like that varies on a kid. You know when you got those kids who want to work hard and it clicks for them, they don't want to be what they've seen growing up, then their apathy is very low because they want to work towards it. But then when you see them it's like when you see them start in a cycle, you know were at a point now where some of these kids at this school there parents graduated when Matt and I did and so its like you see a cycle. A cycle of apathy and just already giving up because this is my life and this is what I am destine too. You know they're going to continue a cycle you know one of them. The one who graduated with my spouse is going to be a grandparent, because their son is expecting a child and that is just crazy. Think at 38 to be a grandparent and that cycle continuing. Empathy wise I don't think I can say much on that one but the apathy I could see that.

Sara Jane added:

> So I think, it can lead to apathy if a child becomes over whelmed from taking on extra
>
> roles from home, or filling some kind of void in the household, or feeling unwanted.
>
> Maybe, especially, male students, it seems to be a little more pronounced when they
>
> become teenagers, if there's nobody there to be that solid role model for them, they're
>
> going to seek that somewhere if they can't find it, I could see that lead them to be
>
> apathetic and just give up. As far as empathy, I almost think, that some kids in that
>
> situation may have more than other students simply because, they've experienced that
>
> kind of adversity and I think, if you have been in that adversity it can make you a more
>
> empathic person when you see other people in the same situation.

Tom stated:

> Students are longing to have a father, when they are not there they become more
>
> apathetic and probably less empathetic because they have been hurt. This has been my
>
> experience in dealing with these students.

Research Question 3 Summary

Educator perceptions related to the absence of the father and student academic

achievement provide further themes from this research. Educators perceived that students

struggle to stay on task and hold themselves accountable for work and preparation for testing.

The lack of structure outside the school can contribute to questioning authority or being

disrespectful. The lack of discipline at home is perceived to equate to a poor work ethic, low

amounts of responsibility, and a low quality of work. These students can sometimes have a low

self-esteem, thus low expectations and little attention to detail. Students may struggle to focus or

be anxious and distracted by outside events. Students could be worried about exterior influences such as poverty or a lack of resources. It may not be the priority of the student to complete the work and therefore they become apathetic with low confidence and expectations for academic success.

Absent Fathers

The twelve educators who participated in the study each have developed a unique perspective over the course of their careers. Table 4 below will identify the strongest perspectives to questions from the general section regarding absent fathers. The educators were each asked eight introductory questions to get them in the mindset of thinking about students with the absence of the biological father. The participants had strong perspectives regarding father involvement, qualities learned from the father, how the absence of the father shapes the educational experience, and that fathers should be more involved in education.

Table 4

Educator Perceptions on Absent Fathers in Secondary Education

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Blake	X				X		X	
Caroline	X	X		X	X		X	X
Dan	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Elizabeth	X	X		X	X		X	X
Freddy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
George	X	X		X	X		X	X
Heather	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Julie	X	X		X	X		X	
Kelly	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Lilly	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Sara Jane	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Tom	X	X			X		X	X

Father Absence

Blake stated:

> What I have noticed about student that I have knowledge that has an absent father it seems like the females seem to look towards male teachers as a father-figure. Students will tell me that I am like a father to them so that gives me the perception that is what they are searching for. A teacher pushes them and can be what they think a father should look like so that is my experience.

Caroline added:

> The first thing that stands out when kids come in and they start to talk about what they are dealing with is that we always look to see what the family structure is. I have noticed with the students without a father is that they have a tendency to have more discipline referrals, they struggle a little bit more with grades, and in certain social situations. Sometimes the girls especially seem to get themselves into uncomfortable social situations with boys and relationships.

Dan stated:

> It depends, when I was working as a football coach I had an opportunity to get to know them a lot better than I can now just teaching because our class schedules have gotten shorter. We are now 49 minute classes and it does not give you as much time to build up the relationship. Often times I do not necessarily find those things out until I have had an issue with the student. Typically, when they do not have work turned in or you have a discipline issue and you call home is when you find out that one of the parents is not in the home. When I was coaching football and you acknowledged things like this the students would latch onto you. You just do not find this out as early in the classroom as

you would in the athletic field. When you do students latch on to try to find a father-like figure.

Elizabeth added:

Well I've worked a lot with students over the years and a lot of them had absent parents, absent fathers, a lot of times they didn't know who their dad was or they chose not to see their dad or their dad was in jail. Just various reasons. Divorce, it wasn't a good divorce, it wasn't a good relationship to begin with and that type of stuff.

Freddy stated:

I was a coach at (another) high school, starting in 1999, there was a lot of my players that lived in single parent homes. I also worked as a case manager with Child and Family Services and I dealt with children, working with at risk kids and a lot of those kids were in fatherless homes. I moved on as a head coach in 2005. Once again at a previous High School where I worked with kids with fatherless homes. Left there, moved to North Carolina, once again poverty area hit without sourcing to where the outsourcing happened a lot of families broke up so a lot of those kids in that next generation were fatherless kids.

George added:

Well what I found is many of them are different. I guess the biggest thing I have noticed is the lower income student without a father is a little different than the ones that are not from low income. Behavior wise, maybe act out a little more often. Not so much disrespectful or mean but just maybe kind of seeking attention.

Heather stated:

I have had experiences; the first thing that comes to my mind is a student whose

biological father is in prison so there is a negative connotation there. I have heard these

kids when they have talked about their biological father there is anger, sadness, and

emptiness. The students will wonder what it is like to have a dad. There are also students

that do not know who their dad is so there is always that piece of who is it, why does he

not want to know me, does he even know about me.

Julie added:

Well in the situations where I have students that know that the father isn't around, the

fact that there is one parent at home, typically means there is not a lot of time at home for

that kid. You know mom is working a lot to provide. There is a lack of, an example,

I guess, as a woman I can't feel for them so a lot of times I see those students to gravitate

more or treat differently their male teachers verses me.

Kelly stated:

Sometimes you do not always know if they have a biological father in the home. As a

teacher I would hardly ever know that unless I called home, the student offered that

information, or I had some reason to dig into that. That might skew some of my

information because I would only know that as a teacher if I had a reason to call home, if

the student was struggling academically, or was in trouble or something like that. So, as

a teacher I wouldn't always know that. In the role that I am in now and being able to loop

with students and having them multiple years I know more and more about each one of

them every year. So now I know more about who has a dad at home or who has a dad that

is really their stepdad. In my experience, anytime you have a student from a single parent

home, whether that be the absent father or mother those students stereotypically struggle

emotionally and therefore academically.

Lilly added:

I think sometimes you realize that after the fact. Sometimes that is not the first thing you

identify when you first get the roster, oh this kid has a dad, this kid doesn't. But

sometimes when you start going through like you mentioned when you need to make that

first phone call home or that first email home you start looking down and sometimes it's

just mom or mom and step dad and you start to recognize a pattern there. That's not

always the case though. There are plenty of instances where, you know when you go to

contact home and there is both parents listed. However I will say if there are both parents

listed, I don't know why but it's like it is a natural inclination that I have to go and

contact the dad. I don't know if that just because growing up. If my dad was contacted I

was in big trouble. And so like sometimes that the route I'll take. But it is very often that

there is not one listed. Then you contact the mom.

Sara Jane stated:

I would say it depends on the student, but often times I think kids from a one parent home

sometimes experience more economic adversity, financial hardships, then other students

simply because they're a one income household opposed to a two income household. So

that sometimes can translate into difficulty in school. I think sometimes if there is only

one parent there, sometimes the parents are so over burdened with trying to work and

take care of the home by themselves, that there is not enough time to stay on top of the

kids the same way that anybody with two parents in a house could do to divide and

conquer. So sometimes kids don't have as much parental supervision or don't have

parents that can constantly nag at them or constantly check their grades, as double parent

homes might have. But then again, I would say that would vary by kid.

Tom added:

Obviously the father or the male role plays a huge part. In my experiences students that

are looking for a father figure as a teacher and a coach a lot of times they will look for

someone to fill that void. Often they are acting out and getting into trouble just to get

attention.

Father Involvement

Caroline stated:

Fathers are not as involved as mothers. I'd say with all of the parent meetings I have,

which is a lot, probably 75% of the time it is just the mom, 20% of the time it is both

parents, and maybe 5% of the time we may have just a dad come alone. I do not know

what to attribute this to, whether that is scheduling, which parent has more flexibility,

which parent is more involved in their education or what, I just know I have more

meetings with the mom.

Dan added:

I have had some kids that didn't have a father, had some that didn't have a mother, had

some that didn't have either, there have been some that I have taken home, taken them to

get them a burger at McDonalds because I knew they were not going to get a hot meal to

eat at home. I have had students that want to hang out and we let them stay and do their

homework just to give them a safe place to go.

Elizabeth stated:

> Working with some of the kids I've worked with currently it varies. I have got a couple
> of single dads actually that are raising kids which is not normal as far the work. Usually it
> is single moms but it is not necessarily a positive influence. The majority of kids as I
> think my case load of my kids I see, there is an absent dad. Like I said before they are in
> jail, they don't know who they are, or they wish they don't want to have contact with
> them.

Freddy added:

> There was very little father involvement. Even now at (our current) high school there is
> very little father involvement with students that I have coached or taught. The few fathers
> that are involved are there more so in a sports capacity then academics or social
> awareness capacity. There were some and most of those fathers were higher educated. I
> even had a couple single fathers that were raising their kids that I was involved with as a
> coach.

George stated:

> I find that students that have actively involved fathers and I am not just talking about just
> having a father but having an actively involved father that I know kids seem more
> motivated.

Heather added:

> With my players, I have two that the moms are not in the picture but the dads are so that
> is flipped. The ones who do have a father are more responsible, more confident, and they
> have a different level of accountability. Sometimes moms struggle to make students at the
> secondary level comply because they would rather nurture and take care of the students.

The dads, on the other hand, tend to play the role of the bad guy. Overall, the father is responsible for discipline whereas the mom wants the relationship.

Julie stated:

Not anything that is different than mom involvement. Being at Open Houses, and parent conferences, emails and things like that. If I had to say if there was more male involvement then female involvement, I don't know if I could say one way or the other.

Kelly added:

I definitely deal with more mothers than fathers. Nearly 9 times out of 10 I will be in contact with the mother. When we ask students who would you want me to call almost always they say to call mom. They will say that mom will know more than my dad would know.

Lilly stated:

It used to be like a societal thing. You expect to see moms at meetings or you expect to see, that is more of the expected parent that I am going interact with at Open House, or something like that. So I always really enjoy it when I get to meet a child's dad.

It is almost like a different level of involvement I feel, or it just feels different dealing with a dad. I don't know why. Dealing with a dad and dealing with a mom you like you feel that. When it is absent I feel like it is really obvious. Like I have a student that during the first week of school told me about her dad. She mentioned very early on that her dad died by drug overdose. I think I can really see how that has affected her. Based off when she told me it happened. I can really see gaps in that level of mathematic skills and she is being raised by her grandparents. Not even being raised like a mother. I feel like a bigger

thing here is like both parents absent and the grandparent raising these kids and that being

a whole other level of parental absence in their lives.

Sara Jane added:

Honestly, I think I see, usually more maternal involvement. Mothers are usually the ones

that respond to emails when I send home, more than fathers. I tend to see more mothers at

Open House then fathers. That's not to say I don't get any responses from dad, but I

would say it's heavily weighted in terms of the mothers.

Tom stated:

This can be good and bad. I have seen fathers who are nonexistent that you never see at

games to the point that I could not tell you who their father or son was. I have also seen

the old helicopter parent where they are hovering above or now the lawnmower parent

where they come in and mow things down for them. I have seen both extremes in my

career.

Father Presence

Dan stated:

I think by the time students are on the high school level the parents are letting their kids

fly on their own. When we make calls home they will say that they try not to interfere

that they are a young adult so I do not see this very often. When you have open house is

when you find out that a student has both parents in attendance those are the ones that

you usually have the most contact with throughout the entire school year.

Freddy added:

Not as much. You have a few that were involved and those fathers were fathers that were

educated themselves. Many of those fathers when I think about it now were fathers,

who, I knew their grandfathers, who had fathers in their lives. Overall in my teaching and coaching career, I haven't had many fathers involved in the education process of the children.

Heather stated:

In my experience at this school, I would say this is not the case as a whole. This would be the case not only in education, but also just not in their lives, not around at all. Some do not have parents as we deal a lot with grandparents in our community. A lot of times there are meetings with moms and grandmothers.

Kelly added:

Stereotypically no, I deal more with moms than dads but it has been my experiences that the students that perform better have fathers that attend conferences or come to open house. On a day to day basis I may deal more with the mom but at least I see the father around.

Lilly stated:

I think that so varies. I think in the lower levels it's less likely. This is just based off of observation not any type of formal study. I think when I talk to lower level classes it's less likely you are going to see either parental involvement or a two parent household. I think as I have moved up more and taught Honors and AP classes you see it a little bit more. At least you see both listed in skyward. Not necessarily both are involved because I think at high school parents are not involved as much. But I do feel like for those lower level classes it seems to be more prevalent thing that the fathers not around or involved with the schooling.

Sara Jane added:

>I have some who are. I've got a few emails from dads just today that I would say the vast
>majority of direct contact that I have, comes from mothers. I think the fathers maybe
>working in the back ground, because moms refer to, "We are doing this." or "We are
>doing that." But most of the contact comes from mom.

Qualities Learned from the Father

Caroline stated:

>Students can get their sense of humor from their father, sometimes a dad can lighten a
>mood. In some homes, the father is the strict disciplinarian so if the students do not have
>that they may feel like they can run all over the mom. This really depends on the
>household and the parent personalities. Some people get their structure from their dad as
>some can be super strict.

Dan added:

>One of the biggest things as a role model is work ethic. Giving children the opportunity
>to go out and mow the yard, to clean their rooms, etc. those things translate to being
>responsible, having a work ethic of turning assignments in and those type of things.
>Again, lack of parents at home when the students arrive because they are absent or at
>work and students have 3-4 hours at home alone without supervision. At one point in
>time I was coaching and teaching at the junior high here in town and we would get out of
>school at 12:45 on a Wednesday, but when I would leave the school around 6:30-7:00
>there would still be students sitting in the lobby because the parents were not home and
>they did not have anyone to get them. These students would spend 5 to 6 hours at school
>after school hours at times.

Elizabeth stated:

> I would hope how to treat their wife or spouse. How to treat their kids. Working hard. Hard working, good work ethic. A couple of the dads I can think of or with some of the kids I work with some of their dads don't pay child support to me that is really sad because there are really good dads out there the kids but these have a negative view of their father and rightfully so.

Freddy added:

> I think they learn consistency from their fathers. I think they learn the hierarchy of authority from their fathers. I think that they learn, I can't say a lot and I don't want to get into man box of what is expected of what society says a man is, but in a sense, fathers of kids when I was growing up and of today a lot of them they learn the man box which is not always good. It is good and bad with the man box. But for mostly it is consistency, it is the hierarchy of authority. It is the responsibility that they learn that is important.

George stated:

> Responsibility, I think that is one of the biggest things, work ethic would probably come second. But I think being able to take responsibility for their self and their work that's probably a learned trait the get from their father.
>
> Heather:
>
> What I have seen, kids learn discipline as it pertains to behavior and self-discipline to manage things. They learn a level of responsibility. They have a higher expectation and more of a fear of failure.

Julie added:

I can answer that I guess based more on my own experience really than theirs. For a girl your father is like your example of how a man should treat a woman. So with respect, or things like that. I mean kind of like that is one thing that you learn. And then, a lot of confidence there. I think for both boys and girls of course, confidence coming from, you know, the support or affirmation of your father. Know that they are proud of you and things like that. I think that for a boy too their looking at those father's example of how am I supposed to behave as a man, like what am I supposed to? What am I reaching toward? If I want to be a man or grown. What does that look like? How do I talk? How do I get peoples respect? But they're looking at their fathers for that.

Kelly stated:

My perception is that students learn discipline from their fathers. They do not want to upset their fathers and they are more afraid of a disciplinary infraction from their father. In this case they are more likely to put pressure on themselves to perform well. They learn that more from fathers than mothers. The fear of failure comes from dad.

Lilly added:

I deal with mostly juniors and seniors. I would hope by the time they got to that age those character traits would of already been taught. You know like the honesty. The, don't be a jerk wad. Those types of things. I would hope by that age the father or mother would have already instilled on them. But I think there is also at that age a whole other level particularly boys. I don't know are you specifying boy's verses girls? I feel like with boys there becomes a little bit more of, when you become a man type of roll. Like those boys

who have kids or who have big life events that happen to them. I would hope that the

father in that instance could show them the roll that they need to take.

Sara Jane stated:

I would say leadership. I would say having a good role model in terms of teaching ethics,

good work ethic, grit, determination, and I would say if a dad is involved in a kid's life

that really sets an example of dedication, commitment.

Tom added:

The big thing is modeling and they see how the family interacts. Children see how their

father treats their mother and they mimic that or carry that out in their own lives.

Absent Father Shaping Educational Experience

Blake stated:

Obviously I think the female takes the role of the man, whatever that role is. The student

tends to be a bit unruly and they push boundaries. You will find that those are the

students that can be backwards, but when they are pushed they can get out of line and it is

noticeable.

Caroline added:

From observing things sometimes if there is only one parent at home and it is the mom

the kids can seem to get off track more frequently, academically and discipline

perspective because they may not have someone checking up on them. We see them get

off the rails academically or behaviorally more often.

Elizabeth stated:

I think it is a huge let down for kids. A lot of kids of course would not admit that right

now. Even the ones that say they don't care. I think they do care they may not fully

understand it. But I think it is a huge impact because it is rejection in a lot of ways. So the

parent is choosing not to be around their kid.

Freddy added:

In the educational experience, I think the absence of the father causes children to search

for leaders and have a false idea of what a leader is. Once again going to the hierarchy of

authority, it caused them to always question or it is on both ends. They either question the

authority or they seek an authority which is not always healthy.

George stated:

I think when a father pushes their child to do something they are going to respond to that

so when the father thinks it is important, when a class is important then the kids going to

put a little more time and effort into it.

Heather added:

It depends on the kid, the personality of the kid and what their goals are. Sometimes they

can have a victim mindset and say that they have something missing in their lives. They

also do not always have the support that some student have both at school and home.

You go to some meetings with both parents and both are at home assisting with

homework. Then you have some whose parents do not care if homework is done or not.

You have some who do not have a dad in the picture and mom is working multiple jobs

so the students can be left on their own outside of the school. These students can also

have more of a negative attitude in the classroom because they feel that they are now the

man of the house and have to take care of mom and take care of kids. Many times these

students are working in things they should not be working in.

Julie stated:

> They in some of the students I that I have and then of course there's a mix of problems. It's not like that's the only problem that they have, so it is hard to say, Oh, because you don't have a father in their life. But I have seen that there is a lack of respect for women. So I don't know if that is like at home discipline or is more like not really handled well by their mom, or they just see their mom as week, so then that transfers to how the view their women authority figures at school. More often showing out in behaviors. Trying to impress other boys. I see that more often in those kids.

Kelly added:

> I don't know if it is that or if it having an absent parent period. Anytime a parent is raising a child by themselves that means less time that a student is able to spend with a parent or an adult. If there are two parents they can tag team, while one is doing domestic chores the other can be spending time with the kids. There is also parental fatigue from single parents. More often you see kids with moms, you see single moms so I would wonder if this is a gender thing or just a function of a student being in a single parent home, that would be something I do not know.

Lilly stated:

> Speaking from a bit of a parental standpoint it is really hard to do on your own. I feel like it would be really easy if I was just by myself day in and day out to not having that second person to carry on and check the homework folder. To sit and read with them. I think at a really early age that could have a big effect. You know someone not to do those math facts at night. Because you get busy. Life is busy. You know if you got this or that

after school you got to work late, to only have one parent doing that I don't know that's

really hard to do for any single parent regardless of mother or father.

Sara Jane added:

Honestly I think I have a lot of kids that are vary scarred. I hear kids talk about this all the

time. Some of them are very blunt about the father leaving. Sometimes it's the mother.

Often times I will hear, "Dad took off." "Dad left us." I think it puts that financial

burden on the kids. I think if puts a stressor on the kids. A lot of times because mom is

stressed out, so I think that can transfer into academics too because if they have got that

home life issue, then they got too much on their plate to be able to focus.

Tom stated:

This is big, having a father provides security for the students. Having a father to be

supportive and to lean on to ask questions is huge for students. If not then the mother is

asked to do more than she actually should.

Importance of Father Presence

Dan stated:

Absolutely I believe that two parents are important. I came from a broken family myself

where my parents divorced when I was 6 years old. I stayed with my mom early on after

about 6 months I went to live with my dad and one of my brothers stayed with my mom,

which lasted until we were teenagers. My mom was a great person but I needed that

discipline in my life that she could not provide. My brother and I as young adults went

two separate directions. I was fortunate enough to go to college and be successful, he

wound up dropping out of high school and having to get his GED later on. He wound up

working as a roofer and construction type jobs where he would make probably 40% less

salary than me but working much harder.

Freddy added:

Absolutely. Once again we are going back to setting parameters of expectation. We are

modeling behavior, not just young boys but for you women also. Setting that hierarchy of

authorities, so children would know an authority hierarchy. Also, expectation to support,

being there to support then financially with resources but also emotionally. I think that

women do a great job of mothering children but the father brings security.

Heather stated:

I do feel that it is important. Students need as much support as they can have from the

parents. The kids that I work with seem to have tougher expectations from their fathers.

It has been my experience that it is important for students to have someone that sets the

standard a bit higher.

Should Fathers be More Involved

Blake stated:

Education is so important it should start at home. When you let your students go to

school and come back home the questions have to start. Parents should question what

happened or was learned at school that day. They should have expectations that tasks are

completed. Fathers should be asking those questions and should be making sure that the

students execute what they are asked to do at school.

Caroline added:

Just be more present, come to meetings more, interact with their kids more at home,

communicate with them regarding school, just try to be there and be present as much as

they possibly can. I know in certain situations custody impacts how much they can be around. In this situation it is important that the fathers let their kids know they are interested and that education is important.

Dan stated:

One thing is to get involved and communicate. When students come home they need to see how the day was and what they are doing. With our computer systems now fathers can check grades and such, be in contact with the teachers when something is not turned in. Come to activities such as open house to get a feel for what the classrooms are like, to meet the teachers, so the first time a teacher and parent meet it is not a bad situation necessarily because of missing work or some type of discipline. This would make the first time they meet on a positive and friendly note and not in a negative situation.

Elizabeth added:

I just think of the history, moms are the ones that comes to meetings, typically I think it is just as important for dads to come to the meetings to support their kids with their grades to try to fully understand what is going on. Watch them play sports, participate in their orchestra concerts that type of things.

Freddy stated:

I think fathers need to become more involved, be seen a little more, because we are a society of single parents. A single parent does not mean that there are that there are not two parents in the home in the education system it means there is just the one parent that's involved, so we have to work on changing that optic and I think that just having fathers there, just like bringing them into school like I said just being with kids it's

bringing them the hierarchy of authority. It bringing them them support, and security both

through resources and emotional support. It also fathers set goals, are great goal setters.

George added:

Just talking with their kids about what's going on. It always helps when they know they

teachers but it is really just talking with their kids and letting them know the importance

of what they are doing and that they care about what they are doing.

Heather stated:

They have to communicate with their kids and know what is going on. They have to

communicate with teachers as well. Fathers should monitor grades and have

Skyward/Canvas passwords to monitor grades. The biggest piece is the communication to

know what is going on. Again, to do that you have to talk to your kids, their teachers, and

you have to know what is going on in their lives.

Julie added:

Well I definitely think that the standard things, like, going to the Open Houses, and going

to games and concerts, and things like that being there for the events. Also making sure

that you're one of the, like, contact people. One thing I don't like about, sometimes about

Skyward is that there might be a father contact but it be down at the bottom.It's now like

the primary. Which means that the primary is going to be the one that's used all the time

and that means that somebody will be left out of the loop. And, I don't know if that's

something that can be fixed in the system. I mean, I don't know, and a lot of times it's the

mom that gets put there and not the dad. And I think that right there kind of put's them

out of the loop a little bit.

Kelly stated:

> Yes, for that reason. When you have two people working with a student on their education, when you have two people showing them that education is important, modeling that, being involved in their daily life by checking up on them and helping them study, that makes a difference. Knowing the teachers, being part of the school system, knowing the community, that is going to impose the importance of education in that students. When you have just one person at home, whether that be a mom or a dad, those energies get split. So, if you have two people that is more focus on education than if there is just one parent present in the home.

Lilly added:

> Again, looking at it from the parent, my kids are young so I have a hard time seeing it from this point. So I just don't deal with parents as much at this age. You know having someone to check the canvas, check the skyward, set those alerts up so that if a grades goes beneath a certain percent you get an email. Just being involved and being on top of it. So your kids got that autonomy to have a little bit of control. But when they are younger, I would hope that someone's at home doing the math facts with them or reading with them for 20 minutes a day and doing those things at a young age that can be really, really important.

Sara Jane stated:

> I think dads need to be aware of what their kid's activities are in the same ways that a lot of the mothers are, checking on grades, helping with homework, going to kid's school activities, showing up at their practices, if they are able to, going to their games or their

concerts, letting their kids know they are important to them. I think that builds their self-

esteem.

Tom added:

That is a good question, there is a fine balance that they need to walk. They need to be

supportive but at the same time they need to allow their children to make their own

mistakes and not try to solve all of their problems for them. Fathers should not do their

homework for their children, let the student make mistakes, struggle, experience failure

and be there for them through that.

Father Participation in School Activities

Caroline stated:

At my kids school they do doughnuts for dads, they get fathers to come in and discuss

their grades, behavior, etc. This seems to increase the presence of the fathers in the school

and seems to work to get them more involved. We do not seem to do much to entice

fathers to participate. We do try to let students know that we can bring anyone they want

to meetings or we can have separate meetings if the custody situation is not great. That

can be awkward because they are saying different things but we just want to make sure

that our kids know they can bring either parent together or separately so they both can be

involved.

Dan added:

Open House is the first opportunity for fathers to come into the building to see us. We

also have PTSO, which is ironic because when we have our luncheons and such I do not

think I have ever seen a man at a PTSO luncheon ever. I hate to say this but the

stereotype of cooking and domestics likely prevent men from participating. Most of the

times when you do have the relationship and are meeting the dad it is in athletics, in that setting they want to talk to the coaches to see how their son is doing in sports but they do not get as involved in the classroom.

Elizabeth stated:

That's a good question. I know that when we advertise things from this office it's just a blanket invitation. It is not necessarily just specific. I know when I was in the elementary schools we would have things specific for dad, like donuts for dad, uncles, grandparents, so that is one thing we definitely lack.

Freddy added:

I don't think the fathers are actively sought out by schools. In my experience from what I see. I think that there is an expectation of fathers through sports and through other activities, but as far as the academics I don't think schools actively seek out fathers. I think that something that should be a priority, if the father is head of the house or the leader of the home. You are taking two steps back if that leader or discussion maker, if he is not involved in the process.

George stated:

Well I don't see many ways that we look at just fathers. We have many things, we have open house, we have things that parents are involved. The place I see it most is probably athletics. It's just because it is easier to be there.

Heather added:

We have talked about that in our office where we need more parent nights, more activities and things. Many parents do not know what is going on they just trust us to take care of things. Most parents do not know what is going on and have difficulty keeping up.

Sometimes if the dad is not involved, it could be because he is not aware. If you have a

divorce situation often, times the information goes to the mother and this may not always

be conveyed with the father. There should be an outreach from the school to get fathers

involved in education. This starts early on and it should not start at high school. Once you

get to high schools, it is difficult to get this type of involvement started.

Kelly stated:

I don't know that they are specifically. I think we try to encourage parents to participate

but I would imagine that most of our methods of communication are more readily used

by females.

Lilly added:

I don't know that there are any special encouragement given to fathers at any school I

have been at. I will say at my daughter's school they have a program called, "All Pro

Dads". So once a month on Friday mornings they go in and they look forward to it.

They go there at 6:30 and have breakfast and do a program. I think that's great but we

have nothing like that here.

Sara Jane stated:

To be quiet honest with you I am not sure what we do directly. We open the doors for

Open House. We reach out to parents, I mean if there are two contacts on an email.

Personally, I will always copy both parents, if two parents are provided I will sent it to

both. But other than that I really couldn't say what we do.

Absent Fathers Summary

Educator perceptions regarding the absence of the father in general contained some common themes throughout the interviews. The educators seem to see that these students without a father are consistently searching for a father-figure to fill the void. The participants perceive that this lack of a family structure can also lead to disciplinary, relational, academic, emotional, and communication struggles for these students. The perception of poverty and sadness or emptiness often exists, leading to low confidence, low motivation, and a lack of accountability. The perception of the educators is that the lack of security leads to an overall concern for the students' responsibility and work ethic.

Additional Commentary

As the final component of each interview every participant was asked if they would like to make any further comments or reference related topics not covered in the questioning. Educators did not have to participate but some were passionate and wanted to contribute more information to the study.

Blake stated:

> If you can look back over time, the last 50 years. The challenge was to learn all you can so that you can be all you can be. This has been passed to my children and my grandson. Did I accomplish and prepare myself to be everything I wanted to be and the answer for most is no. These students without a father do not appear to be motivated to learn.

Dan added:

> It is very important that kids have strong role models at home. This starts at home. As teachers today we see more and more of a single parent home and a no parent home

where grandparents are raising the kids. Sometimes they are living with an extended

family member or a brother or a sister is raising them, this is just how society is today.

There does not seem to be enough male role models to emulate proper behavior and work

ethic and those type of issues.

Freddy stated:

I think number one that having a father doesn't always make the situation better, it

depends on that father, it depends on that family structure and ultimately students have a

choice. Choices give you decisions that lead to consequences, good and bad. I am

thinking of a father, not a male in their life but a father in their life of a definition of what

I know as a father. I think of having that father in their life helps them and helps promote

healthy decision making. It also disciplines you to make better choices. A father

encourages, inspires as a leader of that household. So I will say that the key thing is what

is the definition of a father, what is meant by a fatherless child verses by a child without a

man in his home. I think that needs to be a separation. I also think that you have to look at

a lot of other things that is going to affect some of those questions. You have to look at

race, you have to look at gender now, now with the LBTQ and trans and it's a lot of other

things that go in it. For instance, a fatherless home, a home with a father could be a

Transgender person.They have loving home, or two homosexual couples, is it more the

father being father or loving conjoined family. So there has to be a separation in that,

because I have seen kids that thrive that don't have a male in their home but they have

two loving parents in their home. They are able to thrive. Once again connection,

resources, a familial hierarchy and a lot of things so we separate or define the definition

of a fatherless home. That can kind of all my answers are based off of what I consider a

father to be. Also I think at the engagement, you have to look at all the schools and how

they engage with the fatherless students or non-fatherless. Are there certain type of

stereotypes and prejudices that go against fatherless kids? So those things will have to be

considered and taken into consideration.

George added:

I think there is also a difference too between having a good father at home verses a bad

father. I think having a bad father just as bad as having no father at all if not worse. But in

most cases by the time the kids in high school usually that father that is at home is a

pretty good father, if he has been around there that long.

Julie stated:

Well I think there's a lot of variables to the not having a father. It, you know pending on

why that is and also, I am speaking from my own cultural sense of what a father is and

what that means and what their roll is like and some of that's like, being , white,

southern, lower middleclass and religious too. Being taught what a father and like the

connection between that, God the Father, all that clouds what my expectation is, but,

umm, that could be different from my students I am looking at their situation thru my

cultural lens. So I can't really do that. Because then some, of course even and how some

parents, I know how my parents divided up responsibilities. But that again is cultural so,

if that is not what happens in their cultural maybe that's the father maybe never does

these things. That is just not always a cultural expectation. They don't feel lack of it

because they don't expect it that is not the norm. It's a cultural norm and that makes it a

little hard to judge in some situations. And then I have definitely had other situations that

where the step-father was such an important person in their life, they didn't seem to even,

I can't say they didn't think about but that was their father. So how much impact like not

having a biological father was, I don't know. It is depending on how young they were

when they did lost the presence of the father.

Sara Jane added:

I would just say that I love it that you're working on this topic, because I just think it is

such a factor and I don't know how we address it. But, I do think it makes a world of

difference if kids are coming from a home without a solid father figure. I've just seen it

create so many stressors and so many factors in their academics. It's rough.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father. Grauerholz (2002) noted that fathers are now considered as important as mothers in the development and well-being of children. There is no question the importance of father involvement, but Amato & Keith (1991) stated that the larger numbers of individuals affected by paternal absence creates both scientific and public concerns as to how father absence impacts children's development and well-being. The researchers indicated that father absence has adverse effects for both men and women. Further, a positive relationship with the father and father involvement can act as protective factors against high risk behaviors in adolescence. Through examination of teacher perceptions of father absence on the emotional, social, and academic life of adolescents we are able to make recommendations for ways to assist the secondary student without a biological father. This chapter contains a summary of findings and conclusions, recommendations for future research, recommendations for practice, and conclusions.

Summary of Findings

Regarding the absence of the father the educators seem to see that these students without a father are consistently searching for a father-figure to fill the void. The participants perceive that this lack of a family structure can also lead to disciplinary, relational, academic, emotional, and communication struggles for these students. The perception of poverty and sadness or emptiness often exists, leading to low confidence, low motivation, and a lack of accountability. The perception of the educators is that the lack of security leads to an overall concern for the

students' responsibility and work ethic. The analysis of data collected in this research led to collective themes related to each research question. The summary of these commonalities is presented below for each research question.

Research Question 1

What are educator perceptions of student emotions in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Educators perceive that students without a father struggle more emotionally, they may suffer from anxiety or depression more than their peers. Further, these students will possess anger and resentment as to why the father is not present in their lives. These student often appear frustrated, withdrawn, and lack motivation partly due to the fact that they seem to lack attention and feel rejected. Educator perceptions were that these students hurt, suffer from bitterness, and have lower self-esteem and a more negative self-image. The students may struggle with confidence due to the lack of security and sense of abandonment or hopelessness. These students often have trust issues as a result of the absence of the father. Educator perceptions revealed that this may lead to relational problems with staff, peers, and specifically as it pertains to dating and the understanding of relationship rules.

Ten of twelve educators, or 83%, had strong perceptions that the absence of the father did negatively impact the mental health, belongingness, anxiety, depression, and personal relationships of the adolescent students they have taught throughout their careers. Bennett (2012) found that often people who struggle with depression have an absent father. The absence of the father can influence mental health, self-perception, self-esteem and the ability to relate to others. Further, the absence of the father can often be linked to deep-seated anger and feelings of

powerlessness and hopelessness. Krein and Beller (1988) discovered the absent father will have negative effects on self-esteem and emotional well-being ranging from transient consequences to long-term behavioral changes. Further, some researchers suggest that children without a father do poorly in school because they lack self-control, accountability, and motivation. Peterson and Zill (1986) found that children who are close to and interact frequently with their fathers are less depressed and withdrawn. As it pertained to the absence of the father and adolescent emotions the educators perceived this to result in higher levels of anxiety and depression, more anger and resentment, low self-esteem, hopelessness, lack of motivation, and issues with trust and relationships. Educator perceptions in this area were aligned with research that an absent father negatively impacts an adolescent student's emotional state.

A review of the data collected suggests educator perceptions are that students without a father struggle emotionally. They will have resentment, anger, frustration, confusion, and question why he is not present in their life. Students without a father may search for a male role model through any means. These students may lack the connectedness that a family structure provides and could be withdrawn or apathetic. The participants in this study perceived that adolescent students without a father need attention due to the feelings of rejection they may have internalized. These students may struggle with behavioral problems or impulse controls and they may not adhere to social norms. These students could be in a state of emotional distress. The students may lack trust in their relationships and that lack of security could manifest itself in the form of anxiety and depression. These students may worry about external factors or seem sad. Educators perceive students without a father often seem to have breakdowns and struggle with discipline. These students may feel abandoned or unworthy as a result of the absence of a father in their life. This absence could impact self-esteem and self-confidence as well as encourage

some negative self-talk. These adolescents may feel inadequate, disconnected, and lack the confidence to remain connected mentally and emotionally. The participants in this survey perceived confidence to be impacted in such a way that these students are consistently looking for a role, a place to fit, examples of interactions, all to feel normal, to feel as if they belong, and to find what seems to be missing.

Research Question 2

What are educator perceptions of student social behavior in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Educators perceived these students to have discipline and behavioral problems, lacking accountability, being oppositional and non-compliant. Educators perceived that the lack of structure and support at home can lead to trust issues, disrespect, anger, a lack of responsibility, and a disregard for societal rules and norms. These students can often be quick to anger and struggle with communication skills and recognition of authority. The perception that students without a father will engage in early sexual behavior and increased drinking and/or drug use was prevalent among the participants. Overall, the lack of modeling and social emotional issues were perceived by the educators to lead to negative behaviors.

The data collected in the study suggests that the educator perceptions are strongest regarding social behavior in the areas of students having the ability to follow rules and regulations, accountability, and respect. Ten (83%) of the participants responded extensively regarding the absent father and respect. Nine of the 12 participants (75%) presented strong perceptions on father absence as it pertains to following rules and regulations and accountability. Thomas and Sawhill (2005) noted that father absence may influence adolescent behavior by

placing the youth at an economic disadvantage. This social disadvantage can lead to other issues

throughout adolescence. Hoeve et al. (2009) surmised father absence as being widely

acknowledged as a key contributor to delinquency. The researchers also noted the absence of the

father is a related factor to delinquency in male and female adolescents. Cobb-Clark and Tekin

(2013) discovered that adolescents that have a father present in their lives are significantly less

likely to engage in delinquent behaviors. Researchers concluded that the absence of the father is

a risk factor for delinquent behaviors.

Educator perceptions regarding the social implications of father absence on adolescents

began with concerns over the family structure and what is modeled for the youth in the home.

Educators questioned whether these students were able to obtain learned behavior regarding

behavior in social situations. The perception was that most of the students with absent fathers

may not be taught societal rules and norms by a role model. Many participants in the study were

concerned about the lack of discipline in the home as that is perceived to be the role of the father.

These students did not seem to have the same level of expectations, they did not work out of fear

of disappointment, but were seemingly oppositional and non-compliant on purpose at times for

attention. The educators perceived this to manifest in a lack of responsibility and accountability

in the adolescent students without a father. The participants perceived that the lack of support

and discipline in the home could be a reason for the lack of responsibility and accountability.

The issue of trust was a perception that was present in social implications as well. Educators

perceived the students to not trust them, thus not wanting to perform at a high level for them.

This led to the participants expressing concern over the students without a father and creating a

culture of mutual respect. These students can be disrespectful at times, especially when a teacher

has to discipline them. The educators feel that they do not always have a healthy relationship

with these students. It can be perceived as negative by a student that lacks trust when a teacher tries to help them. These students may feel they are being called out and respond in a disrespectful tone that results in negative outcomes. Internalized anger could be a cause of the negative behaviors and attitudes and teachers do not seem to feel comfortable to address these concerns individually due to the lack of trust that acts as a boundary to the relationship. A positive outcome for this area of the study was that the educators did not have strong perceptions regarding the absence of the father related to early sexual behavior and increased drinking and/or drug use.

Research Question 3

What are educator perceptions of student academic performance in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

Educators perceived that students struggle to stay on task and hold themselves accountable for work and preparation for testing. The lack of structure outside the school can contribute to questioning authority or being disrespectful. The lack of discipline at home is perceived to equate to a poor work ethic, low amounts of responsibility, and a low quality of work. These students can sometimes have a low self-esteem, thus low expectations and little attention to detail. Students may struggle to focus or be anxious and distracted by outside events. Students could be worried about exterior influences such as poverty or a lack of resources. It may not be the priority of the student to complete the work and therefore they become apathetic with low confidence and expectations for academic success.

Eleven out of 12 (92%) of the educators that participated in the study communicated that the absence of the father can lead to increases in adolescent student apathy. This can lead to a

lack of accountability and attention to detail that can impact graduation at the secondary level. Buffum et al. (2010) surmised that students who fail to earn a high school diploma have an increased chance of poverty, government assistance, and incarceration compared to their peers who graduate high school. Convissor (2013) noted that without a high school diploma, dropouts will have difficulty finding and retaining employment and when they do, they will earn much less than their high school graduate peers. The outcome of student apathy can be impactful well beyond secondary education. Nine of the 12 participants (75%) expressed concerns regarding the absent father and time spent working on reading and writing skills. Henderson (1995) found that regardless of form, parental involvement improves student achievement. Chapman (1991) found that students are more likely to complete homework when parents are involved because students have more positive attitudes toward school, learning, and homework; they perceive classroom and school climate more positively; and they take pride in their schoolwork. Eight out of 12 (67%) of participants expressed concern regarding student confidence on testing and the impact that standardized testing can have on post-secondary opportunities. Bauch (1989) concluded that researcher have documented the benefits of parental involvement in education. Children whose parents are involved in their education have higher immediate and long-term achievement, better grades, and higher test scores.

Educators that participated in this study perceived the absence of the father to be negatively influence academic outcomes. The participants noted that the decreased accountability and respect for authority were concerns that have been observed on students with absent fathers. The students can lack the ability to structure the time to complete assignments and educators possesses concern over work-ethic as well as approach to academics. The perception of the participants was that the students lack the ability to self-regulate and the quality of work

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suffers. This was explained multiple times as the outcome of the lack of a strict disciplinarian at home teaching responsibility. The themes of anxiety and self-esteem were prevalent again in regards to academic performance and how the emotional issues can lead to lower expectations. The educators are concerned that the lack of literacy in the home can begin to impact these students at an early age and compound as they grow into adolescents. These student may not be confident or motivated to prepare because they do not have the parental pressure to perform at high levels. The educators perceived that the students anger, hurt, resentment all may lead to an apathetic approach to their education. These students may not be motivated to prepare for tests, whether in the classroom setting or standardized high-stakes testing. The educators did express concern over how this cycle of apathy from the home to the school can cause them to give up and be overwhelmed. Participants worry about how this lack of preparedness can impact post-secondary opportunities such as college acceptance, scholarships, etc. In general educators perceived these students to lack a role model to emulate healthy decision making. They lacked encouragement and inspiration for academic achievement and most become apathetic towards their education.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research are proposed based on the findings of this particular study:

- This research should be expanded to other areas to determine if the educator perceptions related to father absence are similar.

- Replicate this study with students who may not have the biological father present, but do have a positive male role model present in their lives.

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- Conduct research in this community to see why the volume of students with absent fathers exists.

- Study educator perceptions in this community for students with an absent mother to see if the data are similar.

- Expand the study throughout various communities not looking at the absence of the father or the mother, but focusing on single-parent households.

- Replicate the study for father absence due to other reasons: career, military deployment, or deceased.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice are made based on the findings of this particular study:

- Develop programs or initiatives, through case study research of other schools, that will enable them to identify members of the student body with risk factors.

- Organize focus groups of individuals who are struggling with an absent father to enable these students to not feel alone.

- Develop professional development programs to train all faculty and staff members relational tools to be able to reach students with an absent father.

- Develop a bell schedule that includes non-academic time to focus on mental/emotional health for students.

- Research advisory programs that work and create a program that best meets the needs of the students in this educational setting.

- Appoint each student to one faculty advisor or mentor to get to know the students and understand their needs.

- Develop a protocol for placing students with the mentor that is the most suitable to understand and meet the needs of each student.

Conclusion

A father plays an integral role in the development of a child, whether that be male or female. The father will demonstrate a different set of values including discipline, work-ethic, respect, and accountability. The absence of the father during adolescence is detrimental to emotional health, social competence, and academic outcomes. The emotional health, adherence to social norms, and academic performance all play an integral role in the educational success of the student.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father. This research detailed the perceptions of twelve experienced educators who have all taught students with absent father. The participants each gave their perception as to how the absence of the father impacts adolescent students in secondary schools. The findings of this study reveal that fathers are more important to a child's well-being and overall potential for success. Themes emerged throughout this research such as lack of structure, lack of accountability, anxiety, apathy, low self-esteem, hopelessness, trust issues, disrespect, and anger. While the researcher acknowledges that these conclusions only apply to one high school, the results of this study are supported by a wide body of research. Further research must be conducted to determine if these

results are applicable to other communities and no claim is made that the results of this study are typical to other areas.

The involvement of fathers in the education of their children is important as it can encourage students to have higher standards and improve educational performance. Unfortunately, the community utilized for this study is trending towards more and more students at the secondary level not having fathers involved in their lives. While schools cannot influence the demographic of the familial structure, they can respond to the needs of the students in their respective communities. We cannot force fathers to become involved, but we can support the emotional, social, and academic needs of students without a father. Schools can develop relationships of trust and shared interests, they can get to know their students, what impacts them positively and negatively so that they can create a culture of respect. As the number of students in secondary schools without a father increases schools must respond in a manner that supports these students and sets them up with a foundation for success. Each public school is established to serve the community, to know the needs of the community, and to respond accordingly. Secondary schools must develop support structures so that adolescents without a father have the ability to experience educational successes. Every student means every student and school responses to community needs assessments must be more than curriculum. Absent fathers seems to be a phenomenon that is not going away and schools must respond to alleviate the barriers to success created by this dilemma.

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Appendix A

Confidentiality and Purpose

Confidentiality

You will be asked questions regarding the absence of the biological father and how it could be perceived in relation to the secondary education student. Your rights and privacy will be maintained throughout this study. Only the ETSU IRB and I, Scotty Herrell, have access to study records. Rest assured, every attempt will be made to see that your information is kept confidential. Direct quotations may be utilized for the study, but the participant will have the opportunity to proof this.

Purpose

This phenomenological study should allow us to understand these perceptions to identify effective strategies to serve students in the future. To explore the educator perceptions of the impact of the absence of the biological father, the following questions will be posed:

Research Question 1: What are educator perceptions of student emotions in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?
Research Question 2: What are educator perceptions of student social behavior in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?
Research Question 3: What are educator perceptions of student academic performance in educational experiences as a secondary student without a biological father?

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Printed Name of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Witness   Date

Interview Protocol

Survey Questions for Educators

1. Describe your experiences of teaching students without the presence of the biological father.

2. Describe your experiences of father involvement in the lives of your students.

3. Are fathers present and active participants in the education of your students?

4. What qualities do you perceive students learn from their father?

5. How do you perceive the absence of the biological father to shape the educational experiences of your students?

6. Do you feel father presence is important in education?

7. What do you perceive fathers should do to be more involved in education?

8. How are fathers encouraged by the school to participate in educational activities?

Student Emotions:

1. How do you perceive the absence of the father on the mental health of a secondary student?

2. Do you perceive the absence of the father related to student confidence?

3. How do you perceive the absence of the father on anxiety and/or depression on the secondary student?

4. What have you experienced the absence of the father to do to student self-esteem?

5. Do you perceive the absence of the father related to belongingness in your students?

6. How would you perceive the absence of the father on a sense of accomplishment in your students?

7. Have you seen the absence of the father related to a secondary student and personal relationships?

8. Describe the absence of the father and the overall stability of the secondary education student.

Student Social Behavior:

1. Do you perceive the ability to follow rules and regulations in class/school a component of a biological father's influence?

2. Do you witness a difference between students with and without a father as it pertains to hygiene and overall presentation?

3. Describe your perception of accountability and a secondary student experience without a biological father.

4. What perception would you have regarding student respect and the absence of the father?

5. What perceptions regarding student communication and collaboration exist regarding a secondary student without the biological father?

6. Do you perceive the absence of the biological father as related to delinquent behaviors?

7. Have you witnessed early sexual behavior to occur in your students without the biological father?

8. Do you perceive the absence of the biological father attributed to drinking and/or drug use in the secondary student?

Student Academic Performance:

1. How do you perceive the absence of the father affecting daily tasks or classwork?

2. Do you perceive the absence of the biological father related to the completion of homework?

3. Describe your perceptions on the absence of the biological father and classroom testing.

4. Do you perceive the presence of the father to be increase or decrease the reading and/or writing skills of the secondary student?

5. What is your perception on time spent reading as a secondary student without a biological father?

6. How does the absence of the biological father contribute to student confidence on standardized testing?

7. What perceptions regarding critical thinking exist regarding the secondary student without a biological father?

8. What are educator perceptions on apathy in educational experiences as a secondary education student without a biological father?

Educator Consent Letter

April 22, 2019

Dear Educators:

My name is Scotty Herrell, I am currently a graduate student at East Tennessee State University working towards my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. To finish my studies a research project must be completed. The name of my research is Perceptions of Student Experiences in Secondary Education Without the Presence of the Biological Father.

The purpose of this study is to seek to understand what perceptions exist regarding the presence of the biological father and the secondary educational experience. To do this we will examine three prongs of perceptions that could exist in education including emotions, social behaviors, and academic performance. I would like to determine these perceptions through participation in an interview that will take approximately one hour. You will be asked questions regarding the absence of the biological father and how it could be perceived in relation to the secondary education student. The interview will be audio recorded and will be transferred from the audio recorder to an external drive. At no point will this information not be locked up and stored privately. This phenomenological study should allow us to understand these perceptions to identify effective strategies to serve students in the future.

Your rights and privacy will be maintained throughout this study. Only the ETSU IRB and I, Scotty Herrell, have access to study records. Rest assured, every attempt will be made to see that your information is kept confidential. Direct quotations may be utilized for the study, but the participant will have the opportunity to proof this.

While your willingness to participate in this study would be appreciated, if you choose to not participate this will not affect you in any way. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Should you choose to participate you can quit at any time. You may refuse to participate.

If you have any research-related questions or problems, you may contact me at (865) 425-9604. This project is under the supervision of my ETSU Advisor, Dr. William Flora. You may reach Dr. Flora at (423) 439-7617. Should you need to contact the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University you can reach the chairperson at (423) 439-6054 if you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant. Should you have further questions regarding the research or you have any concerns you may also contact the IRB Coordinator at (423) 439-6055 or (423) 439-6002.

Sincerely,

Scotty Herrell

Appendix D

Recruitment Letter

April 22, 2019

Hello, my name is Scotty Herrell. I am a doctoral candidate at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). I am doing a study that involves understand educator perceptions of student experiences in secondary education without the presence of the biological father. I am looking for people who are educators working with secondary students without the biological father. This study involves interviews which should take about an hour. The interview will take place on the campus of Oak Ridge High School. Please think about participating. Participation is voluntary. If you have any questions please contact me at bsherrell@ortn.edu or (865) 425-9604.

Sincerely,

Scotty Herrell

VITA

BRADLEY S. HERRELL

Education:	Clinton High School, Clinton, Tennessee
	Maryville College, Maryville, Tennessee B. A. Business and Organizational Management, 2001
	Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee M. Ed. Curriculum and Instruction, 2004 Ed. S. Administration and Supervision, 2008
	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee Ed.D. Educational Leadership, 2020
Professional Experience:	Anderson County Schools, Clinton, Tennessee Teacher, Clinton Middle School, 2005-2008 Administrative Intern, Anderson County Schools, 2008-2009 Assistant Principal/Athletic Director, Clinton High School, 2009-2011
	Oak Ridge Schools, Oak Ridge, Tennessee Assistant Principal, Oak Ridge High School, 2011-2019 Teacher, Oak Ridge High School, 2019
Honors And Awards:	East Tennessee Coach of the Year, 2005 and 2006 ING Unung Heroes Award, 2006, National Winner Ambassador of Goodwill Award, 2006 Most Influential Person in ORHS, Youth Leadership 2017-2018 TSIN Innovative Leaders Institute, 2017-2018