

**THE EFFECTS OF FATHER ABSENCE ON
MALE CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

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THE EFFECTS OF FATHER ABSENCE ON
MALE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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To the Graduate and Research Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Darlene Ruby Hairston entitled "The Effects of Father Absence on Male Child Development." I have examined the final copy of this paper for form and content, and I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science with a major in Psychology.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Researchers have reported on the growing phenomenon of single-parent households in the past few decades. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1988) reported that in 1988 7 million American families had only one parent, the mother, in residence. Approximately 23.1% of the children under 18 years of age lived in single-parent homes, representing roughly 16 million children, and in most cases there is a decrease in monetary subsidies which casts the homes into poverty. There is a higher incidence of black children residing in single-parent households. One inherent problem in investigating the effects of father-absence on child development has been in the comparisons of the types of father-absence.

Klein (1973) has proposed that the single-parent lifestyle has its roots deeply implanted in the soil of unfulfilled promises. Many single parents, according to Klein, grew up in families where the parent's marriage seemed loveless and unfulfilling. They were raised in the traditional nuclear family and found it to contain more enmity than intimacy. Thus, they as parents have become deviant, avant-garde, dedicated to expanding the concept of a family beyond its old, tightly patrolled borders, and have designed alternative family types. Others contend

that the general decay of the nuclear family, and the consequent increase in female headed households, arise out of the existential alienation of individuals from one another in late 20th century capitalistic society.

Cutright (1974) examined family patterns sociologically, and insisted that it is not a matter of rejecting the isolated, non-extended family at all. He says there is an increased probability that a mother at risk will form a separate family rather than living as the offspring or other relative of the family head. He contends that when a mother has children she does not want to reside in the extended family. Obviously the nuclear and extended family are different contexts for child development than the single parent family. Coleman (1987) defined social capital, in terms of child rearing, as "the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child's growing up" (p. 35). He proposes that the children need capital if they are to enter society with the shared viewpoint most adults hold. He suggests in order to acquire capital, they need to have meaningful contact with adults who have capital and who consciously transmit it to children. He believed that this capital comes from within the family, from outside institutions, and through their conjunction. Inputs that come from family relations include "attitudes, effort, and

conception of self"; inputs from institutions, such as schools, include "opportunities, demands, and rewards (p. 36)."

Due to the increase of one parent households, studies have focused on cognitive performance in assessing the problems encountered with father absence and how it affects child development. To date, data have been conflicting because of the failure to control the many significant variables involved. Studies typically do not address the issue of the length or type of father's absence. The present project will address the relationship between father absence and child development across a continuum from ages 2 through 21 in the areas of sex-role development (Chapter 2), adjustment (Chapter 3), and achievement (Chapter 4). Additionally, where possible, emphasis will be given to the influence of the type of father absence on child development.

Chapter 2

Sex Role Development

Studies on the effect of father-absence on children typically address sex-role identification. Biller and Borstelmann (1967) have differentiated among three general aspects of sex role development: sex role orientation, sex role preference, and sex role adoption. Sex role orientation is considered to be one dimension of an individual's self concept. Included are the individuals' evaluation of their maleness or femaleness. Sex role preference is concerned with the individual's evaluation of certain environmental opportunities and refers to an individual's relative desire to adhere to the cultural prescriptions and proscriptions of the masculine or feminine role. The concept designates a preferential set toward symbols or representations of the sex roles that are socially defined. Sex role adoption relates to how masculine or feminine members of the individual's particular society views his behavior.

A very widely used technique for assessing children's sex role development has been Brown's (1956) IT Scale for Children (ITSC). In this test, the child is presented with a nondescript figure and must choose what gender "IT" is in a series of different scenes. One criticism of this scale, however, is that the figures tend to appear more masculine

than feminine, accounting for a greater ratio of male "IT" identifications. This may account for the reason why children think they are supposed to select choices for a boy figure rather than projecting their own choices onto the ITSC (Brown, 1962). However, the ITSC has been found to have considerable construct validity (Hetherington, 1966; Mussen & Rutherford, 1963). Interestingly enough, for males experiencing both early and lengthy father-absence, results in studies utilizing the ITSC have been associated with lower masculinity orientation in males with later and shorter father-absence. In a longitudinal study using the ITSC, Biller (1968a, 1968b, 1969la, 1969b) compared 29 lower class, five to eleven year-old males from father-absent homes and father-present homes over a two year period. The 11 males who were from father-absent homes tested significantly less masculine than father-present males on the exam. Results from Biller's (1969b) study with five-year-old males suggested that sex-role orientation is more affected by father-absence than sex-role preference or sex-role adoption.

Biller (1972) has also suggested that father-absence before the age of four or five-years of age appears to have a particularly profound effect on masculine development. He suggested that father-absent five year-old males had less masculine sex-role orientations (measured through

fantasy play) and sex-role preferences (game choices) than did father-present males (Biller, 1969b). Moreover, the males who became father-absent before the age of four had significantly less masculine sex-role orientations than those who became father-absent in the fifth year. The cause of the separation and whether the separation was intermittent or complete are also factors in masculinity ratings on the IT scale (Biller, 1968a).

In regards to sex role development, Mussen and Rutherford (1963) and Biller (1968a) have suggested that the mother can enhance her son's masculinity by direct encouragement. Lynn, Baron, and Vargon (1978) says that if the father, the more fearsome parent, is extremely detached or excessively punitive, the boy may become so alienated that he will not wish to model after him or accept his sex-role definition. Notable among father-present males is the degree of perceived father dominance and father dominance in parental interaction. This appears to be more closely related to measures of sex-role orientation than to measures of sex-role preference or sex-role adoption (Biller, 1969a). The most frequent hypothesis, however, is that since these males lack a resident father, they also lack an effective masculine role model and source of identification. Additionally, they are reared in the presence of an overwhelming feminine model which becomes a

source of identification. Consequently, males from father-absent households fail to develop an adequate sense of masculinity. A number of studies have attempted to test this hypothesis focusing chiefly on males who grow up in fatherless homes. Since there has been little decline in feminine sex-role identification for females, far more attention has been given to the development of masculine identity.

Harper and Ryder (1986) studied 46 adolescent subjects, between the ages of 13 to 15, in which no significant differences were observed between father-absent and father-present groups on sexual identification. However, father-absent males were found to score in a less masculine direction on the sex identity score than father-present subjects, suggesting that father-absence among males is associated with less masculine sex identity than father-presence. One inherent problem with this study, however, is that there is no way of knowing when the absence occurred. There are several possibilities. If Biller is correct in assuming that age is a critical factor in determining the degree of sex-role identification, then Harper and Ryder's subjects may well have experienced father-absence after the age of five. If father-absence did occur at an early age, then the males in Harper and Ryder's study may have acquired sex-role identification

from a significant male model, such as an older male sibling. Indeed, this was the finding in Biller's 1974 study. he concluded that the presence of an older male sibling or extended family member, as well as the age at which the absence occurred, must be taken into account when trying to determine possible effects on the child.

Older males have been investigated as well. Kagel and Schilling (1985) conducted a study using college subjects and reported that there was an association between sex-role identification, the age at the time of absence, and presence of older brothers. Father-absent males were not observed to score in a less masculine direction than father-present male subjects on any of the individual measures of sex-role identification when there was an older brother present. Father-absent males tended to score in a less masculine direction than father-present subjects on only some of the measures of gender identity. Feminine sex identity in father-absent males was more frequently observed in subjects whose mothers did not remarry or cohabitate subsequent to the departure of the father from the home.

The presence and availability of the father appears to be more significant to masculine gender identification for males than the quality of the father-son relationship. Characteristics of father-absence appear to be associated

with gender identification (Biller, 1974). Length of absence, subjects' age at the time of absence, type of absence, maternal marital status, and the presence of an older brother were not observed to be associated with gender identification. Rather, these factors may interact with each other in complex patterns to moderate the effect of father-absence on gender identification.

Race also appears to play a factor in sex-role identification. Barclay and Cusumano (1967) studied 40 male delinquents from both black and white families in four matched groups within categories of father-present or father-absent. They suggested that adolescents whose fathers were absent had developed a basic covert feminine identification relative to those whose fathers were present. No differences were noted among adolescents whose fathers were absent or present relative to their masculine interest patterns, as reflected in measures of masculinity and femininity; however, it was noted that black adolescents appeared to have stronger feminine identification than white adolescents.

In a meta-analysis conducted by Black and Stevenson (1988) the differences between father-absent and father-present samples were not large. For males, however, it was indicated that father-present males were more stereotypically sex typed than father-absent males. They

suggested that the best controlled studies produced a non-significant effect-size estimate. They included in their analyses the duration of the absence or the presence of surrogate models. They suggested that most important in accounting for the variability in these data was the discrepancy between parent or teacher ratings of behaviors and other measures of sex-role that most often rely on self-evaluation. These data indicated that on ratings of behaviors, father-absent males, are more stereotypical than father-present males, while on self-report measures the opposite is true. This is consistent with Biller and Leibman (1971) and Biller's (1974) conclusions that older, lower SES, father-absent males were more masculine than the father-present males.

Youniss (1989) implies that the absence of social capital in sex-role development appears to have detrimental effects. The male child appears to lose a sense of closeness and connectedness with the absent father. He is no longer available as an advisor and little capital if any can be conveyed through him, and if the child is in a community that lacks presence of norm-bearing adults and supporting institutions he then identifies with alternative value-bearing adults and supporting institutes with whom he

can identify. However, there was no evidence to suggest that a father's death had an effect on sex-role development in boys (Black & Stevenson, 1988).

Chapter 3

Adjustment

Absence or loss of one or both parents by death or separation before the age of five can have long-term, detrimental psychological effects such as a higher incidence of suicide, depression, and psychosis (Dorpart, Jackson, & Ripley, 1965; Hill & Price, 1967). When one parent leaves the other, the child is confronted with the fear that he or she will also be abandoned, feeling unworthy and undesirable. Unlike separation by death, however, Laiken (1981) points out there is no traditional mourning period for the child of divorce, which makes coping with this parental loss that much more disturbing and difficult.

Wallerstein (1983) suggests that following divorce and concomitant psychological stress there are six psychological tasks that a child must undergo to achieve mental health. The first two need immediate attention and resolution within one year, while the next four may need to be reworked several times.

Task I: Acknowledging of the reality of the material separation, which may involve fears of abandonment and or ego regression.

Task II: Disengaging from the parental conflict so that customary pursuits can be resumed. Inability to

disengage is reflected in lower learning achievement, higher drop-out rates and some acting-out behavior.

Task III: "Resolution of loss" - loss of family traditions, the loss of one parent, feelings of rejection and the feeling of being unloved.

Task IV: Resolving anger and self blame, confronts children's lack of belief in the concept of no-fault divorce.

Task V: Accepting the permanence of the divorce, although its irreversibility may be difficult for younger children, in particular, to accept.

Task VI: Achieving realistic hope regarding one's own future relationships.

Wallerstein concludes that young adults may fear love relationships as a result of recurrence of the residues of sadness, anger, and anxiety at critical times during their adult years if they do not effectively resolve this trauma experienced in their earlier years. Trunnell (1968) concurs with Wallerstein. He studied father-absent children under 18 years of age who attended outpatient clinics for psychiatric diagnoses, concluding that the longer the father was absent and the younger the child was at the time of the absence, the greater the psychopathology in the child.

Additional evidence is consistent with the supposition that early father-absence is associated with a heightened susceptibility to a variety of psychological problems (e.g., Blanchard & Biller, 1971; Holman, 1953). Studies indicate that males have more acting out behavior than females do from one-parent homes. Males from mother-headed homes have been characterized as being more dependent, less masculine, more feminine in self-concepts and sex role preferences, and less aggressive than males from intact families (Hetherington, 1978). However, some studies reveal that certain facets of development are particularly affected by father-absence after the age of five (Herzog & Sudia, 1970). It has been suggested that early father-absence may be associated with lowered competition, physical activity, and aggression in males (Lynn et al., 1978). Santrock and Wohlford (1970) investigated fifth-grade males whose fathers were absent. They controlled for the subjects' age, the time at which the separation occurred, and the nature of the separation. Males who experienced later father-absence were more aggressive in doll play interviews than males who experienced early father-absence or whose fathers had died.

Emery (1982) has shown that a discordant parental relationship is more likely to affect males than females, particularly with regard to problems of lack of control.

Kalter and Schiff (1976) have also suggested that father-absent families exhibit a greater degree of maladaptive behaviors, particularly conduct disorders, aggressive behaviors, and delinquent and antisocial behaviors, than those from father-present households. Children from father-absent families have a higher failure rate, lowered school grades, higher drop-out rates, and poorer performance scores on cognitive tests than those from father-present homes (Shinn, 1978). Because males are perceived as needing less supervision, it may be that there is a greater influence from peers. Hetherington, Camara, and Featherman (1983) concur, pointing out that because of economic disadvantages, the children of divorced parents are often relocated to less affluent neighborhoods and are exposed to more delinquency and other factors which might lead them to express antisocial behaviors. Additionally, Santrock and Tracy (1978) have shown that teachers' ratings indicate negative expectations for children of divorced parents and positive expectations for those of intact families. Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1979) found that males from divorced families were given less positive support and nurturance and were perceived more negatively by mothers, teachers, and peers than females were. This was supported by Ball, Newman, and Scheuren (1984) who

found that teachers held more negative expectations for males than females living with divorced mothers.

Goldstein (1984) suggested that youths 12 to 17 years of age from father-absent homes with low paternal supervision showed a greater likelihood of conduct problems. In homes with a high degree of supervision, youths from father-absent homes were no more likely than those from father-present homes to demonstrate conduct problems. A much higher incidence of conduct problems among males in comparison to females extended across age groups and into adulthood. Goldstein (1984) also examined seventeen single mothers and their children from father never-present households. In this longitudinal study, information was gathered about the children through questionnaires, observations, and standardized tests for qualitative and quantitative data. Teachers' reports were taken when the children were eight years of age. The data suggested that by the age of 6, the children blamed themselves for their fathers' absence. This population was more likely to hold sex-role stereotypes. They appeared to be more anxious than did children of married mothers. Kornfein (1977) suggested that the results are attributed to the stressful effects of the families' low incomes and multiple household changes, and to children's concerns about father-absence.

Douglas (1970) contends that death is not linked to increasing anxiety as is divorce and these adolescents appear similar in most respects to those children living in intact families. Lamb (1981) suggests that father-absent children may not be paternally deprived if they have adequate father surrogates, or they may be less paternally deprived than are many father-present children. Santrock (1970) in a study of lower-class fifth-grade males revealed that males who became father-absent before the age of two were more handicapped in terms of several dimensions of personality development than were males who became father-absent after age two; early father-absent males were found to be less trusting, less industrious, and to have more feelings of inferiority than males who became father absent between the ages of three to five. The impact of early deprivation is also supported by Carlsmith's (1964) findings concerning cognitive functioning.

McCoy (1987) conducted a study of 107 male and female subjects who were identified as being father-absent deceased, father-absent divorced, and father-present males and females. McCoy reported that on the Revised Problem Behavior Checklist scale, father-absent males, father-present males, and father-absent divorced females scored highest on the Conduct Disorder Scale, and Motor Excitement Scale. Father-absent divorced and deceased

females scored highest on the Anxiety Withdrawal Scale. On the locus of control measure, father-absent deceased males and females and father-present males scored most internal. It was found that the father-absent divorced subjects had lower self concepts than the other groups. An attempt was made to investigate the potential influence of same sex sibling and age of father-absence for the father-absent subjects, but no significant differences were found.

Salzman (1987) has pointed out that stress normally accompanies recent father-absence. Lynn and Sawrey (1959) considered the effects upon children of both sexes (eight to nine-and one-half years of age) of father-absence in a study of the children of Norwegian sailors. These fathers were absent from the home for extended periods of time. They found a number of personality differences between these children and children from intact families. Boys were more immature and insecure in their identification with their fathers, and they had difficulties in adjustment.

It becomes clear that comparisons between father-absent and father-present households must include some measure of the length of father-absence and the emotional composition of the household prior to the separation. For example, if a child experiences a very unhappy home before the divorce, the final break-up would

not be as traumatic as it would be to a child who thought his home was a happy household. Landis (1960) discovered that among children old enough to remember their homes before the divorce, the degree of trauma the child experienced was closely related with how they viewed the home before the divorce.

In summary, the data overwhelmingly suggest the children and adolescents incur a deficit in regards to adjustment when there is a loss of one parent. This loss of capital propels adolescents to focus on their own subculture thus causing them to forfeit opportunities for gaining capital that adults could share with them (Coleman, 1987). Similarly, young children are deprived of important sources of governance during sensitive periods of development, and, as these studies suggest, are at high risks for psychological adjustment.

Chapter 4

Achievement

Studies do not typically address the issue of the length of father-absence when addressing achievement. Salzman (1987) has suggested several reasons for these irregularities in the data. Also, studies on achievement do not normally follow the progression of the subjects over a long period of time. Poor performance levels may be due to the period of stress which accompanies the loss of the father, changes in the family economic status, and so forth, yet Jones (1975) found that college students from father-absent homes scored higher on mental ability tests than students from two-parent households. Herzog (1974) also found that males from father-absent families scored higher on math ability tests than males from father-present homes. While previous studies show an alarming disparity between the cognitive performance of father-absent and father-present homes. While previous studies show an alarming disparity between the cognitive performance of father-absent and father-present children, Jones' (1975) study implies other variables may be implicated. If father-absence occurred at an early age, then these college students had a longer period to adjust to his absence. It appears that the older the child is when father-absence occurs, the better able the child is to adjust to his

absence (Lynn, 1974). Additionally, research has shown that stress may have an adverse effect on cognitive performance (Despert, 1962).

Sutherland (1930) studied children ages 11 to 13 from Scottish working class families. He found that children from two parent families had significantly higher IQ scores than their single-parent counterparts. Deutsch and Brown (1964) found the same effect among American urban fifth- and sixth-graders. Crescimbeni (1965) found significantly lower scores on standardized achievement tests among father-absent elementary school children than among children from two-parent families. Blanchard and Biller (1971) found the same results in a study with white third-grade males. They predicted that the degree of father-absence would be positively related to their sons' academic achievement and to grades. All of these findings reveal that the academic performance of father-present groups is superior when compared to males who come from early father-absence, late father-absence, or father-present situations with low father-availability. Furthermore, in other comparisons the father-present group outperformed the early father-absent group (Doering, 1980; Fowler & Richards, 1978; Sciara, 1975; Smidchens & Thompson, 1978). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (1980), in a study of over 18,000

American elementary and secondary schools, found that children from one-parent homes were more likely to be lower achievers than those from two-parent homes.

The number of parents in the home is relatively more important in the elementary grades than in high school (Zakiriya, 1982). Several studies have found that children from two-parent homes score higher than those from one-parent homes in reading comprehension, but they urge that caution be used when generalizing their results because they feel that too little was known about the effects of other family organization variables. For example, a meta-analysis by Herzog and Sudia (1968) reviewed almost 400 studies of children growing up in fatherless homes, primarily those studies conducted during the 1950's and 1960's plus a few outstanding ones that were done earlier. On the basis of their findings, they concluded that there could not be adequate evidence to indicate dramatic differences stemming from fatherless homes.

Studies have pointed to the importance of research conducted in the 1960's, especially in the area of children's achievement and family status. For example, the length of the father-absence and the age of the child when the father left home, because of the activity during World War II, was significantly related to latter cognitive

development (Carlsmith, 1964). The study of elementary school children indicated that children from one-parent homes showed significantly lower means in academic achievement than children from two-parent homes. The differences were greater for parent absences because of divorce, separation, and desertion than absence because of death (Crescimbeni, 1964).

Subjects in Hammond's (1979) study consisted of children in grades three through six attending two elementary schools in a lower-middle to middle-class suburban community. Teachers were asked to provide information on student's achievement in reading and mathematics by marking their placement on a nine-point scale. Analysis of the data indicated that there were no significant differences in reading achievement between children on intact and divorced homes. In mathematics achievement, however, males from divorced homes were rated lower, although no significant differences were found. Boys from divorced families had lower ratings in mathematics achievement and reported their families were less happy. They exhibited more distractability and acting out behavior in school than males from intact families. Despert (1962) feels it is generally accepted that divorce often brings the child's buried anxieties to the surface. Although achievement scores have been found to be lower for

children from one-parent homes, the effects appear to work primarily through the lower income of the one-parent homes. Children from two-parent homes have lower achievement scores if mother works, and the magnitude of the effects is directly related to the amount of time worked. Black children from one-parent homes have higher achievement scores if the mother works, mediated to a large extent by increased family income (Milne, Myers, Ellman, & Ginsberg, 1983).

Wasserman (1969) found that a higher proportion of black women were rearing children without husbands had themselves been reared without a father. Sixty percent of the males in this study had repeated at least one grade, but the performance of the father-absent males was no worse than that of father-present males. In another study (Solomon, 1969), black lower-class urban parents were observed helping their fifth-grade children with a series of intellectual tasks. The way the parents related to their children and their methods of offering help were then compared to their children's actual school achievement. The males' school achievement was found to be related to the father's encouraging them to engage in independent efforts to achieve. Their school achievement was best if their fathers encouraged them and were free of hostility, and if their mothers were not overly interested.

Father absence in the black family has been associated with psychological problems and a reduction of goal orientation for the mother (Lynn, 1974). David McClelland (1961) asserted that unusual achievement in later life is fostered by parental pressure on a child to achieve during his early years, accompanied by consistent parental rewards for success. The effectiveness of these efforts is heightened if the child succeeds more than he fails, and if he identifies with his parents, especially with his mother. Fathers who try to foster the achievement of their males may not react with much praise or criticism of their performance (Lynn, 1974).

Bronfenbrenner (1971) indicated that the absence of the father is more critical than that of mothers, particularly in its effects on males. In general, father-absence contributes to low motivation for achievement, inability to defer immediate rewards for later benefits, low self-esteem, and susceptibility to group influence (e.g. children with absent fathers are more likely to "go along with the game"). All of these findings indicate a more pronounced effect of father absence on males than females. Coleman (1966) investigated factors affecting educational achievement in the nation's schools. There were two findings in that the home background was the most important factor in determining how well the child did

at school--more important than any or all aspects of the school which the child attended. The second finding concerned the aspects of the school environment which contributed most to the child's intellectual achievement. Items such as pupil expenditures, student-teacher ratio, laboratory space, number of volumes in the school library, and the presence or absence of grouping according to ability were of little significance. The most important factor was the characteristics of the other children attending the same school.

Wilson (1967) studied 2,600 students using the Coleman Model. Subjects were selected to be representative of whites and nonwhites, type of neighborhoods, economic level and degree of integration of school on the first-, third-, sixth- and eighth-grade levels. Twenty percent of blacks and nine percent of the white subjects were from broken homes. When the low SES students with high grades in English were compared, both black and white father-absent males scored better than the father-present males. Verbal test scores at different grade levels showed the father-absent males significantly higher in grade three, the father-present males significantly higher in grade six, and differences were insignificant or nonexistent in grades one and eight. The results were so oddly mixed as to defy interpretation. Tests on mathematics ability were not

available. No study controlled entirely for socioeconomic status. The Coleman model, used in this and other larger studies, fails to differentiate clearly between types of fatherlessness. Therefore, it seems unlikely that fathers' absence in itself would show significant relationship to poorer school achievement if relevant variables were adequately controlled.

Shinn (1978) suggests that the evidence points to financial hardship, high levels of anxiety, and, in particular, low levels of parent-child interaction as important causes of poor performance in one-parent households. Herzog and Sudia (1973) concluded that the father's absence from home has no significant effect on the child's school achievement. Several studies of elementary school children conducted in the 1960's examined the effects of divorce upon cognitive functioning measured by academic achievement reported no significant results as well (Burchinal, 1964; Clarke, 1961; Wasserman & Kassinove, 1976).

Rile, Riley, and Moore (1971) concluded that the children at the elementary level feared abandonment, acted aggressively, and displayed attention seeking behaviors. On the other hand, at the secondary level, these children often blamed themselves, withdrew, showed anger, and had other problems. Essen (1979) indicated that one-parent

families tended to live in poor housing, were financially disadvantaged, more geographically mobile, and over-represented in the manual labor classes. Furthermore, she purported that children in the one-parent homes had low test scores overall, due to the lack of material circumstances, rather than the absence of a father.

Studies of school achievement often report that children from fatherless homes do worse in school than children from homes with the father present. Hess, Shipman, Brophy, and Bear (1968) who studies 41 pre-school children in low-income black families found no significant differences between the father-absent children and the forty matched father-present controls in scores on the Stanford-Binet IQ and several other tests. There appears to be a large number of studies conducted on blacks. No comparison data accompanied those on father-absence children.

Greenfield and Teevan (1986) concluded that children of deceased parents had a higher rate of fear of failure than those from father-present homes and father-absent homes due to divorce or separated children. This can be related to fathers' failure to emphasize achievement and performance. There was no one available to guide the socialization of the male infants.

Kagel and Schillings (1985) conducted a study in which father-absence was clearly defined as absence from the home for a minimum of one year. Male subjects have been found to score higher on the quantitative sub-tests of the SATQ, while females score higher on verbal sub-test SATV. No significant group differences were found for age, number of siblings, number of older siblings, number of older brothers, or valence of relationship to mother or father.

Essen (1978) suggests that children who had lived in one parent homes at any time, had statistically significantly lower mean scores on both tests of reading and mathematics. A slight tendency was noted for groups who gained a substitute father figure to have lower scores than the children who were still fatherless, especially before the age of seven. Reading attainment was not related to the reason for the break-up; children of widows did not differ significantly from children of divorce and separation. This examiner related relatively low-test scores overall to a large extent on their poor material circumstances rather than the absence of one parent. Children in one-parent families have lower overall scores in tests taken at the age of sixteen, than those who lived with both their parents. This indicated that the depression in overall scores is related to those social and financial circumstances rather than the child's parental

situation itself. Low-income is clearly associated with difficulties for families without a father, although poor housing appears to be a negligible part of the social favors associated with low math attainment. The age at which the absence occurred in this study was not important. The only suggestion of a consistent pattern among the fatherless group was that after adjusting for differences in their background the children whose mothers were still alone at the time of the follow-up were at a slight disadvantage over the children with a substitute father figure.

In summary, there appears to be two hypotheses that are constant in the literature: one being that father-absence does have an affect on achievement (Blanchard & Biller, 1971; Sciara, 1975), the second being that the age at which the absence occurred affects the level of achievement (Crescembeni, 1965; Jones, 1975). Factors considered were SES, relationship of the parent to the child and degree of encouragement. Bronfenbrenner (1971) suggests that the loss of capital due to father-absence promotes low motivation, inability to defer immediate rewards for later benefits, low self esteem, and susceptibility to group influences. Surprisingly, Milne et al. (1983) noted that, in regard to minorities, if the mother worked and increased family income the adolescent

had higher achievement scores, but in a two-parent household if the mother worked then the adolescent had lower achievement scores due to nonavailability of mother. There are studies which contradict these findings, however. Clearly, the resolution of these contradictory findings awaits more careful research on this question.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This project was conducted to further investigate the effects of father absence on achievement, sex-role development, and adjustment on males. Analysis of the data indicated marked differences according to the researcher conducting the study. Traditionally the concept of social capital focused on parents' helping their sons gain entrance into society and achieving advantageous positions in it. However, after the divorce, separation, or death, the father-son relationship deteriorates to an extent that little if any capital may be conveyed from father to son. Males often feel distant and hostile towards their fathers following the separation. Typically, after divorce and separation the fathers experience income gains while custodial mothers and the children suffer income reduction which leads to a deprivation of developmental tasks and activities that the budget cannot allow. This reduction of income in most cases causes a move to housing that can be afforded by one parent, and this community may lack presence of norm-bearing adults and supporting institutions.

The most frequent hypothesis in regards to sex role development is that since males lack a resident father, they also lack an effective masculine role model and source

of identification. A number of studies support this hypothesis (Barclay & Cusumano, 1967; Biller, 1968a, 1968b, 1969a, 1969b, 1974; Harper & Ryder, 1986; Kagel & Schilling, 1985). However, it is suggested that the length of father absence appears to have an effect on sex-role development. It has been suggested that males experiencing early and lengthy father absence is highly associated with low masculinity orientation (Biller, 1974; Biller & Meredith, 1972; Harper & Ryder, 1986; Hetherington, 1966; Mussen & Rutherford, 1963). It is further suggested that the presence of an older male sibling or other male model increased masculinity and influenced sex-role development (Biller, 1974; Kagel & Schilling, 1985). This lends credence to the studies conducted by Shinn (1978) and Hetherington et al. (1983) that due to several factors father-absent males are more influenced by peers.

Interestingly enough, others tend to negate previous findings. Mussen and Rutherford (1963) and Biller (1968a) have suggested that the mother can enhance her son's masculinity by direct encouragement. Lynn et al. (1978) speculate it is all in how the child perceives the father and whether or not he wishes to model after him or accept his sex-role identification. Lastly, it appears that race is a determinant in the degree of feminine identification (Barclay & Cusumano, 1967). In a meta-analysis conducted

by Black and Stevenson (1988) there was no evidence to suggest that father's death had an effect on sex-role development. In regard to adjustment, the absence or loss of one or both parents by death or separation before the age of five appears to have long-term, detrimental psychological effects (Dorpart et al., 1965; Hill & Price, 1967; Santrock, 1970). Trunnell (1968), Wallerstein (1983), and Blanchard and Biller (1971) suggest young adults fear love relationships. They state the longer the father is absent and the younger the child was at the time of the absence, the greater the psychopathology such as lowered competition, physical activity and aggression in males. However, Santrock and Wohlford (1970) suggest males who experienced later father absence were more aggressive in doll play interviews.

The studies reviewed by Crescimbeni (1965), Blanchard and Biller (1971), Doering (1980), Sciara (1975), Fowler and Richards (1978), and Smidchens and Thompson (1978) are all in agreement that father-absence and the length of father-absence does adversely affect academic achievement. Lynn (1974) states that the older the child is when the absence occurs, the better able the child is to adjust to the absence. Jones (1975) expanded on these findings in his study of college males from father-absent homes who

scored higher on mental abilities tests; the factor associated with this finding was the age at which father-absence occurred. The younger the child is when the father leaves, the longer the child has to adjust to his absence. However, in contradiction, Lynn (1974) stated the older the child is when the absence occurs, the better able the child is to adjust to his absence. Zakiriya (1982) suggested the number of parents in the home is more important in elementary grades than in high school. Milne et al. (1983) concurred with these findings. It seems clear that the multiple variable influencing development interact in complex fashion to produce seemingly contradictory findings.

Across the continuum there appear to be certain variables that are constantly resurfacing; two of these are the age at which the father-absence occurred and the length of father absence. Emphasis is also now being given to causes of father-absence. In addition, socioeconomic status was a significant factor in adversely affecting the development of males by representing a majority of the other variables.

The studies reviewed by Coleman (1987) and Essen (1978 and 1979) support the notion that it is material circumstances rather than the absence of the father that accounts for developmental differences. It has become

apparent throughout the course of this study that there is the need for social capital which is defined as "the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child's growing up." In the male child, adolescent, and young adult's lives to become productive persons, children need social capital if they are to enter society with the shared viewpoint most adults hold. It is believed this capital comes from within the family, from outside institutions, and through their conjunction. The literature presents the view of lower availability of social capital in the single-parent home, the effects of this loss on the child's development, and the subsequent negative attitudes of the public school system and other support and social service agencies.

The results of research are conflicting and the need for further research could possibly take the following factors into consideration:

- The effects of father-absence at varying ages.
- The number, sex-type, and birth order of the siblings.
- Environmental factors that aid the children coping with the absence which help to instill stability and resilience in the child.
- The multiple variables affecting development and their possible relationship to the absence of the

father.

-Comparison studies of low, middle and high SES
father-absent children and adolescents.

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