

THE IMPACT OF FATHER ABSENCE ON THE MARITAL SATISFACTION OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

by

Ashley Ann Sanders

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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ABSTRACT

The African American community is plagued with single-parent homes, headed by women. Importantly, while the father-absent phenomenon has gained more attention, much research is still needed to gain a complete perspective of the absent father and its influence upon the adult child, specifically the adult daughter who is at significant risk of continuing in her parent's footsteps. The purpose of this quantitative survey method research is to explore the impact of father absenteeism among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction; additionally, examining can supportive mothers moderate the effect. This study examined the marital satisfaction among African American women with absent fathers in comparison to African American women with a present father in childhood, in addition to the supportive mother variable. African American women ($N=21$) drawn from a convenient sample of churchgoers, who were in a heterosexual marriage, at least 18 years and older, in the Northeast region of the United States with access to an email completed measures of marital satisfaction using the Couple Satisfaction Index and the support of their mother using the Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire. Overall, there was not a significant difference between the marital satisfaction of African American women with absent fathers in comparison to those with present fathers in childhood. However, the regression analysis indicated that marital satisfaction decreased as the mother's support increased for those with absent fathers. The results indicate a need for further, in-depth research considering a new sample size and including individuals that are not churchgoers.

Keywords: African American Women, Absent Fathers, Marital Satisfaction, Supportive Mother

Dedication

This degree is dedicated to the beloved Kyle Brault, knowing that failure is not an option, and even in death, Kyle is not forever lost. I have realized that love on earth is for a moment, but in heaven, love is forever.

Acknowledgments

There are no words to describe the emotions one experiences during the doctoral process. Some arrive at the finish line considering only the academic gains achieved, while others have made great strides but experienced significant losses. Some discovered whom God predestined them to be, and some experience a loss of family time to gain a collective sacrifice. However, this author's beloved brother, Kyle Brault, was lost on this journey. Nevertheless, his laugh, jokes, walk, voice, and the simple joy of his smile remain in remembrance.

Amid his passing, this author noted in an assignment that people sometimes walk away from God in significant loss, but if we genuinely love God, we must not walk away from Him due to our pain. Therefore, this journey will finish with the idea that love fueled the journey to the finish line by God's grace and mercy. Even today, the tears for Kyle flow as if it was just yesterday that this author kissed him goodbye. Nevertheless, the author's love for him still grows fonder. With God's grace and mercy and in honor of the beloved Kyle, this author remembers these words; love never dies (1 Corinthians 13:8, MSG).

To my loving husband, Zack, I am blessed to have you in my life. Your sacrifices were countless during this doctoral process. You were my cheerleader in this race, even when I ran with my eyes closed. Thank you for being my husband.

To my exceptional children, Robert and Zoey, know that I love you beyond words. You are the only two people to truly know the sound of my heart beating for you. I pray that this journey will create a path that reinforces that you can do and be anyone your heart desires with the knowledge that your mother will support you. Thank you for being my children and the unconditional love you show me every day.

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List of Abbreviations

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI 32)

Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Women are the pillars of the family foundation in the African American community. Nevertheless, as they carry the world on their shoulders, they often bear the burden of being a single parent. In this tragedy, a single mother's hurdle continues to the next generation of young children raised without the support of their fathers. The devastating implications project the generational trend of absent fathers and trauma to the internal workings of children, specifically the black daughter. However, the consequences can, unfortunately, influence the lifestyle of that daughter long into adulthood. In this chapter, the background, problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of this research is revealed as it relates to absent fathers among African American women and their marital satisfaction.

Background

It has been customary for children to grow up in two-parent married homes but unlikely for black children (Hemez & Washington, 2021). Since 1968, African American children living in two-parent homes have decreased for decades, and single-parent homes have nearly doubled (Hemez & Washington, 2021; Kramer, 2019). Therefore, parents are experiencing divorce at high rates, declines in marriage rates, and children continue to be born out of wedlock. Research shows that almost 25% of children live with single parents and no other adults in the home, while the global average is seven percent (Kramer, 2019). However, unfortunately, the number of black children living in single-mother homes was roughly 46.3% in 2020 within the United States (Hemez & Washington, 2021). As single parenthood is on the rise, the involvement of a father, even nonresidential fathers, is a determinant of a child's behavioral development (Choi &

Jackson, 2011). Thus, the phenomenon of the absent father in the African American community has devastated the family structure, impacting the children left behind, especially their daughters (Sağkal et al., 2018). As young girls develop into young women, society may underestimate the significance of the presence of a father in their lives.

Historical Content

One can tear down a community by tearing apart the family in society. Currently, African Americans have the lowest marriage rates, highest divorce rates, and have more children out of wedlock than any other ethnicity. Many African Americans experience alternative family structures as cohabitation has risen (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011). Although African Americans wish to marry, they are often reluctant to do so based on opposing experiences. As African Americans are left to combat struggles in their community, they are often negatively impacted by adverse conditions that lead to distrust in relationships such as parenting styles, unstable families, financial instability, discrimination, and victims of violent crimes (Simons et al., 2012).

According to literature, in 1960, the racial gap among marriages started to appear (Raley et al., 2015). As marriage rates decline among African Americans, single parenthood rises, unfortunately impacting a child's psychological, behavior, and relational well-being. As it stands, absent fathers in early childhood and adolescence can have negative implications on the mood stability of children, such that they are more likely to experience depression (Culpin et al., 2013). Specifically, daughters who lack the presence of a father in their lives run the risk of engaging in more risky sexual behaviors and promiscuity, in comparison, to those with a present father (DePriore & Hill, 2013; Ellis et al., 2012). Additionally, while the youth in black homes overrepresent children with delinquent behaviors, they are still at risk as an association between

absent fathers and the socioeconomic disadvantages can accompany single-parent homes (Gonzalez et al., 2014).

While father absence is a phenomenon that has gained more attention in recent decades, it is impossible to understand absent fathers among the black community without fully exploring the historical factors that contribute to the family structure among African Americans. Slavery itself speaks to the implications of absent fathers on African American women and the family system, including marital satisfaction. Slavery influenced every aspect of black lives, including marriage which disrupted their family structure by dismantling marriage stability as families were torn apart and sold as individual cattle. As a result, generations of African Americans continue to suffer from the residue of discrimination as slavery has influenced blacks physically, mentally, and emotionally, leaving them with skewed attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors that inform the black culture (Pinderhughes, 2002).

Social Context

Structurally, due to discrimination, African American men are more likely to be unskilled workers, and unfortunately, unskilled workers are also more likely to become incarcerated (Raley et al., 2015). As black males become incarcerated at a much higher rate than any other race, this contributes to a gap in the sex ratio for eligible men to marry (Dixon, 2009). Although family breakdown is not the precise reason for mass incarceration, the criminal justice system has contributed to the effects on the family structure of African Americans (Western & Wilderman, 2009).

According to Gramlich (2019), African Americans made up only 12% of the U.S. adult population in 2017, while the prison system consisted of 33% of blacks sentenced to over one year in prison. In contrast, whites make up 64% of the U.S. population while only accounting for

30% of the prison population. Hence, many African Americans are behind bars versus those living in the free world. Although just one reason, it systematically contributes to the mass number of African American fathers living away from their children (Lemmons & Johnson, 2019; Schwartz-Soicher et al., 2011). Thus, in turn, leads to one thread of financial instability among the black community as males experience unstable employment impacting their ability to support their family (Schwartz-Soicher et al., 2011). According to Dixon (2009), not only do African Americans find themselves unable to support their families after incarceration, but unemployment rates among black males have doubled in comparison to whites since 1940.

Social movements, including the sexual revolution, normalized sex before marriage, and before the sexual revolution, sex was an incentive to marriage. For couples who have cohabitated as an alternative to marriage, marital rates continue to decline (Dixon, 2009). According to Mayol-Garcia et al. (2021), the rate of African American males that never marry increased from 2006 to 2016. Males ages 25-29 who had never been married increased from 57.9% to 70.9%, while percentages among married men ages 30-34 years were 34.8% and 45.8%, respectively. Hence, resulting in about a seven-year delay in marriage over the past 50 years. Retrospectively, in 1960, the average age of marriage for men was 23 and 20 for women (Mayol-Garcia et al., 2021). Drastically, in 2016, the numbers rose as reports show that the average age of marriage for men rose to 30 and 28 for women (Mayol-Garcia et al., 2021).

Culturally, marriage among African Americans has shifted as trends have. According to Raley et al. (2015), in the 1960s, family arrangements appeared to have changed broadly and made marriage more of "a choice" than a necessity. As African Americans are less likely to marry, they are less likely to have a stable family structure. Research reveals that when African Americans marry, they often do so later in life and do not remain married for the same duration

as their white counterparts (Dixon, 2009). In 2014, only one-third of black children lived with both parents, while 70% and 59% of white and Hispanic children lived with two parents, respectively (Raley et al., 2015). Subsequently, prolonging marriage negatively impacts children while born out of wedlock into single-parent homes. Some social scientists believe that single-parent homes can harm the development of children as it reduces the resources allotted to the child. Others suggest that family instability due to financial distress fuels development problems (Raley et al., 2015).

Individual factors can explain the historical and social concepts that impact the African American family structure. The desire to marry, mate choice, and commitment are crucial factors influencing the marriage. Specifically, among black males versus black females, marriage rates are influenced by their willingness to marry. Compared to white males, black males do not believe that marriage will improve their existing relationships, such as personal friendships, nor will marriage improve their sex lives, which could account for the reluctance to marry (South, 1993).

Incarceration not only impacts the African American family structurally; but also individually as African American women expect to marry up, noting that they expect their partners to be more educated, problem solvers, and more successful than themselves. However, this might be unrealistic in this culture because incarceration impacts the male's ability to be employable after his offense and because families typically send their daughters to college. At the same time, their sons are encouraged to work. Historically, African American daughters were sent off to college to avoid domestic services within Caucasian homes that potentially led to degradation and sexual abuse (Dixon, 2009). Hence, as marriage has become optional for women

as they increasingly contribute to the home, socioeconomic status has become even more vital when considering marriage (Raley et al., 2015).

Theoretical Context

Consequences can be devastating as African American children suffer from the structural, cultural, and individual factors that influence the family structure, specifically the experience of an absent father. Unambiguously, fathers play a prominent role in developing their children, especially their daughters (Sağkal et al., 2018). However, children who experience a cheerful and present father are less likely to have negative attitudes towards eating, decreased depression, lower levels of body shame (Miles-McLean et al., 2014). Nevertheless, child adjustment influences the daughters raised with a warm, close, responsive, present father from infancy to adulthood. Moreover, during adolescence, the positive parent-child relationship is accompanied by greater self-esteem and academic achievement, lower depression, and substance abuse (Bireda & Pillay, 2018).

Basic Psychological Needs Theory

Most research initially focused on the role of the mother-child attachment while the father-child relationship essentially is ignored, especially that of the daughters (Walters & Stinnett, 1971). Sağkal and et al. (2018) recognized the salient role of fathers in their children's development. In their study, they examined the direct-indirect implications of the father-daughter relationship on the psychological outcome of adolescent daughters.

As noted in the study, the basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) is one mechanism that accounts for the link between the father-daughter relationship and the adolescent girls' adjustment. The basic psychological Needs theory is a mini theory associated with self-determination theory (SDT) that asserts that there are three innate basic psychological needs:

growth, functioning, and overall well-being regardless of gender and culture, the basic need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2012). In SDT, the three basic needs include competence, relatedness, and autonomy which fulfill the what (i.e., content) and the why (i.e., process) of goal pursuit. Literature notes that while satisfaction of the basic needs improves psychological adjustment, the frustration of the basic needs leads to psychopathology (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Furthermore, research has revealed that basic psychological needs are associated with positive adjustment outcomes while controlling parental behaviors is associated with need frustrated children. Hence, the basic psychological need satisfaction mediates the association between the father-daughter relationship and the adolescent girls' psychological adjustment (Sağkal et al., 2018).

According to Sağkal et al. (2018), the study results showed father-daughter relationship projected need satisfaction, well-being, and psychopathology in adolescent girls. Therefore, adolescent girls who experienced greater need satisfaction reported greater well-being and a lower level of ill-being. Indirectly, a greater well-being father-daughter relationship leads to higher levels of need satisfaction, followed by an increase in well-being and a decrease in ill-being. Thus, both hypotheses were true, as (1) the father-daughter relationship is related to well-being and (2) the father-daughter relationship indirectly relates to well-being or ill-being through basic psychological need satisfaction (Sağkal et al., 2018).

Attachment Theory

One area of interest in literature has been father-daughter relationships, despite very little concerning father absence and marital satisfaction explored (Haaz et al., 2014; Lark, 2016). However, Lark (2016) recognized that father absence is prevalent in the African American community and influences the development of the children, specifically the daughter's romantic

relationships in adulthood. Therefore, the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived-in experience of African American women who experienced father absence during childhood and how this influenced their marital satisfaction in adulthood (Lark, 2016).

For Lark's research, attachment theory is the driving theory behind the research, which focuses on the attachment bonds between relationships, specifically, the parent-child or romantic partners (Bowlby, 1969; Lark, 2016). Attachment theory studies how childhood experiences and relationships with our caregivers' guide adulthood relationships (Gibson, 2020). However, much research on attachment theory alludes to the idea that mothers are the primary caregiver instead of fathers (Lambl, 1975).

In 1969, Bowlby asserted that emotional connection is the key to the human need for safety and survival (Sable, 2000). Initially, attachment theory was a means to explain relationships between an infant and a primary caregiver. However, since expanding, attachment theory includes adult romantic relationships as adults rely on the stability of the romantic relationship for security and consistency to explore the world around them (Shaver & Hazan, 1987). Therefore, attachment theory explains the underlying construct of attachment in that it is the primary mechanism of influence for all relationships, including romantic, platonic, or familial (Gibson, 2020). For that reason, understanding a child's sense of loss during separation to their mother-figure helps explain the bond that connects the infant to that figure (Bowlby, 1969). Likewise, from infancy, primary caregivers that are attentive and available for their baby help the child build a sense of security that allows them to explore the surrounding world through a secure base if the caregiver is reliable (Sable, 2000). Therefore, the learned attachment style explains the interactions of other relationships based on one internal working model (Sable, 2000). In the same manner, when adults experience distress or feel threatened, the romantic

partner just as with the caregiver, is seen as a source of safety and comfort (Shaver & Hazan, 1987).

As childhood experiences influence characteristics featured in adulthood, these traits refer to attachment styles. As a result, the four attachment styles include: (a) dismissive-avoidant, (b) fearful-avoidant, (c) anxious attachment, and (d) secure attachment (Gibson, 2020). Those with a dismissive-avoidant attachment experienced a highly neglectful childhood because of unavailable parents. On the other hand, those with a fearful-avoidant attachment had a different tale they endured as one or both parents are typically emotionally volatile or abusive. However, those with anxious attachment manifest because of absenteeism in childhood rather than abuse. However, those with secure attachments experienced available and supportive parents (Gibson, 2020).

As attachment style is one of the most important aspects of measuring human relationships, it is central in evaluating marital satisfaction (Ottu & Akpan, 2011). The literature concerning attachment theory and marital satisfaction supports the theoretical probability that individuals with a secure attachment father-daughter relationship are more satisfied with their marriages than insecurely attached individuals who experience father absence (Banse, 2004; Sable, 2000). Lark's (2016) study shows that participants experienced several negative consequences to father absenteeism such as early sexual activity, lower self-esteem, and self-worth, and lived with a fear of abandonment and rejection. These consequences, in turn, manifested throughout adulthood as they considered how an absent father impacted their lives. As revealed, participants struggled as they looked for the adult intimate relationship that did not resemble their childhood which influenced mate selection and their current marriage. The participants further elaborated on the current marital dilemmas, noting that they did not

understand how to be a wife and relate to a man, which was rooted in their father's absence. In turn, participants relied on their faith in God as they used it to navigate marital life, which gave them hope and strength. Through their experiences, they realized how imperative the effects of father absence were on their marriage (Lark, 2016).

As it stands, the father's absence has been the driving force behind several other studies, as noted by the literature. Father absence predicts that longing for a father can impede the physical, emotional, or psychological well-being of child development, interpersonal, and romantic adjustment that follows children into adulthood. This driving force was cited in Reuven-Krispin et al. (2020) recent study as they discussed the consequences of complete versus partial father absence before the age of 6 due to divorce.

According to Reuven-Krispin et al. (2020), children who experienced a partial father presence in the home before the age of six had more concern for their psychopathology. Those children had lower remarks in the perception of intimacy, commitment, passion; and recalled negative experiences related to their maternal-child relationship in care and overprotection. Young adults were more likely to have less than satisfactory relationships and less likely to invest in their new roles. Those without the presence of a father at all were more likely to self-criticize, felt their mothers were overprotective and experienced less maternal care. Thus, the evidence displayed a link between divorce, child development, adjustment, and well-being (Reuven-Krispin et al., 2020).

Several studies have researched father involvement in child development. However, few reports note the association between absent fathers and adult African American women in adult romantic relationships, specifically marital satisfaction. Most who have focused on African American women, father absence, and marital satisfaction have conducted phenomenological

studies at which time the lived experiences of marital relationships were presented (Priest, 2002).

Interestingly, being married is associated with greater positive affect, while being divorced or separated is associated with greater negative aspects that correlate with the mother-daughter relationship (Cwikel, 2016). Thus, there seems to be some aspects of the mother-daughter relationship that is associated with the spouse. Therefore, Cwikel (2016) noted that future research should include the examination of the mother-daughter relationship and its capacity for a woman to establish intimacy and stability in their marital union. As quantitative research explores research beyond words and actions, emphasizing measuring the statistical relationship among variables, this study will measure the statistical relationship between absent fathers and adult daughters on marital satisfaction in the African American community (Clark et al., 2008). Additionally, examining the potential of a supportive mother as a moderating variable.

As African American women continue to be the pillar within the Black community, children can suffer from the struggles presented to single mothers, specifically the daughters. Voluntarily to involuntarily, the family structure suffers, and ultimately the black child suffers due to the generational trends of historical, social, and theoretical content that describes the absent father. Since 1960, the marital disparity among African Americans has increased at an alarming rate that has attracted the attention of researchers (Wang & Parker, 2014). While African Americans still want to marry, they combat opposing forces that contribute to relationships distrust (Simons et al., 2012). While the father-absent phenomenon has gained more attention, much research is still needed to gain a complete perspective of the absent father and its influence upon the adult child, specifically the adult daughter who is at significant risk of continuing in her parent's footsteps.

Problem Statement

African American children are being raised in single-mother homes at an alarming rate in the United States. As father-daughter relationships have psychological, relational, and behavioral implications on daughters, literature has not entirely addressed this issue as there is some controversy related to the impact of absent fathers. However, Shulman et al. (2012) findings show that mothers can support their daughter's emerging romantic interests. As a result, daughters will show higher levels of romantic competence, even in families with absent fathers. Furthermore, when mothers had comprehensible accounts of their own experiences, daughters were more likely to be involved in reciprocal, intimate, and stable relationships. Finally, when mothers supported and trusted their daughters despite a father not being in the homes, daughters were more likely to experience stable, positive, and mature relationships with proper problem-solving skills (Shulman et al., 2012). Thus, the prevalence and implications of father absence remain without closure.

The problem remains that much has revealed African American fathers' historical barriers and the significance of father-daughter attachment on child development; however, many scholars have yet to exhaust every implication. Unfortunately, little notes the experience of this relationship on marital satisfaction on adult daughters, and those studies that have explored it have been predominately qualitative research (Lark, 2016).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative survey method research is to explore the impact of father absenteeism among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction; additionally, examining can supportive mothers moderate the effect. Hence, for this research, the variables include father absenteeism, marital satisfaction, and supportive mothers. When considering the

marital structure in the African American community, from 1960 to 2012, the rate of black adults never marrying quadrupled from 9% to 36% (Wang & Parker, 2014). However, in comparison, the number of whites that never married doubled from 8% to 16% (Wang & Parker, 2014). Statistically, men are more likely never to marry, but this is more pronounced among the black community. In 2012, about 36% of men and 35% of women ages 25 and older had never married (Wang & Parker, 2014). These rates skyrocketed as the gap widened from 12% and 8% for men and women, respectively (Wang & Parker, 2014). While the decline of marriage rates among African American couples has left an overrepresentation of single motherhood in the black community, the harmful effect rest on the shoulders of the young black child, specifically the daughter.

Unfortunately, about 70% of black children are born out of wedlock (Cherlin, 2005). For the black child who has grown up in a single-mother home, there is a wealth of knowledge that has explored the implications on child development and what behavioral, psychological, and emotional risks the child can encounter (DelPriore & Hill, 2013; Ellis et al., 2012; Lambl, 1975). However, no research has tried to find statistical significance in these findings as they relate to the African American adult daughter and the implications of father absence and the supportive mother on marital satisfaction (Lark, 2016; Reuven-Krispin et al., 2020). To further explore this literature gap, participants for this research study include a convenient sample of African American married women who attend church within the tri-city area of the United States Northeast region. Inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: African American women whose biological father is born to African American, 18 years of age and older, in a heterosexual marriage, have access to an email and living in the Northeast region of the United States of which the population selection took place. There will not be any restrictions on the length of

marriage as some research notes that marital satisfaction does not tend to decline over time and thus still is stable throughout the marriage (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). In addition, the participants must have experienced either father-absence in childhood or a full-time, present father in a residential home. Furthermore, participants with an absent father had to be by way of abandonment, divorce, rejection, incarceration, or never interact with their biological father. Finally, those who did not reconcile with their biological fathers before the age of 18 will be eligible for participation.

Significance of the Study

Marital satisfaction extends beyond couples and can be a mechanism of change for family well-being that influences an individual's happiness, health, and ability to access economic resources (Mayol-Garcia et al., 2021). Therefore, marital satisfaction influences the family system, particularly between partners and children (Cordova et al., 2014). Unfortunately, marriage and divorce, along with timing and duration, can predict the changing economic environment so much so that social norms and cultural attitudes shift, and more importantly, family characteristics (Mayol-Garcia et al., 2021). As life adversity and less favorable outcomes result from the negative influence presented to children, a lack of necessary attachment bonds to be healthy adults due to a lack of parental involvement manifests, precisely due to father absence (East et al., 2007). Unfortunately, women are primarily the head of the house due to divorce or a relationship breakdown. Even more so, an overwhelming number of women raising children in single-parent homes in the African American community (Livingston, 2018). Negatively, divorced women were more likely to live in poverty; therefore, single-parent homes impact the black child (Mayol-Garcia et al., 2021; Raley et al., 2015).

This study proposes to add theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature that will narrow the gap in existing research. This study is essential as it examines the relationship between father absence, supportive mothers, and adult daughters' marital satisfaction among the African American community. Like other studies, the researcher expects to contribute to the field by working with African American women to develop interventions and resources. Therefore, helping engage African American fathers back in the home, improve the family nucleus, and restore the adult daughter could result based on the contribution of the findings (McClain, 2012). Such developments potentially include trauma-informed modalities and therapeutic interventions as well as court-ordered programming for divorcing families to help maintain father-child proximity. Moreover, the researcher assumes that the findings will encourage practitioners to conduct culturally sensitive assessments that explore the black woman's absent father experience. Therefore, becoming better equipped to implement interventions during therapy to help them achieve marital satisfaction despite their attachment bonds with their father (Buckingham, 2012).

As father absence has social and psychological implications on African American women, it is necessary to study this complexity. These factors can lend understanding to intimate relationships of fatherless African American women and increase awareness of inter- and intrapersonal relationships (Wilson, 2017). This study will also further add to the literature that has examined the implication of father absence on the adult daughter and marital satisfaction through phenomenological research. Finally, this research will re-qualify the findings to be more generalizable among the specific population (Gheondea-Eladi, 2014; Lark, 2016).

Research Question(s)

This study design will investigate the statistical significance of father absence among adult daughters and marital satisfaction in the African American community. Additionally,

examining the potential of a supportive mother as a moderating variable. The following research questions will investigate the relationship between father absence, African American women, supportive mothers, and marital satisfaction. These research questions will be investigated through a survey method using statistical methods.

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood?

RQ2: Is there a moderating effect of supportive mothers on marital satisfaction in African American women with absent fathers.

Definitions

1. African American Woman – refers to a woman who identifies as African American based on the mother or father's birth descent in America (Wilson, 2017).
2. Attachment Theory – refers to the regulatory system of maintaining proximity to a caregiver. Bowlby argues that infants are born with attachment behaviors focused on attachment figures. In turn, the attachment strategies focus on maintaining proximity for safety from physical and psychological threats and alleviating distress (Mikulincer et al., 2003).
3. Father absence – refers to a father who was not physically or emotionally present due to a disruption in the family by way of divorce or separation (Pougnnet et al., 2012). Father absence also refers to daughters who had little or no contact with the father. Father absence also relates to a daughter who did not know their father. Finally, father absence refers to a daughter whose father abandoned the family during infancy or early childhood or daughters who had no physical or verbal contact with their father before 18 (Lark, 2016).
4. Marital – refers to legally married, heterosexual couples (Lark, 2016).
5. Marital Satisfaction – the perceived quality of the marital couple's interaction, level of happiness, and feelings about their marriage (Canel, 2013).
6. Reconciliation – refers to reestablishing a relationship (Molina, 1999).
7. Secure Base – refers to the actual or perceived availability provided to a child allowing the infant to explore the world and others around them without fear of danger in a safe environment (Bowlby, 1969).
8. Single Mother – relates to the child's residency, specifically living with the mother without the biological father's presence (Mencarini et al., 2019).
9. Supportive mother - refers to the measurement of quality and closeness of the relationship among mother and daughter (Cwikel, 2016).

Summary

African American children are being raised in single-parent homes at an increasingly alarming rate as the number of single-parent homes, cohabitation, and divorce increases. Attachment is one of the most critical factors in developing healthy adult children related to marital satisfaction, specifically for the father-daughter relationship. Those who have secure attachments with a present father tend to have healthy and more marital satisfaction, decreasing the continued cycle of divorce and never married. The earlier studies on absent fathers, African American women, and marital satisfaction depict behavioral, emotional, and psychological implications that prove a close relationship between these variables with devastating effects. A few studies have examined these variables in phenomenological studies, but even fewer have tried to generalize the findings among the African American community. This study will extend the realm of research about generalizing the relationship between absent fathers, African American women, and marital satisfaction. Therefore, helping to forge a research foundation in absent fathers and its long-time implications for the African American adult daughters and their intimate relationships.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

African Americans hold the lowest marriage rate in the United States, the highest divorce rate among ethnicities, and have always been disproportionately likely to raise their children in single-parent homes (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; Miller, 2018). Even stemming back to slavery, if a slave owner had larger slaveholdings than smaller ones, slave families were more likely to remain intact and not torn apart. However, this was the opposite for smaller slaveholdings as the families experienced more instability (Miller, 2018). This chapter will explore the theoretical framework and related literature that lends to the purpose of this research study which is to examine the impact that father absence has on the African American daughter and her marital satisfaction, additionally, with supportive mothers as a moderating variable.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory

Development of Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory refers to the regulatory system used in maintaining proximity to a caregiver. John Bowlby argued that infants are born with attachment behaviors focused on attachment figures. In turn, the attachment strategies focus on maintaining proximity for safety from physical and psychological threats and alleviating distress (Mikulincer et al., 2003). In addition, attachment theory explains the underlying construct of attachment in that it is the primary mechanism of influence for all relationships, including romantic, platonic, or familial (Gibson, 2020). It studies how childhood experiences and relationships with our caregivers' guide adulthood relationships (Gibson, 2020). For that reason, understanding a child's sense of

loss during separation to their mother-figure helps explain the bond that connects the infant to that figure (Bowlby, 1969). From infancy, primary caregivers that are attentive and available for their baby help the child build a sense of security that allows them to explore the surrounding world through a secure base if the caregiver is reliable (Sable, 2000). Therefore, the learned attachment style explains the interactions of other relationships based on one internal working model (Sable, 2000).

Attachment theory originated as a collaboration of joint work developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth in the 1960s (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Gibson, 2020). Bowlby was a scholar from Cambridge University grounded in the object relations approach, which he became familiar with during his time at the British Psychoanalytic Institute (Bowlby, 1969; Gibson, 2020). He believed that family experiences were influential in developing emotional disturbance (Bretherton, 1992).

As Bowlby considered his career path, he volunteered at a school for maladjusted children (Bretherton, 1992). Influenced by his professional relationships with two young boys, he became interested in people's attachments (Gibson, 2020). One thing he found fascinating about the two boys was that the teenager was without a stable mother figure and appeared withdrawn and indifferent, while the other young boy, whose parents were either overbearing or absent during childhood, was both fearful and inseparable from Bowlby (Bowlby, 1969; Gibson, 2020). This stark difference between the boy's childhood parental relationships sparked Bowlby's desire to understand the relationship between upbringing and adulthood. The basis of his research was rooted in his curiosity to understand the connection between how a child gets treated and how they will then treat others (Gibson, 2020).

According to Bretherton (1992), Mary Ainsworth was introduced to the security theory during her professional development, emphasizing that children need to develop a secure dependency on their parents before exploring unfamiliar territories. As she developed professionally, in 1950, Mary Ainsworth went with her husband to London. Her attention fell upon a research study headed by Bowlby that explored the effect on personality development of the separation of an infant from their mother in early childhood. This research reset Ainsworth's professional career. When Ainsworth arrived at the institute, she was so impressed by the data collection that she vowed to expand upon the naturalistic observation of attachment if she ever undertook her own studies (Bretherton, 1992).

During Ainsworth's time at the institute, Bowlby published works with the help of Ainsworth. Bowlby concluded that infants and children should experience a warm, intimate, and stable relationship with their mother to grow up mentally healthy, which called for a theoretical explanation establishing attachment theory. In 1953, Bowlby published his first ethological paper, and little referenced his new thinking about attachment. His colleagues were unconvinced that ethology was relevant to the mother-child relationship (Bretherton, 1992). Even Ainsworth was wary of the direction Bowlby started to undertake and later left the institute but continued to consult with Bowlby on his research. However, work between Ainsworth, Bowlby, and colleagues will give way to classifying basic relationship patterns. Based on five papers, the basis stood for the first basic outline of attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992). According to Bretherton (1992), Bowlby formulated the basic tenets of attachment theory which revolutionized our thinking about a child's connection to their mother through separation, deprivation, and bereavement. However, Ainsworth made it possible to test some of Bowlby's ideas and help expand the theory, giving way to a new direction in attachment theory.

According to Bowlby (1969), before 1958, four principal theories were found among psychoanalytical and psychological literature which explained the nature and origin of the child's ties. The first included that the child had several physiological needs, specifically for food and warmth. Therefore, the attachment between the mother and child resulted if the mother met the infant's physiological needs, which accounts for the mother being a source of gratification. Bowlby (1969) labeled this theory as the secondary drive derived from the learning theory and called it the cupboard-love theory of object relations. The second includes an infant's built-in desire to connect to the human breast, suck, and possess it orally. As the breast is attached to the mother, the child will also relate to the mother, theorized as the primary object sucking (Bowlby, 1969). The third theory includes that an infant desires to be in touch with and cling to another human being. Hence, the infant needs food and warmth and needs an object independent of food, theorized as the primary object clinging (Bowlby, 1969). Finally, the fourth theory includes that an infant resents being separated from the womb and seeks to return; therefore, the theory of primary return-to-womb craving (Bowlby, 1969). However, according to Bowlby (1969), among the four theories, the most widely used and strongly endorsed was the theory of secondary drive.

As Bowlby examined the dynamic aspects of the child's ties, he proposed that sucking, clinging, crying, following, and smiling all become instinctual responses during the first year of life (Bowlby, 1969, 1986). He hypothesizes that the child's tie to the mother is a product of the behavioral system's activities that explain proximity to the mother as a predictable outcome (Bowlby, 1969). These responses become integrated into attachment behavior. However, he was unable to hypothesize how the integration process took place. He categorized these instinctual responses into two classes. Class one allowed an infant to achieve their end, which called for food and proximity to the mother, including sucking and clinging. However, class two, including

crying and smiling, solicits a maternal behavioral response. Both classes thus evoked an instinctual response from the mother (Bowlby, 1986).

As each infant develops differently in the first twelve months of life, typical attachment behaviors occur once a child enters year two and is mobile. By two, when the mother departs from the infant or is frightened, the integration of behavioral systems is activated and can be soothed by the mother's sound, touch, or sight. This system readily activates until the age of three, when the child is not so easily activated and no longer makes proximity to the mother urgent. Changes continue to occur during adolescence and adulthood, including the figures towards whom the behavior is directed (Bowlby, 1969).

Infant Attachment

Attachment behavior regards a class of social behaviors with crucial importance, just as mating and parental behavior (Bowlby, 1969). However, in 1969, Bowlby proposed that attachment behavior and its biological function had little consideration. Therefore, he understood the need for a new theory to explain the drive related to avenues of holding, playing, exploring, and safety (Holmes, 2014). Hence, in 1969, John Bowlby launched his new constructing framework to explain the object relations theory traditions known as attachment theory, and the hypothesis is rooted in Bowlby's advancements from 1958 (Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). There are no references to needs or drives in this formulation, but instead, attachment behaviors occur when specific systems are activated. The behavioral systems develop because of an infant's interaction with their surrounding environment and the mother as the principal figure. Of the earlier four principal theories found in the literature, the closest to that of Bowlby's theory are primary object sucking and primary object clinging, which gives basis to the concept that certain behaviors are towards objects of specific properties. Consequently, the

theory of secondary drive and primary return-to-womb craving are dismissed based on redundancy and biological implausibility (Bowlby, 1969).

Bowlby (1969) hypothesized that at some stage in developing the behavioral system responsible for attachment, proximity to the mother became a set goal. In the early version of the theory, sucking, clinging, following, crying, and smiling were described as contributing factors to the attachment. The newer version of the theory held that these same five patterns are critical. However, between months nine and 18, they usually developed into a sophisticated goal-corrected system allowing a child to maintain proximity to their mother. Hence, the earlier version was described as a part of instinctual responses, while the newer version describes the control theory of attachment behavior (Bowlby, 1969).

Attachment theory helps to examine an infant's attempt to maintain proximity to their mother and describes the creation or breach of affectional bonds (Bowlby, 1969; Holmes, 2014). Maintenance of proximity can often be seen among mothers and children early in childhood. Often mothers or children act in a way that reduces the distance between them. Mothers will often check on the child while the child will find a way to scamper back to the mother, for example, by crying. Thus, resulting in a dynamic equilibrium between the mother-child duo. As maintenance proximity and distance set stable limits, Bowlby explains that the behavior stands for orientational behavior. Maintenance proximity is essential for attachment behavior, which classifies two classes: (a) signaling behavior which is to bring the mother to the child, and (b) approach behavior which is to bring the child to the mother (Bowlby, 1969). As favored by natural selection, protection of the infant shows the desire to safeguard the infant. However, this notion does not become extinct after childhood but is influential throughout life. Thus, the focus is on the infant-caregiver attachment bond, resulting in two essential functions: (a) caregivers act

as a haven to infants during times of distress, and (b) act as a secure base to explore their environment without the fear of danger (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990).

Bowlby's early research showed that children, like adults, experienced intense feelings such as yearning, anger, hopelessness, and withdrawal if separated and bereaved. Separating children from their parents interrupted the natural mechanism that fueled the bond between two human beings (Holmes, 2014). Hence, the bond between mother and infant serves as a secure base on which the children can safely explore the world. As infants and mothers develop healthy attachments to one another, infants can develop attuned relationships (Fitton, 2012). Therefore, the main goal is to preserve relational bonds and diminish any threat towards affection bonds. If these attempts are not successful, as in the case of an absent father, it can manifest into interpersonal problems (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

Expanding Attachment Theory

According to Bowlby (1969), in 1963 and 1967, Ainsworth reported that one group of African infants tried to follow their mothers as early as 15 and 17 weeks (about four months) old. This behavior was quite common among infants at six months of age. During Ainsworth's time in Uganda among the Ganda tribe, she observed infants and mothers. At this time, Ainsworth was visiting the mothers for a couple of hours after their morning, at which time Ainsworth saw infants being held, crawling, or sitting in their mother's lap. Several adults were always present, so observing the infant's attachment to the mother was easy (Bowlby, 1969).

According to Ainsworth, among the Ganda children, attachment behavior was represented by six months of age which was evident by the mother leaving the room. She was greeted by smiles, delight, and children lifting their arms towards the mother when they returned. As the infants aged, this attachment behavior became stronger; children followed the mother as

she left the room and crawled to her as quickly as possible when she returned. Children also showed signs of clinging to the mother when they were frightened by a stranger's presence, for example (Bowlby, 1969).

In 1969, Ainsworth proposed three theoretical approaches to infant-mother relationship development: object relations, dependency, and attachment. Although all seem similar and related to interpersonal relations, they are not synonymous. Psychoanalytic instinct theory gives birth to object relations as the object of an instinct is the path to which an instinctual goal is achieved and usually tends to be the mother initially. Dependency is associated with social learning theories on which the origin lies in the infant's dependency on the mother, which is a learned drive pending her care and interaction. However, the term dependency refers to immaturity, which gradually will develop into a degree of independence. The term attachment refers to love relations that Bowlby sought to replace dependency. Attachment gives way to affectional ties from one person to another. Like object relations, attachment can occur at all ages but does not imply immaturity such as dependency. Once the attachment forms, it tends to endure even under distress (Ainsworth, 1969).

Ainsworth explained that Bowlby motioned that infant-mother relations are associated with several behavioral systems activated and terminated by stimuli originating from other people, promoting proximity and interaction between infant and mother. However, as Bowlby paid close attention to attachment behaviors and behavioral systems, he paid little attention to attachment bonds (Ainsworth et al., 2015). Therefore, the attachment-behavioral system forms a bond to a figure is accepted. Thus, the child's attachment behavior predicts the outcome of bringing the infant and mother into closer proximity by signals or activities (Ainsworth, 1969).

Ainsworth made it possible to test Bowlby's theory and expanded upon it by developing the concept of an attachment figure as a secure base for which an infant can explore the world (Bretherton, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). As noted by Ainsworth, optimal functioning would be found by a secure attachment as two suboptimal functions would reflect insecure patterns: anxious/ambivalent attachment (or resistant) and the avoidant pattern. For example, if the infant can recognize that their caregiver was available and unresponsive, the infant would only become anxious and clingy. While on the other hand, if the infant believes that the primary caregiver was neither a secure base nor haven then they would not have confidence in the mother's ability to be available to respond and maintain proximity, the infant will develop an anxious/ambivalent pattern (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990).

Adult Attachment

Attachment theory studies childhood experiences with our caregivers, which affect adulthood relationships (Gibson, 2020). Bowlby insisted that attachment theory applies to parent-child attachment and the internal working model of an individual, which influences how people relate to one another (Melville-Chester, 2014). Furthermore, the theory carefully demonstrates how an individual's parenting style can affect their adult child's relationships (Gibson, 2020). Therefore, adult attachment constructs a background for behavior, emotion, and cognition in adult relations (Chopik & Edelstein, 2015).

According to attachment theory, caregivers that provide a stable, nurturing environment that allows them to be available, respectful, and supportive during their time with their child encourage a secure attachment bond that translates into similar adult relationships (Bowlby, 1969). The underlying idea is that the same internal working system that motivates parent-child relationships is influential in intimate adult relationships (Chopik & Edelstein, 2015). As the

interpersonal workings of attachment theory begin at conception and span over a lifetime, the theory holds that attachment bonds play an active role in adulthood (Fitton, 2012). According to Johnson, attachment theory forms the constructs for understanding adult love relationships and insists that childhood relationship bonds explain how later adulthood relationship bonds will form into intimate relationships (as cited by Dansby et al., 2017).

A secure attachment (i.e., autonomous) is evident in adults as adults describe early relationships dependably, which leads to the adult's solid identity and emphasis the importance of early experiences and current relationships (Dickstein et al., 2001). However, in the case of long-term separation between infant-caregiver, the implications could be devastating for children, adolescents, and mentally ill adults (Holmes, 2014). Hence, a non-secure attachment denotes the disruptions between an attachment and the motivational system. During infancy, two organized patterns of insecure attachment: avoidant and resistant (i.e., activated by different attachment behaviors) and one pattern that has no noticeably clear organization (disorganized) (Dickstein et al., 2001).

The relationship developed during infancy with the baby's caregiver influences adult romantic relationships across their lifespan (Chopik & Edelstein, 2015). In comparison, avoidant infant-parent attachment develops during stressful situations and deactivates attachment by avoiding parental contact to minimize anxiety associated with parental rejection. According to Dickstein et al. (2001), in adults, this manifests as a dismissive attachment in which adults limit, deactivate, or devalue attachment relationships. On the other hand, resistant infant-parent attachment manifests the child's over-activating attachment behavior as they demand the attention of the rejecting parent and become excessively dependent as they try to minimize their arousal. In adulthood, this leads to the preoccupied attachment because of early on confusing and

conflictual relationships, which often arise as passivity, fear, or anger. Lastly, the disorganized infant-parent attachment shows that the child cannot consistently deal with distressing attachment-related concerns resulting in the child showing multiple sides of organized patterns and conflict, apprehensions, or helplessness. Disorganized infant-parent attachment manifests itself as a lack of resolution about loss or trauma related to current attachment involvements in adults. The adult child can lack both reasoning and discourse (Dickstein et al., 2001). Hence, attachment is a special emotional bond that involves the exchange of comfort, care, and pleasure, which speaks to its importance in adult intimate relationships (McClain, 2012).

As childhood experiences manifest and emerge in adulthood through attachment style, there are four primary forms: dismissive-avoidant, fearful-avoidant (also known as anxious-avoidant or disorganized), anxious attachment, and secure attachment (Gibson, 2020). Dismissive-avoidant individuals typically had parents absent through childhood physical, emotional, or intellectual abandonment. As a result, this child will develop the mindset that they can safeguard themselves by only relying on themselves and that vulnerability will bring about pain. Dismissive-avoidant attachment style will appear withdrawn, independent, emotionally distant, least likely to connect on an intimate level, not highly involved with their partner, cannot be heavily relied on, retreat physically and emotionally. Similarly, fearful-avoidant individuals typically experience an untrustworthy relationship with their parents or child abuse, which manifests by feeling unworthy, unsafe, and exploited. As a result, the fearful-avoidant individual will appear uncertain in relationships, overanalyze body language and language as signs of betrayal, trust does not come easily, fear vulnerability, and often feel betrayed. In general, those with an anxious attachment are people pleasers, fear rejection, and fear of abandonment. This attachment style generally manifests due to absenteeism rather than abuse or dysfunction.

However, secure attachment styles are secure in relationships, open in relationships, and help support others who do not have a secure attachment. This attachment style emerges from childhood with available and supportive parents. They learned that it is acceptable to be vulnerable and have worth based on their relationships with their caregivers (Gibson, 2020).

Effects on Relationships

According to the literature, a secure attachment and bond to a caregiver encourage the rise of an independent and confident adult; similarly, an insecure attachment creates the foundation for an anxious-avoidant relationship bond leading to an adult's lack of trust in others (Dansby et al., 2017). In retrospect, infants are validated in their attempt to seek proximity to their caregiver and soothed in times of agony, which influences them to return to explore the environment around them. Hence, a secure attachment bond recognizes stability between attachment and an exploratory motivational system. In addition, their earlier relationships with their caregiver are consistent, enabling them to develop a personal identity and place value on earlier and current relationships. Thus, a secure attachment translates into adulthood by recognizing autonomy. (Dickstein et al., 2001).

As the intergenerational trend of broken families continues, the attachment bond of infant-parent is influenced (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Adult attachment style appears to correlate with early childhood caregiving experiences, but once in adulthood, it is not as pliable as childhood and adolescent experiences (Fraley & Roisman, 2019). Hence, attachment style is related to relationship quality and overall healthy functioning. As a result, attachment style and attachment behavior influence marital quality (Sandberg et al., 2017).

Self-Determination Theory

Psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan first introduced Self-Determination theory in 1985. Through the lens of self-determination, behavior occurs when drive stimulation and an object or a response association develops. As it stands, most psychologists refer to non-drive-based motivation as intrinsic motivation, which suggests that motivation is intrinsic to the purpose of the organism as they wish to be competent and self-determining (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Specific to self-determination theory is the notion that goal pursuit and accomplishment are key issues in how a person satisfies their basic psychological needs as they seek to obtain their desired outcome (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In everyday language, the term need is a specific desire to obtain a particular outcome, often rooted in a deficit that varies from person to person (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). However, when considering self-determination theory, need refers to a psychological necessity essential for an individual's adjustment, integrity, and development (Ryan, 1995). Thus, when considering how a desire meets the definition of a basic psychological need, satisfaction must be essential for an individual's well-being and cause frustration, ill-being, and defensiveness when this need is unmet (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As the basic psychological needs theory is rooted in self-determination theory fueled by intrinsic motivation, the study of motivation explains an organism's energy and directional behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Basic Psychological Needs Theory

The basic psychological needs theory is a mini theory born out of self-determination theory that asserts that three innate basic psychological needs include growth, function, and overall well-being. All three are in pursuit regardless of gender and culture, which is the basic need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan, 1995). Autonomy is

related to feeling agency and initiating one's actions, and relatedness refers to feeling connected to others and cared for, while competence references feelings of capability (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As all these needs are satisfied, optimal well-being can be experienced, especially in close relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Patrick et al., 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). By way of satisfaction in all needs, individuals can move towards effectiveness, connectedness, and intrinsic motivation (Patrick et al., 2007).

Intrinsic motivation is an active engagement between tasks and people which promotes growth. These tasks are considered fulfilling; however, they can gain or lose interest based on experienced need satisfaction during the activity. However, intrinsic motivation is more about behavior versus satisfaction, thus, engaged out of interest without consequences. To be continued, they need satisfaction for autonomy and competence. Therefore, experiences of competence and autonomy are vital factors for intrinsic motivation and interest (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

Several studies have investigated the satisfaction of the basic needs in parent-child and romantic relationships throughout lives experiences (Demir & Davidson, 2013; Patrick et al., 2007)). According to Sağkal and et al. (2018), research among fathers and adolescent daughters revealed that basic psychological needs are associated with positive adjustment outcomes, while controlling parental behaviors is associated with need frustrated children. Furthermore, results indicate that basic psychological need satisfaction can mediate the association between the father-daughter relationship and the adolescent girls' psychological adjustment. Thus, the basic psychological needs theory is one mechanism that accounts for the link between the father-daughter relationship (Sağkal et al., 2018).

Much research on self-determination in close relationships is associated with relationship motivation. However, more research focuses on needs fulfillment in close relationships (Patrick et al., 2007). Among some of the first studies, La Guardia and colleagues (2000) examined the role of need fulfillment in relationships in attachment. They proposed that need fulfillment may be one mechanism in which attachment appears. Thus, attachment predicted need fulfillment as participants were more securely attached to those who met their need for autonomy, relatedness, and connectedness (La Guardia et al., 2000).

Related Literature

African Americans hold the lowest marriage rate in the United States, the highest divorce rate among ethnicities, and have always been disproportionately likely to raise their children in single-parent homes (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; Miller, 2018). Even stemming back to slavery, if a slave owner had larger slaveholdings than smaller ones, slave families were more likely to remain intact and not torn apart. However, this was the opposite for smaller slaveholdings as the families experienced more instability (Miller, 2018). Unfortunately, although slavery no longer exists, this pattern of single-parent homes has not changed. However, despite the obstacles presented before African Americans' low marriage rates and high divorce rates, their desire to marry still is consistent (Lincoln & Chae, 2010).

As African Americans engaged in alternative family structures, Blacks are more likely to experience cohabitation, run the risk of never marrying, leading single-parent homes, and father absences. However, single parents are not bound to remain single, but it is also a more fragile form of a family despite reforming a family (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; Gurman et al., 2015). In turn, the plaguing number of absent fathers in the African American home continues the intergenerational patterns of single-parent homes. Furthermore, this trend harms children as the

fragile family is more likely to experience poverty, deficit education, more mental health concerns than married couples, and negatively influences how they communicate their spiritual beliefs (Gurman et al., 2015; Gutierrez et al., 2014).

Understanding the structure of the African American family, it is imperative to offer a brief overview of social, economic, and political factors, which is up for further discussion in the chapter. These factors plague the African American culture as it has contributed to the greatest downfall of the Black family by way of the Black male. Historically, family is a vital institution within the African family. However, as of recent, the last 30 years have left the African American family dismantled due to the mass changes experienced (Lemmons & Johnson, 2019). As the current structure of the black family remains under attack, discussion of marriage after slavery, single-parent homes, extended families, and blended families will take place. In addition, as divorce, employment, and mass incarceration all play a part in father-child relationships, this chapter will also elaborate on the impact of an absent father on the African American family. Specifically, examining the impact of an absent father on the adult daughters' marital satisfaction, exploring the intimate and psychological implications influencing the broken African American family's generation trend, particularly about the black women.

Plagues of the African American Family

African American families, especially black males, are competing against institutional stereotypes. These social, economic, and political factors influence racism, oppression, and a violation of human rights. The cruel maltreatment of African Americans has contributed to the belief that African Americans are bound to the dysfunctional family structure and community (Taylor et al., 2019). Although the breakdown of the African American family and community continues to deteriorate, the collapse started long before the last three decades.

Implications of Social Factors

Decades of news coverage and political agendas have documented the immigration of people migrating by what society considers a choice. However, history notes that ancestors of African Americans came to the United States not by free will but as captive beings. A great deal of slave trade occurred between the 16th and 19th centuries as Africans were stripped of their culture, torn from their families, and lost at sea. At the same time, Europeans fulfilled their agenda as they saw Africans as the necessary solution to build America (Black & Jackson, 2005). What started with 500 enslaved Africans led to over 40 million Africans becoming enslaved (Mosley, 2012).

The system of slavery inflicted trauma and abuse on the mindset of African Americans. Slavery was not only an individualized trauma but a mass, multi-layer trauma experienced by Africans (Dale & Merren, 2019). Slavery was the first movement against African families, including males' roles as husbands and fathers (Pinderhughes, 2002). During slavery, Africans experienced compound trauma as they were taken into captivity and stripped of their culture and norms. Their women and children experienced rape, and men were used as slave breeders, beaten, intimidated by murder, and starved (Dale & Merren, 2019; Mosley, 2012). Africans had to standby as they watched their families dismantled as their children, wives, and family members were sold off like cattle as if the value of family meant nothing (Dale & Merren, 2019).

Implications of Economic Factors

Poverty appeared as an apparent social issue in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Bailey & Danziger, 2013). As a result, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared war on poverty during his Union address on January 8, 1964 (Bell & Wray, 2004). During this time, the war on poverty was launched and intertwined with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which targeted vulnerable groups

with the highest poverty rates, such as the aged, disabled, and single-parent homes (Bailey & Danziger, 2013; Haveman et al., 2015). One part of the war on poverty targeted single mothers allowing them to claim benefits based on household incomes. Before 1964, federal programs developed explicitly for mother-only households with low income aided by providing cash assistance through Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and in-kind aid such as housing subsidies (Haveman et al., 2015).

Unintentionally made public, the Moynihan Report blatantly speaks to the Black family's structural problems stemming from slavery and reinforced by racial discrimination (Wilson, 2009). Unfortunately, following the war on poverty, most African American families consisted of single-parent female homes encouraged by the assistances while the young black male struggled. Moreover, as economic conditions worsen for African American families, the number of fatherless black homes increases (Patterson, 2010). Thus, the war on poverty failed the African American community (Bell & Wray, 2004).

Implications of Political Factors

The challenge presented to the black family rests in politics (Carper, 2017). Despite abolishing slavery, the standard of maltreatment of African Americans remained (Taylor et al., 2019). Moreover, post-emancipation, African Americans were subject to new levels of torture at the hands of white mobs (i.e., lynching). Stories of such traumas continue to echo from generation to generation, which has psychological implications for the community (Dale & Merren, 2019). According to Dale and Merren (2019), diagnoses such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and complex trauma illuminate the psychological impact of slavery and modern-day racism and oppression in the black community. This trauma has forced African Americans to develop coping skills to survive as they continue to reexperience trauma (Dale &

Merren, 2019). As individuals experience symptoms related to PTSD, symptoms could significantly interfere with their ability to function. This level of distress may interfere with their daily lives in such a way that impacts work, school, and relationships. In addition, complex trauma may result in a prolonged sense of terror and learned helplessness, resulting in decreased self-worth, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and sense of identity (Dale & Merren, 2019).

Slavery is still within the fabric of institutional racism and stereotypes that still blankets the African American community (Taylor et al., 2019). It is rooted and intertwined into several aspects of the community at large. While abolishing slavery with the thirteenth Amendment, racism continues to be rooted in slavery, perpetuating trends in large institutions such as law enforcement. Policing African Americans allows for the legacy of trauma to remain in the African American community's minds, emotions, and responses (Dale & Merren, 2019). For example, African Americans are stereotyped as criminals based on targeted populations as law enforcement practices blanket the whole culture (Jones, 2014). African Americans still experience an unjust justice system through police brutality, police homicide, and incarceration (Dale & Merren, 2019).

Unfortunately, violent crime rates spiked at the beginning of the twentieth century due to the increased male population, racial tension, and gender role shifts. Between 1900 and 1925, homicide rates nearly doubled and were prominent in larger cities (Adler, 2015). Policymakers' ideology projected that most immigrants and African Americans were predisposed to criminal lifestyles and took place within their neighborhoods. However, the violence of the 1920s extended beyond robberies and robbery-homicides as the crime rates in Chicago had increased by one hundred times (Adler, 2015). Following the Wall Street bombing, the case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo in Massachusetts, and the Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb trial in

Chicago, the American people absorbed fear. However, crime rates did not match conviction rates as most felony charges did not earn a felony conviction, leading to panic in the public eye (Adler, 2015).

In 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson declared war against crime to combat crimes against the nation. Law and order politics targeted areas where there was a concern for unemployment, poverty, crime, and riots. Therefore, the war on crime focused on African Americans (Martin, 2021). As a result, mass incarceration devastates the Black community as it has impacted the growth of African American families. As Black men continue to experience incarceration, it leaves the burden of raising a family on the shoulders of single mothers, disproportionately African American women (Williams & Battle, 2017).

Overview of the Current Structure of African American Families

Structure of Current African American Families

Known for their resiliency and mutual support among members, black families are hallmarks of solid family structures with children at their center (Bertera & Crewe, 2013; Revell & Mcghee, 2012). As family structure during childhood impacts achievement in adulthood, multiple factors influence the nuclear structure of African American homes (Bloome, 2017). Among father influence, intergenerational factors contribute to African American fathers' involvement as fathers may model their parental style after their fathers. Hence, the more involved a father is with his children, the more likely his children will become involved in their own children's lives (Cooper et al., 2019). However, African American families cannot forgo all the family's obstacles despite their strength as so many experiences a void created by absent fathers. As it stands, absent fathers contend against unemployment, poor socio-economic conditions, and divorce (Eddy et al., 2013). Thus, family structure and parental income provide

insight into potential obstacles and inequalities facing African American children and their families (Bloome, 2017).

Marriage After Slavery

Research has noted that between 1725 and 1952, African American families primarily consisted of intact, two-parent homes (Franklin & James, 2015). Frankly, this does not speak to the entirety of the black family structure. Before slavery, marriage was more than two individuals becoming one flesh in Africa, but blending two families as family structures reinforced community resources that influenced family success. However, enslavement in America ripped husbands away from their wives, changing the African family structure. Fortunately, the structure of marriage was supported in slave quarters and among free ex-slaves (Revell & Mcghee, 2012).

Slave family structures varied based on the number of enslaved people owned by the slave owner. Thus, the smaller the slaveholding, the more likely the children would have been raised by a single parent. However, if the slaveholding were large enough, the children had a significant chance of being raised in a nuclear family (Miller, 2018). Nevertheless, slavery impacted Black homes, which continues to last into modern times. Unfortunately, due to generational trends, children raised by a single parent or born out of wedlock were still likely to live in a single-parent home and then be single parents themselves (Miller, 2018). Miller (2018) sampled people and families across 1860, 1880, and 1900 census data to explore the intergenerational impact of slavery on the black family in the United States. Findings indicated that slaveholding influenced single parenthood in that mothers on farmers with fewer enslaved people would be 49% more likely to be single parents. By 1900, slaveholdings had no direct impact on the family structure. However, indirectly, children with single parents were more

likely to be single-parents and born out of wedlock (Miller, 2018). According to Pougnet et al. (2012), similar findings note that men who experienced absent fathers in childhood were likely to be absent fathers to their children, while women who experienced an absent father in childhood were more likely to have children with absent partners. This generational trend indirectly impacted women through aggression, education, and substance abuse. Therefore, these findings suggest that father absenteeism has intergenerational implications (Pougnet et al., 2012).

African American Single-Parent Homes

By the late 1960s, African American families started to experience a decline in two-parent homes. The dismantlement of the African American family resulted in fathers living away from their children (Lemmons & Johnson, 2019). As two-parent homes decline, income inequality rises (Bloome, 2017). Among many factors, divorce had tripled among the Black family, and children reared in single-parent homes doubled as the women head of household families have raised by more than fifty percent. Unfortunately, this results in children being more likely to be raised in poverty when compared to their counterparts in two-parent homes. Nevertheless, the shift in singlehood has contributed to the community and individual well-being (Revell & Mcghee, 2012).

Society has an old saying, noting that mothers love their sons and raise their daughters. This saying implies that African American mothers have higher expectations for their daughters, thus giving them more responsibilities, monitoring their behavior more closely, expecting their daughters to achieve more academically, and demanding more than their sons. Socialization among first-born sons and daughters is the same, but sons born secondary to the first-born son receive less responsibility in the home and argue more with their mothers (Mandara et al., 2010). However, research notes that fathers and mothers socialize with their children differently when

considering a two-parent home as fathers are the opposite of mothers. Thus, fathers have higher expectations for their sons than their daughters. Hence, two-parent homes in the Black community balance each other (Mandara et al., 2005).

Lark (2016) recognized that father absence among the African American community was prevalent and that many factors contributed to the low marriage rates and high divorce rates, which directly impact daughters. Much research examines the father absence in adolescent and adult children, but research lacks exploring the father absence's impact on childhood. Therefore, Lark (2016) completed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study to explore the lived-in experience of African American women who experienced father absence during childhood and how it influenced their marital satisfaction in adulthood. Among the ten women interviewed, five emerging themes manifest:

1. Desperate for something different in adult relationships
2. Challenges within marriage
3. Not knowing how to relate to men
4. Faith in God
5. Awareness of the childhood effects of absent fathers

While the study yielded valuable information for this population, there were limitations in the research. Limitations included self-selection bias, the recollection of respective memories, lack of generalizability based on specific homogenous group selection, not including husband perspective, and limited to heterosexual marriages (Lark, 2016).

Muhammad (2017) recognized that marriage is the foundation of African American families; however, little research has explored the positive aspects of Black marriages but focuses on the negative factors associated with marital dissolution. In this study, the researcher

examined the lived-in experience of African Americans, both male and female, who were raised in single-mother households and are currently married. The 10 African Americans (three males and seven females) interviewed during this qualitative study had been married for over ten years. The results discovered emerging themes that included: (a) respect, healthy communication, and trust, (b) single-mothers indirect influences, (c) marital good and challenging times, and (d) positive role models. Although the research enriched the literature previously proven for this population, limitations emerged. Limitations included a recollection of childhood experiences, contributing factors that the experimenter could not control related to marital satisfaction, and lack of specificity in research questions. The experimenter recommended that future research include a homogenous sample group as gaining a homogenous group would allow equal comparison. Future research should also examine a consistent timeframe that participants lived in a single-parent home, unlike Muhammad, who lacked consistency. Furthermore, the experiment suggested developing interview questions and a mixed-method design for data collection (Muhammad, 2017).

Harris (2014) explored the outcomes of African American Christian women raised without their biological fathers in the home, as little research examined the outcomes of their lives. The research collected data on 10 African American women between 30-45 years old through a 30–45-minute in-depth interview while fatherlessness included fathers' absence due to death, divorce, and abandonment for this study. Emerging themes include: (a) emotional apprehensions, (b) resiliency, (c) issues with self-perception, and (d) trust issues. Although this research added to the body of literature for this group, limitations were present. Limitations included the population as it only included African American Christian women and had racial implications. African American women have grown to normalize and adapt to the absent father

phenomenon as they have been raised without a father and have raised their children in the same manner. Another limitation includes the religious affiliation of the selected population and the phenomenological research design, which is subject to the participants' interpretation (Harris, 2014).

African American Divorced Families

Some African American families have tried to be whole; however, they sometimes experience separation due to divorce. As children experience divorce in the home, they are more prone to end their marriages in divorce as divorce appears to be predictive of marital commitment for the following generation (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). In addition, as children are privy to parental conflict during divorce, the parent-child relationship is likely to experience a decrease in quality social support and an increase in anxiety towards personal relationships experienced by the child (Riggio, 2004). Therefore, as children see marital discord, it can have profound long-term implications on an adult child's attitude towards and within marital relationships (Jarnecke & South, 2013).

As research focuses on the mother-child relationship after separation or divorce, more research is necessary for the father-child experience as the child transitions into two homes. Scholars have shown a difference between Caucasian nonresidential fathers and African American nonresidential fathers. However, most research on the father-child relationship among the African American community is related to young, unmarried fathers rather than nonresidential fathers by divorce or separation. Therefore, most African American fathers' descriptions emphasize father absence, abandonment to fatherhood, and the lack of parenting skills (Leite & McKenry, 2006). From a political stance, research on father involvement influences policies related to post-divorce life for children. Thus, parenting time, co-parenting

training, child support, and custody arrangements encourage father involvement based on past and current research, vital in the court's determinations (Leite & McKenry, 2006).

Schwartz and Finley (2005) recognized that father involvement had increased scholars' interest. However, their research argues that empirical research lacks consideration for how the family structure impacts the children's perceptions of their fathers' nurturance and how ethnicity might be a potential moderator. The sample of 1,989 university students from Miami included Hispanic (e.g., Cubans and Cubans Americans) and non-Hispanic blacks, including African Americans and Caribbean Islanders (e.g., Haitians Jamaicans). The research among ethnic groups investigated the magnitude of father-child relationships among intact and divorced families. The researchers note that most children's retrospective perception of their father's acceptance-rejection, nurturance, and father involvement is associated with the child's psychological and behavioral adjustment (Schwartz & Finley, 2005).

At the time, Schwartz and Finley (2005) recognized that the role of ethnicity in moderating the effects of divorce on children's perception of the father had not been studied despite literature noting the importance of ethnicity and family. They emphasized that most African Americans and Caribbean Islanders are nonresidential fathers taken for granted. However, Hispanics placed a great deal of emphasis on family, and those Hispanic fathers tend to be more involved as residential fathers than any other group. Of great discovery, ethnicity moderated father nurturance. As suspected, from all ethnic groups, participants from divorced families had significantly lower levels of nurturing fathers and father involvement than intact families; however, differences varied among ethnicities. Among African Americans, Caribbeans Islanders, and foreign-born Cubans, father involvement and nurturance among intact and divorced families were more significant in comparison. The difference among non-Hispanic

Whites and Asians was of minor differences. Interestingly, fathers in divorced families had a greater desire to be involved with their children regardless of ethnicity than those in intact families (Schwartz & Finley, 2005).

African American Extended Families

Often, nuclear family structures consider the Euro-American lens that focuses on two-parent homes and disregards the roles of extending family members (Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020). However, parenting within African American families extends beyond the biological mother and father. It can include grandparents, aunts, and even friends as they identify as co-parents who often do not live with the single parent (Gonzalez et al., 2014). Children are often born into several generations that influence and help raise the children, which adds security and stability to the family. However, this experienced threats after World War II, at which time single-family homes were on the rise. Thus, the economy was less likely to favor the multi-generational structure. According to Revell and Mcghee (2012), this trend was prevalent until 1980, when society saw a rise in multi-generational family structures again.

African American Blended Families

Gurman et al. (2015) show that African American stepfamilies are on the rise, which further specifies that the nuclear family in the Black community is on the decline, and they are trying to marry and remarry which mirrors the nuclear family. Despite the higher numbers among African American families, stepfamilies for this culture embody unique strengths (Gurman et al., 2015). However, while stepfamilies can benefit from biological parent involvement, sometimes stepparents are marked with resentments if the biological parent gets extra time with their children outside of the custody agreement (Martin-Uzzi, 2013). Blended families struggle to manage loyalties, sometimes confusing the new marriage. Couples struggle

to meet the needs of both their spouse and their children. The parent is often left feeling as if they are caught between the children, the biological parent, and the spouse and forced to pick, resulting in any given individual feeling overlooked or betrayed (Martin-Uzzi, 2013). As family dismantlement increases, father involvement decreases even more as mothers remarry or cohabit with new partners (Cheadle et al., 2010).

Several factors influence father contact with their children after separation, including the child's age upon separation, if they were born to wed parents, had an older mother, educated mother, if the father pays child support, and living close to the children post-separation. Conversely, fathers who tend not to be uninvolved in their children's lives post-separation include younger fathers, young mothers, and mothers who are not well educated. In addition, these children were typically born out of wedlock, fathers typically did not pay child support, and the father did not live within proximity of their children (Cheadle et al., 2010).

Barriers to Fatherhood in African American Families

Employment Barriers

African Americans combat more significant barriers in their attempt to obtain employment as they experience a greater risk of unequal treatment due to the ethnic group (Zanskas et al., 2011). Rooted in slavery, African Americans never have received the same access to education as European Americans. When enslaved people could obtain any level of education for manual labor, it was limited to a 6th-grade education. African American males previously were excluded from the countries that passed universal educational standards. When forced to provide African Americans with an education, they did so in segregated schools (Mosley, 2012).

There continues to be a disparity in education because of systemic racism as there are disparities in the work field within the African American community, specifically among males. These trends reveal discrimination, incarceration, health disparities, and deaths concerning black males (Laurencin & Murray, 2017). In addition, African American men continue to experience long-term bouts of unemployment despite social change over the past five decades (Williams, 2020). According to Edin, the jobless African American male contributes to the breakdown of black families. As a result, black mothers have multiple fathers, as jobless black fathers tend to move away and abandon their offspring (as cited by Williams, 2020).

Mass Incarceration

Since 1989, the criminal justice system has heavily consisted of African American males (Smith & Hattery, 2010). A significant shift occurred despite criminal patterns staying the same as the U.S. inmate population moved from seventy percent European American males to seventy percent African American and Latino males. As of 2010, fifty percent of incarcerated males were African American resulting in at least 1.2 million African American men experiencing imprisonment (Smith & Hattery, 2010). Thus, African American men experience incarceration much more than any other race. This level of disproportionate incarceration destroys the Black family and the community (Smith & Hattery, 2010).

For fathers behind bars, their ability to maintain significant relationships with their children deteriorates (Swisher & Waller, 2008). As a result of father absence due to imprisonment, adolescents and young adults internalize problems (Wakefield & Wilderman, 2011). Incarcerated African American men can no longer provide income, childcare, toys, diapers, or child support to their families. As a result, the child lacks the emotional support and

guidance needed to thrive as they remove the social capital from the Black home (Hagan & Coleman, 2001).

Nearly one-third of African American males become incarcerated between 14 and 35 years old, devastating the Black community resulting in millions of African Americans suffering. When men become incarcerated, they are unemployable and unable to support their families even after release (Smith & Hattery, 2010). Unfortunately, this incarcerated individual loses marketable skills post-incarceration, which leaves most men to feel as if they must hustle to help support their loved ones. Therefore, the community experiences a trickling effect as most companies will not view the male as employable after returning to society. Hence, the Black community loses employment options for everyone. Thus, single parents and extended family members must bear the weight of the lost wages, further depleting the black family of their resources and wealth. (Smith & Hattery, 2010).

Lack of Coparenting

Roberts and colleagues recognize that despite the lack of an intact family, some fathers still wish to be an active part of their children's lives (Roberts et al., 2014). However, sometimes fathers are not met by physical or financial barriers but are presented with the barrier of co-parenting. During a qualitative study of 30 fathers, the researchers noted that most fathers in the study were active in the lives of their children, and among the 30 fathers, not much of their involvement differed based on family household status: resident and nonresident fathers (Roberts et al., 2014). However, literature does not agree on father involvement among residential and nonresidential fathers (Roberts et al., 2014; Schwartz & Finley, 2005).

Roberts and colleagues reported concern about parenting for nonresidential fathers and barriers presented by mothers that create issues surrounding child visitation. Some fathers report

feeling exhausted with little hope about engaging with their children. Despite barriers, fathers want to maintain a relationship with their children despite negative relationships with the mother of their children. Several of the fathers in the qualitative study reported that they prefer not to have a relationship with the mother of their children as the strained relationship was a potential challenge to father involvement. However, the researchers noted that fathers would benefit from understanding the mother's perspective and learning how to deal with stressful situations (Roberts et al., 2014).

Impact of Parent-Child relationship on Daughter's Marital Satisfaction

Attachment style influences how adults feel, think, and behave in their adult relationships (Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). According to Shaver and Hazan (1987), attachment styles represent romantic love such that secure attachment style reflects a happy, trusting, and supportive relationship. Since Shaver and Hazan's research, scholars have documented positive correlations between secure attachment and marital satisfaction, reiterated by Meyers and Landsberg (2002). Their research findings show that secure attachment is positively correlated with marital satisfaction, while avoidant and ambivalent attachment has an inverse association with marital satisfaction. They extrapolated the findings by noting that secure attachment may supply such a shield to psychological distress that the secure attachment, in turn, enhances marital satisfaction (Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). However, this is contrary to secure attachment that manifests in avoidant style (i.e., fear of intimacy) and ambivalent style (i.e., obsessive, jealous, and extreme sexual attraction) (Shaver & Hazan, 1987). In adulthood, each partner's attachment style influences the other (Diamond et al., 2018). Attachment style, secure or insecure attachment, predicts marital satisfaction, which also is influenced by gender (Ottu & Akpan, 2011; Siegel et al., 2019).

Father Relationship

Children naturally want a relationship and bond with their fathers. However, as children experience disrupted relationships with their fathers due to absence, divorce, or separation, children have a challenging time establishing these bonds. This struggle results in children viewing their fathers as distant and cold, which affects the daughter from childhood into adulthood (East et al., 2007).

Although many factors contribute to the intergenerational patterns of absent fathers in the African American community, little research, if any, has examined the effect on marital satisfaction, and even less have tried to generalize the research findings (Nosko et al., 2011). Thus, more research is needed to examine existing marital satisfaction and the impact of absent fathers' maternal attachment in the African American home on daughters. This research will add to the field of study. It will explore a difference among African American women who had absent fathers in childhood, a secure maternal attachment following a period of father absence, and African American women who had present fathers in childhood.

Present Father

Father-daughter relationships are strong predictors of a woman's emotional openness and bond in adult male relationships. Adult attachment style is at the core of relationship development (Haaz et al., 2014). Individuals with positive parent-child relationships in adolescence were more likely to have secure attachment styles in adulthood, translating into romantic relationships (Nosko et al., 2011). If she has a close emotional bond with her father, she is likely to be open, form close bonds, and feel similarly supported in an intimate relationship with men (Haaz et al., 2014). Accordingly, perception of a father's influence and physical presence influences a daughter's marital satisfaction and can predict current marital intimacy (Ali

& Daoud, 2016; Haaz et al., 2014). However, women who did not have this privilege are less likely to establish an emotional bond with other men and are under the impression that this bond is impossible to form with any man (Haaz et al., 2014).

Absent Father

The absent father lacks intimacy in the father-daughter relationship, leading to emotional barriers, creating barriers for forming and maintaining close relationships (East et al., 2007). As women describe the absent childhood father or lack of consistent contact with their father, they feel that their fathers did not care for them, lacked interest in their relationship, sometimes felt like strangers, and felt abandoned. Thus, daughters experience pain as they yearn for a bond that was not there. These daughters respond to their father's perceived lack of interest or abandonment with behavioral problems that sometimes worsen their disapproved behavior. Daughters, in turn, would enact certain behaviors hoping to gain their father's attention leading to a connection. As the lack of connection continues, the daughter sometimes endorses a lack of respect for the father in response to the father's unavailability or unwillingness to fill the daughter's desire for an attachment bond (East et al., 2007). Hence, resulting in negative emotions towards their fathers, attachment concerns, and a significant problematic communication style (Demidenko et al., 2015). Thus, this attachment style is recognized in adulthood by a lack of resolution related to loss or trauma (Dickstein et al., 2001).

Absent fathers contribute to adverse psychological effects that range from lower self-esteem to low academic achievement, in addition to vulnerability in opposite-sex relationships (Smith et al., 2014). In addition, insecure attachment issues can associate with depression, personality dysfunction, and anxiety disorders (Cepukiene & Celiauskaite, 20). Therefore, some findings suggest a relationship between attachment insecurities and mental illness susceptibility

(Johnson & Galambos, 2014). As the issue of attachment manifest in the form of a mental illness, some women experience mild negative affectivity to severe, debilitating personality disorders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Hence, mental health is an indirect mechanism through which parent-adolescent relationships function and future changes in marital satisfaction (Johnson & Galambos, 2014).

Research shows that attachment to parents influences the internal mechanisms of children, and attachment issues during infancy can manifest helplessness (Dickstein et al., 2001; Pascuzzo et al., 2013). Although, subconsciously, attachment issues in childhood can lead to an over-activating attachment and demand of parental attention attempting to diminish their arousal, the manifestation in adults recognizes preoccupied attachment marked by passivity, fear, and anger (Dickstein et al., 2001). Thus, consistent and dependable parents are vital as the parent-child relationship translates into adult romantic relationships (Pascuzzo et al., 2013). Furthermore, if a female has a partner with a secure attachment, the relationship will still suffer. The consequence of one partner having an insecure attachment style in comparison to daughters with secure attachments is that the securely attached daughter is more likely to turn to their boyfriends for emotional comfort and support in comparison to daughters with poor father-daughter relationships (Lozano et al., 2021; Nielsen, 2014).

As broken bonds in childhood can lead to anxious/avoidant attachment styles, research has noted that anxious and avoidant attachment along with anxiety symptoms mediate emotional dysregulation (Nielsen et al., 2017). As a child develops an anxious attachment to their caregiver, they are likely to develop this same attachment style with their significant others in response to the internal mechanism developed throughout childhood (Pascuzzo et al., 2013). In response to the insecure attachment between parent-relationships, individuals use emotional-oriented

regulation strategies they internalized during their youth and apply them to adulthood relationships (Pascuzzo et al., 2013). Insecure attachment styles are related to romantic disengagement depression and influences relationship commitment (Callaci et al., 2020). Those with anxious attachment styles risk responding to distressing scenarios with negative emotions, distorted, catastrophic, ruminating thoughts (Pascuzzo et al., 2013). However, secure attachments reduce the prospect or intensity of post-traumatic stress disorder and eating disorders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

Unfortunately, anxious attachment accompanies ambivalent feelings projected on the spousal relationship, while avoidant attachment style influences marital satisfaction among distressed individuals (Bradley & Hojjat, 2017; Mondor et al., 2011). In addition, high attachment anxiety correlates with partner expectations, influencing individuals to believe their partners would blame them, not want to explore relationship problems, and fear abandonment and rejection. Even more so, highly anxious attachment individuals seek reassurance from others when experiencing relationship troubles (Muetzelfeld et al., 2020). Unfortunately, researchers note that women are more likely to have high anxious attachments (Bradley & Hojjat, 2017; Mondor et al., 2011).

Women with attachment insecurities are reported to have more problems in areas related to communication, are less likely to explore emotional concerns with their partners and report more relationship and family-of-origin problems (Muetzelfeld et al., 2020). Insecure attachment such as highly avoidant can also develop due to broken bonds in childhood. Therefore, highly avoidant individuals do not value affective communication skills as much as those with secure attachment, thus avoiding conflict resolution. Highly avoidant attachment style individuals avoid entangling their emotions in others while experiencing greater romantic disengagement (Callaci

et al., 2020; Muetzelfeld et al., 2020). If couples attend therapy for their relationship distress, those with avoidant attachment become more distant from their partner to protect themselves from pain (Callaci et al., 2020). Individuals with avoidant attachment styles tend to break up with their partners prematurely, and following the breakup, they are less likely to be distressed (Callaci et al., 2020).

Mother Relationship

Females from divorced families do not constantly develop the same romantic competencies from intact families as early as adolescence (Shulman et al., 2012). However, despite fathers not being in the home due to divorce, daughters of divorced parents can learn to be emotionally intimate with their spouses through their relationship with their fathers (Haaz et al., 2014). Unfortunately, some daughters still do not get the opportunity to keep a relationship with their fathers. However, some research indicates that even if a daughter does not grow up with her biological father or a father in the home, she can still create emotional ties with males (Haaz et al., 2014).

Despite the negative implications of absent fathers, Shulman et al. (2012) findings support that a mother can support their daughter's emerging romantic interests. As a result, daughters will show higher levels of romantic competence, even in families with absent fathers. Furthermore, when mothers had comprehensible accounts of their own experiences, daughters were more likely to be involved in reciprocal, intimate, and stable relationships. Finally, when mothers supported and trusted their daughters despite a father not being in the home, daughters were more likely to experience stable, positive, and mature relationships with proper problem-solving skills (Shulman et al., 2012).

Summary

The research's central question is: What is the effect of absentee fathers during childhood on the marital satisfaction of African American women, and what impact does a supportive mother have on this effect? African Americans hold the lowest marriage rate in the United States and the highest divorce rate among ethnicities, affecting families, especially daughters. However, this is not a new phenomenon but has roots in slavery as the black family experienced the stripping of its identity, culture, and family ties. The residue of slavery has changed the structure of the current African American family as plagues such as the war on poverty and the war on crime continue to present barriers to the black home. Hence, leading to an increase in single-parent homes, which calls for extended family support and often results in blended families. As families experience dismantling, they combat father absenteeism for reasons that include divorce, unemployment, and mass incarceration. In addition, due to father absences, daughters are likely to contend against behavioral, psychological, and relational implications associated with the lack of father-daughter relations. This impact on the African American adult daughter and her marital satisfaction can be understood through the attachment theory lens and applying the psychological basic needs theory to this concept. Given the low marriage rates, high single-parent household rates, increasing cohabitation, and fragile family structure, the significance of this research can help give light to the needed awareness within the black family. Hence, the importance of the nuclear family can alter the family structure and stability among African Americans.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The role that fathers play in the lives of their daughters is vast. Consequently, when fathers are absent, the implications of this lost relationship can span from childhood to adulthood, impacting the romantic relationships of daughters, which can influence the likelihood of them raising their children in single-parent households as well (Knapp et al., 2015; Pougnet et al., 2012). The purpose of this quantitative study is to explore the effects of the African American absent father during childhood on adult daughters' marital satisfaction. Additionally, the study will explore the possibility of supportive mothers moderating the impact of an African American absent father on the adult daughter's marital satisfaction. This chapter will describe the research design, questions, hypotheses, participants and setting, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis.

Design

A quantitative, nonexperimental survey research design will explore the effects of African American absent fathers during childhood on adult daughters' marital satisfaction. In addition, the study will explore the possibility of supportive mothers moderating the impact of an absent African American father on the adult daughter's marital satisfaction. The research's central question is: what is the effect of an absentee African American fathers during childhood on the marital satisfaction of women, and what impact does the supportive mother have on this effect?

Survey research gives people an opportunity to provide information about their attitudes, beliefs, demographics, and behaviors. They have become useful as society demands information beyond intuition and anecdotes but data on the issues. (Cozby, 2004). Hence, surveys can help study research questions in social science such as those outlined in this dissertation. Therefore, a survey method can address causal relationships between the research variables (Jann & Hinz, 2016).

In this research, participants are not randomly selected as the groups are preexisting based on a present father or absent father for the African American married women. Thus, the research is neither experimental nor quasi-experimental, as no intervention distinguishes the groups (Baldwin & Berkeljon, 2012). As the research will study the impact of an African American absent father as it has already occurred, the proposed study will use a survey method to gather the information (Joye et al., 2016). Therefore, quantitative research utilizing a survey method design will explore the effects of the absent African American fathers during childhood on the marital satisfaction of adult women. Additionally, the study will explore the possibility of supportive mothers moderating the impact of an absent father on the African American woman's marital satisfaction. Hence, the moderator (i.e., supportive mother) affects the strength of a predictor variable (i.e., father absences) on a criterion variable or dependent variable (i.e., marital satisfaction) (Heppner et al., 2016).

Research Question(s)

The following are the main research questions that this study will address:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood?

RQ2: Is there a moderating effect of supportive mothers on marital satisfaction in African American women with absent fathers?

Hypothesis(es)

The alternate hypotheses for this study are:

Ha1: There will be a statistically significant difference between the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood. The marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers during childhood will report lower scores in marital satisfaction than African American women who had a present father during childhood.

Ha2: Supportive mothers as measured by Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship

Questionnaire (ADMRQ) will serve as a moderator variable between African American women with absent fathers and marital satisfaction. The marital satisfaction of African American women who experienced a supportive mother and an absent father will report higher scores in marital satisfaction than those who did not have a supportive mother.

Participants and Setting

Obtaining a list of all African American married women in the United States population who had an absent or present father in the home is infeasible. Therefore, a convenient sample will allow participants who are accessible to be used (Allen, 2017). The participants for this study will consist of a convenience sample of African American women whose fathers are African American, who are 18 years and older, in heterosexual marriages, with or without children, drawn from local churches found in the Northeast region of the United States during February and March 2022. The churches were selected based on a google search and local church directory, which was cross-referenced with social media for a Facebook page. The churches selected for solicitation are located within a multi-racial county within a tri-city area, multi-racial congregations that include African American families, and have a social media page (i.e., a Facebook page). A total of 17 churches were contacted via email to request permission to access their membership to obtain participants. In addition, email addresses were publicly available and obtained through personal acquaintances.

Each church will receive the same permission request email (see Appendix B) and permission response (see Appendix C) for convenience and research consistency. If churches agree to participate, they will agree to advertise the research. Therefore, the churches will complete the following:

1. For three weeks, during the church's routine announcements on Sunday morning, the church will display the recruitment flyer (see Appendix F) and the social media announcement (see Appendix E).

2. The church will advertise the research by posting the following on their Facebook social media page: the recruitment flyer and social media announcement.
3. The church will post the flyer within the church concurrent to the displayed recruitment flyer and social media announcement.

Research starts February 27th and ends on March 19th, allowing advertising to run February 27th, March 6th, and March 13th.

Potential volunteers will contact the researcher via email during the advertising timeframe. In response, the potential volunteers will receive the same recruitment email (see Appendix D). They will click on an embedded link (i.e., "click here") directing them to a demographic survey (see Appendix G), which is completed online (i.e., using PdfFiller to complete online documents). PdfFiller is a cloud base automation solution that utilizes electronic forms. PdfFiller allows users, such as the researcher, to create fillable PDF forms created by scratch or convert an existing form (PdfFiller, 2021). The researcher will then identify individuals who meet the study criteria utilizing the study's inclusion criteria based on the information provided on the demographic survey. Next, the researcher will contact the potential volunteers who meet the inclusion criteria via email to provide a consent form (see Appendix H) to e-sign (i.e., utilizing PdfFiller).

The researcher will list the participant's criteria and study procedures in the consent form. After volunteer participants e-sign the consent forms, participants will receive an emailed link to complete two surveys. Thus, PdfFiller allows the participants to complete the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI 32) (see Appendix I) and Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ) (see Appendix J) online. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time, and participants will not receive compensation for their participation.

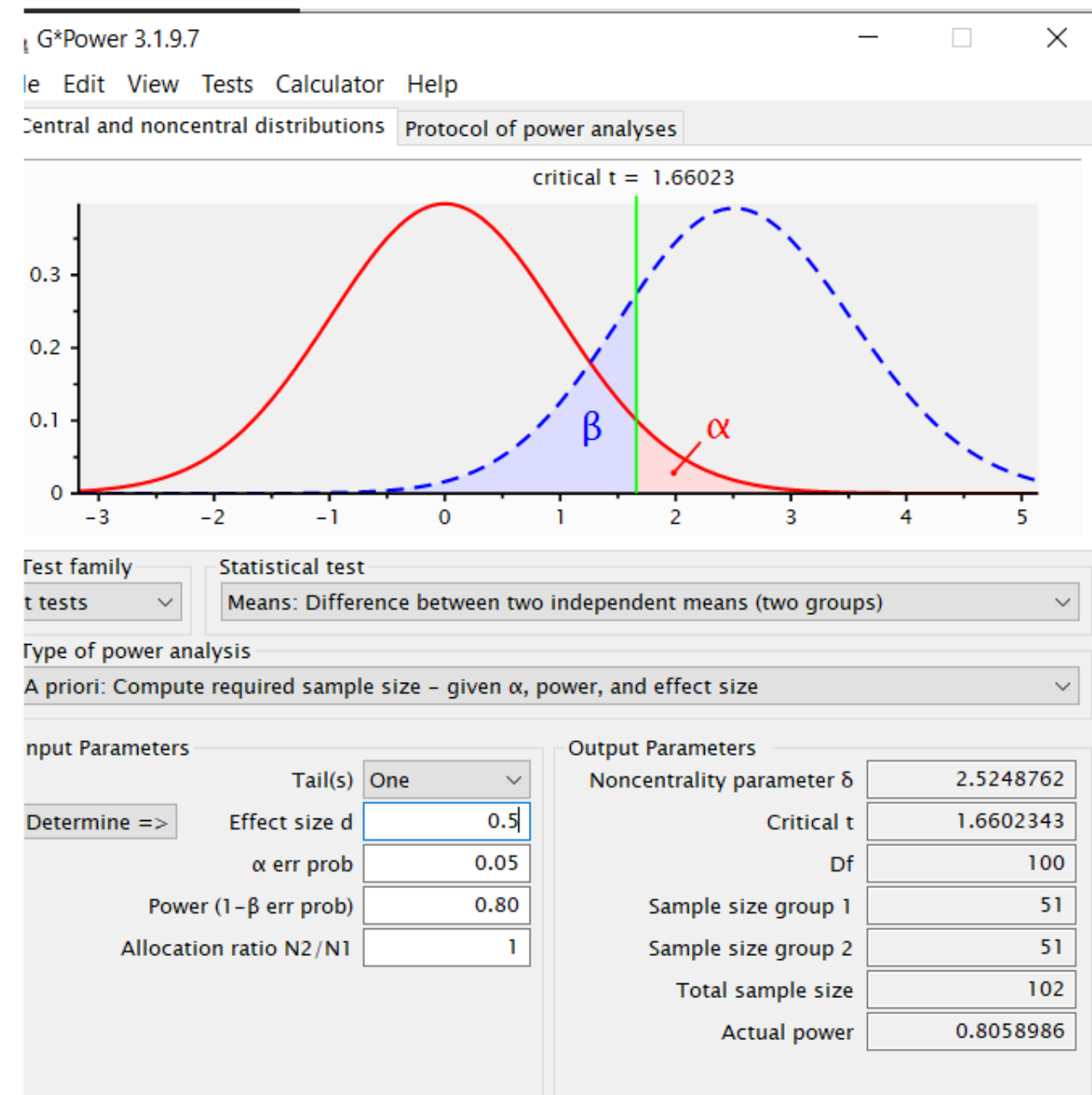
For this study, the researcher will look for a total sample size of no less than 102 with 51 participants in each group to conduct an independent t-test. However, to conduct a multiple linear regression to find statistical significance among the independent variable of absent fathers and the

independent variable of supportive mothers, the total sample size must include at least 68 participants that experienced an absent father in childhood. These sample sizes will meet the minimum needed for the medium effect size. Hence, calculations must compute sample sizes based on effect size, alpha level, and desired power (Cozby, 2004). According to Warner (2013), power is the probability of obtaining a large enough ratio to reject the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is false. Power also varies as a function of the alpha level (Warner, 2013). As it stands, power is related to a Type II error in that the probability of an experiment having a type II error is related to significance level or alpha, size of the sample, and effect size (Cozby, 2004).

It is a widespread practice to choose a minimum sample size that would give a power of 80% for the assumed effect size (Warner, 2013). Effect size describes the strength of the relationship between two variables which range from 0.00 to 1.00, or describes the magnitude of the differences between means (Cozby, 2004; Warner, 2013). Alpha is the theoretical risk that a Type 1 error will occur, which equals the probability that the null hypothesis will be rejected despite being correct (Warner, 2013). Therefore, in theory, with a power of .80, the research has an 80% chance of rejecting the null hypothesis (Warner, 2013). Therefore, the independent t-test will include an effect size of 0.5 with a power of .80 and an alpha of .05. Hence, in Figure 1, the researcher will use a power = .80, which means there is an 80% chance of rejecting the null hypothesis, which requires a total sample size no less than 102, resulting in a medium effect size. Therefore, in each group (i.e., present or absent fathers), the sample size is 51 per group. Refer to Figure 1.

Figure 1

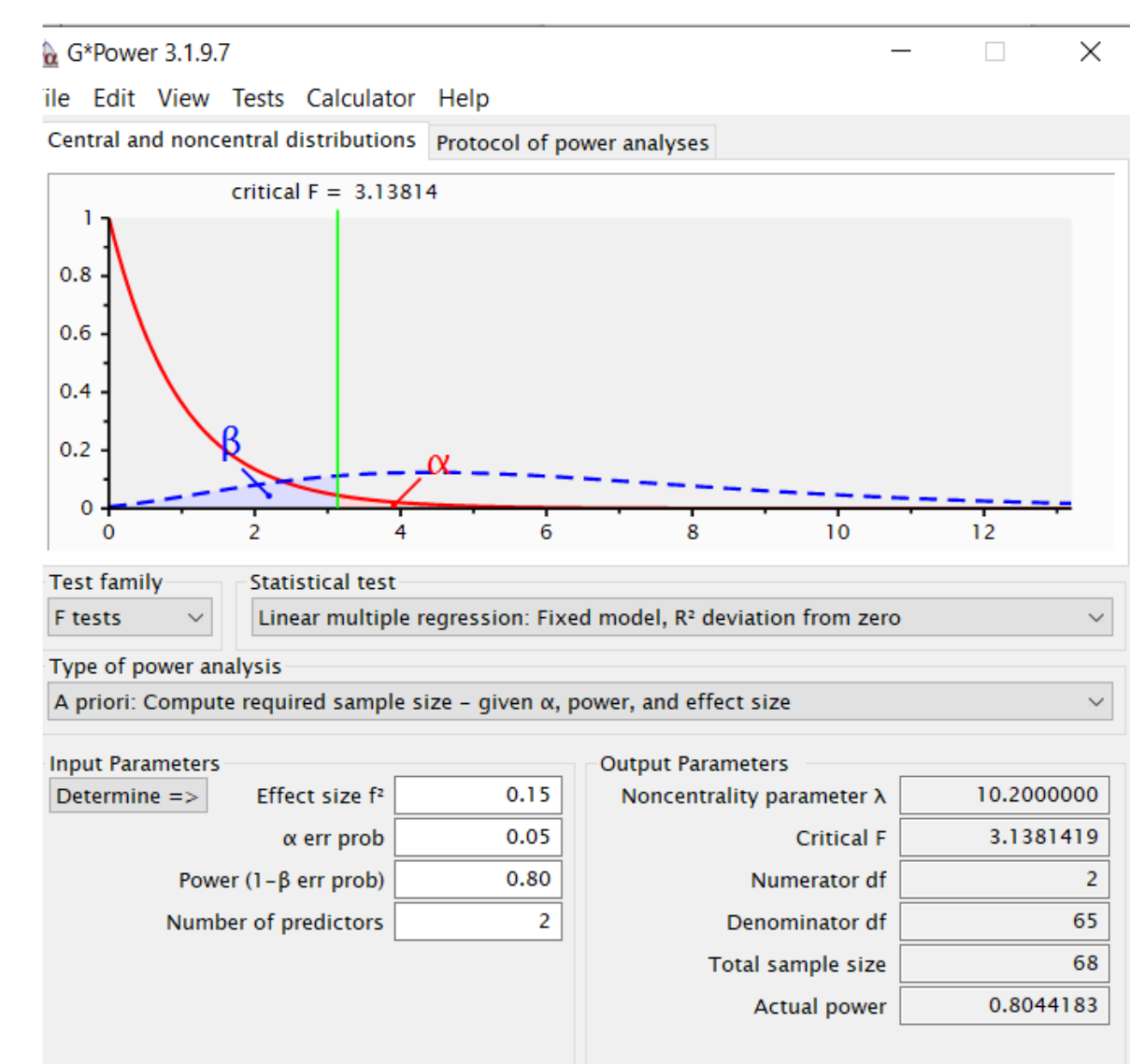
*G*Power Independent t-test*



Power for the multiple linear regression test will include an effect size of 0.15, alpha of .05, with a power of .80. In Figure 2, the researcher will use a power = .80, which means there is an 80% chance of rejecting the null hypothesis, which requires a total sample size of at least 68, resulting in a medium effect size. Refer to Figure 2.

Figure 2

*G*Power for Linear Multiple Regression test*



Thus far, the sample will come from three different churches in the region, as three have permitted the solicitation of potential volunteers from their congregation. Potential volunteers desiring to participate will email the researcher and complete a demographic survey online, followed by the consent form if they agree to participate in the research, and then complete two surveys online: CSI and ADMRQ. Although the participants must meet the inclusion criteria, participation is voluntary, and consent forms signatures are collected from volunteers who desire to continue participating in the research.

In this nonexperimental design, the groups are preexisting, and variable manipulation does not occur. Therefore, the two groups in comparison are the women raised with their African American fathers full-time and the women who experienced an absent African American father in childhood. Hence, African American women, born to African American fathers, 18 years or older, in heterosexual marriages, with or without children, raised in a home with a father full-time will be compared to African American women, in heterosexual marriages, with or without children, who experienced an absent father in childhood.

Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: African American women whose fathers are African American, 18 years of age and older, are currently in a heterosexual marriage, have access to an email, and living in the Northeast region of the United States of which the population selection took place. There will not be any restrictions on the length of marriage as some research notes that marital satisfaction does not tend to decline over time and thus still is stable throughout the marriage (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). In addition, the participants must have experienced either father-absence in childhood or a full-time, present father in a residential home. Furthermore, participants with an absent father had to be by way of abandonment, divorce, rejection, incarceration, or never interact with their biological father. Finally, those who did not reconcile with their biological fathers before the age of 18 will be eligible for participation.

Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria will be those who do not meet the inclusion criteria. For example, although the death of a father will give women a similar experience of father abandonment, the term father absence for this study relates to abandonment, divorce, rejection, incarceration, or never having any interaction with their biological father. Therefore, this study does not examine father absenteeism due to death. Also, those who reconciled with their father during childhood will not meet the inclusion criteria. Furthermore, African American women whose biological father is not African American will not meet the inclusion criteria. This exclusion is because historically, the use

of the "one-drop" rule (i.e., to define anyone with any "drop" of black blood in them as black) allows anyone with a drop of black blood to identify as African American (Khanna, 2010). Hence, women identify as African American but whose fathers belong to any other racial group other than African American will not meet the inclusion from this study.

Instrumentation

Demographic Survey

The demographic survey (see appendix G) will be sent via email to each potential volunteer after contacting the researcher via email. The demographic survey includes information on (a) the participants' age, (b) their ethnicity, (c) the father's ethnicity, (d) marital status, (e) whether their father was present/absent in childhood, (f) at what age did the women start to experience father absence in childhood, and (g) whether they experienced reconciliation with their father in childhood. Those who do not meet the inclusion criteria will be excluded and not allowed to further participate in the research.

Couples Satisfaction Index

Funk and Rogge (2007) measure relationship satisfaction in married, dating, or engaged couples. During this research, the wives will complete the Couples Satisfaction Index. The Couples Satisfaction Index consists of 32 items utilizing a Likert-type scale with multiple anchor values. The total sum of the score ranges from 0 to 161. Higher scores indicate higher levels of relationship satisfaction, while a score below 104.5 will indicate relationship dissatisfaction. Funk and Rogge (2007) developed the Couples Satisfaction Index after administering eight well-validated self-reported measures of relationship satisfaction to 5,315 online participants. These measures included the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), in addition to 75 potential satisfaction questions. Utilizing item response theory, the authors concluded that MAT and DAS had poor levels of precision; however, the Couples Satisfaction Index revealed higher levels of precision when assessing relationship satisfaction. In addition, the couples Satisfaction Index demonstrated strong validity, alpha coefficients of .98 for CSI (32), and all correlations were

significant at the $p < .001$ level, Reproduction of the content is feasible for educational purposes (Funk & Rogge, 2007). According to Funk and Rogge (2007), the Couples Satisfaction Index includes questions such as:

1. *I still feel a strong connection with my partner.*
2. *If I had my life to live over, I would marry (or live with/date) the same person.*
1. *Our relationship is strong.*

Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire

Participants will complete the Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMQR) developed by Julie Cwikel, which will measure the quality of the mother-daughter relationship as assessed by the daughter (Cwikel, 2016). The Adult Daughter-Relationship Questionnaire consists of 35 items measured on a five-point scale Likert scale that ranges from Strongly Agreed to Strongly Disagree. Responses were as follows: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Partially Agree = 3, Do Not Agree = 2, Strongly Do Not Agree = 1. The questionnaire is broken into three-factor structures: affective response, ambivalent response, and interdependent relations (Cwikel, 2016). The inventory's internal consistency and test-retest reliability was proven. Cronbach's alpha was .927 for positive affect, .907 for negative affect, .697 for ambivalent relations, and .625 for interdependent relations. However, the author suggests that future studies compare the Adult Daughter-Relationship Questionnaire to other inventories such as Mother-Adult Daughter Questionnaire (MAD). Reproduction of the content is feasible for educational purposes (Cwikel, 2016). According to Cwikel (2016), the Adult Daughter-Relationship Questionnaire includes questions such as:

1. *My mother is an amazing woman.*
2. *My mother accomplished many things that I am proud of.*
3. *I wish that my mother had had more time to pay attention to me and my needs when I was young.*

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will only use the positive affective (PA) as this subscale will measure how supportive the mother was in the mother-daughter relationship. As noted in the literature, greater PA was associated with marriage, while being divorced or separated was associated with negative aspects of the mother-daughter relationships (Cwikel, 2016).

The following variables will be under assessment and defined for this study: father absence/presence, marital satisfaction, and supportive mother. Father absence refers to growing up without the biological father living in the home full-time and about his physical, emotional, or psychological distant in a child's life (Pouget et al., 2012; Reuven-Krispin et al., 2020; Wilson, 2017). Marital satisfaction refers to relationship satisfaction, as scores below 104.5 will indicate relationship dissatisfaction. Finally, the mother-daughter relationship will assess supportive mothers related to the daughter's perspective on the positive affective relationship between the mother and daughter (Cwikel, 2016).

Procedures

After a google search, review of the local church directory, and cross-referencing the list with Facebook, 17 churches with a Christian denominational developed; each church solicited had to have a Facebook page. Subsequently, each church was emailed a permission request email (see Appendix B) and permission response (see Appendix C) for their convenience. Finally, pastors responded to the permission request as the IRB approval was secured.

Each church will receive the same permission request email and permission response for their convenience and research consistency. The permission request email will explain the purpose and procedures of the research study. If churches agree to participate, they will advertise the research study within the church and on the church's social media (i.e., Facebook). Before beginning the study, the researcher will hand-deliver the recruitment flyer (see Appendix F) to each participating church. The researcher will also email the same recruitment flyer and the social media announcement (see Appendix E) to the church for advertisement on the church's Facebook page. The recruitment flyers and social media announcements will be the same for each participating

church. Therefore, the churches will complete the following:

1. For three weeks, during the church's routine announcements on Sunday morning, the church will display the recruitment flyer and social media announcement.
2. The church will advertise the research by posting the following on their Facebook social media page: the recruitment flyer and social media announcement.
3. The church will post the flyer within the church concurrent to the displayed recruitment flyer and social media announcement.

Each pastor was made aware of the researcher's tentative dates. Research starts February 27th and ends on March 19th, allowing advertising to run February 27th, March 6th, and March 13th.

Potential volunteers will contact the researcher if they wish to participate in the research study during the advertising timeframe. Potential volunteers will receive a recruitment email with a link embedded within it that will allow them to complete the demographic survey online. Following the completion of the demographic survey, potential volunteers will be selected based on the inclusion criteria.

The researcher will maintain a list linking codes to participants' identities. The list linking codes to participants' identities will be in a separate password-protected folder, and only the researcher will have access to the linking list. In addition, the researcher will review the risk and benefits of the study within the consent form.

Before administering the surveys, the participants can ask questions related to the study and e-sign the consent forms (i.e., utilizing PdfFiller) prior to participating in the research. The consent form will allow participants to learn about confidentiality and the level of privacy the study in question upholds via the informed consent document (Allen, 2017). Those who consent to participate in the research study will complete the surveys online as the research will use PdfFiller to administer the surveys. It will take approximately 45 minutes to complete the surveys.

Self-reported validated measurements are often used in education research to assess different attitudes, values, and behaviors. The items used are related to the content of interest,

which will allow participants to rate items based on agreement levels (Leung & Shek, 2018). The surveys will include a Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI 32) and an Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ). Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time, and participants will not receive compensation. However, those desiring to participate in the research will complete the surveys in their entirety to avoid missing data collection before the participants submit their answers. Data entry and analysis will take one month to complete. Therefore, all research surveys and information will be accessible to the researcher for three years and then discarded.

Data Analysis

An independent t-test will analyze data from the nonexperimental design, which will allow for the means between naturally occurring groups (i.e., those with present fathers in childhood and those with absent fathers) to be compared (Warner, 2013). For this study, an independent t-test analyzes RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood? The alternative hypothesis includes the following: There will be a statistically significant difference between the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood. Therefore, the marital satisfaction of women who had absent African American fathers during childhood will report lower scores in marital satisfaction than women who had a present African American father during childhood.

The researcher is interested in examining multiple variables (i.e., father presence and support of a mother). Utilizing a multiple linear regression test will allow the relationship among the multiple variables to be described. At that time, the research can examine multiple predictor variables' separate and collective contributions and the association with the dependent variable (i.e., marital satisfaction) (Heppner et al., 2016). A multiple linear regression test will analyze RQ2: Is there a moderating effect of supportive mothers on marital satisfaction in African American women

with absent fathers? For this research, the alternative hypothesis includes the following: Supportive mothers as measured by Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ) will serve as a moderator variable between African American women with absent fathers and marital satisfaction. The marital satisfaction of African American women who experienced a supportive mother and an absent father will report higher scores in marital satisfaction than those who did not have a supportive mother.

Internal validity allows researchers to conclude causal relations based on data collected (Cozby, 2004). However, nonexperimental studies typically have weak internal validity as correlation does not necessarily mean causation (Warner, 2013). For this study, changes to marital satisfaction might confound variables other than the present father or absent father. Specifically, marital satisfaction for African American women who experience father presence or father absence may have a confounding variable, such as experiencing a supportive mother in childhood that buffered the impact of an absent father. Similarly, internal validity could be affected by extended family resilience in the African American community.

Literature notes that high internal validity sometimes threatens external validity. External validity references the ability for research to be generalized to other populations. Thus, the question is if the study can be replicated with different operationalized variables, with different participants, in a different setting (Cozby, 2004). There are various components to contemplate when considering generalizing to other populations of research participants, such as (a) gender considerations (e.g., males might interpret the independent variables to impact differently), (b) locale (e.g., participants in different local may differ in another locale such as Iowa and California), (c) generalization as a statistical interaction (e.g., can the results be generalizable to makes), and (d) cultural considerations (is the sample ethnically diverse) (Cozby, 2004).

According to Warner (2013), researchers entirely rely on proximal similarity when exploring the potential to generalize research findings based on convenience sampling. In hypothetical populations, it is possible to use a larger group of people with similarities to the

convenience sample to make a cautious inference about the hypothetical population based on the sample's responses. According to Campbell, suggest that researchers explore the degree of similarity between the hypothetical population and the sample population but limit the generalizability of the results based on similarities (Warner, 2013). For example, suppose a convenience sample includes 50 Corinth College students, ages 18-22, mainly consisting of Northern European families. In that case, it might be reasonable to consider that the student's results can potentially be generalized to a broader hypothetical population that includes 18-to-22-year-old college students with similar ethnic backgrounds (Warner, 2013).

Researchers consider probabilities and not certainties. Therefore, the experimenter must explore the statistical validity issues of type I and type II errors. Inferential statistic errors can result in type I and type II errors. A type I error occurs when experimenters reject the null hypothesis despite the null hypothesis being correct (Cozby, 2004). Therefore, this study would experience a type I error if African American women with absent fathers in childhood did not experience a change in marital satisfaction, and we did not accept the null hypothesis. The probability of making a type I error occurs based on the choice of the alpha level. On the other hand, type II occurs when the null hypothesis is accepted and should have been rejected (Cozby, 2004).

Summary

This study has three variables: marital satisfaction, father presence, and mother support. Marital satisfaction is the criterion variable, and mother support is the moderating variable. Measurement of father's presence consists of two levels: father presence versus father absence, but it is still an independent variable. Therefore, two surveys will measure the variables: Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI 32) for marital satisfaction and Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire for mother support. The population for this study was African American married women, and the convenient sample arises from local Christian denominational churches in a tri-city area in the Northeast region of the United States. The first step of data analysis will be an independent t-test for RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in the marital satisfaction of

African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood? The next step of data analysis was a multiple linear regression test to find the relationship between variables for RQ2: Is there a moderating effect of supportive mothers on marital satisfaction in African American women with absent fathers?

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This study aimed to examine the effects of the African American absent father during childhood on adult daughters' marital satisfaction. In addition, the research examined the possibility of supportive mothers moderating the impact of an African American absent father on the African American woman's marital satisfaction. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher administered survey tools collected to quantify the impact of the absent African American father on the marital satisfaction of their adult daughter in addition to the supportive mother variable. Data analysis included one independent t-test and one multiple linear regression analysis. This chapter will describe the descriptive statistics, hypotheses, and results.

Descriptive Statistics

Fifty-three volunteer participants from three churches agreed to participate in the current research study. Of those volunteer participants, 39 completed the demographic survey. However, 11 participants were excluded as they indicated that they experienced a reconciled father-daughter relationship before the age of 18. In addition, two participants were excluded as they indicated that their fathers had died in childhood. Of the 28 participants who completed the demographic survey and met the inclusion criterion, only 21 completed the research procedures entirely. Therefore, the sample size consisted of 21 participants. Descriptive analyses revealed that most participants (i.e., 18 of the 21 participants), whether they had an absent or present father in childhood, were satisfied with their marriage (85.7%), and only 14.3% revealed that they were dissatisfied with their marriage based on a reported score of 104.5 and under. Dividing the groups by categorical variables (i.e., absent fathers or present fathers) provides additional descriptive statistics. Of the participants with a present father (N=11), nine (81.8%) reported that they were satisfied with their marriage and two (18.2%) reported that they were dissatisfied with their marriage. Of the participants with absent fathers (N=10) in childhood,

nine (90%) reported that they were satisfied with their marriage, while only one (10%) reported marital dissatisfaction.

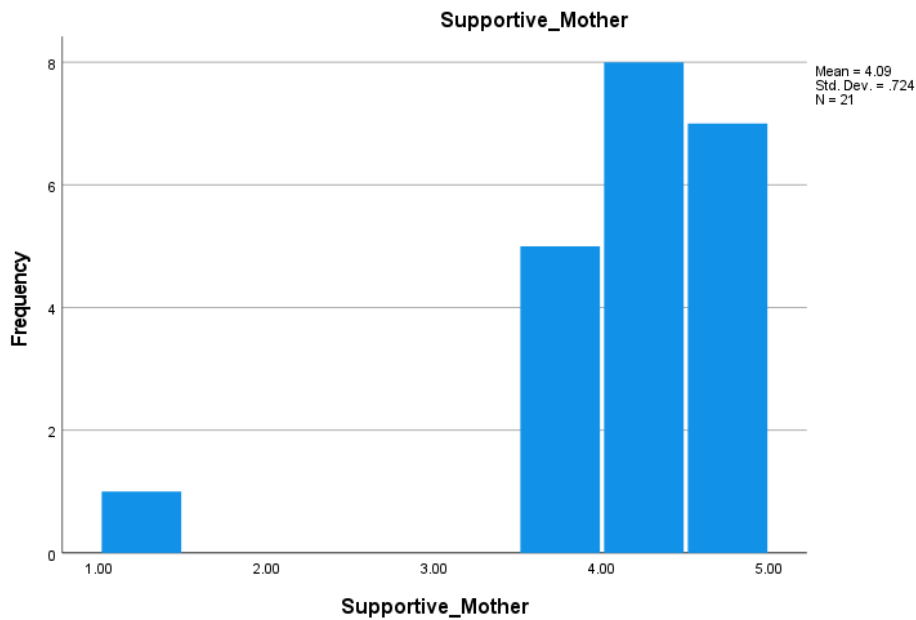
In the sample of married African American women with present fathers in childhood, the mean marital satisfaction score (131.9, $SE = 8.207$) fell within the range of marital satisfaction. In the sample of married African American women with absent fathers in childhood, the mean marital satisfaction score (131.90, $SE = 8.505$) fell within the range of marital satisfaction. There was no significant difference between the marital satisfaction of African American women with absent African American fathers in childhood and African American women with present African American fathers in childhood (see Table 1).

Table 1

Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Marital Satisfaction	Absent father women	10	131.90	26.897	8.505
	Present father women	11	131.91	27.219	8.207

Descriptive analyses revealed that most women in this research study reported that they “agree” they have a positive affective relationship with their mother regardless of their father's status (i.e., absent or present father). Of the sample ($N=21$), 15 participants indicated they “agree” have a positive affect with their mothers, five participants “partially agree” that they have a positive affective relationship with their mother. Only 1 participant indicated that they “strongly do not agree” that they have a positive affective relationship with their mother (see Figure 3).

Figure 3*Supportive Mother Frequency*

In the sample of married African American women who experienced either a present or absent father in childhood, the mean satisfaction score (131.90, $SD = 26.382$) and the mean supportive mother score (4.0933, $SD = .72425$) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Father_Status	21	0	1	.52	.512
Marital Satisfaction	21	63	160	131.90	26.382
Supportive Mother	21	1.33	4.67	4.0933	.72425
Valid N (listwise)					

Results

Hypothesis(es)

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood?

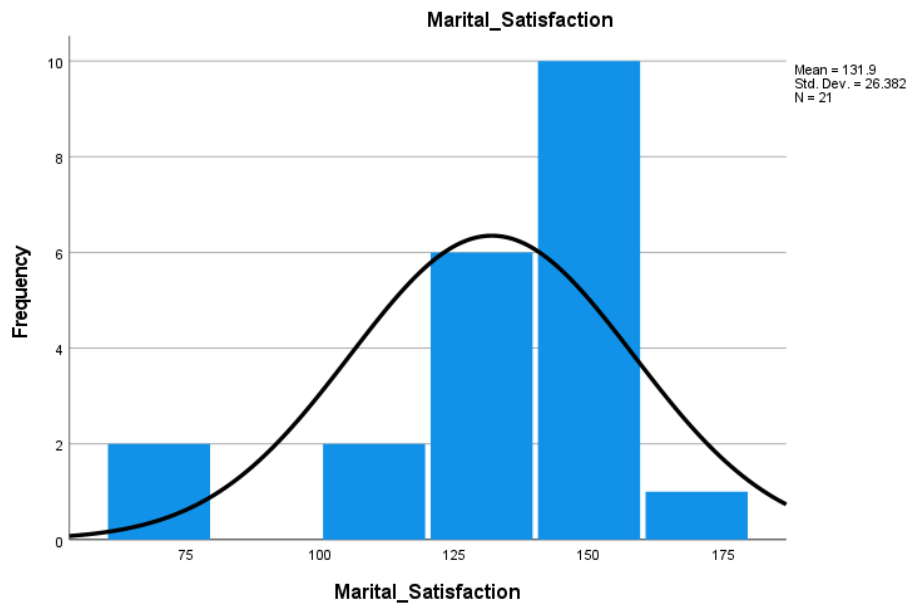
Ha1: There will be a statistically significant difference between the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood. The marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers during childhood will report lower scores in marital satisfaction than African American women who had a present father during childhood. An independent t-test was conducted, and marital satisfaction was measured by CSI for each group (i.e., those with an absent father versus those with a present father in childhood).

An independent samples *t* test was performed to assess whether the mean of Marital Satisfaction differed significantly for a group of 10 participants who had an absent father in childhood (Group 1) compared with a group of 11 participants who had present fathers in childhood (Group 2) randomly sampled from the population. As required for a comparison of means, the dependent variable must be continuous (i.e., marital satisfaction as indicated by the CSI score), and the independent variable is categorical (absent fathers vs present fathers) for an independent *t* test (Warner, 2013). Hence, the participants for this research were not and could not be assigned to more than one group. A second assumption is that scores are not correlated with other scores within the same group as participants did not have the opportunity to influence each other response as the data tools were administered separately using the participant's emails and the participants were not surveyed as a group in the same environment (Warner, 2013)

Preliminary data screening was conducted, which involves the identification of errors and inconsistencies. According to Warner (2013), the SPSS data file must be proofread and compared

with original data sources collected to correct errors in data entry. Therefore, prior to submissions utilizing PdfFiller, participants were alerted if they attempted to submit the surveys before they were completed. As the original data was accessible after it was collected from participants, the researcher also proofread the surveys line by line, and the scores were calculated and compared to the dataset, which did not reveal any inconsistencies across questions. Furthermore, according to Warner (2013), within the SPSS program, an empty cell in the data worksheet can be interpreted as a System Missing value; however, the dataset was not missing any data. Ideally, a dataset should have a few missing values (Warner, 2013). However, all participants were removed from the dataset during the initial data collection if they did not complete all the research procedures (i.e., demographic survey, consent form, CSI, and ADMRQ).

The dataset was collected from a random sample of the population. Statistical analysis methods based on the data collected are divided into two methods: parametric and nonparametric methods, according to the normality of the data. When data satisfy the normality, the data shows a probability distribution curve with the highest frequency at the center of the curve. The frequency decreases with distance from the center of the distribution curve (Kim & Park, 2019). When the data is gathered around the mean, it shows the nature of the group and gives information on whether there is a difference among the groups and its magnitude (Kim & Park, 2019). Although the data for this research is not a perfect normal distribution (see Figure 4), the assumption violation is not serious enough to discount using a parametric test. The sample size is very small; therefore, it is likely that a larger sample size would show a more normal distribution (Krithikadatta, 2014). In addition to the sample size being small, the sample population was limited to church-attending participants, which may have contributed to the high level of marital satisfaction (Ahmadi et al., 2008).

Figure 4*Histogram of Marital Satisfaction*

The Levene's test assessed the assumption of homogeneity of variance, $F = .000$, $p = .989$; this indicates no significant violation of the equal variance assumption; therefore, the pooled variances version of the t test was used (see Table 3). The independent t test is appropriate when the scores of the two samples being compared are independent of each other and uncorrelated. This assumption is usually satisfied when the researcher assigns each participant to just one group (Warner, 2013). For this study, the participants were naturally assigned to groups based on preexisting conditions in childhood.

Table 3*Independent t Test with Outliers*

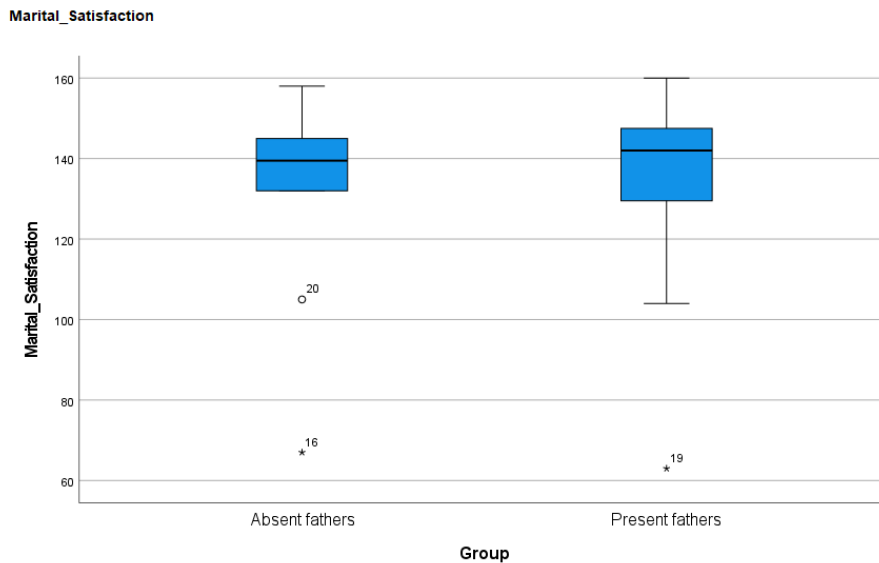
Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Marital Satisfaction	1	10	131.90	26.897	8.505
	2	11	27.219	27.219	8.207

Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance				t-test For Equality of Means							
95% Confidence interval of the											
Significance											
Difference											
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Means Differences	Std. Error Differences	Lower	Upper
Marital Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	.000	.989	-.001	19	.500	.999	-.009	11.826	-24.762	24.744
	Equal variances not assumed			-.001	18.852	.500	.999	-.009	11.819	-24.760	24.742

According to Warner (2013), an outlier is an extreme score on either end of a frequency distribution for quantitative variables (i.e., marital satisfaction), which can be detected by a boxplot. A boxplot will be used as a nonparametric exploratory procedure. Figure 5 indicates that the middle 50% of the distribution of marital satisfaction for women with absent fathers in childhood was between 133 to 145, and there was one outlier in marital satisfaction (participant 20 with a marital satisfaction score of 104) and one extreme outlier (participant 16 with a marital satisfaction score of 67) in the absent father group. For women with present fathers in childhood, the middle 50% of the distribution of marital satisfaction was between 130 and 147, and there was one extreme outlier (participant 19 with a marital satisfaction score of 63) for the present father group.

Figure 5*Boxplot*

Due to the outliers, the researcher had to decide whether the outliers should remain in the dataset or be removed. A single extreme score can have a disproportionate impact on the analysis outcome, while omitting the outliers can also change the outcome (Warner, 2013). However, it is a good idea to conduct the statistical analysis twice, with the outliers included and with the outliers excluded, to see what effect (if any) the decision about outliers will have on the outcome analysis. Therefore, based on the previous outliers discovered in Figure 5, another independent t test was conducted.

Table 4*Independent t Test without Outliers*

Group Statistics					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Marital Satisfaction	1	9	139.11	15.128	5.043
	2	9	142.67	10.247	3.416

Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance				t-test For Equality of Means							
95% Confidence interval of the											
Significance						Difference					
		F	Sig	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Means Differences	Std. Error Differences	Lower	Upper
Marital Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	.237	.633	-.584	16	.284	.568	-3.556	6.091	-16.467	9.356
	Equal variances not assumed			-.584	14.064	.284	.569	-3.556	6.091	-16.613	9.502

The independent t-test was performed to determine if a significant difference existed in marital satisfaction between African American married women who had an absent father in childhood and African American married women who had a present father in childhood. The mean Marital Satisfaction that included the outliers did not differ significantly, $t(19) = -.001$, $p = .989$, two-tailed (see Table 3). However, the mean Marital Satisfaction that did not include the outliers did not differ significantly, $t(16) = -.584$, $p = .568$ (see Table 4). Therefore, both show no significant differences among groups, so taking the outliers out did not change the results, indicating no differences between the two. Mean Marital Satisfaction for African American women within the absent fathers' group ($M = 131.90$, $SD = 26.897$) was .009 lower than mean Marital Satisfaction for the African American women within the present fathers' group ($M = 131.91$, $SD = 27.219$) (see Table 5). This study suggests that there is not a significant difference between the

marital satisfaction of African American women with or without present fathers in childhood (see Figure 5).

Table 5

Independent Samples t test

Group Statistics					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Marital Satisfaction	1	10	131.90	26.897	8.505
	2	11	27.219	27.219	8.207

Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance				t-test For Equality of Means							
95% Confidence interval of the											
Significance						Difference					
		F	Sig	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Means Differences	Std. Error Differences	Lower	Upper
Marital Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	.000	.989	-.001	19	.500	.999	-.009	11.826	-24.762	24.744
	Equal variances not assumed			-.001	18.852	.500	.999	-.009	11.819	-24.760	24.742

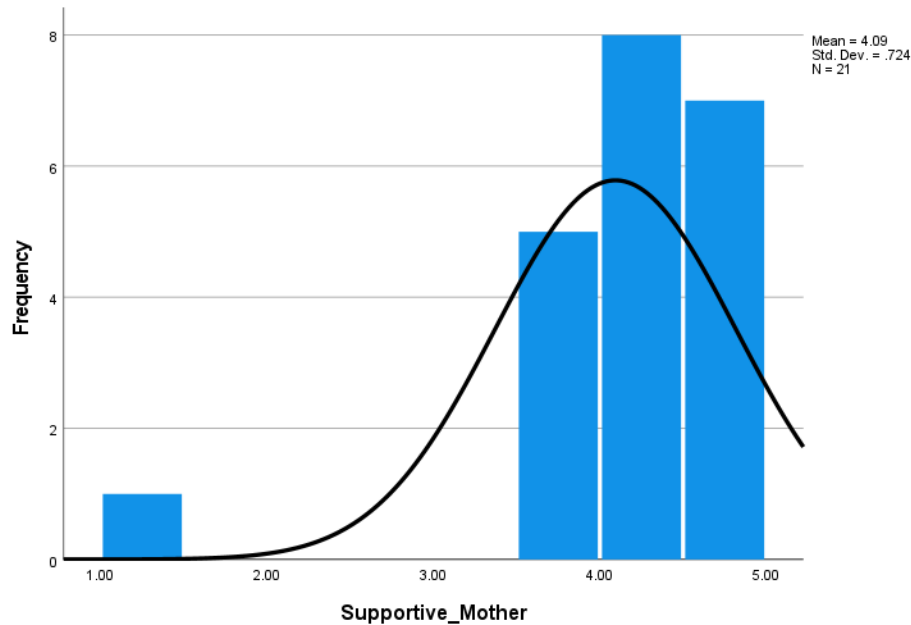
RQ2: Is there a moderating effect of supportive mothers on marital satisfaction in African American women with absent fathers?

Ha2: Supportive mothers as measured by Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ) will serve as a moderator variable between African American women with absent fathers and marital satisfaction. The marital satisfaction of African American women who experienced a supportive mother and an absent father will report higher scores in marital satisfaction than those who did not have a supportive mother. A multiple linear regression was conducted, and marital satisfaction (measured by CSI) and supportive mother (i.e. positive affective relationship) was measured by ADMRQ for those with an absent father.

A multiple linear regression test is used when a study has two or more independent variables (i.e., father status and supportive mothers) and one dependent variable (i.e., marital satisfaction), leading to the question of how the multiple independent variables, either alone or together, influence change among the dependent variable (Warner, 2013). Multiple linear regression aims to develop a prediction equation that evaluates the dependent variable based on the information provided on the multiple independent variables in the research (Warner, 2013).

Preliminary data screening indicates that the dependent variable must be continuous (i.e., marital satisfaction as indicated by the CSI score). The independent variable is categorical (father status, which includes absent fathers and present fathers) and continuous (i.e., positive affective relationship, which measures the supportive mother variable) for multiple linear regression (Warner, 2013). This assumption has been met. In addition, the assumption for independence of observation has been met as previously discussed for the assumptions regarding the independent t test.

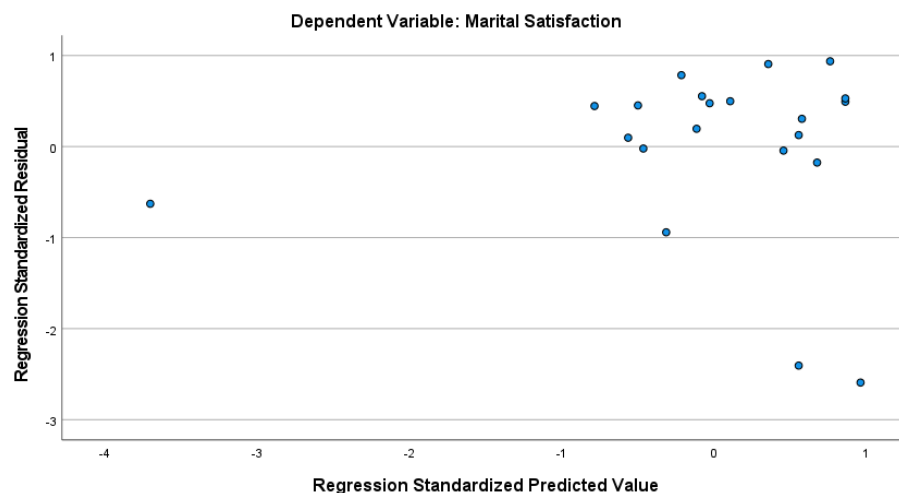
First, for each predictor (independent variable) and the outcome variable, the researchers had to set up a histogram to examine the shape of the distribution of scores, which was previously discussed regarding the preliminary data screening for the independent t test (see Figure 4). A histogram displaying the scores for supportive mother's indicates a negatively skewed distribution, which indicates a longer tail on the lower end of the distribution (see Figure 6). As the dummy-coded predictors (i.e., fathers' status), the two groups ideally would have at least 10 cases, which is valid for this research (Warner, 2013).

Figure 6*Histogram of Supportive Mother*

Second, a scatter plot was obtained for every pair of quantitative variables to examine the linearity among variables (Warner, 2013). Therefore, a residual scatterplot can be used to analyze the linearity (see Figure 7). The assumption of the bivariate normal distribution is more difficult to determine, especially if the sample size is small. Several problems may be detectable in a bivariate scatter plot as a bivariate outlier is a score that falls outside the region in the X, Y scatter plot where most X, Y values are located as indicated in (Warner, 2013). Nevertheless, the scatterplot does not indicate any problems with residual, nor is there evidence of a linear or curvilinear trend. The assumption of homoscedasticity is met if the variance of residuals is uniform across values of the predicted score and meets the normality also because the mean value of the standardized residuals should be 0 for all values of the predicted score (Warner, 2013). The points on the graph are clustered around 0 on the x-axis for the most part.

Figure 7

Graph of Standardized Residuals (on Y axis) Versus Standardized Predicted Scores on Dependent Variable (Marital Satisfaction)



It is essential to screen for multicollinearity as it can indicate a dependency between predictor variables and categorical variables as the presence of interaction is a violation of this assumption (Warner, 2013). Testing for multicollinearity can be conducted in SPSS using Father Status (i.e., absent or present father) as a categorical variable and Supportive Mothers as predictor variables (i.e., quantitative variable). Multicollinearity can be tested by examining tolerance and variation inflation factor statistics. Tolerance can be expressed by the amount of variance in independent variables, ranging from 0 to 1. When the tolerance values are smaller than 0.1, they are viewed as problematic as they have a high multicollinearity present (Warner, 2013). Therefore, the independent variable strongly depends on the other independent variable. The variance inflation factor can be a factory by which the variance of the independent variable increases due to dependence on the other independent variable and can have any value higher than 1.0. Therefore, when the values are larger than 10.0, high multicollinearity is present in the model (Allen, 2017). Table 6 indicates that the variance inflation factor is not higher than 10. Therefore, there is no presence of high multicollinearity within the model, and the results are within tolerance as indicated.

Table 6*Multicollinearity Test*

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient			Correlations		Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	113.061	45.174		2.503	.022					
	Father_Status	1.443	12.472	.028	.116	.909	.000	.027	.027	.938	1.066
	Supportive Mother	4.067	8.813	.112	.461	.650	.105	.108	.108	.938	1.066

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

As previously decided by the researchers, outliers will not be excluded from the research dataset based on the independent t-test. Furthermore, the outliers did not make a significant difference, as indicated in Table 3 and Table 4. Therefore, they will not be omitted from the regression analysis.

Before running the regression, SPSS needs to compute a new variable to represent the interaction; this is called IND_Father_Mother2; it is obtained by forming the product of father status x supportive mothers (Warner, 2013). A linear regression was performed using father status, supportive mother, and IND_Father_Mother2 as predictors of marital satisfaction, as SPSS results appear in Table 6.

Table 7

Regression Results for Significant Interaction Between One Categorical and One Quantitative Predictor Variable with One New Variable to Represent the Interaction

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variable Entered	Variable Removed	Method
1	Supportive_Mother, Group	.	Enter
2	IND_Father_Mother2	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Marital_Satisfaction

b. All requested Variables Entered

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.108 ^a	.012	-.098	27.646
2	.276 ^b	.076	-.087	25.501

a. Predictors: (Constant), Supportive_Mother, Group

b. Predictors: (Constant), Supportive_Mother, Group
IND_Father_Mother2ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Means Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	162.718	2	81.359	.106	.900 ^b
	Residual	13757.092	18	764.283		
	Total	13919.810	20			
	Regression	1062.630	3	354.210	.468	.708 ^c
	Residuals	12857.179	17	756.305		
	Total	13919.810	20			

a. Dependent Variable: Marital_Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Supportive_Mother, Group

c. Predictors: (Constant), Supportive_Mother, Group, IND_Father_Mother2

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized B	Standardized Coefficients Std.Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	113.061	45.174		2.503	.022
	Group	1.443	12.472	.028	.116	.909
	Supportive_Mother	4.067	8.813	.112	.461	.650
2	(Constant)	372.667	242.198		1.539	.142
	Group	-134.574	125.308	-2.611	-1.074	.298
	Supportive_Mother	7.232	9.235	.199	.783	.444
	IND_Father_Mother2	-32.055	29.387	-2.674	-1.091	.291

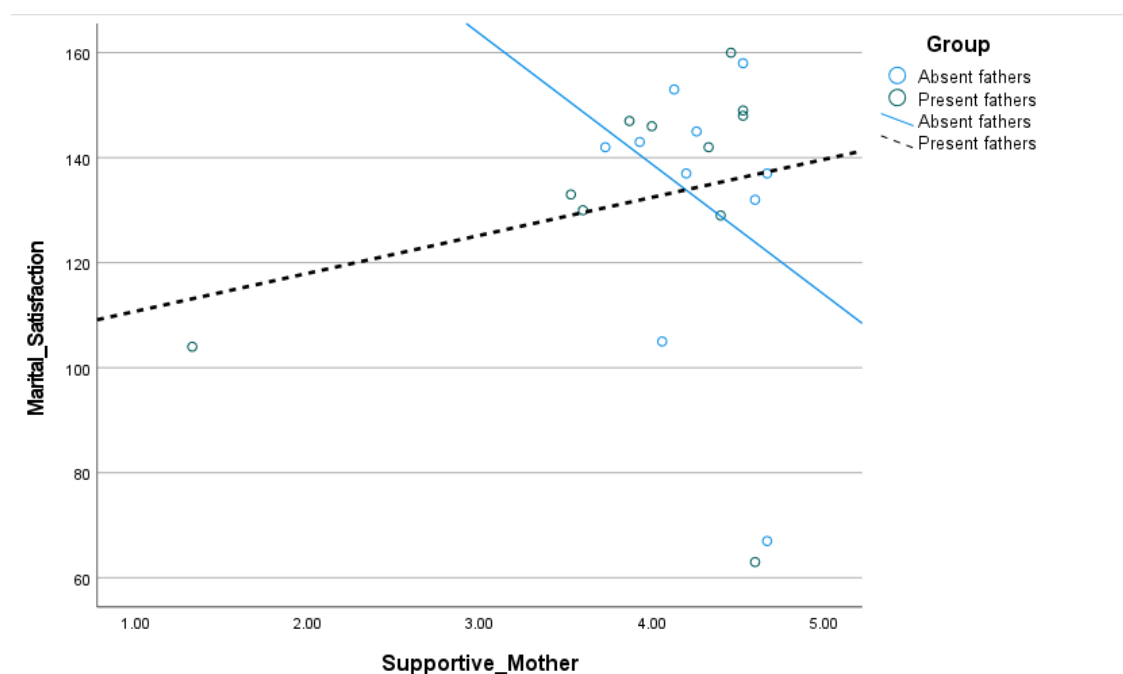
a. Dependent Variable: Marital-Satisfaction

Graphing regression lines for subgroups can easily communicate the nature of an interaction. The researcher used SPSS to set up a scatter plot of the independent by the dependent variable, using categorical predictor to set markers for cases (Warner, 2013). The regression lines for absent fathers and present fathers superimposed on the graph were edited for better visual presentation. The upper/solid line represents the regression to predict marital satisfaction from supportive mothers for the absent fathers' subgroup; the lower/dashed line represents the regression to predict marital satisfaction from supportive mothers for the present fathers' subgroup.

To assess possible father status differences in both the intercept and slope for prediction of marital satisfaction, a regression was performed to predict marital satisfaction from father status (present fathers = 0, absent fathers = 1), supportive mothers, and a product term to present a father status-by-supportive mother interaction. The overall regression was not statistically significant and explained almost a moderate portion of variance in marital satisfaction, $R = .276$, $R^2 = .076$, $F(3,17) = .468$, $p = .708$. The effect of supportive mothers was not statistically significant, $b = 7.232$, $t(17) = .783$, $p = .444$, two-tailed. The effect of father status was not statistically significant, $b = -134.573$, $t(17) = -1.074$, $p = .298$. The interaction between father status and supportive mother was not statistically significant, with $b = -32.055$, $t(17) = -1.091$, $p = .291$. These two regressions are graphed in Figure 8. Women with absent fathers and women with present fathers did differ significantly in predicted marital satisfaction when the supportive mother was 4.00 of a positive affective relationship. However, as the supportive mother (positive affective relationship) increased there was a difference between the absent father and present father group. For women with absent fathers, as the positive affective relationship increased, the marital satisfaction decreased. As for the women with present fathers, as the positive affective relationship increased, the marital satisfaction increased.

Figure 8

Regression Lines for Absent Fathers and Present Fathers



Summary

African American children are being raised in single-mother homes is increasing in the United States. The implications of father absenteeism, specifically for daughters, can have psychological, relational, and behavioral implications on the daughter that can emerge in adulthood among romantic relationships. However, the literature notes that findings show that mothers can support their daughter's emerging romantic interest despite the lack of a father's presence. Thus, daughters will show higher levels of romantic competence, even in families with absent fathers. This quantitative survey method research aims to explore the impact of father absenteeism among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction; additionally, examining can a supportive mother moderate the effect? The independent *t* test revealed no statistically significant difference between the means of women with absent fathers and those with present fathers. A regression analysis was performed to predict marital satisfaction from father status (absent fathers and present fathers), supportive mothers, and a product term to present a father status-by-supportive

mother interaction. The regression analysis failed to confirm a relationship between independent variables and marital satisfaction. However, with an R of .276 (which indicates a weak association between the model and dependent variable) and the R^2 of .076, the analysis suggests that a correlation between these independent variables and marital satisfaction might be seen with a larger sample size. Within the tentative picture the analysis provides, women with absent fathers and present fathers differed notably in predicted marital satisfaction when the supportive mother was 4.00 of a positive affective relationship. However, as the supportive mother (positive affective relationship) increased, there was a difference between the absent father and present father group. As the positive affective relationship increased, marital satisfaction decreased for women with absent fathers.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This quantitative survey method research aimed to explore the impact of African American father absenteeism among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction; additionally, to examine if supportive mothers moderate the effect. This chapter discusses the study's findings in the context of the existing literature. The research questions are the following: (a) is there a statistically significant difference in the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood, and (b) is there a moderating effect of supportive mothers on marital satisfaction in African American women with absent fathers? The research limitations and recommendations for future research are also presented.

Discussion

This quantitative survey method research aimed to explore the impact of African American father absenteeism among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction; additionally, examining can supportive mothers moderate the effect. The problem remains that much has revealed African American fathers' historical barriers and the significance of father-daughter attachment on child development; however, many scholars have yet to exhaust every implication. Unfortunately, little has been noted on the experience of this relationship on marital satisfaction among adult daughters, and those studies that have explored it have been predominately qualitative research (Lark, 2016). This study was designed to investigate the statistical significance of father absences among adult daughters and marital satisfaction in the African American community. The current study explores whether there is a statistically significant difference in the marital satisfaction of African American women who had absent fathers in childhood and African American women who had present fathers during childhood. Based on the current research

findings, there is no statistically significant difference between the means of women with absent fathers and those with present fathers.

According to the literature, it is not surprising that African Americans hold the lowest marriage rate in the United States, the highest divorce rate among ethnicities, and have always been disproportionately likely to raise their children in single-parent homes since slavery (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; Miller, 2018). However, devastating is the implications that an absent father can have on a child, specifically, the daughter. As African Americans engaged in alternative family structures, Blacks are more likely to experience cohabitation, run the risk of never marrying, leading single-parent homes, and father absences (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; Gurman et al., 2015). The plaguing number of absent fathers in the African American home continues the intergenerational patterns of single-parent homes. This trend harms children as the fragile family is more likely to experience poverty, deficit education, more mental health concerns than married couples, and negatively influences how they communicate their spiritual beliefs (Gurman et al., 2015; Gutierrez et al., 2014). Although many factors contribute to the intergenerational patterns of absent fathers in the African American community, little research has examined the effect on marital satisfaction and even less has tried to generalize the research findings (Nosko et al., 2011).

Despite father-daughter relationships being an area of interest, very little concerning father absence and marital satisfaction has been explored (Haaz et al., 2014; Lark, 2016). However, Lark (2016) recognized that the father's absence is prevalent in the African American community and influences the development of the children, specifically the daughter's romantic relationships in adulthood. Therefore, Lark's qualitative transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived-in experience of African American women who experienced a father absence during childhood and how this influenced their marital satisfaction in adulthood (Lark, 2016). For Lark's research, attachment theory was the driving theory behind the research, which focuses on the attachment bonds between relationships, specifically, the parent-child or romantic partners (Lark, 2016). Among the ten women interviewed, five emerging themes manifested including (a) the women

being desperate for something different in adult relationships, (b) challenges within marriage, (c) not knowing how to relate to men, (d) faith in God, and (e) awareness of the childhood effects of absent fathers.

Lark's (2016) study shows that participants experienced several negative consequences of father absenteeism, such as early sexual activity, lower self-esteem and self-worth, and lived with a fear of abandonment and rejection. These consequences, in turn, manifested throughout adulthood as they considered how an absent father impacted their lives. Participants struggled as they looked for an adult intimate relationship that did not resemble their childhood which influenced mate selection and their current marriage. The participants further elaborated on the current marital dilemmas, noting that they did not understand how to be a wife and relate to a man, which was rooted in their father's absence. In turn, participants relied on their faith in God as they used it to navigate marital life, which gave them hope and strength. Through their experiences, they realized how imperative the effects of their father's absence were on their marriage (Lark, 2016). The literature concerning attachment theory and marital satisfaction supports the theoretical probability that individuals with a secure attachment father-daughter relationship are more satisfied with their marriages than insecurely attached individuals who experience father absence (Banse, 2004; Sable, 2000). However, this current research study does not support this theory entirely. The dataset does not indicate that absent fathers in childhood are associated with negative consequences that manifest throughout adulthood, specifically in adult intimate relationships. However, a smaller sample size such as those in this study could explain the results. Thus, a larger sample size may have yielded results that agree with the literature.

As the intergenerational trend of broken families continues, the attachment bond of infant-parent is influenced (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Although attachment style is one of the most important aspects of measuring human relationships, it is central in evaluating marital satisfaction (Ottu & Akpan, 2011). The attachment theory explains that childhood experiences affect adulthood relationships and impact their internal working model, influencing how people relate to one another

and their adult child's relationships. Hence, the underlying idea is that the same internal working system that motivates parent-child relationships is influential in intimate adult relationships (Chopik & Edelstein, 2015). Therefore, adult attachment constructs a background for behavior, emotion, and cognition in adult relations (Chopik & Edelstein, 2015). According to the theory, a secure attachment and bond to a caregiver encourage the rise of an independent and confident adult; similarly, an insecure attachment creates the foundation for an anxious-avoidant relationship bond leading to an adult's lack of trust in others (Dansby et al., 2017).

Children naturally want a relationship and bond with their fathers. Children who experience disrupted relationships with their fathers due to absence, divorce, or separation, have a difficulty time establishing these bonds. This struggle results in children viewing their fathers as distant and cold, which affects the daughter from childhood into adulthood (East et al., 2007). Adult attachment style appears to correlate with early childhood caregiving experiences, but once in adulthood, it is not as pliable as childhood and adolescent experiences (Fraley & Roisman, 2019). Hence, attachment style is related to relationship quality and overall healthy functioning, especially marital quality (Sandberg et al., 2017). Therefore, literature notes the importance of attachment bonds, the necessity of a father-daughter relationship in childhood, and its impact on adult experiences, specifically marital satisfaction. However, this current research study did not reflect this same notion in its entirety. The dataset reflects no difference in marital satisfaction among those with absent and present fathers. This begs two questions. First, are the results due to the supportive mother variable noted in each group (absent fathers and present fathers). Second, could the dataset result align with current research if non-church attendees were included in the study? Therefore, the dataset could reflect equal means of marital satisfaction for each group due to the constant variable of religion, which was not under evaluation for this current study. Prior research has noted that religiosity can mediate marital satisfaction for African American couples (Fincham et al., 2011).

The purpose of this quantitative survey method research was to explore the impact of African American father absenteeism among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction, and examine whether a supportive mother can moderate the effect. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, no research has tried to find statistical significance in these findings related to the African American adult daughter and the implications of the father's absence and the supportive mother on marital satisfaction (Lark, 2016; Reuven-Krispin et al., 2020). However, this study was designed to examine if there was a moderating effect of supporting mothers on marital satisfaction in African American women with absent fathers. Based on the current research findings, the regression analysis performed to predict marital satisfaction from father status (absent fathers and present fathers), supportive mothers, and a product term to present a father status-by-supportive mother interaction did not show statistical significance.

By the late 1960s, African American families started to experience a decline in two-parent homes. The dismantlement of the African American family resulted in fathers living away from their children (Lemmons & Johnson, 2019). As two-parent homes decline, income inequality rises (Bloome, 2017). Divorce had tripled among the Black family, and children reared in single-parent homes doubled as the women head of household families have raised by more than fifty percent. Unfortunately, this results in children being more likely to be raised in poverty when compared to their counterparts in two-parent homes. Nevertheless, the shift in singlehood has contributed to the community and individual well-being (Revell & Mcghee, 2012). According to Harris (2014), literature has noted that African American women have grown to normalize and adapt to the absent father phenomenon, which could speak to the current study's research results as there was not a difference in the means of the two groups (absent fathers and present fathers).

According to the literature, father-daughter relationships are strong predictors of a woman's emotional openness and bond in adult male relationships. Adult attachment style is at the core of relationship development (Haaz et al., 2014). The absent father lacks intimacy in the father-

daughter relationship, leading to emotional barriers, creating barriers to forming and maintaining close relationships (East et al., 2007).

As women describe the absent childhood father or lack of consistent contact with their father, they feel that their fathers did not care for them, lacked interest in their relationship, sometimes felt like strangers, and felt abandoned. Thus, daughters experience pain as they yearn for a bond that was not there. These daughters respond to their father's perceived lack of interest or abandonment with behavioral problems that sometimes worsen their disapproved behavior. Daughters, in turn, would enact certain behaviors hoping to gain their father's attention leading to a connection. As the lack of connection continues, the daughter sometimes endorses a lack of respect for the father in response to the father's unavailability or unwillingness to fill the daughter's desire for an attachment bond (East et al., 2007). Hence, this results in negative emotions toward their fathers, attachment concerns, and a significant problematic communication style (Demidenko et al., 2015). Thus, this attachment style is recognized in adulthood by a lack of resolution related to loss or trauma (Dickstein et al., 2001).

Females from divorced families do not constantly develop the same romantic competencies from intact families as early as adolescence (Shulman et al., 2012). However, despite fathers not being in the home due to divorce, daughters of divorced parents can learn to be emotionally intimate with their spouses through their relationship with their fathers (Haaz et al., 2014). Unfortunately, some daughters still do not get the opportunity to keep a relationship with their fathers. However, some research indicates that even if a daughter does not grow up with her biological father or a father in the home, she can still create emotional ties with males (Haaz et al., 2014).

Despite the negative implications of absent fathers, Shulman et al. (2012) findings support that a mother can support their daughter's emerging romantic interests. As a result, daughters will show higher levels of romantic competence, even in families with absent fathers. Furthermore, when mothers had comprehensible accounts of their own experiences, daughters were more likely

to be involved in reciprocal, intimate, and stable relationships. Finally, when mothers supported and trusted their daughters despite a father not being in the home, daughters were more likely to experience stable, positive, and mature relationships with proper problem-solving skills (Shulman et al., 2012). However, the current research study results did not support this notion entirely. First, the research study indicates that women with absent fathers experienced marital satisfaction as measured by the CSI. However, the regression graph indicated that women with absent fathers' marital satisfaction decreased as mother support increased. Therefore, they do not experience as much marital satisfaction as their counterparts (women with present fathers in childhood). However, one notion that could explain this is that mothers use storytelling and oral histories to educate their daughters on various topics, including marriage. As married mothers communicate and socialize with their daughters, they provide a marital narrative to their daughters, enhancing their daughter's marital satisfaction (Gilchrist-Petty & Reynolds, 2015). However, if a mother is single or a child lacks a father in the home, this begs the question of what narrative the daughter is being told. A more in-depth study would be needed to explore these additional variables.

As broken bonds in childhood can lead to anxious/avoidant attachment styles, research has noted that anxious and avoidant attachment, along with anxiety symptoms, mediate emotional dysregulation (Nielsen et al., 2017). As a child develops an anxious attachment to their caregiver, they are likely to develop this same attachment style with their significant others in response to the internal mechanism developed throughout childhood (Pascuzzo et al., 2013). In response to the insecure attachment between parent-relationships, individuals use emotional-oriented regulation strategies they internalized during their youth and apply them to adulthood relationships (Pascuzzo et al., 2013). Insecure attachment styles are related to romantic disengagement depression and influences relationship commitment (Callaci et al., 2020). Those with anxious attachment styles risk responding to distressing scenarios with negative emotions and distorted, catastrophic, ruminating thoughts (Pascuzzo et al., 2013). Unfortunately, anxious attachment accompanies ambivalent feelings projected on the spousal relationship, while avoidant attachment style

influences marital satisfaction among distressed individuals (Bradley & Hojjat, 2017; Mondor et al., 2011). However, secure attachments reduce post-traumatic stress disorder and eating disorders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

Research shows that attachment to parents influences the internal mechanisms of children, and attachment issues during infancy can manifest helplessness (Dickstein et al., 2001; Pascuzzo et al., 2013). Although subconsciously, attachment issues in childhood can lead to an over-activating attachment and demand for parental attention, attempting to diminish their arousal, the manifestation in adults recognizes preoccupied attachment marked by passivity, fear, and anger (Dickstein et al., 2001). Thus, consistent and dependable parents are vital as the parent-child relationship translates into adult romantic relationships (Pascuzzo et al., 2013).

Individuals with positive parent-child relationships in adolescence were more likely to have secure attachment styles in adulthood, translating into romantic relationships (Nosko et al., 2011). If she has a close emotional bond with her father, she is likely to be open, form close bonds, and feel similarly supported in an intimate relationship with men (Haaz et al., 2014). Accordingly, the perception of a father's influence and physical presence influences a daughter's marital satisfaction and can predict current marital intimacy (Ali & Daoud, 2016; Haaz et al., 2014). However, women who did not have this privilege are less likely to establish an emotional bond with other men and are under the impression that this bond is impossible to form with any man (Haaz et al., 2014). The current research study does support this notion as the regression analysis indicates that women with present fathers had higher levels of marital satisfaction, but also in combination with having a supportive mother. However, the regression analysis unexpectedly indicates that women with absent fathers experienced a decline in their marital satisfaction as their mother's support increased. One reason that could explain this is that being married is related to higher levels of a positive affective relationship (mother support) between mother-daughter, while being divorced or separated was related to greater negative aspects of the mother-daughter relationship. Therefore, some aspects of the mother-daughter relationship are stained by conflict or distress in interpersonal

relationships, such as with a spouse (Cwikel, 2016). Hence, a more in-depth study would be needed to explore these possibilities.

Implications

Clinically, within the tentative picture of the analysis, the findings are important to clinicians who work with both individuals and couples to increase their marital satisfaction. The literature concerning attachment theory and marital satisfaction supports the theoretical probability that individuals with a secure attachment father-daughter relationship are more satisfied with their marriages than insecurely attached individuals who experience father absence (Banse, 2004; Sable, 2000). Therefore, if a woman has a close emotional bond with her father, she is likely to be open, form close bonds, and feel similarly supported in an intimate relationship with men (Haaz et al., 2014). This is vital to understand in therapy, as having an absent father can impact the marital quality of a married woman (Sandberg et al., 2017). Therefore, counselors may be able to help facilitate a greater father-daughter bond as consistent and dependable parents are vital as parent-child relations translate into adult romantic relationships (Pascuzzo et al., 2013).

While the father-absent phenomenon has gained more attention, much research is still needed to gain a complete perspective of the absent father and its influence upon the adult child, specifically the adult daughter who is at significant risk of continuing in her parent's footsteps. There is also an intergenerational trend of father absenteeism among African American families, which has implications that must be understood to correct them. As African American women continue to be the pillar within the Black community, children can suffer from the struggles presented to single mothers, specifically the daughters. However, considering the tentative results, courts could consider parenting time with the father outside the home in a new way and increase father visitation. As the regression lines indicate, as supportive mother levels increase, marital satisfaction decreases for absent father women. Unfortunately, due to generational trends, children raised by a single parent or born out of wedlock were still likely to live in a single-parent home and

then be single parents themselves (Miller, 2018). Hence, perpetuating the generational trend. Thus, courts have an obligation to consider the child's best interest, which could expand into the more extended time implication of adulthood if more research is completed in this area (Archard & Skivenes, 2009).

Limitations

Although this research yields valuable information for the growing body of literature concerning African American women in heterosexual marriage and African American father absences, this study has multiple limitations. One major limitation within the current research study is the demographics of the sample population. The sample size included all churchgoers, and their religious beliefs may have limited the generalization to a broader population (Fincham et al., 2011). Literature notes that religious and cultural mores may contribute to African Americans' lack of participation in research studies, but the most often reported barrier is the fear of exploitation, contributing to the sample size (Branson & Butler, 2007). The study used convenient sampling within multi-racial Christian denomination churches; however, the participants were African American. Due to the small sample size, the result cannot be generalized.

Another limitation could include social desirability response biasing as self-reported tools are subject to participants responding to items based on underreporting undesirable attitudes and overreporting more desirable attributes (Latkin et al., 2017). This may have impacted the reporting of marital satisfaction among the women with absent fathers. Another limitation is that the study only explored the marital satisfaction of a specific homogenous group of women. All the participants in this study also experienced an absent father in childhood or had a full-time, present father in a residential home. Participants with an absent father had to be by way of abandonment, divorce, rejection, incarceration, or never interact with their biological father. However, those who did reconcile with their biological fathers before the age of 18 were ineligible for participation. This in turn, could have limited the sample population as all fathers who are not present in the home remain completely absent from their children's lives, specifically the daughter. Relationships can

still be maintained outside of residential homes in parent-child relationships, and interestingly, the researcher had to exclude about 33% of the willing participants due to the exclusions.

Furthermore, women who experienced a father's absence through the death of a father were also excluded; however, the age at which they lost their father could account for a positive father-daughter relationship that could positively impact on a woman's marital satisfaction. Those who experienced their father's death in childhood were willing to participate but were also excluded, contributing to the small sample size. As a result, this quantitative research is not generalizable to all African American women, and the results of this study may have limited meaning for other groups, including various ethnic groups, race of the father, race of the daughter, marital satisfaction, sexual orientation, death of a father, and reconciled father-daughter relationships.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the father-absent phenomenon has gained more attention, much research is still needed to gain a complete perspective of the absent father and its influence upon the adult child, specifically the adult daughter who is at significant risk of continuing in her parent's footsteps. Therefore, it is recommended that the problem and purpose of this research study be explored further by conducting the research again, perhaps after a redesign that includes reducing the inclusion and exclusion criteria. For example, sampling the homogenous group but not using the church population as a convenient sample because religious and cultural mores may contribute to African Americans' lack of participation in research studies.

Some father-child relationships experience reconciliation after numerous factors such as complex personal, family, structural, societal, or agency barriers (Chopik & Edelstein, 2015; East et al., 2007). According to Lark (2016), there is a need for future research on reconciliation. Several participants in her study reported that they did not have the opportunity to reconcile or repair their relationships with their fathers. Future research can examine how reconciliation with fathers can impact women's perspectives on fathers' absence and marriage. The problem is that little research has explored absent and reconciled fathers among African American women regarding their marital

satisfaction.

As quantifying research has its place in the literature, qualitative research speaks volumes regarding the transcendental phenomenological that can be explored the lived-in experience of African American women who experienced father absence during childhood and how this influenced their marital satisfaction in adulthood (Lark, 2016). Thus, it explores the lived-in experience of the African American women who experienced a father's absence during childhood and explores why the African American women remain in a marriage that she indicates to be filled with low marital satisfaction. Furthermore, each woman who experiences an absent father will not experience low marital satisfaction. Therefore, future research should focus on how women who experienced an absent father in childhood can experience healthy and long-lasting marriages (Lark, 2016).

Not only should the experience of the African American women be explored, but also women of multi-racial backgrounds, which was not included in the current research study as the father's race (i.e., being African American) was an inclusion criterion. The one-drop rule considers one to be African American if they have "one drop of black blood" in them. This discounts the reality of one's whole identity (Khanna, 2010). African American daughters could be the product of a multiracial conception but deemed African American based on the one-drop rule. Hence, future recommendations include exploring African Americans with multi-racial backgrounds and those who are considered African American based on their mother's race and not their fathers. African American fathers are not the only fathers absent from their daughters' lives; thus, gaining a fuller picture of absent fathers' impact on marital satisfaction would include an expansion of race for both father and daughter. According to other researchers, it is also essential to include in this future research the examination of other geographical regions and more heterogeneous samples that expand beyond race, geographical location, and marital status (Lark, 2016).

An additional future recommendation would include examining the marital satisfaction of an adult son whose biological father was absent from his childhood. It may be helpful to examine

the difference the opposite sex parents' presence has on the adult child's marital satisfaction. Hence, shedding light on the void that the opposite parent leaves in a child's life manifests into adult relationships. Furthermore, another future recommendation would include the examination of the ADMRQ and its use among father-daughter and mother-son dyadic relations (Cwikel, 2016).

Summary

It is not a surprise that African American children are being raised in single-mother homes at an alarming rate in the United States. Father status related to the father-daughter relationship, specifically father absenteeism, can have psychological, relational, and behavioral implications on the daughter that can emerge in adulthood among romantic relationships. However, research has not entirely addressed these issues as there is some controversy related to the impact of absent fathers. The literature notes that findings show that mothers can support their daughter's emerging romantic interest despite the lack of father's presence. Thus, daughters will show higher levels of romantic competence, even in families with absent fathers. This quantitative survey method research aims to explore the impact of father absenteeism among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction; additionally, to examine if a supportive mother moderates the effect. This research found no significant difference among African American women with absent fathers compared to those with present fathers. As the dataset indicates no significant difference among these groups, there was also an indication that as supportive mother's levels increased, marital satisfaction decreased for women with absent fathers. Although the sample size was small and the findings did not completely align with previous research, this research study does add value to the knowledge base by pointing out new avenues that should be explored, such as the effects of storytelling or communication between the mother and the effect of the level of conflict and distress due to the father absence.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 25, 2022

Ashley Sanders
Pamela Moore

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY21-22-570 The Impact of Father Absence on the Marital Satisfaction of African American Women

Dear Ashley Sanders, Pamela Moore:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: February 25, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Permission Request Email

[Insert Date]

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient],

As a graduate student in the School of Behavioral Science at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Community Care and Counseling degree. The title of my research project is *The Impact of Father Absence on the Marital Satisfaction of African American Women*, and the purpose of my research is to explore the impact of father absence among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction.

I am writing to request your permission to utilize your membership to recruit potential volunteers for my research. If the request is approved, churches are asked to advertise my research during their routine announcements on Sunday morning for at least three weeks, post a recruitment flyer and social media announcement on the church's Facebook page, which will be emailed to the church, and post a flyer that will be hand-delivered to the church within the church during the same three weeks. Potential volunteers will then email me if they desire to participate and will receive a recruitment email with instructions detailing the procedures. The research is tentatively projected to start on February 27th and end on March 19th, which will allow for advertising to run on February 27th, March 6th, and March 13th.

Participants will be asked to complete a demographic survey and two data collection surveys: the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI 32) and the Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMQRQ). It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to _____ . A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Ashley A. Sanders
Doctoral Candidate, LMSW

Appendix C

Permission Response

[Date]

Dear Ashley A. Sanders:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled *The Impact of Father Absence on the Marital Satisfaction of African American Women*, I have decided to grant you permission to access our membership and invite them to participate in your study. With permission granted, the church agrees to advertise the research during routine announcements on Sunday morning for at least three weeks, post a recruitment flyer and social media announcement on the church's Facebook page, which will be emailed to the church, and post a flyer that will be hand-delivered to the church within the church during the same three weeks.

I grant permission for Ashley Sanders to contact [description of potential participants] to invite them to participate in her research study. With permission granted, the church agrees to advertise the research during routine announcements on Sunday morning for at least three weeks, post a recruitment flyer and social media announcement on the church's Facebook page, and post a flyer within the church during the same three weeks.

Sincerely,

[Official's Name]

[Official's Title]

[Official's Company/Organization]

Appendix D

Recruitment Email

Dear Potential Volunteer,

As a graduate student in the School of Behavioral Science at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Community Care and Counseling degree. The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of father absence among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction and whether a supportive mother can change this effect, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join the study.

Participants must be African American women whose biological father is African American, at least 18 years old, in a heterosexual marriage, have access to email, and live in the local area. Participants must have experienced either father-absence in childhood or a full-time, present father in the residential home. Participants with an absent father had to be by way of abandonment, rejection, divorce, or never had any interaction with their biological father. Finally, those who did not reconcile their relationship with their biological father before the age of 18 will be eligible for participation. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a demographics survey and two data collection surveys: the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI 32) and the Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ). It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete the demographic survey: [Click here](#)

A consent document will be emailed to you if you meet the inclusion criteria for the research study. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After reading the consent form, and if you are willing to participate, please e-sign and date. Following, two surveys will be emailed to you, which will be completed online.

Sincerely,

Ashley Sanders
Doctoral Candidate, LMSW

Appendix E

Recruitment Social Media Announcement

ATTENTION, ATTENTION, ATTENTION: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Community Care and Counseling at Liberty University. The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of father absence among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction and whether a supportive mother can change this effect.

The participants must have experienced either father-absence in childhood or a full-time, present father in the residential home. Participants with an absent father had to be by way of abandonment, rejection, divorce, or never had any interaction with their biological father. Finally, those who did not reconcile their relationship with their biological father before the age of 18 will be eligible for participation.

To participate, you must meet the above criteria and the following:

- Be an African American woman
- Your biological father is African American
- At least 18 years old
- Are currently in a heterosexual marriage
- Have access to an email
- Live in the local area

Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a demographic survey and two data collection surveys: the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI 32) and the Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ). It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Potential volunteers will be emailed in accordance with the following:

- A recruitment email will be sent to you with a demographic survey included which will be completed online to determine your eligibility to participate based on the inclusion criteria.
- If potential volunteers meet the inclusion criteria, they will be emailed a consent form to e-sign prior to participating if they desire to do so still. The consent document contains additional information about my research.
- After completing the consent form, each participant will be emailed two surveys to complete online: the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI 32) and the Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ).

Taking part in this study is **entirely voluntary**, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Appendix F

Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed!!!

The Impact of Father Absence on the Marital Satisfaction of African American Women



- Are you an African American female?
- Is your father African American?
- Are you in a heterosexual marriage?
- Are you at least 18 years old?
- Are you from the local area?
- Do you have access to an email?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a marital satisfaction research study.

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of father absence among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction and whether a supportive mother can change this effect.

Between February 27 and March 19, 2022

PARTICIPANTS WILL COMPLETE:

Demographic Survey
 Consent Form
 Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI 32)
 Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ)

ALL ONLINE to keep you safe!

Research is always voluntary!

Ashley A. Sanders, a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Science at Liberty University is conducting this study.
 Please contact Ashley A. Sanders at _____ for more information.

Appendix G

Demographic Survey

Please complete the following information:

1. Age: _____
2. Ethnicity: African American Caucasian Hispanic/Latino Other
3. What is the ethnicity of your father: African American Caucasian Hispanic/Latino Other
4. Are you married? Yes or No
5. Are you involved in a heterosexual marriage? Yes or No

The following definition pertains to the next question.

- Father absence refers to a father who was not physically or emotionally present due to a divorce or separation in the family.
 - Father absence also refers to daughters who had little or no contact with the father in childhood.
 - Father absence also relates to a daughter who had no knowledge of their father.
 - Father absence refers to a daughter whose father abandoned the family during infancy or early childhood and daughters who had no physical or verbal contact with their father before 18.
6. Would you say you had an absent father? Yes or No
 7. If you answered yes to the previous question, at what age did you begin to experience father absence? _____ or N/A

The following definition pertains to the next question.

Reconciliation refers to reestablishing a relationship.

For example, reestablishing a father-daughter relationship after several years of no contact.

8. If you answered yes to question 6, would you say you experienced reconciliation with your absent father before the age of 18? Yes or No or N/A

Appendix H

Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: The Impact of Father Absence on the Marital Satisfaction of African American Women

Principal Investigator: Ashley A. Sanders, Doctoral Candidate, LMSW, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an African American woman whose father is African American, at least 18 years old, currently in a heterosexual marriage, have access to an email, and live in the local area. The participants must have experienced either father-absence in childhood or a full-time, present father in the residential home. Participants with an absent father had to be by way of abandonment, divorce, rejection, incarceration, or never interaction with their biological father. Finally, those who did not reconcile their relationship with their father before the age of 18 will be eligible for participation. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of father absence among African American adult daughters and their marital satisfaction and whether a supportive mother can change this effect.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete two data collection surveys online: the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI 32) and an Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ). This will take approximately 45 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include increased knowledge that can influence positive attitudes for African American family reform specifically within therapy and court-ordered parenting time.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Publishing reports will not include any information

that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time before submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collection from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Ashley Sanders. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at _____
You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Pamela Moore, at _____.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix I

Couples Satisfaction Index



Couples Satisfaction Index

PsycTESTS Citation:

Funk, J. L., & Rogge, R. D. (2007). Couples Satisfaction Index [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t01850-000>

Instrument Type:
Index/Indicator

Test Format:
Likert-type with multiple anchor values.

Source:
Funk, Janette L., & Rogge, Ronald D. (2007). Testing the ruler with item response theory: Increasing precision of measurement for relationship satisfaction with the Couples Satisfaction Index. *Journal of Family Psychology*, Vol 21(4), 572-583. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.21.4.572>

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Appendix J

Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire



Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire

PsycTESTS Citation:

Cwikel, J. (2016). Adult Daughter-Mother Relationship Questionnaire [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t56102-000>

Instrument Type:

Inventory/Questionnaire

Test Format:

This 35-item measure utilizes a 5-point scale with the following options: 5 = "Strongly agree," 4 = "Agree," 3 = "Partially agree," 2 = "Do not agree," and 1 = "Strongly do not agree." The ADMRQ is designed to be easily administered, scored, and applicable in both self-report and interview formats. There are two versions of the ADMRQ: One for women whose mother is still alive, and one for women whose mother is deceased or incapacitated, rendering the relationship inactive.

Source:

Cwikel, Julie. (2016). Development and evaluation of the Adult Daughter–Mother Relationship Questionnaire (ADMRQ). *The Family Journal*, Vol 24(3), 263-272. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1066480716648701>. © 2016 by SAGE Publications. Reproduced by Permission of SAGE Publications

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