Who is Leading Today's Family? The Detrimental Effects of an Absent Father

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Department of Community Care and Counseling, Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Fathers have an enormous role in their families – it was God's original design. This study considered the detrimental effects of a physically absent father as the leader, mentor, disciplinarian, and husband of the family home, using a quantitative research design. The theoretical framework used for this descriptive design was John Bowlby's attachment theory, Dr. Murray Bowen's family systems theory, Daniel Goleman's psychological theory on emotional intelligence, and, last, Albert Bandura's view on aggression theory and the General Aggression Model (GAM). Additionally, the concept of father hunger was explored and measured as this was a crucial construct during this study. The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), the Father Hunger Scale, the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BP-AQ), and the Schutte Self-Report Inventory (SSRI) were utilized to collect data from 113 men ages 18 and upward who had a physically present father in the home and 26 men, ages 18 and upward, whose father was not physically present in the home. Surveys were completed online by a random sampling of men who were informed of the study and had Internet access. Previous studies have focused either on the importance of a mother in the home or on father absence without noting any significance of father presence and the quality of time between the child and father. While a father's relationship with both a son and daughter is significant, this study concentrated on the detrimental effects of a physically absent father in the family home, father-son relationship and the significance of the father's physical presence in the father-son dyad, and the levels of aggression, emotional intelligence, attachment, father hunger, and biblical references related to fatherhood.

Keywords: attachment, emotional intelligence, absent father, father hunger, aggression

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to furthering the Kingdom of God and highlighting the importance of families, specifically, the leaders of the home - the father. Additionally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to another set of fathers: the father to whom I was born, John Zehner, who never knew his own father and came to the United States as an immigrant and an orphan with other young children from Latvia during the 1940s; my step-father, Timothy Leonard, who cared for and loved six children three of whom were not biologically his; my husband, Michael Davis, who also took on the role of a step-parent of two boys and became a biological father, as well as loved and cared for a young man who has lived with us for a decade; and then my sons, John, Jack, and Joseph, and our unofficially adopted young man, Will, who, God willing, will one day all become fathers and leaders in their own families. May God bless these men and all who read this as it is written in Numbers 6:24-26, "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace" (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008).

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List of Abbreviations

Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Anger (AN)

American Psychological Association (APA)

Behavioral Affect Rating Scale (BARS)

Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BP-AQ)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Children Born of War (CBOW)

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

English Standard Version (ESV)

General Aggression Model (GAM)

Hostility (HS)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Internal Working Model (IWM)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Physical Aggression (PA)

Research Question (RQ)

Schutte Self-Report Inventory (SSRI)

United Kingdom (U.K.)

Verbal Aggression (VA)

World War Two (WWII)

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

Fathers, continue to be an overlooked population of study, despite the detrimental effects of their absence on the family system and global dilemmas around the world – crime, unwanted pregnancies, substance abuse, unemployment, identity crisis, mental health, and more (Cowan & Cowan, 2019; Freeks, 2021; Turchi & Bernabo, 2020). Without a father in the home, there are serious impairments in the area of responsibilities where fathers would normally contribute to a child's development, identity, and the stability of the family home as a provider, protector, teacher, helper, friend, encourager, role model, and husband (Altizer, 2021; Boloje, 2021; Carlson, 2020; Freeks, 2021). As families have evolved considerably over the past two thousand years, a global dysfunction of the family system with "fatherlessness" has become "the core of the problem" (Freeks, 2018, p. 1018). One problem with today's family is that it continues to be led by fatherless homes with one out of three children who do not live with their biological father and a father wound that moves to the next generation (Miller, 2013; United States Census Bureau, 2022). This chapter focuses on the background of the problem surrounding the detrimental effects of physically absent fathers in the family home, followed by the problem statement, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions (RQ), and definitions.

Background

Many years have been spent in the field of psychology studying the complexities in families with a majority of the focus centered on mothers as the primary caregiver or primary influence in the parent-child dyad or relationship (Cabrera et al., 2018; East et al., 2020; Freeks, 2021). Cabrera et al. (2018) noted that despite the "surge of studies on fathers in recent decades"

(p. 152) the theoretical models that were once primarily used to measure child development and mother-child influence are outdated. Several assumptions could be made as to why fathers may have been excluded or minimized in research; for instance, the Department of Labor noted that in the 1950s men made up 86.4% of the workforce; this could suggest that the father was the primary source of income at one time (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021; Cabrera et al., 2018). While the father was at work, it was normal to assume that mothers spent more time with the children and, therefore, the relationship between mother and child was more relevant and measurable (Cabrera et al., 2018). In addition to a father not being accessible for studies, societal influence began weighing in, stigmatizing, and labeling fathers. Fathers were seen as secondary to mothers and even labeled as babysitters because they were not as "hands-on" as mothers (Cabrera et al., 2018). This theory evolved due to the fact that fathers spent the majority of their time at work while mothers were typically home. On the other hand, studies indicate that regardless of who spent more time at work, typically the mother spent a majority of time with the children (Cabrera et al., 2018; East et al., 2020). However, in the past several decades there has been a shift in the social and demographic family composition so that if time was considered the primary factor for excluding fathers in measuring a child's development and relationship, that concept in itself is seriously outdated (Cabrera et al., 2018).

Historical Data

The family system that once consisted of father, mother, and siblings has dramatically changed over the last few decades and approximately "40% of children born today, are born out of wedlock" (Cabrera et al., 2018, p. 153). Cabrera et al. (2018) observed; however, that a child born out of wedlock does not necessarily mean that a father does not have contact with his child but it does change how the family system is viewed and operates. Some studies have highlighted

that society focuses on who is the superior parent or whom a child has a greater attachment to when the emphasis should be on how to keep a family more intact so that the family functions as a unit as in the family system theory and as a system that God originally designated rather than what society dictates (Cabrera et al., 2018, p. 153; *English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, Joshua 24:15; Evans, 2020; Freeks, 2021).

In today's fast-paced society, families are besieged with heavy work schedules, continuous homework assignments, hectic sports schedules (often for multiple children), and all too often in homes with varied family dynamics where a quarter of the families in the United States are led by single parents (Pew Research Center, 2019a). Because of these responsibilities and commitments, time spent together as families must be more intentional (Pew Research Center, 2019). Studies have been historically more constructed around the mother-child dyad; however, in the past decade, there has been a shift in focus to the father-child dyad and the detrimental effects that a physically absent father has had in the family (Cowan & Cowan, 2019; Freeks, 2021; Long et al., 2014; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). The family has continued to change since the 1960s when single-person households represented only 13% of all households. Today, according to the United States Census Bureau (2022), that number is now 28% of all households. Not only are children living in homes where parents may not be married, but the definition of family has become askew compared to the biblical definition of one man and one woman as divorce, single parenting, and same-sex marriages were not a part of God's original design (Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2016; *English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, Genesis 2:24). One could argue how changes in family dynamics came about; however, just as evil subtly sneaks in the crevices of any foundation, so it did in the foundation of the family dynamic as far back as in the Garden with the first family of Adam and Eve and the following generations of

Isaac, Jacob, and even King David (Carlson, 2020; *English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, Genesis 2:4, 12, 20, 26; 1 Samuel 16).

   One of America's "favorite national past times", the institution of baseball, used to be depicted when describing a father-son relationship (LaRossa, 2011, p. 142). LaRossa (2011) asserted that basically, whoever wants to know the heart and mind of American fatherhood better know the game of baseball because it is here in the backyard in a simple game of catch between a father and son that true fatherhood is happening. The relationship between a father and son does not necessarily need to be spoken in words to achieve meaning; but, when playing catch in close proximity to one another, the eye contact, the ball going back and forth, hitting one another's glove, the occasional wink of affirmation from dad to son, and the mutual smiling was just enough, more than enough, to build that unique bond that only a father and son could communicate, remember, and more importantly, pass on to the next generation (LaRossa, 2011). LaRossa (2011) further conveyed that more than likely, if one is a fan of baseball, "chances are, your dad is responsible" (p. 142). While, today, there may still be a love for the game of baseball, it is rare to catch a glimpse of a father and son in the yard throwing the ball around (LaRossa, 2011). The distance in fatherhood may have been a result of what can be defined as a shift in urbanization and industrialization (American Psychological Association, 2009; LaRossa, 2011). Men and women's changing roles in various wars, the distances a father traveled for work increased, and the evolution of electronics are a few distractions that have competed for the attention of family members thus putting more distance between parental relationships and leading to changes in family dynamics (American Psychological Association, 2009; LaRossa, 2011).

In addition to urbanization and industrialization, the media and Hollywood have contributed to this influence, as America's family dynamics can be portrayed from screens that can be scrutinized privately in every living room. Society's ability to use the media and television is just one area where evil can slither in quietly and exclusively to each family household and break down the family dynamic if the family is not careful (LaRossa, 2011; O'Kane, 2021; Turchi & Bernabo, 2020). As televisions became popular in American homes, families became easy targets for societal influence and propaganda – whether accurate or not (O'Kane, 2021; Turchi & Bernabo, 2020). Turchi and Bernabo (2020) highlighted that despite the fact that single-father households were common on television, they represent less than 1% of homes in America.

Theoretical Concepts and Framework

John Bowlby's concept of attachment theory emphasized the effective bond between a child and primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1977). When Bowlby was considering this concept, the primary caregiver was not typically seen as the father; his consideration of fathers evolved over time (Bowlby, 1977; Bretherton, 2010). Bowlby was known to have an "all or nothing" concept where Mary Ainsworth, while studying with Bowlby, identified patterns of attachment through observational studies and the concept of "Strange Situation" (Bretherton, 2010; Cassidy et al., 2013).Ainsworth proposed that attachment styles could contribute to how one socializes later in adulthood (Bretherton, 2010; Cassidy et al., 2013). However, Bowlby correlated one's attachment and loss of attachment to one's personality through aggression, anxiety, depression, and emotional distress to how individuals develop relationships with others later in life (Bowlby, 1977). Similar to how attachment styles relate to how one socializes and more importantly, may parent later in life, is the concept of family systems. One difference between attachment theory

and family systems is where attachment theory emphasizes parent-child relationship, the family system emphasizes the whole family as a unit (Withers, 2020). When a father is physically absent whether permanently (death, abandonment, or non-existent) or temporarily (deployment, divorce, or incarceration), the family system is disrupted and how each individual responds to the disruption is internal within each individual (Rodriquez & Margolin, 2015)

As the dynamics of one's family can change at any given time, affecting all members, it is ideal for one to achieve a certain level of emotional intelligence. Serrant (2017) defined emotional intelligence as "having the ability or capacity, skill or self-perceived ability to identify, access and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups" (p. 330). Great success in relationships and life, in general, has been revealed through one's ability to develop emotional intelligence (Serrant, 2017). Freeks (2021) pointed out the significant benefits to mentoring men where family issues were noted and where men have shared their feelings of being unprepared for fatherhood themselves. Further, Freeks (2021) conveyed that a Christian understanding of fatherhood stemmed from the Bible and the solutions to fatherhood issues lie in "God through his Son, Jesus Christ, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (p. 2). This understanding may be lost to even the most devout Christian, but with a level of emotional intelligence whether taught or innate, fatherhood issues that have the potential of developing into a father wound may be reduced, healed, and offer hope for the next generation. This same understanding could be applied to the mention of aggression theory which is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two.

The General Aggression Model (GAM) was developed as a "comprehensive, integrated framework for understanding human aggression" that considers how the roles of social, cognitive, developmental, and biological factors affect aggression (Allen et al., 2018, p. 75).

Many studies have been conducted regarding father absence and its effects with one effect noted

to be aggression in children (Allen et al., 2018; Kim & Glassgow, 2018). Freeks (2021) stressed

that fathers who once were regarded as the "pillar of society," have gone missing; they are

physically absent, for varied reasons (p. 1). The role of fatherhood has become devalued and

degraded and absent fathers have been shown to be a "destructive phenomenon and tendency that

society has to deal with globally" (Freeks, 2021, p. 1).

Problem Statement

The family has been scrutinized from the beginning of time with the first family

consisting of Adam and Eve, their infamous sons Cain and Abel, and the first struggles of sin

that befell humanity, and ultimately led to a fracture in the family system (Boloje, 2021; *English

Standard Version*, 2001/2008, Genesis 3-4). Boloje (2021) emphasized that where the ground

was once cursed because of Adam's disobedience, it is now cursing Cain; father and son will

experience difficulties as a consequence with each generation consequence greater (*English

Standard Version*, 2001/2008, Genesis 3:18-19; 4:13-24). Dr. Tony Evans described how a

man's identity begins with how he sees God (Altizer, 2021). Dr. Evans (2021) conveyed that

there is a mirror between the heavenly father and the earthly father; fathers are supposed to

mirror God's image for their sons to live by as stated in Ephesians 5. The problem is that earthly

fathers have cracked the mirror which then distorts the way in which the heavenly father is seen

(Altizer, 2021).

Despite the fatherless home being noted as a global dysfunction, fathers continue to be an

overlooked population of study (Turchi & Bernabo, 2020). Cowan and Cowan (2019) revealed

that fathers were not the main focus of developmental psychology studies in the early 1940s

and1950s. In fact, psychoanalyst, John Bowlby's research and concept of attachment theory

began in the late 1950s when initially fathers were not even mentioned as potential caregivers in their own children's lives (Bretherton, 2010). Albert Bandura, a social cognitive psychologist, studied and conceptualized the aggression theory with children in the early 1960s using a "Bobo Doll"; his focus was on children and any mention of parents typically referred to the mother not the father (Cowan & Cowan, 2019; Graham & Arshad-Ayaz, 2016). Parenting styles and parent-child relationships became an interest in the field of psychology in the 1960s and 1970s, continuing to largely exclude fathers with the main focus on the mother-child relationship (Cowan & Cowan, 2019). By the 1980s and 1990s when researchers became concerned over the absence of fathers and their contribution to a child's development, in an effort to include fathers, many researchers then neglected to include mothers and the family system as a whole (Cowan & Cowan, 2019). Cowan and Cowan (2019) further divulged that while the family systems theory had been around since the 1960s, it wasn't until the 1980s that various family patterns were studied.

Furthermore, Cowan and Cowan (2019) emphasized the differences in family processes and family structure and stated that some "observers of the family process perspective" actually reject the idea that it is possible or beneficial to return to the "traditional family arrangement" because a traditional family environment does not "ensure a supportive and nurturing environment for children" (p. 301). Rather than advocating for the family system to be intact and supporting the traditional family nucleus, social activists and some academics have focused on how to help single and unwed parents by politicking for increased child support or more affordable housing rather than education and support for the family system (Cowan & Cowan, 2019). Views on how the family system should be managed and how change could be

approached are complex because the lines cross between moral, political, and religious beliefs making changes difficult as each position will be exclusive (Cowan & Cowan, 2019).

As Bowlby continued in his research and observations, his position regarding fathers as attachment figures, evolved (Bretherton, 2010). Rather than focusing on one parent or the other, the focus should remain on how significant both parents are in the lives and development of their children as well as the marital relationship and how that affects children (Bretherton, 2010). Much research in parenting, focuses on the mother as she is considered the primary caregiver and the father is simply secondary or even the babysitter (Cabrera et al., 2018). Tools of measurement and theoretical framework tend to become outdated as more studies begin to include fathers, as they should (Cabrera et al., 2018). Freeks (2021) posited that when there is a continued absence of a father in the home, "the role of the father becomes devalued and degraded" (p. 1). Freeks (2021) further noted that even within Christian homes and the church, biblical fatherhood is not widely emphasized as being important or relevant. The problem is that while globally, fatherless homes continues to be a grave concern, the situation is not improving and as fathers are included in family studies, theoretical framework and measurements in research require updates to include both mothers and fathers (Cabrera et al., 2018; Freeks, 2021).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore any significant differences in levels of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger between individuals who had a physically present father in the home versus individuals whose father was physically absent using data collected from surveys completed online by men who are 18 and older.

Significance of the Study

This study provided an insight into the detrimental effects of a physically absent father in the home, an area that continues to be lacking in research. Garfield et al. (2019) indicated an association between father involvement and a positive influence on the development of children, but tools to measure father involvement are not keeping pace with research in understanding a father's role. Additionally, insight was provided as to whether there was any significant difference in the levels of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger, between individuals who grew up with a physically present father in the home versus a fatherless home. Several studies have indicated that an emotionally absent father is just as significant; however, for this study, the physically absent father was the primary focus.

As indicated earlier, fatherless homes continue to be a global concern that produce grave consequences in the family system leaving the family subject to poverty, behavioral issues, high crime rates, unwanted pregnancies, unemployment, mental health issues, and more and are often situations that can be transferred from generation to generation in the form of "father wounds" if not addressed (Cowan & Cowan, 2019; Freeks, 2021; Kim & Glassgow, 2018; Miller, 2013; Turchi & Bernabo, 2020). Miller (2013) noted that first time fathers who never knew their fathers and thought they were ready for fatherhood, may be triggered and experience a "father wound" that becomes apparent from their own experience of a fatherless home as they now become a father. This self-awareness becomes important as one becomes a father and requires a form of emotional intelligence that not every father or individual possesses (Serrant, 2017). Miller's (2013) study revealed that there is much evidence that indicates poor self-esteem, struggles with intimate relationships, and antisocial and violent behavior are related to absent fathers. When fathers struggle with their own identity issues based on the absence of a father in

their lives, the same "profound grief" can be felt by both the father and subsequently their own sons (Miller, 2013). While the notion of becoming a father may be exciting for many men, leaping into this demanding role should not be taken lightly or even hoped or prayed for if one is truly not prepared (Smith & Amaya, 2021, *English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, 1 Peter 1:13).

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions. Hypotheses derived from each question will be presented in Chapter Three.

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in emotional intelligence between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in levels of aggression between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference in levels of attachment between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ4: Is there a significant difference in the level of father hunger between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

Definitions

Attachment Hierarchy – Relationships with subsidiary attachment figures (Bretherton, 2010)

Attachment Theory – The affective bond that emerges between a child and a caregiver (Levy et al., 2015).

Avoidant Attachment Theory – Children who do not appear distressed when separated from their mother or who may even ignore their mother or primary caregiver (Levy et al., 2015).

Anxious-Ambivalent Attachment Theory – Children who exhibit heightened distress at separation (Levy et al., 2015).

Caregiver – An individual who represents a "secure base" for an infant from which the infant can explore its environment safely and then always return when feeling threatened or scared (Levy et al., 2015).

Disorganized-Disoriented Attachment Theory – Children who exhibit confused and disoriented behaviors based on a breakdown of behavioral strategies (Levy et al., 2015).

Dyad – A significant relationship between two individuals such as husband-wife or father-son (Long et al., 2014).

External Locus of Control – The belief that fate or luck is the responsible factor for what happens in life rather than the belief in internal locus of control (Radl et al., 2017).

Father Hunger - The emotional and psychological longing that a person has for a father who has been physically, emotionally, or psychologically distant in the person's life (Perrin et al., 2009).

Father Wound – An internalized, unresolved conflict between father and son (Miller, 2013).

Internal Locus of Control – When one believes that the driving force of their success is one's own ability and actions (Radl et al., 2017).

Interparental Relationship – The relationship between mother and father in the family system (Bretherton, 2010)

Internal Working Models - Complex mental schemas of oneself and others that develop from early infant-caregiver interaction, provide expectations and guidance in interpersonal interactions, and facilitate emotional appraisals of others' intentions and attitudes. (Levy et al., 2015).

Involved Fathers – Fathers are expected to be actively involved in the birth and care of their offspring (Machin, 2015).

Locus of Control – The belief that life events are causally attributed to one's own actions (Radl et al., 2017).

Monotrophy – Infants' tendency to seek out a principal attachment figure, if present (Bretherton, 2010).

Offspring – Conceived children (Machin, 2015).

Parental Psychological Control – An intrusion into the psychological development of a child, such as love, withdrawal, or keeping the child dependent with the use of guilt to control the child (Weitkamp & Seiffge-Krenke, 2019).

Safe Haven – A caregiver who meets a child's biological and psychological needs and whom the child turns to during stressful times (Levy et al., 2015).

Secure Attachment Theory – Children who have created a bond with their mother, express some distress upon separation and may show only moderate interest in strangers (Levy et al., 2015).

Secure Base – A caregiver in which a child uses as a base where they can safely explore their surroundings from (Levy et al., 2015).

Strange Situation Procedure – A tool developed by Mary Ainsworth that measured mother-infant attachment (Cassidy et al., 2013).

Summary

Dr. Bowen noted that the family system was the sum of all of its members; with one member missing, the whole becomes subject to malfunction or collapse (Bowen, 1974). With the global concerns of fathers absent from the home, the goal of this study is to explore significant differences in levels of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger between men who had a physically present father in the home and men whose father was

physically absent. Studies have determined that globally, families continue to experience fatherless homes and without a father in the home there are grave detrimental effects in the area of responsibilities where fathers contribute to a child's development, identity, and the stability of the family home as a providers, protectors, teachers, helpers, friends, encouragers, role models, and husbands (Altizer, 2021; Boloje, 2021; Carlson, 2020; Freeks, 2021).

Thomas (2017) described how a husband is to consider his wife using the analogy of ballet dancers, where the wife is the ballerina being showcased and the husband is in the shadows; this is for marriage and how the couple can function as a team – not one without the other. From a Christian perspective, the family was not originally designed to operate without the whole despite societal tolerance (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, Genesis 2:24). With the various influences, whether evil or societal, generationally, many men have believed the lie that as a father they are not better than their past or current situation (Altizer, 2021). Past studies and measurements have focused more on the mother-child relationship, and it is vital that further studies be conducted utilizing restructured measurements that include the father, who is more valuable than what past studies have labeled as simply a "babysitter" or "secondary caregiver" (Cabrera et al., 2018, p. 153). There becomes a void in the family home and in a child's life when a father is missing and ultimately other 'things' are used to fill the void such as crime, shame, guilt, addiction, violence, etcetera and eventually a father wound that is replicated in the next generation (Freeks, 2021).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

The Bible speaks on a multitude of levels in regard to the father's role in the family; he is the leader of the home (Genesis 18:19, Titus 2, Proverbs 22:6, 1 Timothy 3:5, Ephesians 5:22-24), he is to train the children with love and discipline (Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, Colossians 3:21), he is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Genesis 2:24, 1 Peter 3:7, Colossians 3:19), and in a Christian home he is to love the Lord with his heart, all his soul, and with all of his strength, and with all of his mind (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, Luke 10:27). While the Bible is clear on man's role and the role of fatherhood, society has portrayed alternative illustrations that have constantly evolved over several decades (Cabrera, 2020; Lamberty & Imhoff, 2019). The family nucleus and the destruction of the original design has increasingly resulted in detrimental effects of an absent father, whether emotionally or physically; and, while emotional absence is complicated and not easily measured, physical absence is straightforward (Carlson, 2020; Domoney & Trevillion, 2021; Flouri et al., 2015; Freeks, 2021; Saltzman et al., 2019). For this study, the primary focus will be on the detrimental effects of fathers who are physically absent from the home.

A review of literature was undertaken to demonstrate the importance of this study and to focus on societal and biblical definitions of a father, the historical and current role fathers have been identified as holding, the various dynamics of today's family, the importance of a two-parent home with a mother and father, the myriad of influences on families and specifically, the father-son dyad that can pour into the next generations, and gaps in the study of fatherless homes.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this section was to offer a theoretical framework for the current study which include Attachment Theory, Family Systems Theory, Emotional Intelligence Theory, and Aggression Theory. The foundations of child development and family systems must be explored in order to understand the detrimental effects of an absent father. This study sought to understand the targeted group's level of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger in contrast to a father presence in their home.

Attachment Theory

John Bowlby's concept of attachment theory emphasized the effective bond between a child and caregiver (Bretherton, 2010). Interestingly enough, when Bowlby designed his tentative formula for attachment theory, the "caregiver" or "safe haven" was not typically seen as the father; the role of the father actually evolved over time despite the fact that the conception of a child necessitates a father (Bretherton, 2010). Furthermore, Bowlby was essentially aiming to "debunk" the attachment theory altogether (Bretherton, 2010). He was motivated by ecological literature and the parent-offspring bonding that he had noticed in birds and non-human primates and suggested a more "evolutionary explanation" (Bretherton, 2010). Bowlby had even suggested that attachment was more "adaptive because it maintained a younger more vulnerable individual in more or less close proximity to another discriminated and stronger individual who can provide protection when needed" (Bretherton, 2010, p. 9). This led to Bowlby coining the term, "monotrophy" which was used to describe an infant's tendency to become attached to a primary caregiver or individual – specifically the mother or mothering person (Bretherton, 2010).

Many researchers have based their suppositions of attachment theory during infancy on the infant's emotionally-related social experiences with a specific individual (Cassidy et al., 2013). These experiences would then build upon what Bowlby would call one's Internal Working Model (IWM) that is developed in the first year of life based on one's self and surrounding environment (Cassidy et al., 2013). However, it was when Bowlby partnered up with Mary Ainsworth a noted "empirically oriented researcher" that the specific attachment categories were developed based on Ainsworth's observational research data on infant mother relationships (Cassidy et al., 2013). Three major attachment patterns were identified from observational studies conducted by Ainsworth and her colleagues while using what Ainsworth termed the "Strange Situation" concept as secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant; and a fourth attachment pattern was later added, disorganized-disoriented (Levy et al., 2015). A child with each pattern will present with the following:

- A child with *secure attachment* will seek closeness with their mother, may display distress upon separation, and may show little interest in a stranger (Levy et al., 2015).

- The *anxious-ambivalent* child will demonstrate heighted distress upon separation, is difficult to console when reunited with the mother, and demands continuous attention and closeness with their mother (Levy et al., 2015).

- A child with *avoidant attachment* many not appear distressed when separated by their mother, may ignore her upon return, and even treat their mother and a stranger similarly (Levy et al., 2015).

- A child with *disorganized-disoriented attachment* will appear confused and disoriented in the presence of their mother, suggesting a "temporary collapse of a behavioral strategy" (Levey et al., 2015).

Bretherton (2010) described Ainsworth's laboratory assessment study and concept of "Strange Situation" and Cassidy et al. (2013) noted how Strange Situation and attachment styles could contribute to how one socializes later in adulthood. Ainsworth's Strange Situation was based on countless hours of laboratory studies conducted on mother-infant attachment. Various 20-minute sequences were conducted that involved an infant and mother and infant, mother and stranger in an effort to measure the caregiver (mother) and infant (child) attachment levels when adding a variable (stranger). It was during this study that Ainsworth determined the attachment styles. Research conducted by Cassidy et al. (2013) noted Strange Situation may predict how one socializes later in adulthood; however, earlier studies that left fathers out of the study due to their unavailability during the work day may require this theory to be reevaluated. Levy et al. (2015) noted that Bowlby and Ainsworth's hypothesis of attachment patterns have accurately predicted social attitudes and behaviors across one's life span. Bowlby posited that "internal working models become components of individuals' personality structure" and remain relatively stable over time (Levy et al., 2015, p. 93). However, Levy et al. (2015) also noted that while one may have developed an insecure attachment style, there are other underlying models that may correct any maladaptive views of self or others that can lead to "healthier interpersonal interactions" (p. 93). Attachment styles that have developed in one's life span may now appear as the following in adulthood:

- Adults who experienced *secure attachments* consider relationships positive

  and beneficial and are able to manage any potential distressing feelings about

  the past or future effectively (Levy et al., 2015).

- Adults who may have presented with *anxious-ambivalent attachment* patterns

  as a child may now appear "overwhelmed by anxiety and negative affect"

  encompassing close relationships (Levy et al., 2015).

- Adults who have exhibited *avoidant attachment* are likely to distance

  themselves from attachment figures as a defensive mechanism against painful

  emotions elicited by attachment relationships (Levy et al., 2015).

- Lastly, adults who have *exhibited disorganized-disoriented attachment*,

  according to Levy et al. (2015) may display incoherent working models that

  suggest confused or incongruous attitudes toward others.

Research conducted by Bretherton (2010), noted Bowlby's initial lack of consideration

for fathers as attachment figures upon the initial development of attachment theory. However,

based on longitudinal studies by several researchers, data regarding fathers and infant attachment

were reassessed based on new questions such as, "Can fathers serve as attachment figures" and

"Are father's roles equal or secondary to mothers?," that Bretherton (2010) sought to answer and

categorized into four phases, with each phase having its own questions.

Phase One

This phase of Bretherton's research sought to evaluate the questions of, "Can fathers

serve as attachment figures" and if so, "is the father's role secondary or equal to the mother's?"

(p.10). While the first question may seem relatively straightforward and should be answered

with a simple yes, much observable research has shown overwhelmingly that mothers have

historically been considered the attachment figure, such as in studies by Ainsworth and even Bretherton's (2010) research (Withers, 2020; Levy et al., 2015; Cassidy et al., 2013). However, this finding had a significant basis: When an infant was in a good mood, content, or happy, the child was more apt to be more accepting of other figures, but if the infant was ill, unhappy, tired, or hungry, the infant preferred the mother (Bretherton, 2010). Many of the studies were conducted on infants during the first year of life and studies showed greater mother/infant attachment during the first year of life; after 18 months, the children were no longer considered infants (Bretherton, 2010). Bretherton (2010) shed light on a study conducted by Shaffer and Emerson (1964) who had noted that after 18 months of age, children were looking more toward fathers as a primary attachment, not as an equal or even more than 50% attachment but more than they did during their first year of life. Bretherton (2010) noted how Bowlby dismissed this finding and attributed this new found father attachment to playtime rather than attachment and continued to fall back on Ainsworth primary findings of children seeking their mothers as the primary attachment figure and fathers as the secondary figure.

Phase Two

This phase of Bretherton's (2010) research sought to evaluate a father's attachment hierarchy: Could he be the primary or secondary attachment figure, or would his role be less than that of grandparents, siblings, or even strangers? As in the evaluation of phase one, fathers could be the primary attachment figure, but were more than likely, not during the first years of a child's life (Bretherton, 2010). In a discouraging discredit to fathers in the early years of study, research shifted away from fathers, mainly because they were working and unavailable for studies, to strangers and their interactions with infants (Bretherton, 2010). Ainsworth spent countless hours in observations studies with infants, mothers and strangers in developing the concept of

"Stranger Situation" so she could further understand and educate others in infant behavior when

infants were away from their mothers and then reunited (Bretherton, 2010; Levy et al., 2015;

Cassidy et al., 2013) However, in Bretherton's (2010) study in phase two, it was noted that

Michael Lamb began new studies to "resolve issues" concerning "attachment hierarchy

hypothesis" (p. 12). The outcome of the studies revealed that when both mother and father were

present, infants sought out each parent equally but more so with the father when closer

associations were displayed or offered such as smiles or toys. When a stranger was with the

child, mother and father the mother was the more sought after figure (Bretherton, 2010). Further

studies were conducted based on age and gender and revealed some comparable results to earlier

studies such as when comfort was needed, the mother was sought after, while play was more

observed with the father. As far as gender, it was observed in these studies that fathers were

more active with their sons than their daughters and questions arose regarding each parent's

relationship with the child and how the mother-child, father-child relationships contribute to the

child's overall personality (Bretherton, 2010). These parent-child experiences could also explain

some of the avoidant or anxious attachment patterns that children present with later as adults

(Bretherton, 2010). Bretherton (2010) noted, however, that the topic of the parent-child dyad in

relation to personality development was not approached again until they reached phase four.

Phase Three

This phase of Bretherton's (2010) research evaluated family of origin attachments and

how each parent-child dyad affects relationships during one's lifetime. Using the Adult

Attachment Interview (AAI), studies were conducted to assess how adults rated their relationship

with their parents while growing up; and while the AAI is an assessment of attachment, it is not

to be used as a classification of an attachment disorder (Bretherton, 2010). The patterns that

emerged were similar but not exact to the attachment patterns defined by Ainsworth such as, secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and unresolved/disorganized (Bretherton, 2010). The findings of phase three resulted in a higher percentage of maternal sensitivity toward the child with lingering questions regarding how an infant's relationship with each parent contributes to the child's personality (Bretherton, 2010). As Bowlby considered a father's relationship in attachment theory, he simply stated that the mother-child and father-child dyads were complex and while one's personality is multifaceted it is hard to delineate exactly how one's personality is completely formed. However, Bowlby still posited that the greater influence was maternal due to the amount of time a mother typically spent with or had access to her children (Bretherton, 2010). Regardless of the attachment style that an adult might have developed as a child, as they became parents, it was possible to consciously parent their children with a secure attachment style (Bretherton, 2010).

Phase Four

This phase of Bretherton's (2010) research evaluated longitudinal studies that focused on questions that asked, "Are the developmental outcomes of mother and father attachment different, even if both relationships were secure during infancy and childhood?" and "Are the same assessments appropriate for the study of attachment to mother and father?" (Bretherton, 2010). Bretherton (2010) utilized studies conducted in various countries, and a brief description of these studies will be provided for the sake of this study based on the relevance of fathers. Bretherton (2010) documented that while each country's outcome presented differently based on their version of the study and choice of measurements, a "common thread" was difficult to note, although, all studies "documented theoretically plausible links of early father-related attachment measures to several offspring outcomes in adolescence" and some in young adulthood (p. 18).

One interesting note was made in that while Bowlby posited that an attachment figure was seen as one the secure child leaves and returns to as the safe haven rather than in contrast to a study conducted in Germany, found that secure play with the father is considered "secure exploration", a more fostered activity that encourages the child to play in more mature ways based on the child's point of view (Bretherton, 2010). While the studies resulted in various outcomes, one study indicated that mothers played a stronger role in the first two years of a child's life and the father during years two and up (Bretherton, 2010). However, another study indicated that a stronger relationship between mother-child (ages, 11, 17, 20) projected greater adaptability outcomes in life whereas the father-child positive adaptability emerged after age 20 in relation to global self-esteem and romantic relationships (Bretherton, 2010). While it appeared that it may be irrelevant as to what assessment is used to collect data regarding mother-child, father-child attachment, the outcomes of attachment may just be different based on gender, each parent and the parental gender, and origin of attachment for each parent – it becomes too complex (Bretherton, 2010).

Bretherton concluded the study with a research proposal that seems relevant to the family system and detrimental effects of an absent father in the family home. The author suggests that further research be conducted based on "interparental relationships" and the family systems theory and how spousal satisfaction may contribute to the parent-child dyad (Bretherton, 2010). If a father is missing from the home then surely this must cause instability in the family system.

Family Systems Theory

While attachment theory seeks to explain the importance of a parent-child relationship, the family systems theory emphasizes how all family members are interconnected and "family relationships influence individual functioning within the system" (Withers, 2020, p. 245). Family

system theory posits that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" meaning that to understand how an individual functions, one must study the entire family system (Withers, 2020. p. 245). In this theory, if one parent is absent, in this case of study, the father, one can hypothesize how the family system may be affected and then in turn, each individual.

Bowen's theory regarded families as "being intensely and emotionally connected" (Willis et al., 2020). Often intense emotions that can be overlooked are what some researchers have noted to be a result of marital conflict, with other researchers noting depression and delinquent behaviors from the adolescent (Willis et al., 2020; Withers, 2020) While depression has been noted in adolescents based on the parent-child relationship, research is lacking as to whether or not a parent could develop depression based on the same intense relationship within the family system (Withers, 2020). The Bowen Family System outlined eight concepts in which families intertwine:

- differentiation of self: Willis et al. (2020) described this concept as the "cornerstone" and "principle subject" of the Bowen Family System. Differentiation of self is described as how one is able to cope with life's demands while at the same time, pursuing their own interests on a scale from most adaptive to least – a balance of emotional and intellectual functioning (Willis et al., 2020). Differentiation of self can also be described as the pendulum between autonomy and the emotional connection to one's family (Willis et al., 2020). Willis et al. (2020) posited that if an individual grows up with a family who allows them to develop their sense of self then that person should be able to develop a high level of individuality while developing intimate relationships with others. Of course, having a negative relationship with one's family will have alternative outcomes that affect one's relationship with others. However, Willis et al. (2020) implied that while

differentiation of self is typically "static" once formed, through self-awareness and

assistance, a sense of self can "slowly be improved." (p. 2).

- triangulation: Bowen's theory of triangulation was described as the "most basic building

  block of emotional systems" that involves a three-person configuration whether in a

  family or not (Willis et al., 2020, p. 3). Christians have even used the illustration of the

  triangle in counseling with the husband and wife at the base and God at the top of the

  triangle as a means of keeping God the focus of their relationship or showing that as the

  couple continues to grow, they are growing together toward God (Rizkallah & Hudson,

  2019). However, as Willis et al. (2020) noted, a two-person system is only stable when

  there is tranquility; when anxiety increases, a third most vulnerable person is drawn into

  the triangle. Some studies have found couples to actually use God as a means of

  avoidance in triangulation (Rizkallah & Hudson, 2019). Within a family system, children

  are used more often by parents as the most vulnerable third party in the triangle when

  tensions are high (McCauley et al., 2021).

- multigenerational transmission process: This process is described as how one's

  differentiation of self appears from one generation to another (Calatrava et al., 2022). The

  level of differentiation of self has been found to affect one's marital stability, health,

  education, and profession. The impact of differentiation on overall life functioning can

  often explain the noticeable difference that typically exists in the lives of the members of

  a multigenerational family (Calatrava et al., 2022).

- family projection process: The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family (2021)

  described the family projection process as the way in which parents "transmit their

  emotional problems onto their child". This projection process can ultimately cause the

child to potentially inherit emotional problems and negatively affect future relationships

(The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021).

- nuclear family emotional system: The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family (2021)

  described the concept of the nuclear family emotional process as four basic relationship

  patterns that govern where problems develop within a family. The system implies that

  individuals' attitudes and beliefs about relationships play a role in patterns, but the

  energies that are primarily steering them are part of their emotional system (The Bowen

  Center for the Study of the Family, 2021; Calatrava et al., 2022). The Bowen Center

  (2021) posited that these patterns operate in intact, single-parent, stepparent, and other

  nuclear family configurations. Any heightened or prolonged tensions that arise are based

  on the family's connectedness, how each family adapts to stress, and the family's

  connection with extended family and social networks (The Bowen Center for the Study

  of the Family, 2021). Individuals within the family system can be symptomatic due to

  increased tensions within one or more of the four relationship patterns, marital conflict,

  dysfunction in a spouse, impairment in one or more children, and emotional distance

  (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021).

- emotional cutoff: This concept is described in how individuals manage unresolved

  emotional issues with parents, siblings, or other family members by lessening or cutting

  off emotional contact with them (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021).

  While other individuals often significant others in one's current family, may provide

  emotional support, unresolved emotional issues will eventually resurface generating new

  tensions (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021; Calatrava et al., 2022).

- sibling position: Bowen's theory supported the research of psychologist Walter Toman and the concept of sibling position which posited that the order in which children were born contributed to important characteristic traits that could be seen in many individuals who shared the same birth order. For example, studies have shown that first-born children tend to gravitate toward leadership positions whereas the youngest tend to be followers (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021). Toman's research also noted that sibling position could affect a couple's chance of divorce; this can be seen from the sense of the couple themselves – where their position was in their family and then that of their parents (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021).

- societal emotional process: Bowen recognized that the societal impact on adolescents during his studies with juveniles in the court systems in the early 1960s paralleled the struggle between parents' emotions when adolescents contest with their parents. Parents' emotions are conflicted and tensions ensue to the point that parents either yield to their unruly or dishonest child or they say no and the child rebels (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021). Bowen noted the adolescents he observed in courts often had parents who yielded to their child's delinquent behavior, they became out of control, negative consequences were neglected and courts became involved. Therefore, Bowen posited that there is a "societal emotional process" as a piece of the family system. Bowen noted that another piece of the issue was how systems respond to the negative behavior. Many organizations and systems such as schools and prisons were anxious to have the negative behavior corrected and incorporated punishments rather than any long-term, positive standards (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021). Bowen noted that a type of societal regression pattern began after WWII and had only gotten

worse from the 50s to the 60s and this is where the rise in divorce can be seen as well as racial tensions and violence (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2021).

Emotional Intelligence Theory

Daniel Goleman while most commonly associated with the term "emotional intelligence theory," was not the only researcher of the theory (Serrant, 2017). Its most distant origins can be traced back to Charles Darwin and his early work on "the importance of emotional expression for survival and adaption" (Serrant, 2017, p. 330). Later, in the 1980s, Wayne Leon Payne is credited with coining the term and in the 90s, John Mayer and Peter Salovey described the term as "the ability to monitor one's own and others feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Serrant, 2017, p. 330). Mayer and Salovey later developed a model that described the four branches that defined emotional intelligence. The four branches encompassed the "abilities to perceive, accurately, emotions in oneself and others; use emotions to facilitate thinking; understand the meaning of emotions; and manage emotions"; additionally, they also attempted to develop a way to scientifically measure differences between people's abilities in the area of emotions (Samadi et al., 2013; Serrant, 2017, p. 330).

Emotional intelligence was defined by Serrant (2017) as "the ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups" (p. 330). Serrant (2017) communicated that those who possess a high level of emotional intelligence are very self-aware, able to sense the emotions of others, affable, resilient, and optimistic. During the 1990s, when Daniel Goleman wrote a book on emotional intelligence, the concept became popular. Drawing from emotional, behavioral and communication theories, emotional intelligence can prepare individuals to be more successful and productive in life while

helping others as well (Serrant, 2017). It is often wondered how individuals originating from the same family and living in the same environment can sometimes exhibit extreme polar opposite personalities; however, as Serrant (2017) clarified, individuals consist of their own unique personalities, wants, needs, and even how they demonstrate their emotions (p. 331). There are many differences in the making of one's personality, including the internal and external environmental interactions that each individual has during the day that result in a moderate sense of satisfaction in daily relationships through emotional intelligence which was further defined by Samadi et al. (2013) as "appraisal and expression of emotions, regulation of emotions, and utilization of emotional information in thinking and acting (p. 1712)". A person's identity begins at an early age and is influenced by the relationships within their environment and the attachment with their caregiver as suggested by Bowlby (Samadi et al., 2013). Bowlby theorized that people develop mental models (internal working models) which relate to their relationships with others during infancy, childhood, and adulthood that also "unify and organize the individual's experiences and beliefs while compromising other people's personal characteristics" (Samadi et al., 2013). Samadi et al. (2013) posited that attachment styles have been noted to have a "significant effect on emotional intelligence" (p. 1714).

Serrant (2017) described five domains within emotional intelligence that encompassed personal and social competencies; self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness, and social skills. Serrant (2017) described each domain as follows:

- Self-Awareness:
  - Emotional awareness – recognizing one's emotions and their effects.
  - Accurate self-assessment – knowing one's strengths and limits.
  - Self-confidence: Certainty about one's self-worth and capabilities.

- Self-Regulation:

  o Self-control – managing disruptive emotions and impulses.

  o Trustworthiness – maintaining standards of honesty and integrity.

  o Conscientiousness - taking responsibility for personal performance.

  o Adaptability – flexibility in handling change.

  o Innovativeness – being comfortable with and open to novel ideas and new information.

- Self-Motivation:

  o Achievement drive – striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence.

  o Commitment – aligning with the goals of the group or organization.

  o Initiative – readiness to act on opportunities.

  o Optimism – persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks.

- Social Awareness:

  o Empathy – sensing others' feelings and perspective and taking an active interest in their concerns.

  o Service orientation – anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customer's needs.

  o Developing others – sensing what others need in order to develop and encouraging their abilities.

  o Leveraging diversity – cultivating opportunities through diverse people.

- o   Political awareness – reading a group's emotional currents and power

  relationships.

- Social Skills:

  - o   Influence – wielding effective tactics for persuasion.

  - o   Communication – sending clear and convincing messages.

  - o   Leadership – inspiring and guiding groups and people.

  - o   Change catalyst – initiating or managing change.

  - o   Conflict management – negotiating and resolving disagreements.

  - o   Building bonds – nurturing instrumental relationships.

  - o   Collaboration and cooperation – working with others toward shared

    goals.

  - o   Team capabilities – creating group synergy in pursuing collective

    goals".

While mothers have primarily been the focus of child-parent relationship studies, Geddes

(2008) urged researchers to bear in mind that one's genetics originated from both the mother and

father, and therefore, fathers should be brought back into theoretical consideration. Attachment

theory and emotional intelligence have been observed to be intertwined in the sense that

attachment theory is known to be the "empirical paradigm for understanding social and

emotional development" where studies have concluded that children who experience "secure

maternal attachment from infancy" "scored high on ego-resilience and self-esteem" and relied

less on the teacher (Geddes, 2008, p. 401). This study also indicated a strong emphasis on the

maternal-child relationship as a positive, long-term influence on the child's emotional, cognitive,

and social development (Geddes, 2008). However, equally noted, was the absence of fathers in

the study and their importance as a potential influence in a child's life (Geddes, 2008). Geddes

(2008) felt that not only were fathers absent from past studies but other influencers as well such

as siblings, other family networks and the immediate community. Not only do there seem to be

detrimental effects to a family home from an absent father, but one can infer that there are

detrimental effects to research due to the disregard of fathers (Geddes, 2008). While some

individuals may be more intelligently or socially gifted Serrant (2017) indicated that emotional

intelligence can be learned if an individual is motivated and willing to practice the skills learned.

Aggression Theory

Aggression in humans has been long studied, from its origin to its delineation, and

continues to be a source of controversy as to which theory can best describe how aggression in

family conflict arises and how each individual may or may not foster aggression (Horwitz et al.,

2011). Horwitz et al. (2011) described aggression as "hostility, anger, and irritability, as well as

a readiness to engage in physical and verbal aggression" (p. 175). Allen et al. (2018) defined

aggression as any behavior that is directed toward another with the intent to cause harm where

the perpetrator believes harm will be inflicted and the person targeted is motivated to avoid the

harm. The General Aggression Model (GAM), as seen in Figure 1, was developed as a

"comprehensive, integrated framework for understanding human aggression" that considers how

the roles of social, cognitive, developmental, and biological factors affect aggression (Allen et

al., 2018, p. 78).

> The model described a person in a situation, called an episode, consisting of one
>
> cycle of an ongoing social interaction. The episode is then defined by three levels;
>
> person and situation inputs; cognitive, affective, and arousal routes through which
>
> these input variables have their impact; and outcomes of the underlying appraisal

and decision processes. Personal factors include all the characteristics a person

brings to the situation, such as personality traits, attitudes and genetic

predispositions. They interact with situational factors including any important

features of the situation, such as presence of a provocation or an aggressive cue to

create an internal state which influences behavior. The internal state is a

composite of cognitions (e.g., hostile thoughts, aggressive scripts), affect (anger,

general negative affect) and arousal (physiological and psychological arousal)

influencing appraisals and decision-making processes which may or may not

result in an aggressive response. (Allen et al., 2018, pp. 75-77).

Figure 1

The General Aggression Model (GAM) (Allen et al., 2018)
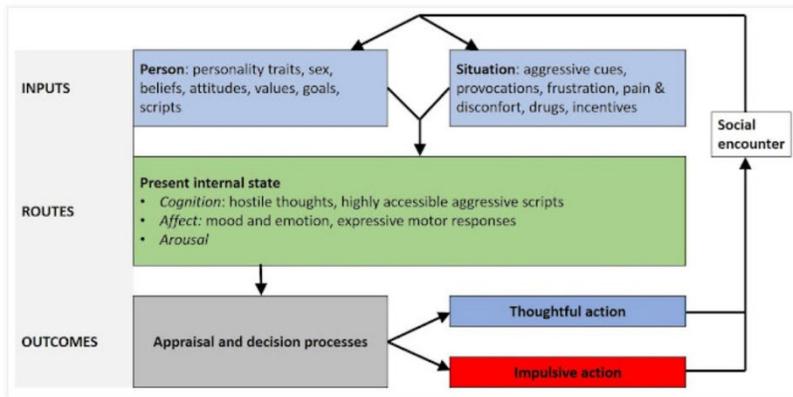
One of the most prominent studies on aggression was conducted by Dr. Albert Bandura,

with the use of the "Bobo doll" (Graham & Arshad-Ayaz, 2016).

In these experiments, Bandura would have a child playing in a room when an adult would

enter the room and become aggressive with a blow-up Bobo doll. Later, when the child

was left alone in the room with the Bobo doll, the aggressive adult behavior witnessed by

the child would generally be imitated. The child would often repeat much of the full

repertoire of aggression, including hitting, kicking, punching and hammering the Bobo

doll. (Graham & Arshad-Ayaz, 2016, pp. 262-263).

Graham and Arshad-Ayaz (2016) presented an interesting speculation from Bandura's

experiment: Did the experiment really lead to aggression or was the Bobo doll merely a trigger

for the learned aggression? Jambon et al. (2019) conveyed that 70-80% of children between the

ages of 18-36 months engage in some form of aggressive behavior such as "hitting, biting, or

forcefully taking toys from others" (p. 1212). However, this type of behavior gradually declines

as the child ages and learns socially acceptable behavior (Jambon et al., 2019). Subsequently

what arose were further questions as to what was socially acceptable behavior, how a child

developed moral reasoning, if the "Bobo doll" was merely a tool or symbol that even a stick

could represent, and, why some children maintain aggressive behaviors while others do not

(Graham & Arshad-Ayaz, 2016; Jambon et al, 2019). A child's first role model in socially

acceptable behavior is their caregiver or parent(s); despite having the inability to communicate

verbally and as described in the GAM, a child is intently watching social interactions that are

developing their responses and behaviors in conjunction with the child's maturing attachment

style (Graham & Arshad-Ayaz, 2016; Hymel & Perren, 2015; Jambon et al., 2019). The range of

aggression in children has been shown to decline to a low or a moderately low level beginning at

the age of six and continuing through adolescence (Jambon et al., 2019).

In addition to learned behavior, some believe that aggression is genetically inherited as a

personality trait with 50% heritability (Horwitz et al., 2020). Horwitz et al. (2020) reported that

while genetic influences may contribute to aggressive personalities in some individuals, over

time, the aggression becomes stable. For those who maintain a high level of aggression through

adulthood, it is thought that contributions using a model such as the GAM could focus on one's

personality and a conflict in moral reasoning, underdeveloped social skills, parental

psychological control (for example; shaming, invalidating, controlling, guilt, withholding love,

and instilling anxiety.), negative peer relationships, family conflict, and situational and arousal

factors (Allen et al., 2018; McClain et al., 2020). McClain et al. (2020) emphasized that within

attachment theory it is believed that "family experiences provide the basis for later peer

relationships"; and, the insecure parent-child relationship that may have developed may also

correlate to problematic relationships with others (p. 283). McClain et al. (2020) also remarked

that Bandura's social learning theory can "help explain the connection between parental

psychological control and children's aggression" (p. 283). Some forms of aggression can be

learned behavior that a child has witnessed in the family home – manipulation, physical

violence, verbal aggression, etc. (McClain et al., 2020). Studies noted that there was a higher

level of aggression detected in boys but that parental psychological control contributed to issues

for both genders that could be seen in peer relationships (McClain et al., 2020)

Bandura communicated the importance of moral reasoning and moral standards as the

foundation for moral conduct; however, when an adolescent experiences psychological parental

control during, what could be their highly emotional developmental years, there may be a

collision of standards that could "trigger the development and reinforcement of aggression"

(McClain et al., 2020, p. 283). Studies have shown that individuals who carry unresolved

aggression and anger into adulthood are more prone to unstable relationships, divorce, and

family conflict (Horwitz et al., 2020).

Related Literature

The related literature section provided literary works that supported or contradicted topics

central to the issue and detrimental effects of fatherless homes. Related literature also explored

definitions and roles that have been historically and biblically bestowed upon fathers.

Additionally, related literature examined various family dynamics such as single families,

divorce, military families, et cetera and influences on the family and father roles as well as the

impact that an absent father has on a child's social, emotional, and academic abilities. Lastly,

related literature concluded with gaps in research for the study.

Definitions and Roles of a Father

Garfield et al. (2019) provided a definition of what constitutes a "good father" that has

morphed into what a "new dad" is considered in today's society; an individual who includes

"characteristics of caregiving such as providing love and emotional support, being a teacher and

guide, and contributing to daily tasks of everyday life" (p. 2). While this definition closely

resembles the biblical definition of a father, the word "one" or "individual" blurs the gender line

(*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008; Garfield et al., 2019). Furthermore the individual or

caregiver role known to provide the loving and emotional support was typically seen by society

as the mother but has now evolved to finally include the father (Bretherton, 2010; Cabrera et al.,

2018; Garfield et al., 2019).

The father title itself has also taken a historical shift from the once endearing or

affectionate terms "dad", "daddy", "father", or even "pop" or "poppa" to a somewhat negative

label such as "absent father", "resident father", "non-resident father", and even "baby daddy"

(Cabrera et al., 2018, p. 153). However, Long et al. (2014) best defined a father as "someone

who is a father because another person is a son" (p. 124). Some fathers reported such negative

connotations with fatherhood that they were determined to "flip the script" when it came to

modeling fatherhood in their own homes (Long et al., 2014, p. 13). Freeman (2008) underscored

the fathers as the "forgotten parent" and the mother as the "lynchpin" as most studies emphasize

the mother-child relationship. Fathers are the patriarchs, the leaders, and the pillars of their

families; without them one would wonder how a family would function yet in countries like

South Africa, families without fathers rely on extended family members such as grandparents,

uncles and cousins (Gachago et al., 2018). Moreover, it is suggested that "pervasive feminism"

in how God's Word is interpreted has some contribution in how the modern family is viewed

today (Lamb, 2017).

Biblical Definition and Role of a Father

A biblical definition of a father can be found in the first book of the Bible in Genesis 18

where the importance is placed on the father's leadership of the home (*English Standard

Version*, 2001/2008, Genesis 18:19). Freeks (2021) remarked that the "fatherhood notion is not

only about connection, teaching, training and equipping, but it also provides guidelines to attest

to the uniqueness of God as Father, while demonstrating the pinnacle of the worth of an earthly

father within a family system" (p. 2). The Bible speaks of various leaders and fathers; one

specifically, King David, is described as a "man after God's own heart" (*English Standard

Version*, 2001/2008, 1Samuel 13:14). While King David was a man who God held in high

esteem, he was emotionally absent during certain aspects of his children's lives, for which there

were grave consequences (Bosworth, 2011; *English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, 2 Samuel). In

some cases, being emotionally absent can be just as critical as being physically absent

(Bosworth, 2011)

Dr. Tony Evans and Stephen Kendrick agreed that one of the "deepest needs God has put

into the heart of every human being is for a father" (Altizer, 2021). Evans also conveyed that a

father is "supposed to be a man who has accepted the role and responsibility of transferring the

character, person, and purposes of God to his offspring" (Altizer, 2021). How one feels about

their earthly father is typically how they see their heavenly Father but often the mirror has been

cracked by the earthly father so our heavenly Father is not seen clearly (Altizer, 2021).

Ultimately, a father is described as a provider, encourager, friend, helper, leader, protector, and

teacher (See Figure 2) (Altizer, 2021; *English Standard Version*, 2001/2008).The definition and

relationship of a father are so complex that even the disciples questioned Jesus about the Father

in John 14:8, when they said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us"

(*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008).   Jesus then replied, "Whoever has seen me has seen the

Father" (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, John 14:9).

Figure 2

Biblical Character Traits of a Father (Altizer, 2021)
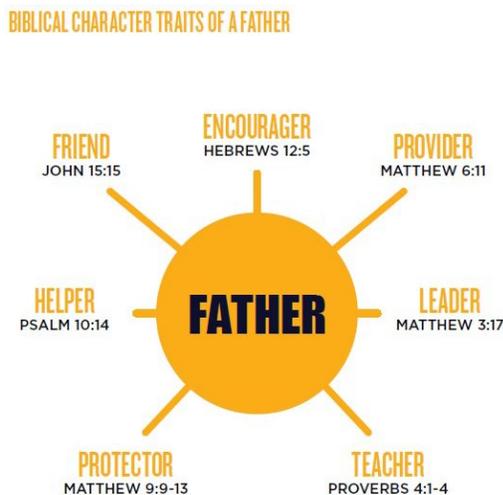
Societal Definition and Role of a Father

Fathers have been considered the foundation and authority of the family home (Freeks,

2021; Gachago et al., 2018; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; Walters, 2019; Weitkamp &

Seiffge-Krenke, 2019; Wildmon, 2018) The societal definition of a father is more complicated

and complex than the biblical reference as society's definition is wrapped up in a father's

involvement rather than the biological connection and identity to God (Garfield et al., 2019;

Lamb, 2017). Additionally, with the evolving trend of individuals being allowed to select their

gender, the role and identification of any parent, becomes clouded or confusing and constitutes

the need for further study (Endendijk et al., 2018). One author noted that fathers were once

depicted as "the pillars of the family" but now, the number of fatherless homes, this has become

a global pandemic (Freeks, 2021, p. 5). However, in countries such as South Africa, an absent

father has been normative and the definition of a father may be extended to other male figures

such as an uncle or grandfather (Gachago et al., 2018).

LaRossa (2011) described how the image of fatherhood emerged between WWI and

WWII. Fathers were described by some as the economic provider, pal, and role model and to be

a father, one had better know how to play baseball or "catch" with their son (LaRossa, 2011.

LaRossa (2011) continued by describing the symbolism between parenting and a father in how

fathers taught their sons how to play catch. "Chances are good that if one is a fan of baseball,

then your dad had something to do with it" (LaRossa, 2011, p. 142). The connection between a

dad and son during a game of catch was often unspoken, but it was there and catch could be

played anywhere. LaRossa (2011) shared stories about fathers who were quoted as saying that

when their sons asked to throw a few, the dad would drop what he was doing and go outside and

play catch. The bonding and building of the relationship was more important than any job or

what the father may have been doing at the time. Many fathers considered themselves failures if

their sons did not grow up to be good men (LaRossa, 2011). Studies indicate that the various

changes in the construct of families and the role of fatherhood can be contributed to urbanization

and industrialization (American Psychological Association, 2009). The WWII years are noted as

an era when the man's role in the home as a husband and more importantly, a father became

blurred as women joined and remained in the workforce, continued to join the armed forces, and

the feminist culture began to stir (Lamb, 2017; LaRossa, 2011).

Nutting (2010) investigated situations where husbands' employment required them to be

absent from the home leaving the wife as a single parent and delegated to run the home. Using

case studies, the author examined how the industrial and transportation revolutions reshaped

homes and families. Society typically focuses on the mother-child relationship and rarely is the

father-child relationship considered, yet there are consequences when the father is absent from

the home; Cabrera et al. (2018) have explored the importance of the father's role in the home and

why fathers are missing from scientific studies. The authors also noted that many studies that

include any measurement of fathers end up being based on measurements of the mother (Cabrera

et al., 2018). Machin (2015) explored the notion that in the United Kingdom (U.K.) fathers are

expected to be involved with the birth and care of their "offspring"; they are expected to be

involved fathers. However, in a quantitative study conducted with first time fathers over the age

of 18, mixed races, all employed, and varied degrees of education, Machin (2015) indicated gaps

between expectations and reality. Machin (2015) suggested that the gap is due to the lack of

support that is offered to fathers, societal expectations, work life, and even the role of a father.

The "involved father" is a phrase that was coined in the 1980s and defines the "new role" of

fathers today (Machin, 2015, p. 37). Machin (2015) reported that overall, some men's transition

into fatherhood is overlooked as are the various ways that their lives change when becoming a

father.

Single-parent homes have been a topic for decades, with the number or of children living

in a home without their biological father constantly changing, (See Figure 3) (Booth et al., 2010;

United States Census Bureau, 2022). Today, the various sciences argue about the role of the father; is it the biological assignment, how involved is the individual who assumes the father role, does the step-father replace the biological father, and the debate continues with societal changes and further research (Krampe, 2009).

Figure 3

Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old
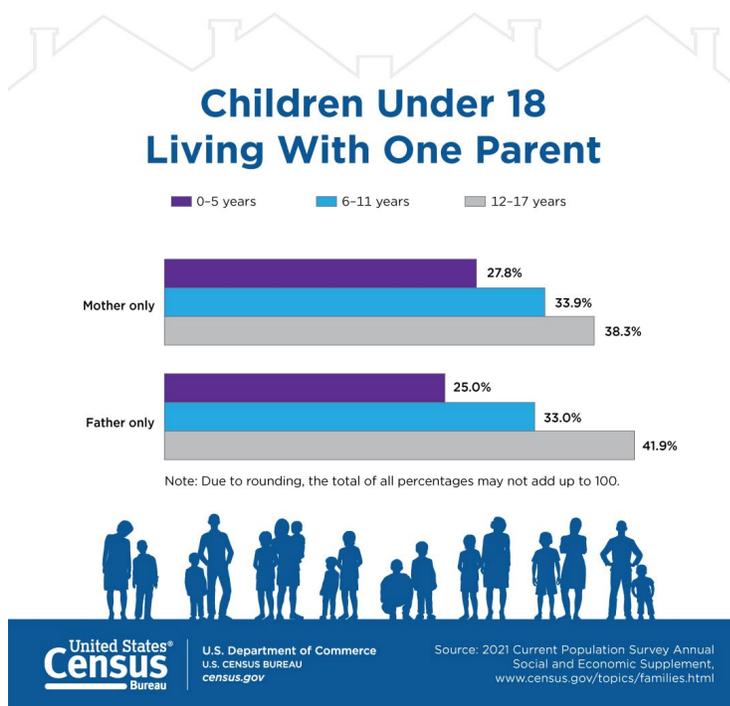
Varied Dynamics of Today's Family

The mother, father and biological children as the family image is now considered an "outdated concept" (Arsenault & Stykes, 2019, p. 747). The complexities of today's family dynamics have yet to sufficiently document fathers' living arrangements and the various ties between father and child. Ames (2014) wrote that Jung presented a word of caution to parents:

"Parents should always be conscious of the fact that they themselves are principal causes of neurosis in their children" and that "many times this stems from parents placing their personal baggage, and projecting missed opportunities, upon their children in an attempt to live vicariously through them" (p. 431). Where once it was rare to see a home without the presence of a father, it is now quite common. East et al. (2020) examined how influential family dynamics, including an absent father, and parenting styles are on a child's well-being. The reasons a home may be without a father can be varied, such as, unwed, unwanted or unknown pregnancy, military obligations, divorce, mental health, criminal activities, or death.

A Dual Parent Home

Thomas (2017) described how a husband and wife should "cherish one another," describing the relationship between a husband and wife in relation to a choreographed ballet in which the husband supports the wife just as a ballerina is supported by the male dancer (pp. 43-44). Further, Thomas (2017) stated the male dancer in a ballet is typically in the shadows of the ballerina and the ballerina is in the limelight; without him, she would not be able to perform alone, and her best sides are shown because of him, she is supported because of him, he gives her strength, and he allows her to do far more than what she could do alone. This example is similar to a father and husband as the leader of a home (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, 1 Corinthians 11:3). Without a father/husband, the mother/wife struggles, and the family is not whole. When a father is absent from the home, there are detrimental consequences to the family system (Booth et al., 2010; Bosworth, 2011; Domoney & Trevillion, 2021; Lamb, 2017; Freeks, 2021; Porter & King, 2015).

Dual-parent homes where both the biological father and mother reside result in better outcomes for the children (Garfield et al., 2019). Many studies conducted on the family home

focused on the maternal contribution to the family, with very little focus on the paternal contributions; however, in the last decade more studies have revealed the vast benefits of the father's presence in the home (Garfield et al., 2019; Krauss et al., 2020; Shiffrin et al., 2019; Walters, 2019; Withers, 2018). Krauss et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal study with repeated assessments to examine parental behaviors (warmth, hostility, involvement, etc.), family environment (parental involvement with child), family values, maternal and paternal mental health, economic conditions, and specifically father presence to note any correlation to a child's self-esteem and development. The 674 families that participated in the study were given access to surveys that measured warmth, hostility, self-esteem, involvement in education, father presence, economic hardship, maternal and paternal depression, and family values (Krauss et al., 2020). Various instruments were used; for example, to measure parental warmth, the nine-item Behavioral Affect Rating Scale (BARS) with multiple raters was used for child's report on mother's behavior, child's report on father's behavior, mother's report on father's behavior, and father's report on mother's behavior.

The stability of a child's environment is a "crucial matter" according to Krauss et al. (2020) (p. 458). Krauss et al. (2020) focused primarily on the prospective effects of a family environment on a child's self-esteem which led to some findings that while parenting behaviors could lead to changes in a child's self-esteem, the same could be said for the opposite direction – a child's behavior could affect a parent's self-esteem. However, the authors reported that if a father is absent from the home, this is one less parent who could be showing the child "warmth, love, and interest" (Krauss et al., 2020, p. 460).

Family mealtime is another activity in addition to baseball that involves "directly observed, quantifiable aspects of patterned interactions" between family members (Saltzman et

al., 2019, p. 466). Saltzman et al. (2019) posited that the family is "the most proximal context influencing energy intake in early childhood" with mealtimes serving as the centerpiece for family interaction (p. 465). Many studies have generated data regarding the correlation between family togetherness and health however, Saltzman et al. (2019) link mealtime and family functioning such as in family system theory where every individual is uniquely interrelated and contribute to the family functioning as a whole. In an odd sense, disruption in meals equals disruptions in the individual, and disruption in individuals equals, a disruption in the family system. Saltzman et al. (2019) described distractions as loud noises, television, or toys; when children are toddlers, researchers observed when there were fewer distractions at mealtime, children were less fussy. In families with adolescents, when there was a higher use of video games, music, or phones, there was less communication between family members (Saltzman et al., 2019). Family mealtimes were noted as an activity that is a common family ritual; however, similar to innumerable studies, mother and child were the focal points. Saltzman et al. (2019) aimed to examine if a father's absence would contribute to distractions during mealtime. The authors hypothesized that both the mother and child would be distracted by the father being absent during mealtime (Saltzman et al., 2019). Saltzman et al. (2019) reported correlations between a father's absence or lack of involvement and the importance of a father being present at mealtime. Suggestions by Saltzman et al. (2019) offered several suggestions to fathers who remain present in the home such as; lending a hand in helping the mother with preparations, and there being no electronics at the family table. While mealtime may seem like an inconsequential correlation between father absence and family function, Saltzman et al. (2019) demonstrated yet another paternal opportunity that can prove to be significant in family dynamics.

A Single Parent Home

How a single-parent home comes to be is often unimaginable and complicated. Despite a marriage commencing with good intentions, unforeseen situations can occur that can alter the family dynamic instantaneously. Research conducted by Vargas et al. (2016) noted the discrepancies in various research regarding single parent homes and the impact of an absent father on a child's well-being. A plethora of research indicates the detrimental effects that an absent father has in the family home (Vargas et al., 2016). Cockrel (2006) documented stories and instances where men have shared their stories and sadness over their absent father and the ramifications that those times had on their self-esteem and identity. Adult sons who had an absent father while growing up mentioned feeling out of place or not belonging because while they had supportive mothers, there was only so much a mother could do – especially during times that a father was required, for example, Boy Scouts or a church function for Father's Day (Cockrel, 2006). Cockrel (2006) shared one man's description of how a single-parent home affected him in that he felt God was missing as well as his father. God meant the home to be run by two parents; without one, it becomes arduous. However, Cockrel (2006) continued with this man's story of how he had to learn that despite not having an earthly father, he did have a heavenly father, one who loved and cared for him more than any earthly parent could. In addition to being introduced to God as one's Father, having earthly male mentors can provide some minor respite by having someone to talk with or get advice from (Cockrel, 2006). Even though this man described believing in God and that God loved him, he also believed that because his earthly father didn't show up for him, his heavenly Father was absent as well, a belief echoed by many other men (Cockrel, 2006).

In a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews, East et al. (2017) reiterated the significance of an absent father, not only on the children but on the mothers as well. When a home is run by one parent, for example, the mother, she becomes ill-equipped to do her job due to the weight she must carry for the absent father (East et al., 2017). Reuven-Krispin et al. (2021) described the consequences of divorce and father absence that are reflected on the children of those families. After a parent leaves the home during a divorce, commonly the father, the relationship between the father and child will undoubtedly be altered. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (n.d.) the rate of divorce has decreased significantly from 944,000 divorces reported in 2000 to 630,505 reported in 2020; correspondingly, the rate at which adults are getting married has also decreased from 2,315,000 marriages reported in 2000 to 1,676,911 marriages reported in 2020. While divorce may be not always be a clear contributor to single parent homes, one does not need to be married in order to conceive a child.

Regardless, of how the family became a single parent run household, a fatherless home run solely by a mother can have consequences for a child's emotional and social development (Vargas et al., 2016). In a phenomenological study conducted by Vargas et al. (2016), the authors reiterated the research that has highlighted the negative effects of father absence on a child's "masculine development, self-concept, and academic achievement" (p. 474). Additionally, Vargas et al. (2016) stated that "problem behaviors, juvenile delinquency, and drug and alcohol abuse have also been predisposed by a father's absence" (p. 474). Little research can be found on the correlation between father absence and identity and some researchers even suggest there is outdated literature on single parent homes that does not necessarily include

enough data to indicate negative consequences of single parent homes but rather the more significant factor is the parent-child relationship (Kroese et al., 2021; Vargas et al., 2016).

Step-Parent Led Home

It may be assumed that a step-parent can either replace the missing father or at the very least, compensate for the missing father. Booth et al. (2010) posited that while the consensus is that children benefit more from a two-parent home, there are instances where the father-child relationship lacks closeness and the innate desire to have both biological parents cannot be filled by a step-parent. Booth et al. (2010) conducted testing to analyze various models of father-child closeness and problem behavior. The authors concluded that while ideally, it is in the best interest of the child to have both biological parents in the home, there may be instances where the father-son relationship is flawed due to a mentally absent father (Booth et al., 2010). Additionally, behavioral issues existed in every model presented with an absent biological father; a step-parent did not mitigate this issue (Booth et al., 2010). The authors also noted gaps or other areas that could benefit from further research such as the mental health of each parent (Booth et al., 2010). Could a parent's mental health mediate the closeness in the parent-child relationship (Booth et al., 2010)? Additionally, in some cases, it was unclear as to why the father was absent from the home and/or from a relationship with his son (Booth et al., 2010). To further complicate matters, King et al. (2020) conveyed that a mother's presence can mediate a step-father's involvement, meaning, if the mother is no longer involved or present in the family, the step-father has been known to withdraw his involvement with the step-children.

Death of a Parent or Divorce

The death of a parent can also add to the complexities of one's identity (Berg et al., 2016; Sapharas et al., 2016; Tebeka et al., 2016). Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 states, "Two are better than one,

because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But

woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!" (*English Standard*

Version, 2001/2008). An absent father, regardless of the situation, leads to complexities: Who is

there to pick up the remaining parent if and when they fall? Tebeka et al. (2016) found that at

least 2% of children under the age of 18, in the United States, experience the death of a parent.

Studies conducted by Tebeka et al. (2016) and compared to others revealed some inconsistencies

related to any correlation between parental death and increased risk of mental health issues.

Some studies indicated no risk for substance use disorder, anxiety, and mood disorder in children

over 17, while other studies indicated an elevated risk for depression and substance use disorder

in adults whose parents died when they were adolescents. The authors noted that inconsistencies

could be related to one's resiliency and ability to cope (Tebeka et al., 2016).

Using populations in Sweden and the UK, Berg et al. (2016) noted that 4-5% of children

experienced the death of a parent due to external circumstances, with paternal deaths

overshadowing maternal deaths by almost 20%. Berg et al. (2016) noted the discrepancies in

data indicating that while there could be long-term effects for children who suffer the loss of a

parent from an external cause, much like Tebeka et al. (2016) had found there could be other

factors that could mitigate the child's emotional well-being.

Divorce, on the other hand, is a disconnection that is much different than a death caused

by an external force beyond one's control – aside from suicide. Reuven-Krispin et al. (2021)

described divorce as causing "severe family distress and that is often associated with

maladjustment in children" (p. 452). Divorce generally results in one parent, normally the father,

leaving the family system (Reuven-Krispin et al., 2021). Reuven-Krispin et al. (2021)

introduced the term, "father hunger" used to label father absence when an individual has

experienced a deep emotional and physical longing for their father who has been emotionally, physically, and or psychologically absent from their life. Reuven-Krispin et al. (2021) highlighted quality over quantity and asserted that rather than worrying about the amount of time a father is afforded with his children, a better focus would be on how the time is spent, noting consistency as the more significant factor between the father-child relationship.

Military Parent and Children of War

Mitreuter et al. (2019) shed light on how important children born of war (CBOW) are and how they are a largely uninvestigated population. Children born of war, are defined as children whose father was a foreign soldier and whose mother was local. These children often spend their entire life struggling with identity issues and trying to locate their fathers. The authors noted that despite CBOW being present in every society, this population continues to be overlooked in research. After WWII many children were left without their mother but worse, many never knew who their father was. How these men grew up and the issues they struggled with were based on this missing piece. Additionally, Mitreuter et al. (2019) ascertained many CBOWs were not fully aware of their background until late in adulthood leaving many individuals feeling a loss of identity.

Children with military parents experience a high rate of parental absence due to the parents' military obligation, typically a father. Moeller et al. (2015) explored the effects of parental absence on school-aged children – through both quantitative and qualitative research. The study results suggested that children with military absent parents suffer academically and have an increase in behavioral problems compared to students who did not have a parent absent out of military obligation. Karre et al. (2018) referred to theorists describing the military as being a "greedy institution". This is defined as when "pressure is put on the military individual to

weaken their tie, or not to form any ties, with other persons (family members, friends, etcetera) or institutions (for example, church, children's sports and education obligations, marriage and family, etcetera) that might make claims that conflict with the military's own demands on the individual" (p. 642). Karre et al. (2018) flipped the table on the family system and stated that not only is the military greedy, but in actuality, the family is a "greedy institution" due to the fact that family members constantly make demands on one another to varying degrees over time, leaving military fathers in a conundrum (p. 642). Karre et al. (2018) argued that while the Family Systems Theory can be used to link a parent's poor mental health to the parent's ability to deal with stress that in turn can lead to dysfunction and yet so many military fathers seem to function at a "high level and are resilient" (p. 643). Despite the findings from Karre et al. (2018), existing studies indicate each branch of military service experiences its own set of issues and inconsistencies (Flores et al., 2017). Trautman et al. (2015) reported that more than 40% of the children of service members are under the age of six. The report provided by Trautman et al. (2015) was extensive and comprised of qualitative and quantitative reports that were collected by numerous researchers.

An Absent Father Due to Incarceration

Porter and King (2015) examined the implications of a father who is incarcerated which they found was an unprecedented amount in American history at 2.3 percent. Incarceration is defined and explored using a quantitative research method. The authors explored the link between a father's incarceration and their adolescent's delinquency. Several detrimental effects are noted when a father is incarcerated to include marriage dissolution, father attachment, finances, etcetera (Porter & King, 2015). Turney and Wildeman (2013) found through qualitative studies that for fathers who lived with their children prior to incarceration, there were negative

implications on a child's well-being, especially when the mother had to compensate for the loss

of the father. Some argued that a son's identity is better developed when a father provides

"paternal influence and attachment" and there are fewer social and behavioral issues when a

father is present (Vargas et al., 2016, p. 474). An incarcerated father creates a barrier to his

involvement and more often than not, a mother will move on to a new relationship leaving the

biological father behind (Turney & Wildeman, 2013).

Father Absence Effect on Social, Emotional, and Academic Skills

Many researchers concluded that having a dual-parent home – the biological mother and

biological father adds to the normative development of social, emotional, and academic skills

(Long et al., 2014; McLanahan et al., 2013; Sapharas et al., 2016; Vargas et al., 2016; Walters,

2019). Yoder et al. (2016) posited that the relationship between father and son varies but has an

influence on a son's cognitive functioning, internal locus of control, empathy, and gender

stereotyping; and while past studies' focus was on the matriarch, studies on fathers continue to

fall short despite their significant contribution to and influence on their offspring.

Social-Emotional Effects

Long et al. (2014) conducted in-depth interviews with 38 men focusing on the

relationships that each individual had with his father. Results indicated several themes such as

reframing memories, a son's changing expectation for a father, relationship outcomes, symbols

of care, personality mesh, and identity. Several cases within the study resulted in what the

researchers labeled as father hunger or father wound but noted that this was not normative

considering the sample size and that one's perspective in what would be considered a negative

experience with their father is subjective (Long et al., 2014).

Studies have found that the school environment is a critical learning transition for psychosocial development for adolescents (Vargas et al., 2019). When issues arise in the school setting, they are typically seen through a child's behavior that usually prevents them from socializing appropriately and will often generate negative attention (Vargas et al., 2019). Vargas et al. (2019) emphasized various hardships that adolescents experienced. In studies using eight variables from the adverse childhood experiences (ACES), four were related to the family with one being the biological father's absence, ranking below family participation in support networks. The CDC has been studying the variables of ACES as a means to educate, prevent, and treat those who may be more vulnerable with those with absent fathers being at high risk (Vargas et al., 2019). Based on 47 reviews, McLanahan et al. (2013) found strong evidence that overall, father absence negatively affected adolescents' social-emotional development "by increasing externalizing behaviors" and was more pronounced before middle childhood, and in boys (p. 17). Despite the weaker findings for cognitive disruptions based on father absence, negative effects were associated with high school graduation rates (McLanahan et al., 2013).

Effects on Academic Skills

Flouri et al. (2015) and McLanahan et al. (2013) posited that the age at which a child experiences an absent father may be significant in relation to their academics. Sapharas et al. (2016) revealed divorce predicted a 41% high school drop-out rate for males and the death of a parent predicted a 79% increased chance of high school drop-out. The authors proposed a theory titled "push-out, pull-out, and fall-out" that described the reasons they believed adolescents left high school. The "push-out" portion of the theory described children who may have left high school due to poor academics (grades and testing) and policies (attendance and behavior) that would lead to suspension and eventually the child dropping out (Sapharas et al., 2013). Sapharas

et al. (2013) asserted that children who need to leave school for varied reasons such as employment, financial stress, or family reasons, may fall under the "pull-out" portion of the theory. The last part of the theory, "fall-out" is described as children who show poor academic progress due to lack of support from parents, teachers, and peers which in turn can result in dropping out (Sapharas et al., 2013). Children who experience father absence fall under all three theoretical situations as the authors highlighted that children of divorce, death or separation may lead to all three factors. Children are more likely to be held back in school after death or divorce and have lower GPAs, and rates of detention and suspensions are higher amongst children whose parents are divorced (Sapharas et al., 2013).

Influences on the Family and Father's Role

In spite of external influences on the family system, fathers and mothers have an enormous impact on their children within the family home, and are the first influences (Cabrera et al., 2014). Cabrera et al. (2014) posited that attachment between one parent and another shouldn't be the primary focus or segregating the behaviors of each parent rather each parent's complementary aspects should be highlighted. The authors noted that their studies revealed early research was mostly based on middle-class fathers where there were more similarities than differences between mothers and fathers in regard to parenting styles (Cabrera et al., 2014). Additionally, the authors remarked that both parents reported being more engaged in play with their sons than their daughters, and in observational research, it was noted that both parents provided nurturing (Cabrera et al., 2014). Cabrera et al. (2014) further suggested that regardless of the parent, "children benefit from parental support" as long as it is "frequent and of high quality" (p. 337). However, if one parent is missing, such as the father, from the family system,

added stress is then put on the remaining parent, complicating the quality of family time,

amongst other detrimental effects (Cabrera et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2020).

Three themes emerged relating to participants' experiences of themselves becoming

fathers. The first was, that several men reported that being a father was a "new experience" and

that they were unprepared. Next, men questioned their ability to be a father due to the absence of

a father in their own lives. Last, many men discovered that using another male model as a father

could aid them in their parenting and break the cycle of an absent dad (East et al., 2020). East et

al. (2020) highlighted a Canadian study that found "fathers who felt supported by their own

parents were 40% more likely to report optimal levels of positive parenting behavior and 70%

more likely to express confidence in their parenting than fathers with lower levels of support" (p.

484). Fathering was found to be complex and based not only on one's past but each father's

internal and external locus of control (East et al., 2020).

East et al. (2020) reiterated the importance of parenting and the family's dynamic when

raising children. The authors reported their findings on men who grew up in a father-absent

home and how their upbringing influenced their understanding of fatherhood and how they

would become a father. Parental influence and the absence of a father figure in the home have

increasingly become a concern. One out of three families live in fatherless homes which may

produce grave consequences, leaving the family system broken, subject to poverty, unwanted

pregnancies, mental health issues, violence and crime, and father wounds that appear in the form

of aggression that if not addressed will be passed down to the next generation of men (Cowan &

Cowan, 2019; Freeks, 2021; Miller, 2013; Turchi & Bernabo, 2020; United States Census

Bureau, 2022).

Lamb (2017) explored the implications of a "fatherless home" and the various family systems that have been created today such as same-sex, single parent, grandparents, et cetera. Lamb (2017) suggested that the epidemic of the fatherless home is brought on by two root causes: "divorce-on-demand and unwed pregnancies," both having implications in the home, church, and God's Word (p. 100). Lamb (2017) asserted that this topic is the "elephant in the room" within most churches when it should be addressed in a proactive manner to facilitate any real change (p. 107). Lamb (2017) cited an abundance of scripture that references the adverse effects of a fatherless home.

Gaps in Literature

While the study of fathers has increased over the years, research remains lopsided. Cowan and Cowan (2019) imparted valuable wisdom in their observation of how research has historically been conducted on the family system. On one hand, mothers were the focal point and studies were rampant based on maternal attachment and child development, largely excluding fathers (Cowan & Cowan, 2019). Eventually, fathers became the focus of study; however, many studies, in their focus on fathers, left out mothers. Rather than focusing on one parent versus the other, studies should concentrate on how both parents' contributions to child development hold value and the fact that without one parent, the family system fails to work as well as it would with both parents (Cowan & Cowan, 2019).

While there are notable negative consequences of divorce and father absence for young children, Reuven-Krispin et al. (2021) posited that the study of father absence for young adults in the age group of 18-33 is lacking and crucial. Young adults in the developmental period of 18-33, according to Reuven-Krispin et al. (2021), are experiencing meaningful growth in interpersonal relationships, employment, and education, as well as this, being a "critical period"

for "different elements of the developmental self" such as ego and self-identity (p. 454). The

value of a father in his child's life remains constant; it doesn't diminish as the child ages.

Summary

"For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him

to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to

Abraham what he has promised him" (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008, Genesis 18:19).

Despite the numerous biblical references to a father's role in his family and research repeatedly

reporting fatherlessness as a global concern; fathers continue to be overlooked in studies

regardless of their significant impact in their child's development (Cabrera, 2020; East et al.,

2017; Freeks, 2021). Perhaps if the importance of who a child attaches to was redirected to more

of a family system theory where all of the members are interconnected with a dash of emotional

intelligence and members were sensing each other's feelings and perspectives and taking an

active interest in their concerns, the family system as a whole could return to its former state.

However, as some researchers stated, fatherlessness remains the "elephant in the room" even in

churches where the topic could be easily addressed, and continues to be swept under the rug

(Lamb, 2017, p. 107).

Chapter Three: Methods

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative study was to provide insight into any impairments on emotional intelligence, increased aggression, attachment issues, and father hunger with individuals who had a father physically living in the home and individuals who did not have a father living in their home. The theoretical concepts of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger were used to assess any hypothetical levels of each in men who had fathers physically present in the family home compared to men who lived in homes with a physically absent father.

Design

For this quantitative study, a quasi-experimental design was utilized to compare the detrimental effects of a father physically absent from the home versus a father physically present in the home. A quasi-experimental design is used when seeking a cause and effect relationship from one variable to another (White & Sabarwal, 2014). Additionally, the value of the independent variable is typically not influenced by the other variables; whereas, the value of the dependent variable is wholly dependent on changes in the independent variable (White & Sabarwal, 2014). For this study, the independent variables represented men who lived with their biological fathers and men whose fathers were absent. The dependent variables examined were levels of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger using structured surveys made available to participants via a secure website. The use of the Internet and online surveys today provide a means for researchers to solicit participants from a broader geographical range of individuals (Heppner, 2016).

Subjects for a quasi-experimental design are assigned to a specific group rather than randomly selected; therefore, non-probability sampling is utilized based on the participants'

predetermined factor of which they had no control over whether or not they grew up with their biological father in the home. Two sampling groups were formulated, with one group for individuals who had a father physically present in the home and a second group that consisted of individuals whose father was not physically present. Further research could be warranted based on certain aspects of some hypotheses that indicate some statistical significance in differences in levels of attachment and father hunger (Walker et al., 2022). Additionally, as indicated in other studies, instrumental measurements would be beneficial and advantageous to the field of psychology if instrumental measurements were updated to fathers (Cassidy et al., 2013; Davies et al., 2010).

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in emotional intelligence between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in levels of aggression between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference in levels of attachment between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ4: Is there a significant difference in the level of father hunger between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

Hypotheses

To answer the research questions, alternate hypotheses were formulated. The number associated with each hypothesis corresponds with number of the research question with which the hypothesis is associated.

H_a1: There will be a statistical difference in levels of emotional intelligence between men

who had a father physically present in the family home and men who did not have a father physically present.

H$_a$2: There will be significant difference in levels of aggression between men who had a father physically present in the family home and men who did not have a father physically present.

H$_a$3: There will be a significant difference in levels of attachment between men who had a father physically present in the family home and men who did not have a father physically present.

H$_a$4: There will be a significant difference in levels of father hunger between men who had a father physically present in the family home and men who did not have a father physically present.

Participants and Setting

This study focused solely on men and the rare opportunity in which they are offered to share their experiences. The participants for this study were solicited from populations in several surrounding counties in the Northeast region of the United States through word of mouth in the local churches and communities that consisted of a mixed population of lower-to-upper class families and a broad range of family dynamic households and drawn from a non-probability sample of men, 18 years and older who have access to the Internet (Suburban Stats, 2020). Stratified random sampling was used as this method allowed the researcher to divide the population into smaller non-overlapping groups to test that represented an entire population (Heppner et al., 2016). Stratified random sampling takes into account certain characteristics such as men and women; for this study, men were the focus and specifically, men who grew up with fathers in the home and men who did not have a father physically living in the home growing up.

Groups included 113 randomly selected males who grew up with fathers physically present in the home and 26 randomly selected males who had a father physically absent from the family home.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for participation in this study included males over 18 as the focus was on fathers and the father son relationship. For this quasi-experimental study, two groups were designed to include males who physically lived with their biological father from birth to 18 or longer (or until the child moved out of the home for college or military) and a second group that included males who never had a biological father living in the family home. Exclusion criteria included females, males under the age of 18, males who were adopted, and anyone who was unable to read English as the test was only offered in English.

An electronic version of the survey was made available online and accessible to participants by word of mouth through the program Qualtrics™. Qualtrics is a "cloud based platform for creating and distributing web-based surveys" (Kent State University, n.d., para. 1). A random drawing was conducted at the conclusion of the study and two participants from each group were selected to receive a gift card for their participation.

Instrumentation

Participants were asked to answer questions based on four instruments used in this study to collect the necessary data: the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), Father Hunger Scale, the Schutte Self-Report Inventory (SSRI), and the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BP-AQ) (Buss & Perry, 1992; Davies et al., 2010; Perrin et al., 2009; Scharfe, 2017). The AAS was used to measure secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant attachment styles (Scharfe, 2017). The Father Hunger Scale was used to measure the relationship between father and child (Perrin et al., 2009). The SSRI was used to measure the levels of one's emotional intelligence (Davies et al.,

2010). The BP-AQ was used to measure levels of aggression based on four factors that included physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility (Buss & Perry, 1992).

Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)

Besharat (2011), Levy et al. (2015), and Scharfe (2017) examined John Bowlby's Theory of Attachment that originated in the 1930s and 1940s to determine maternal attachment and the negative effects of separation between mother and child. Bowlby was careful to use the "term attachment figure" rather than solely referring to mothers because his belief was that although mothers typically were the primary caregiver, other adults such as fathers, grandparents, adoptive parents, and child-care providers could also assume the role as the primary caregiver (Cassidy et al., 2013). The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) is a "widely used psychometrically sound measure of adult attachment" and can provide data on how individuals perceived the care received from their primary caregiver (Tasso et al., 2012, p. 733). Bi et al. (2018) conveyed that "few studies have examined spousal attachment and children's attachment to their parents" (p. 457). The researchers proposed that there is a mediation between spousal attachment and marital conflict where marital conflict acts as a moderator of the relation between spousal attachment and "parental emotion expressions during parent-child interactions" (Bi et al., 2018, p. 457).

A review of AAS showed a "test-retest reliability of 70% over 4 years" with "subscales scores correlated in expected directions with measures of self-esteem, social behavior, instrumentality, expressiveness, openness, and satisfaction in romantic relationships" (Ravitz et al., 2010, p. 425). Insecurity in AAS was "linked to personality factors, depressive and anxiety symptoms, negative affectivity, and proneness to distress" (Ravitz et al., 2010, p. 426). Using the 18-item self report AAS developed by Collins and Reade in 1990, participants rate each question on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) where

questions gauge one's relationship and closeness to others based on attachment security with questions marked with (S) indicating secure, (Ax) indicating anxious/ambivalent, and (Av) indicating avoidant behaviors (Shaver et al., 2000; Tasso et al., 2012). Sample questions include "I find it relatively easy to get close to others (S)," "People are never there when you need them (Av)," "I find it difficult to trust others completely (Av)," and, "I find others are reluctant to get as close as I would like (Ax)," (Tasso et al., 2012).

Father Hunger Scale

Based on literature and studies emphasizing the importance of fathering and the disregard for fathers in measuring father-child relationships, Perrin et al. (2009) developed the Father Hunger Scale. Perrin et al. (2009) highlighted that while attachment research has now included the father's role in a child's development, it is to a lesser degree compared to how the mother's role is viewed. The detrimental effects of father's absence such as, higher rates of high school drop-out, psychological disorders, social and emotional issues and more were reiterated by the researchers as they noted "fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation" (Perrin et al., 2009, p. 315).

Perrin et al. (2009) described "father hunger" as "the emotional and psychological longing that a person has for a father who has been physically, emotionally, or psychologically distant in the person's life" (p. 315). Father hunger is believed to develop at any point across one's life span with a greater factor if father absence is experienced during childhood or adolescence (Perrin et al., 2009). The scholars noted that historically children with psychological or emotional issues were "assumed to have father hunger despite never being assessed for it" (Perrin et al., 2009, p. 316). The Father Hunger Scale was developed as a means to aid in studies on fathering in spite of other scales that were developed to address similar but distinct father-

child relationships. The purpose of the Father Hunger Scale was to "quickly and directly isolate

the effective longing that an individual has for greater connection with his or her father" (Perrin

et al., 2009, p. 317). Initially Perrin et al. (2009) developed a 41-item scale that was ultimately

reduced to 11 items after using a four-factor model to determine which items had sufficient

psychometric deficiencies to exclude them. Perrin et al. (2009) determined the Father Hunger

Scale to have high internal consistency and test-retest reliability. The 11-item scale is rated from

1= not at all to 6= completely, with the ratings describing how well the statement describes one's

relationship with their father. The summed scale ranges from 1-66, with higher scores suggesting

higher levels of father hunger (Perrin et al., 2009). Sample questions include "I couldn't get close

enough to my dad in the time we had together," "My father broke his promises to me," and "I

wasn't sure what my father thought of me" (Perrin et al., 2009).

Schutte Self-Report Inventory

The Schutte Self-Report Inventory (Schutte et al., 1998) is a measure of emotional

intelligence based on Salovey and Mayer's model of emotional intelligence. As Schutte et al.

(1998) posited, whether the concept of emotional intelligence or the earlier terms intrapersonal or

interpersonal intelligence were cited, all provided the foundation for later models of emotional

intelligence. Several individuals have made contributions to the manifestation of the emotional

intelligence model and thus various versions of measurements exist (Austin et al., 2004; Davies

et al., 2010; Schutte et al., 1998). Schutte's 33-item measurement, based on a pool of 62 items

from Salovey and Mayer's theoretical model, was reported to have good internal consistency and

testretest reliability showing validity over time (Schutte et al., 1998). However, Schutte et al.

(1998) noted that much like any self-report, there is a degree of discrimination and while this

inventory would be ideal for researchers to use when measuring one's emotional intelligence, it

may not be suitable to use as a means to identify individuals best suited for employment. Using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1" that represents "strongly disagree" to "5" that represents "strongly agree" to indicate which response describes them, sample questions include "Other people find it easy to confide in me," "I expect good things to happen," "I have control over my emotions," and "I help other people feel better when they are feeling down" (Schutte et al., 1998).

Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BP-AQ)

The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BP-AQ), developed by Buss and Perry and published in 1992, is a 29-item self-report instrument divided into four factors that examine physical aggression (PA), verbal aggression (VA), anger (AN), and hostility (HS) (Gallagher & Ashford, 2016; Gerevich et al., 2007). It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= uncharacteristic of me to 5 = extremely uncharacteristic of me, with questions including "If somebody hits me, I hit back (PA)," "I tell my friends openly when I disagree with them (VA)," "I flare up quickly but get over it quickly (AN)," and "I am sometimes eaten up with jealousy (HS)" (Buss & Perry, 1992). The BP-AQ has become the "gold standard" for the measurement of aggression and has been translated into at least seven languages due to its "theoretical relevant constructs" (Gallagher & Ashford, 2016, p. 1639; Gerevich et al., 2007, p. 124). Using Cronbach coefficient alpha for each of the subscales, Gerevich et al. (2007) found high internal consistency for two of the factors that included PA and HS and a moderate level of consistency for VA and AN. Gerevich (2007) asserted that studies indicated significant differences in scores between genders within the subscales of PA and VA.

Procedures

Data collection for this study included collecting permission to use the instruments for

the study and obtained in PsycTESTS. The researcher gained approval from the university's

Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data. After obtaining approval, site

permission was granted from the researcher's church and flyers were distributed; see Appendix

B. The local parishioners are a diverse group, with many who travel from an active duty Army

base located nearby, providing another potential diverse group of participants. Word of mouth

and snowball sampling were the primary means to recruit volunteers for the study (Heppner et

al., 2006). Additionally, with the hopes of broadening participation, Facebook, Instagram, and

mTurk were utilized; see Appendix B for the flyer. Participants were elicited from volunteers

who could access the survey online from the link located on the flyer that included an

explanation of the study, the study's informed consent letter (see Appendix A), a demographic

questionnaire (see Appendix C), and questionnaires used for the study through an Internet based

survey collection company called Qualtrics®.

Qualtrics® allows for multiple surveys and questionnaires to be designed, consent forms

integrated for participants to electronically acknowledge, and ineligible respondents can be

"exited from the survey upon providing a response that did not meet inclusion criteria or

exceeded set quotas (i.e., *a priori* quotas for race or household income group already met)"

(Miller et al., 2020, p. 732). Participants were notified through Qualtrics® that all items must be

filled out in their entirety in order to be considered in the final data analysis; however, should the

participant decide to opt out of the study, they just simply need to click out of Qualtrics®. The

use of Qualtrics® allowed participants to partake in the study from the privacy and comfort from

their own environment (Heppner, 2016). Participants answered questions from four

questionnaires; the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS; Collins & Reade, 1990), the Father Hunger

Scale (Perrin et al., 2009), Schutte Self-Report Inventory (Schutte et al., 1998), and the Buss-

Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BP-AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992). In addition to the questionnaires,

the participants answered a brief demographic questionnaire, see Appendix C.

Heppner (2006) and Rockinson-Szapkiw and Spaulding (2014) mentioned that due to the

nature of questions, it is understood that there could be emotions that transpire or situations that

may not have been resolved from youth. If participants were to ask about counseling, it would be

made clear that counseling is not offered by the administrator of the questionnaires and should be

sought from other sources. It is noted that no participants asked for such counseling or made any

comment that taking the survey triggered any unwanted stress or negative emotions.

Data Analysis

Heppner et al. (2016) clarified that statistical testing is typically conducted to test two

competing hypotheses, a null hypothesis and an alternative hypothesis. In order to assess if any

differences exist among emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger,

multiple independent sample t-tests were conducted on the data. More specifically, an

independent sample t-test was conducted using father presence as the independent variable and

emotional intelligence as the dependent variable to assess H_a1; an independent sample t-test was

conducted using father presence as the independent variable and aggression as the dependent

variable to assess H_a2; an independent sample t-test was conducted using father presence as the

independent variable and attachment as the dependent variable to assess H_a3; and an independent

sample t-test was conducted using father presence as the independent variable and father hunger

as the dependent variable to assess H_a4. Another set of tests was conducted using father absence

as the independent variable and emotional intelligence as the dependent variable to assess H_a1;

an independent sample t-test using father absence as the independent variable and aggression as

the dependent variable to assess H_a2; an independent sample t-test using father absence as the

independent variable and attachment as the dependent variable to assess H_a3; and an independent sample t-test using father absence as the independent variable and father hunger as the dependent variable to assess H_a4.

Summary

The absence of a father can have profound effects on a child and if a child does not develop a level of emotional intelligence, the chances of experiencing a father wound or father hunger later in adulthood is significant; further, there is a risk of passing those wounds on to the next generation (Maalouf et al., 2022; Rodriquez & Margolin, 2015). Emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger are intricately intertwined (Maalouf et al., 2022). Maalouf et al. (2022) conveyed that the secure core concept in how one responds to stress and threat is at the center of attachment theory; and, a secure attachment will support proper emotional self-regulation, which will in turn decrease one's level of aggression. This quasi-experimental study sought to obtain data by measuring the father-child relationship and levels of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger among men whose fathers were absent from the home versus those men who grew up with fathers in the home and to contribute to the literature (Buss & Perry, 1992; Davies et al., 2010; Perrin et al., 2009; Scharfe, 2017).

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

This study examined the detrimental effects of an absent father in the family home. Additionally, four variables were evaluated to consider if there was any significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger between men who grew up with a father present in the home and men who had an absent father. To accomplish this, the researcher utilized social media platforms, mTurk, and Qualtrics for data collection and SPSS to organize, analyze, and measure the data to include independent *t*-test for the data analysis. This chapter will include the descriptive analysis, hypothesis, and results.

Descriptive Statistics

Two hundred and forty-six participants consented to participate in an online survey to examine the levels of emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger between men with a present father and those with an absent father. Of the 246 participants, 107 identified as females and were, therefore, excluded, leaving 139 participants for this study's sample size. Out of the remaining 139 participants who met the inclusion criteria, 26 identified with an absent father, and 113 identified with a present father while growing up. Due to the nature of online data collection, random sampling provided an opportunity for wide participation across populations despite the significant collection in the White/Caucasian population represented by 79% of the participants, presented in Figure 4. The mean age for participants was within the group of 25-44-year-olds, presented in Figure 5.

Figure 4

Ethnicity of Participants
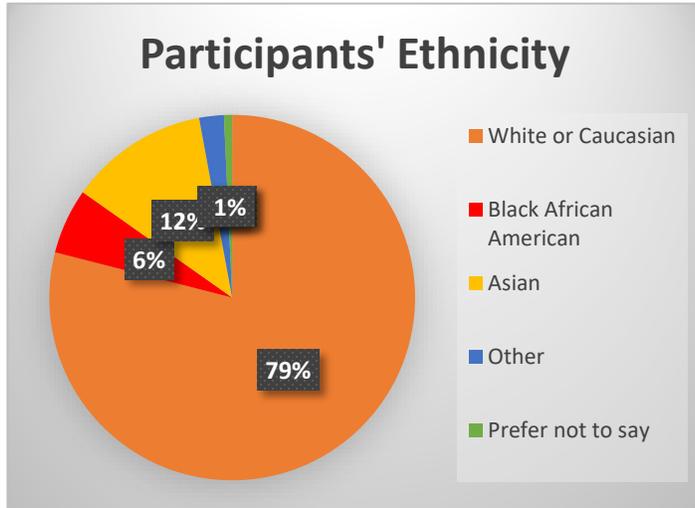
**Figure 5**

Age Group of Participants
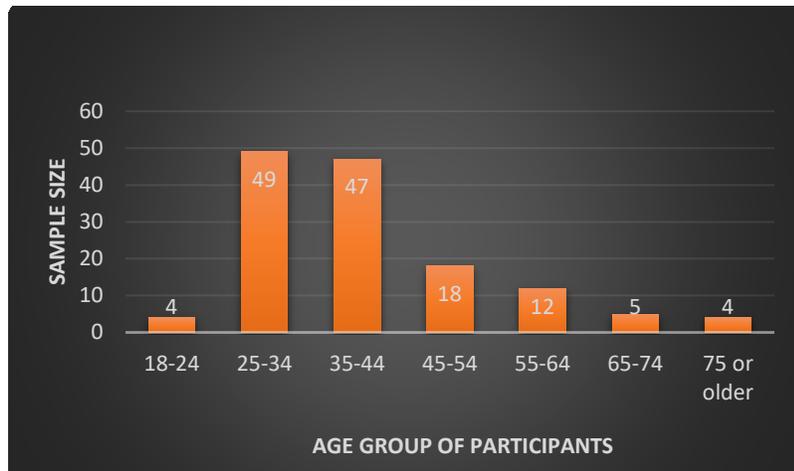
Results

This quasi-experimental study attempted to compare the detrimental effects of a physically absent father in the family home versus father physically present in the home. Four alternative hypotheses were determined as a result of the study.

Hypotheses

Fail to Reject the Null Hypothesis

H$_a$1: There will be a significant difference in levels of emotional intelligence between men who had a father physically present in the family home and men who did not have a father physically present.

An independent *t*-test was performed to show any statistical significance between the independent variable (X = present fathers/absent fathers) and the dependent variable (Y = levels of emotional intelligence) at a 95% confidence level. No statistically significant differences were found between men with present fathers (*M* = 123.531) and men with absent fathers (*M* = 117.7692) and their level of emotional intelligence, *t*(137) = -1.415, *p* = .080, *d* = -.308, as presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Dependent Variable Levels of Emotional Intelligence
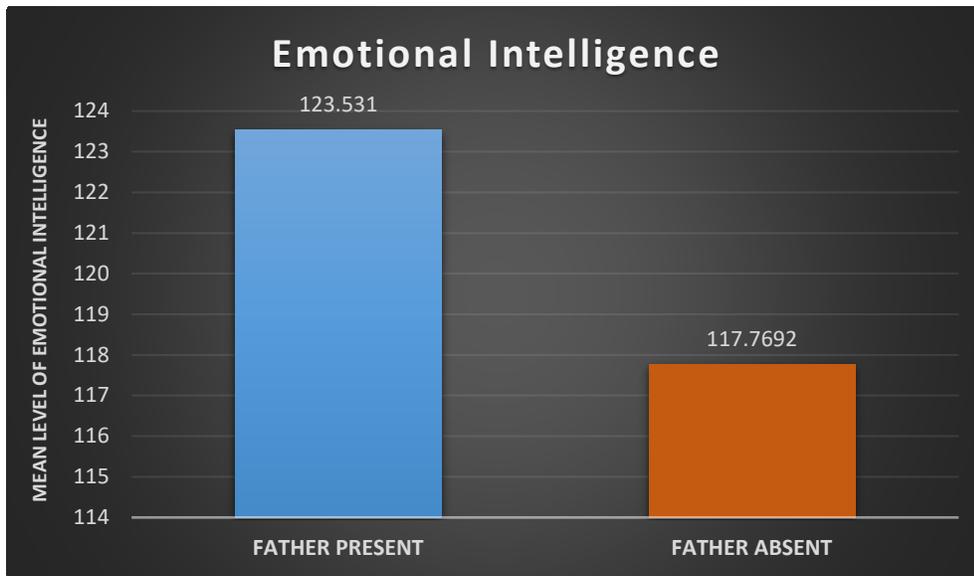
Fail to Reject the Null Hypothesis

H$_a$2: There will be a significant difference in levels of aggression between men who had a father physically present in the family home and men who did not have a father physically present.

The Aggression Scale was labeled and grouped into four categories, hostility (HS), anger (AN), verbal aggression (VA), and physical aggression (PA) with reverse scoring for question 7 in physical aggression and reverse scoring for question 4 in anger. An independent *t*-test was performed to show any statistical significance between the independent variable (X = present fathers/absent fathers) and the dependent variable (Y = each category of aggression: HA, AN, VA, and PA) at a 95% confidence level. No statistically significant differences were found between men with present fathers (*M* = 2.3861) and men with absent fathers (*M* = 2.3798) and their level of hostility aggression, *t*(137) = -0.027, *p* = .489, *d* = -.006; present fathers (*M* = 2.2491) and men who had absent fathers (*M* = 2.1484) and levels of anger aggression, *t*(137) = -

0.482, p = .315, d = -.105, men with present fathers (M = 3.0035) and men with absent fathers (M = 2.9692) and their level of verbal aggression, $t(137)$ = -0.143, p = .443, d = -.031, and men with present fathers (M = 2.3913) and men with absent fathers (M = 2.2564) and their level of physical aggression, $t(137)$ = -0.632, p = .264, d = -.138, as presented in Figures 7-10.

Figure 7

*Dependent Variable Levels of Hostility Aggression*
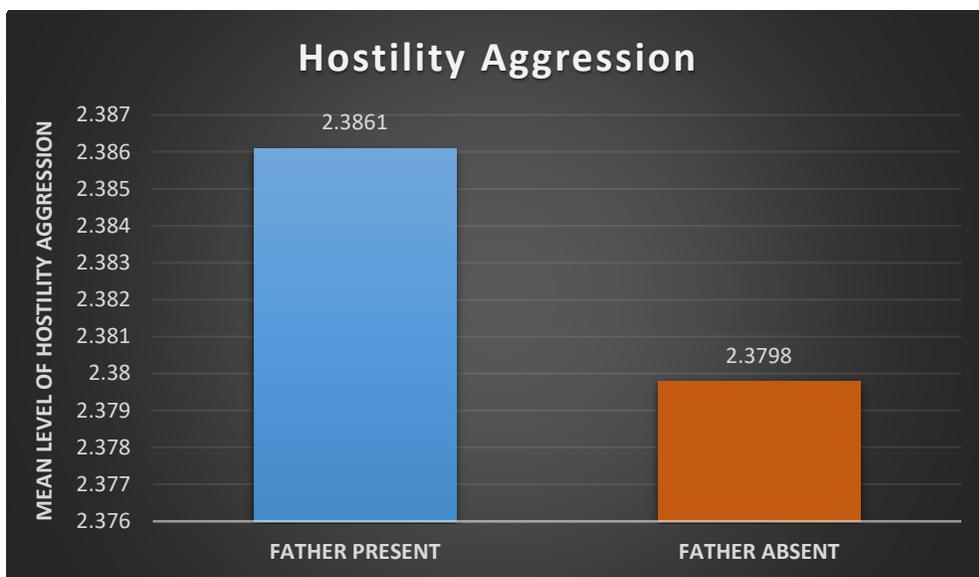
Figure 8

Dependent Variable Levels of Anger Aggression
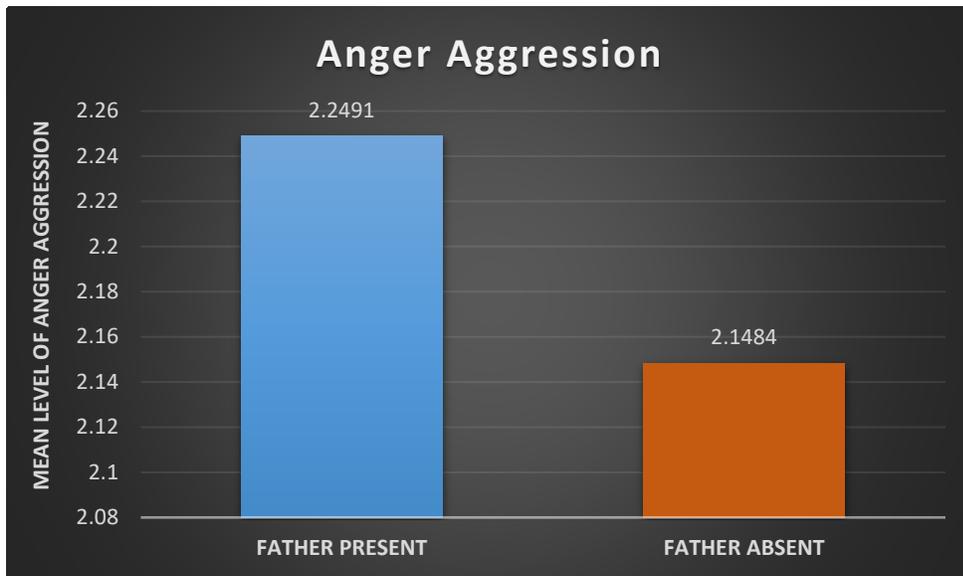
Figure 9

Dependent Variable Levels of Verbal Aggression
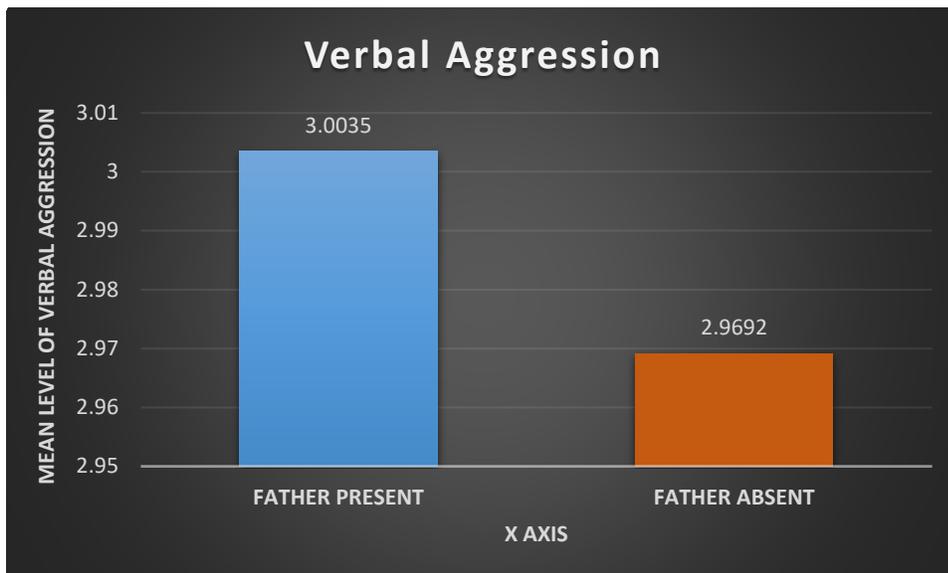
Figure 10

Dependent Variable Levels of Physical Aggression
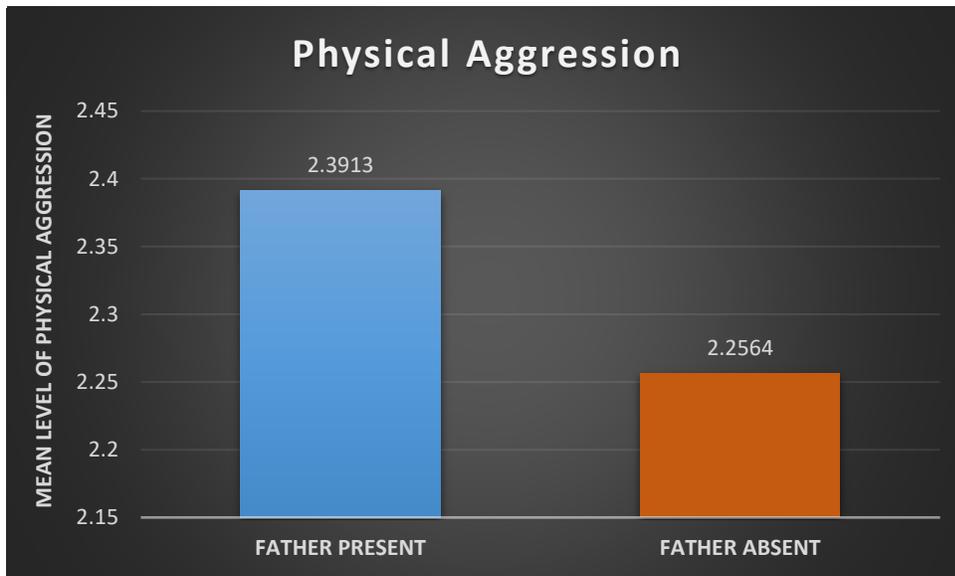
Mixed Results – Reject the Null Hypothesis and Fail to Reject the Null Hypothesis

H_a3: There will be a significant difference in levels of attachment between men who had a father physically present in the family home and men who did not have a father physically present.

The Adult Attachment Scale had two suggested conditions in which data could be measured. Initially, the questions were labeled and grouped into two categories and scored from the alternative scoring portion of the scale; avoidance and anxiety, per the instrument instructions, and include reverse scoring for questions 1, 5, 6, 12, and 14 in the avoidance category. An independent *t*-test was performed to show any statistical significance between the independent variable (X = present fathers/absent fathers) and the dependent variable (Y = each category of attachment, avoidance, and anxiety) at a 95% confidence level. Data indicated significant statistical differences between men with present fathers (*M* = 2.6704) and men with

absent ($M = 3.1282$) fathers and the level of avoidance in attachment, $t(137) = 2.765$, $p = .003$, d = .601, as presented in Figure 11. On the contrary, data indicated no statistical difference between men with present fathers ($M = 2.4867$) and men with absent fathers ($M = 2.7308$) and the level of anxiety in attachment, $t(137) = 1.077$, $p = .142$, $d = .234$, as presented in Figure 12.

Figure 11

*Dependent Variable Levels of Attachment Avoidance*
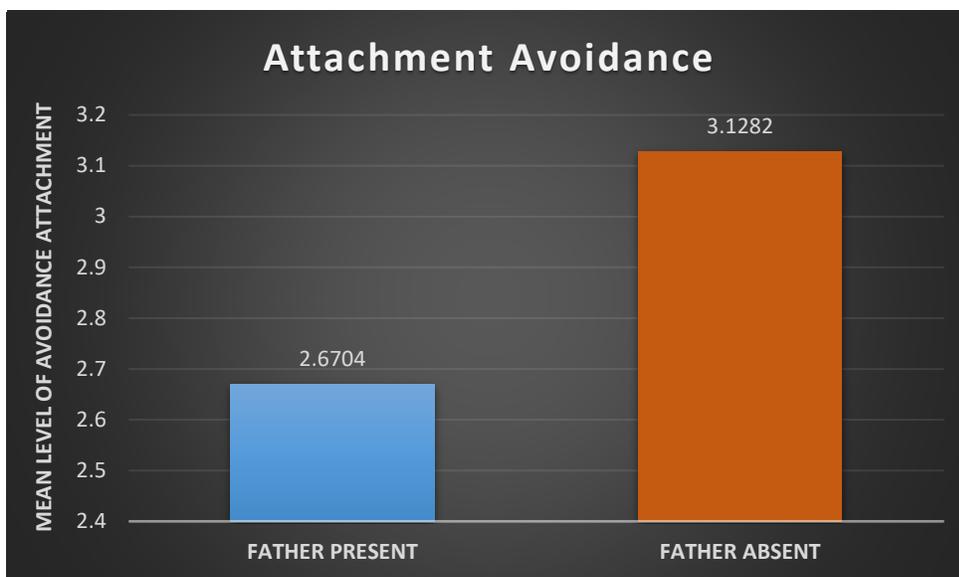
Figure 12

Dependent Variable Levels of Attachment Anxiety
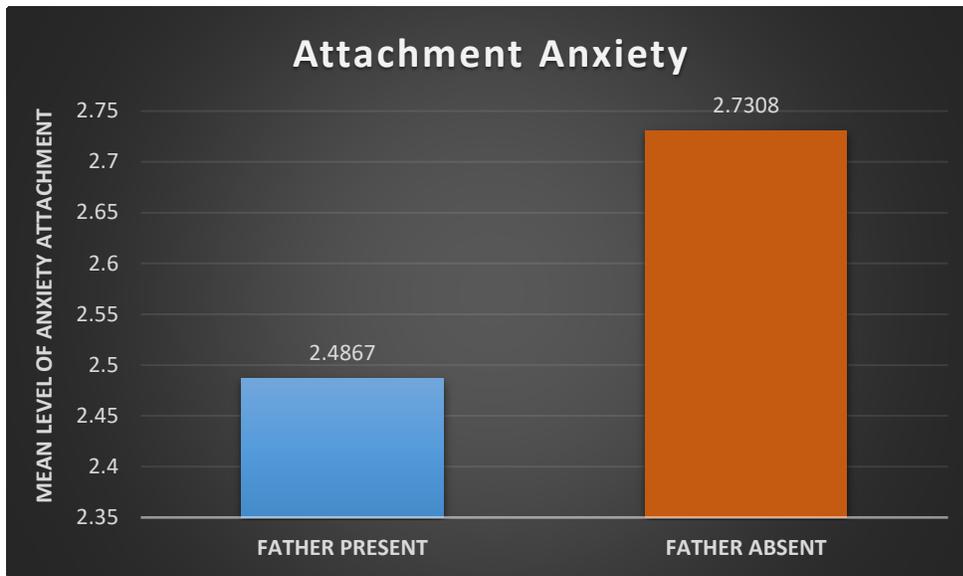
Collins (1996) offered two options of scoring the revised AAS, and, after analyzing the alternative scoring, the researcher circled back and scored the items using the original scoring methods as a means to compare the outcomes and better analyze the attachment styles. An independent *t*-test was performed to show any statistical significance between the independent variable (X = present fathers/absent fathers) and the dependent variable (Y = each category of attachment for close, depend, and anxiety) at a 95% confidence level. There was statistically significant evidence found between men with present fathers ($M = 3.2375$) and men with absent fathers ($M = 2.6731$) and the level of dependency in attachment, $t(137) = -3.076, p = .001, d = -.669$ and between men with present fathers ($M = 3.4218$) and men with absent fathers ($M = 3.0705$) and the level of close attachment, $t(137) = -2.020, p = .023, d = -.439$, as presented in Figures 13 and 14. No statistically significant differences were found between men with present fathers ($M = 2.4867$) and men with absent fathers ($M = 2.7308$) and their level of anxiety attachment, $t(137) = -1.077, p = .142, d = .234$, as presented in Figures 14 and 15.

Figure 13

*Dependent Variable Levels of Close Attachment*
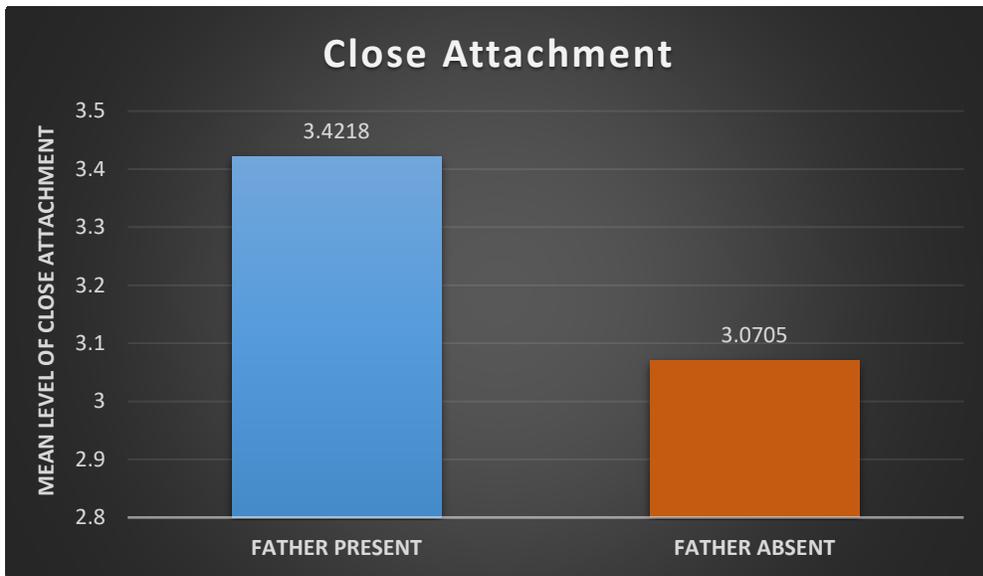
Figure 14

Dependent Variable Levels of Depend Attachment
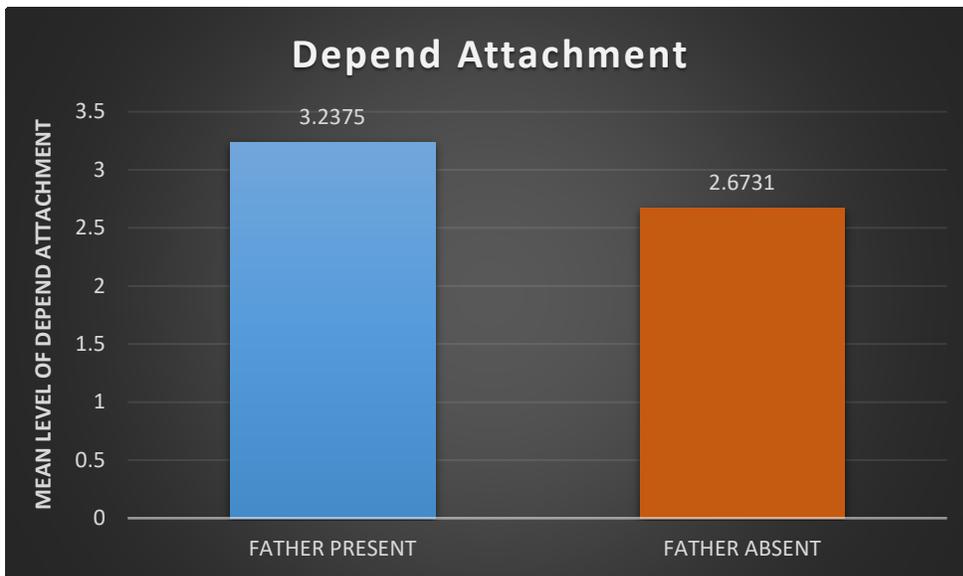
Figure 15

Dependent Variable Levels of Anxiety Attachment
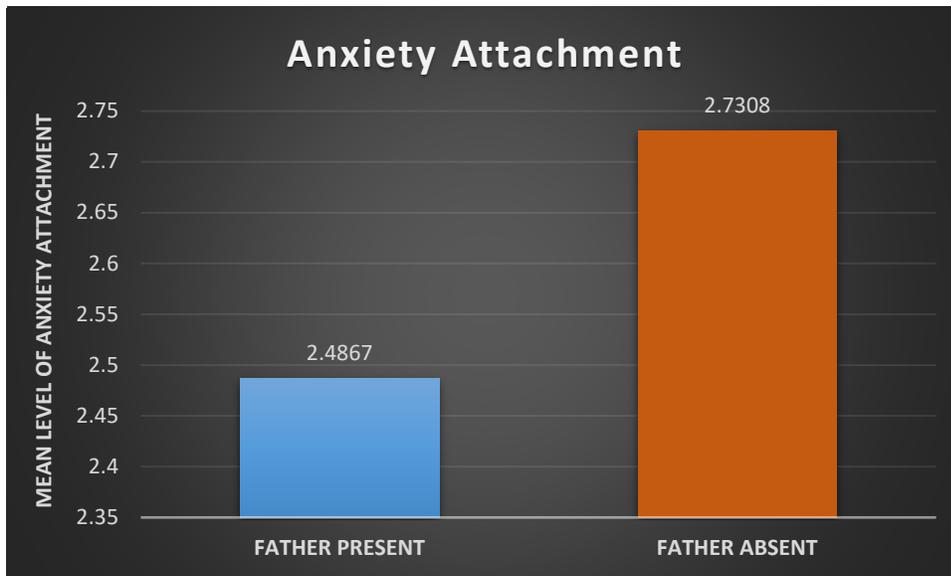
Reject the Null Hypothesis

H$_a$4: There will be a significant difference in levels of father hunger between men who had a father physically present in the family home and men who did not have a father physically present.

An independent *t*-test was performed to show any statistical significance between the independent variable (X = present fathers/absent fathers) and the dependent variable (Y = father hunger) at a 95% confidence level. Statistically significant differences were found between men with present fathers (*M* = 34.4602) and men with absent fathers (*M* = 46.2308) and the level of father hunger, *t*(137) = 3.799, *p* = -.001, *d* = .826, as presented in Figure 16.

Figure 16

Dependent Variable Levels of Father Hunger
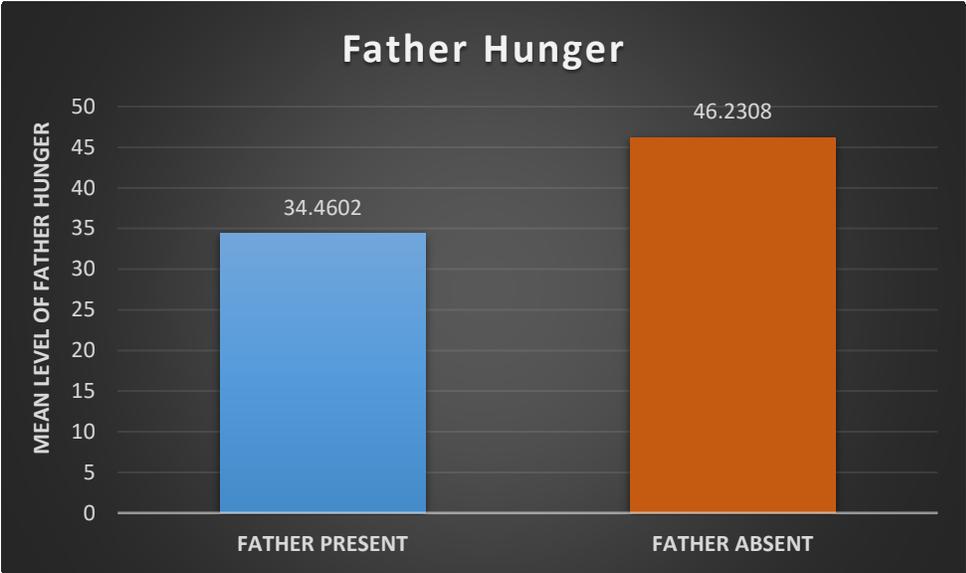
Chapter Five: Conclusions

Overview

Data through an online survey (see Appendix A) was collected to ascertain any significant differences in levels of emotional intelligence, attachment, aggression, and father hunger between men who had a present father and men who had an absent father growing up. This chapter discusses the research implications, limitations, and any recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the detrimental effects of absent fathers by examining any significant differences in emotional intelligence, aggression, attachment, and father hunger between individuals who had a physically present father in the home versus individuals whose father was physically absent. While textbooks often repeat the phrase, "correlation does not imply causation," the dependent variables in the research questions examined have been suggested in past studies to have detrimental effects on one's own development as well as that of their family and are intertwined in the theoretical framework of this study (Cowan & Cowan, 2019; Warner, 2013, p. 265). Four research questions were developed to examine the hypotheses of this study.

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in emotional intelligence between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in levels of aggression between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference in levels of attachment between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

RQ4: Is there a significant difference in the level of father hunger between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father?

Research Question 1 (RQ1)

The first research question hypothesized whether there would be a significant difference in emotional intelligence between men with a physically present father and men with a physically absent father. Through decades of research, the term emotional intelligence has evolved in terms of terminology and significance in psychological research (Davies et al., 2010; Schutte et al., 1998; Walker et al., 2022). Schutte et al. (1998) stated that the core of intrapersonal intelligence is the "ability to know one's own emotions and the core of interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other individuals' emotions and intentions" (p.168). Daniel Goleman postulated that without a level of emotional intelligence, that is; self-awareness, managing distressing emotions, having empathy, and effective relationships, no matter how "smart" one might be, one's chances at success in life would be limited (Serrant, 2017).

To examine the levels of emotional intelligence for the first RQ, participants of this study were asked to respond to a survey that contained a self-report inventory that included questions from the SSRI that measured items based on the individuals' perception of the extent to which they could appraise and regulate emotions of self and others and utilize emotions for problem-solving (Schutte et al., 1998). Low scores on the Schutte Self-Report Inventory (SSRI) indicated a lower level of EI while a higher level indicated a greater level of EI (Schutte et al., 1998). While individuals who did not grow up with a father present in the family home did score lower than individuals with a father present, these results were not statistically significant (See Figure 6). More studies are required to ensure a homogenous sample size for both groups. Some researchers argue that certain scales of measurement alone cannot measure one's emotional

intelligence, it is each situation that an individual encounters that necessitates how one extracts one's emotion (Davies et al., 2010).

While the participants in this study did not show any statistically significant difference in emotional intelligence, Serrant (2017) suggested that even individuals residing in the same home can also exhibit polar opposite personalities. Each individual is formulated with their own unique characteristics and handles internal and external situations based on those characteristics. Therefore, in theory, the presence or absence of a father may not determine and individual's emotional intelligence, as this can be innate or taught (Serrant, 2017). Serrant (2017) also noted that individuals' environment plays an important role in their development and this begins at an early age, most likely with an attachment to one's caregiver. The emotions and the behaviors of others in the family system have an impact on every member of the family. If there is any family conflict, how an individual processes these emotions varies (Horwitz et al., 2011). This notion can also lead to the next research question, related to how aggression can play a role in one's life.

Research Question 2 (RQ2)

The second research question examined levels of aggression. Allen et al. (2018) offered the definition of aggression that has been conceived by theorists as "any behavior intended to harm a target" (p. 75). Researchers often described the family system as complex and stated that a child's first influence externalizing their behaviors is their parents (Graham & Arshad-Ayaz, 2016; Horwitz et al., 2011; Maalouf et al., 2022). Whether aggression is learned or hereditary and commonly displayed during the toddler years, by youth, the behavior dissipates as children learn socially acceptable behaviors (Jambon et al., 2019). However, research has shown that consequences from harsh parenting, poor parent-child relationships, or other family risk factors

could result in children who continue aggressive behavior – usually among their peers (Jambon et al., 2019).

  To examine the levels of aggression for the second RQ, participants of this study were asked to participate in a survey that contained a self-report inventory that included questions from the BP-AQ that is typically used as a trait measure with four subscales of physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility (Archer & Webb, 2006; Buss & Perry, 1992). Higher scores of aggression within all subscales indicate higher levels of aggression whereas, lower scores indicate lower levels of aggression. Buss and Perry (1992) suggested that anger is often the prelude to aggression and that typically, individuals are more likely to become verbally or physically aggressive when angry.

  This study indicated no statistically significance in differences between individuals who had a present father and those with an absent father. It was interesting to note that while it was assumed levels of aggression would be higher for individuals with absent fathers, this study actually indicated, individuals with a present father scored higher for all levels of aggression than individuals with absent fathers (see Figures 7-10). Based on research, one might surmise there were hereditary traits or some family risk factors with the individuals who had fathers present (Archer & Webb, 2006; Buss & Perry, 1992; Jambon et al., 2019; Maalouf et al., 2022). Buss and Perry (1992) theorized that verbal and physical aggression represent "instrumental behavior" and hostility is more cognitive, with anger connecting to all three. Based on the results of this study in the categories of aggression, this study might support observers of "the family process perspective" in that a traditional family environment does not necessarily imply a supportive and nurturing environment (Cowan & Cowan, 2021). While it has been found that as a child ages their range of aggression declines as they learn what is socially acceptable, research has also

indicated that an individual's inherent personality and attachment style can attribute to whether or not they continue to display forms of aggression (Bowlby, 1977; Jambon et al., 2019). Therefore it appeared logical to incorporate examining attachment levels as the next research question.

Research Question 3 (RQ3)

The third research question examined levels of attachment. While the premise of attachment focuses on the effective bond between a child and caregiver, several studies indicate that emotional intelligence and aggression are also intertwined in attachment hence the rationale for using all constructs (Bowlby, 1977; Bretherton et al., 2009; Maalouf et al., 2022; Samadi et al., 2013). Bretherton (2009) noted that fathers thought of as attachment figures, "evolved over time" (p. 9). The attachment theory consisting of three attachment patterns of secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant, when consistent in childhood was noted to have a direct correlation in adulthood with social attitudes and behaviors (Levy et al., 2015).

To examine the levels of attachment for the third RQ, participants of this study were asked to participate in a survey that contained a self-report inventory that included questions from the AAS that is used to measure attachment styles in one of two ways: 1) average the ratings for the three styles, close (the extent to which a person is comfortable with closeness and intimacy), depend (the extent to which a person feels they can depend on others when needed), and anxiety (the extent to which a person is worried about being rejected or unloved) or 2) compute for two attachment dimensions of anxiety (model of self) and avoidance (model of others). Initially, participants' scores were computed using option two for the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance. The items for close and depend were incorporated into the avoidance subscale.

While at first glance, it appears that there are significant differences between individuals with present fathers and individuals with absent fathers for both dependent variables of anxiety and avoidance, avoidance was the subscale that had statistical difference. One interpretation of this could be that the subscale of avoid is actually a combination of the two original subscales of close and depend. However, after further examination and analysis, it was determined that returning to the original scoring and subscales would provide a better illustration and explanation of attachment styles that indicated statistical significance between individuals with present fathers and individuals with absent fathers for both subscales of close attachment and dependency attachment and no statistical significance for anxiety, as presented in Figures 13, 14, and 15.

Collins (1996) clarified that high scores on close and depend and low scores on anxiety will typically indicate a secure attachment style; whereas high scores on anxiety and moderate scores on close and depend will indicate an anxious attachment style. Individuals who had a present father scored higher on close and depend and lower on anxiety and individuals with absent fathers scored lower on close and depend and higher on anxiety. These results would indicate that there is a probability that individuals from this study with a present father would be considered slightly more secure in attachment level than individuals who had an absent father. Additionally, individuals with absent fathers had higher scores in anxiety than individuals who had fathers present. While the scores may not be statistically significant, they are still higher which between groups could indicate that those men have higher anxiety levels.

It is interesting to note, however, that a majority of past studies were based on mother-child relationship, with the attachment style thought to be established by age five or six, while fathers were generally left out of studies (Bretherton, 2010; Levy et al., 2015). If this were the

case, drawing conclusions as to one's attachment style and the relationship to one's father, surely must fall short. Still, an individual's attachment style is still extensively researched and is intertwined with other constructs such as emotional intelligence, aggression, and father hunger (Bretherton, 2010). Bretherton (2010) noted that while examining attachment styles has its benefits, studies indicate that a strong father-child relationship may need further study as the importance of that relationship may appear to be when a child is actually a young adult and could benefit greatly in means of "global self-esteem and romantic relationships" (p. 17). Cabrera et al. (2014) concluded that the attachment to one parent or another should not be the primary focus but rather the importance of both parents and how each is complementary in the family system. It is the frequency and high quality of parental support that a child benefits from, whether the parent is present or absent (Cabrera et al., 2014). However, God did not design the family to operate with one parent and a father's absence is felt as "father hunger," with a break in the family system and injuries to the individual as indicated in the outcome of this study's next research question.

Research Question 4 (RQ4)

The final research question examined the level of father hunger. Researchers have heard many men with father wounds state that they are left with a tremendous burden that is constructed from the vast array of struggles they have experienced with their fathers, leaving them with a gaping hole of unresolved issues (Freeks, 2020; Miller, 2013). The most harmful demographic trend of this generation is "fatherlessness," one of the "leading causes of decline in child well-being in our society" (Perrin et al., 2009, p. 315). The family system cannot operate without the entire family; as previously stated, "The whole is more than the sum of its parts." (Withers, 2020, p. 245).

To examine the levels of father hunger for the fourth RQ, participants of this study were asked to respond to a survey that contained a self-report inventory that included questions from the Father Hunger Scale that was created to measure the emotional and psychological longing for a father in one's life (Perrin et al., 2009). While clearly the participants who indicated that they grew up without a father showed signs of father hunger, this study only outlined a principal factor that there was a significant difference; various mediating factors exist that influence how one may have developed father hunger or a longing (Perrin et al., 2009).

Differences in one's personality characteristics such as self-identity and self-esteem are shaped early in one's life and become more established and difficult to change once an individual reaches adulthood (Krauss et al., 2020). Past studies have predominantly focused on the mother-child relationship, but recent studies have increased their focus on the importance of the father-child relationship and more importantly, the entire family system as a whole – with all members sharing an important role in the family (Ames, 2014; East et al., 2020; Krauss et al., 2020; Miller, 2013; Thomas, 2010). Ames (2014) reaffirmed the works of Carl Jung and the words of caution and reminders that Jung offered to parents who may consciously or subconsciously place their "personal baggage" onto their children in the form of their unfulfilled dreams, expectations, or generational mistakes. Parents are the central component of the family home that the child first looks to, seeking what is necessary for their social, emotional, and physical needs. Just as important as having all of the members of the family present is that the relationships in the home are more positive and stable in their interactions as they will also have an effect on one another (Freeks, 2021).

Similar to the participants in this survey, Cockrel (2006) conveyed stories from men who expressed an emptiness due to their fatherlessness. Mothers were only meant to fulfill their role

as mothers and as men conveyed stories in this study and others of their fathers either breaking

promises or not being there at all, sons were left yearning for a father or envying others who had

a father to do things with like Boy Scouts or other father-son activities (Cockrel, 2006; Long et

al., 2014; Reuven-Krispin et al., 2021). The social emotional effects, or father hunger and father

wounds that men are left with, if not addressed, are then at risk for being transferred to the next

generation (Calatrava et al., 2022; Long et al., 2014). As indicated in this study, the men who

had absent fathers continue to express the lingering effects of their fatherless homes.

Implications

As the rate of individuals diagnosed with mental illness continues to rise, the field of

counseling necessitates therapists and interventions (NAMI, 2022; Rizkallah & Hudson, 2019).

Quite often, intervention can take place in the family home, however, some studies indicate, it is

vital to incorporate God and faith into therapy and the rebuilding of the family system (Freeks,

2021; Rizkallah & Hudson, 2019). Some confusion exists concerning counselors not imposing

their ethical values onto their clients and relating that to incorporating spiritual beliefs into a

counseling session (Evans et al., 2022). Evans et al. (2022) noted that those are two separate

points and that in the United States, approximately 80% of Americans identify with a religious

belief, with 73% of those individuals identify as Christian. Freeks (2021) proposed mentoring for

fathers and touted the plethora of benefits in the means of support, aid, care, counsel, and more.

Mentoring has been offered in many organizations but is often overlooked in the family system

for some reason and especially in churches where it seems more obvious as a caring and

supportive environment (Freeks, 2021). Men often report feeling a father wound or hunger when

speaking of their own fathers, many of those wounds are unresolved and risk being transferred to

their own children (Miller, 2013).

Counseling and interventions for families are essential for the next generation. The gap between church and mental health commands change in posture and the elimination of any negative stigma (Freeks, 2021; Evans et al., 2022). Seeking counseling can be seen as a wise resolution, as spoken in Proverbs 15:22: "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed" (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008). Healing and change may not come from the actions of previous parents where there may have been dysfunctional attachment and aggressive behaviors in the home and past generations that generated an intense father hunger; however, with proficient emotional intelligence, healing and change can come from addressing present situations and inspiring hope for the next generation (Freeks, 2021; Miller, 2013).

Additionally, the battle for families is real as the original family construct doesn't align with societal views. A "Christian understanding of fatherhood stems from the Bible" (Freeks, 2021, p. 2). It is noted that fatherlessness contributes to global concerns of crime, unwanted pregnancies, mental health issues, substance abuse, poverty, spiritual issues, and generational father wounds. These issues can only be addressed by having the father return as the leader of the home. Freeks (2021) clarified how scripture defines a marriage, the family construct, and instructions on how to operate as a family. Men and women were created equal with two different roles as written in Genesis 1:26-28 with the man being the "head", which in Greek is translated as "source" (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008; Freeks, 2021). Society will distort this original illustration with many believing that man rules over a woman, instead of with her as stated in Genesis (Freeks, 2021). As this false belief snowballs, we end up with chaos in the family system as American culture and society typically mock fathers, make jokes about them, and men wind up feeling irrelevant (Freeks, 2021). Freeks (2021) and Evans (2021) reiterated how every child needs a Godly father and it may not be their biological father; having a male

role model, in the same way Christ came to Earth and modeled, men, need to be the visible

model to others. Additionally, Freeks (2021) and Evans (2021) reaffirmed how the "fatherhood

of God is proclaimed in Jesus Christ because Jesus called God his Father and the Father of all"

(*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008). The benefits of having a father as the source and leader

of the home are abundant; the wife, obtains stability and strength in addition to a loving,

committed partner, and for the children, a father offers social support, a role model, stable love,

and an intimate bond – and more (Altizer, 2021; Evans, 2021; Freeks, 2021).

Limitations

The research in this study had several limitations, with time constraints, uneven sampling

size, and demographic variability as major restrictions on the external validity of the study.

Surveys were made available through various social media environments beginning on

September 15, 2022 and concluding on October 21, 2022. While over 246 participants attempted

to participate, 107 identified as females and were, therefore, excluded, leaving the remaining 139

participants for this study's sample size. Out of the remaining 139 participants who met the

inclusion criteria, there was an uneven distribution for the purpose of this study as the two

independent groups were labeled with men who grew up with present fathers (113) in the home

and men who had absent fathers (26) while growing up. Given that this study's focus was on the

detrimental effects of absent fathers, it was the expectation of the researcher to obtain a greater

number of men who did not grow up with a father present, or at the very least, even sample sizes

between the two sets of men. While utilizing social media may have been a limitation on sample

selection for this study, as technology increases the ability to set quota sampling criteria

increases and this will become increasingly valuable for future research (Miller et al., 2020).

Additional participation in the study might have been possible if there was more time to conduct the study.

Other limitations include various threats to internal validity with scales of measurement used whether a limitation or inconvenience. The SSRI scale consisted of 33 items; however, they were categorized so that one could easily determine which questions measured emotional intelligence levels of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness, and social skills (Serrant, 2017). This inconvenience made it difficult to do a quick analysis of the various categories of emotional intelligence as the questions were all intermixed (Davies et al., 2010; Schutte et al., 1998). Davies et al. (2010) stated that measuring one's emotional intelligence is subjective in two respects; the person completing the self-report and the actual question(s). The authors note that self-report differs greatly from performance-based measures and that much reliance is placed on the person's self-report of perceived emotional ability and skills (Davies et al., 2010). While Davies et al. (2010) reported that the SSRI had gone through revisions to reach the current 33 items, some items continue to be subjective, such as the statement "I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on" and how this statement relates to emotional intelligence. Additionally, the length of the scale was an issue. Some research indicated that to accurately measure one's emotional intelligence, more questions are essential; however, participation could lessen or be counterproductive (Davies et al., 2010). However, even Schutte et al. (1998) noted that using the SSRI wouldn't be a good measurement to determine how to hire a potential job candidate based on self-report, but the SSRI seems to be a reliable measurement when individuals are willing to participate in an assessment of their emotional intelligence and whether their emotional intelligence can be enriched.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations for future research have been noted based on this study. One recommendation relates to the tools used to measure parent-child relationships. On one hand, many measurements have typically been based on the mother-child relationship (Bretherton, 2010). Future studies would benefit more from measurements that are more focused on the father-child relationship or the parent-child relationship in general (Cabrera et al., 2018). On the other hand, other tools of measurement, such as the SSRI, that have been designed to measure an individual's characteristics appear rather vague or irrelevant. Schutte et al. (1998) originally developed the SSRI to measure EI based on 62 questions with 346 participants, and the 33-item scale seems to be effective for small rudimentary studies to show a comparison of in-between groups. If more sufficient scales are available they could be better utilized if time constraints were not an issue and participants could afford the time it would take to perform the survey. For this study, whether an individual had a father present or not, appeared to have nothing to do with one's emotional intelligence. Research has noted that EI can be learned or innate; however, Vargas et al. (2006) conveyed very little research had been found on the correlation between father absence and identity.

Another suggestion for future research would be to explore parenting styles in correlation with father hunger, attachment, aggression, and emotional intelligence. Ames (2014) reiterated the cautionary words from Jung that parents should always be cautious of the fact that they themselves are often the cause of their child's neuroses. The generation of the 1950's was considered the greatest with mealtime being something that was normal, Sunday family gatherings were treasured, and fathers playing catch in the front lawns was common (LaRossa, 2011). World War II began the shift in families with divorce, single parent homes, and women in

the workplace, mental illnesses, and more which in turn brought on additional stress (Lamb, 2017). East et al. (2020) emphasized that all too often parents place their personal baggage onto their children and will project their own missed opportunities onto their children by attempting to live vicariously through them. Parenting styles can greatly affect the parent-child relationship which may have been indicated in measurements used in this study such as the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire. This is worth investigating further.

As current and past research reports on fatherlessness being an issue globally and despite the relatively low sample size of this study, several studies would continue to benefit from this topic mediated by factors such as, emotionally absent versus physically absent fathers (Freeks, 2018). There are various factors that influence why a father would be absent whether it be emotionally or physically. However, when a father is absent, this becomes not only a burden within the family home but in the community as well, through school drop-out, juvenile delinquency, mental health, etcetera (Freeks, 2018). Individuals with present fathers in this study scored higher than individuals with absent fathers on the aggression scales. The results of the study suggested something else is going on; could it be that a present father may be emotionally absent? While it is not known for certain why there is a difference between the two groups of individuals and aggression, further studies may be warranted. Children with military parents experience a high rate of parental absence due to deployments and even when the parent returns to the home, the parent's mental state may be altered (Moeller et al., 2015). Another group of individuals are children born of war (CBOW), such as WWII; however, this may be limited due to the age of participants, as these individuals are in their 70s and 80s. Many CBOW migrated from war-torn countries such as Latvia during WWII and have never known their fathers (Mitreuter et al., 2019). Children born of war have experienced a life without their biological

fathers and were immediately adopted into new families replacing what once was; many of these stories will never be heard and the wounds never healed (Mitreuter et al., 2019).

Last, and perhaps the most important recommended future study to consider based on the distortion of today's family and an individual's identity would be to address marriage and family more proactively from the pulpit as Lamb (2017) suggested. James, the brother of Jesus, asserted that Christians should be doers of the word and one action is to show mercy on the orphans and widows as in James 1:27 (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008). Instruction concerning marriage and family needs to occur regardless of the presence of fathers as much research exists concerning present fathers who are emotionally absent, unsupportive, uninvolved, and/or uneducated (Freeks, 2021). Freeks (2021) urged communities to step up and not only equip families but encourage men to step up to their God-given roles in their home and community and reclaim what God had already sanctioned – their leadership role. The message that Freeks conveyed to fathers is that their role does not have to be firm or rigid but also not what society has labeled in television sitcoms as irrelevant or imprudent (2021). Father hunger and father wounds may also be correlated with how one identifies as a father and their spiritual walk with their heavenly Father (Freeks, 2021). However, as Evans (2020) states, men have a choice. Joshua proclaimed in verse 24:14-15, "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2008). Despite what the world has defined as a father, family,

or individual, we are not to look to the world as our source but rather to God and His word (Evans, 2020; Freeks, 2021).

Summary

Perrin et al. (2009) noted that the most harmful demographic trend of this generation is "fatherlessness," yet for this study, it was the demographic most underrepresented, for reasons unknown and a cause for concern. Fatherless homes are not a local issue but one that remains global with detrimental effects on the family system in terms of crime, unwanted pregnancies, substance abuse, unemployment, mental health, identity crisis, and more (Cowan & Cowan, 2019; Freeks, 2021; Turchi & Bernabo, 2020). The areas where a father would contribute as the leader and provider of the home, teacher, role model, and encourager for his child, and helper, friend, encourager, and protector for his wife, would become void and filled by other persons or things that could possibly destroy the family instead (Freeks, 2021)

However, research also suggests that having a father present does not equate to a normal or happy home (Cowan & Cowan, 2021; Serrant, 2017). Serrant (2017) noted that each individual is formulated with their own unique characteristics and while each may cohabitate in the same living environment, each person may exhibit different levels of emotional intelligence. This concept was found in similar studies with Cowan and Cowan (2021). However, as mentioned by Cowan and Cowan (2021) and this researcher's study, father presence does not always signify a nurturing and supportive home. In this study, the levels of aggression were higher among men who had fathers present than among men who did not. Despite the uneven sample size, this study does add value to the knowledge base by pointing out avenues of exploration for future studies and showing that father hunger continues to be a concern.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

Title of the Project: Who is Leading Today's Family? The Detriments of an Absent Father
Principal Investigator: Kimberly Davis, ███████████████████, Liberty University
Co-investigator: Jeremiah Sullins, ███████████████, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a male adult age 18 or older who understands English. This study is only open to men that will participate in one of two groups - one group being men who grew up with a biological father who physically lived in the family home and another group of men whose biological father was physically absent while growing up. A father physically present is defined as a father who lived in the home from the son's birth until the son moved out of the family home. For this study, a physically absent father is defined as abandonment, divorce, death, rejection, incarceration, or military deployment with their biological father. 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 investigate the ongoing global epidemic of fatherlessness. The study will explore whether there is a significant difference in levels of aggression, attachment, and emotional intelligence between men who grew up with a physically present father versus men whose father was physically absent.

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:

1. Complete a demographic survey (5 minutes).
2. Complete four data collection surveys online with the provided secure link: Revised Adult Attachment Scale – Close Relationships, Father Hunger Scale, Schutte Self-Report Inventory, and the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete all the surveys.

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 an increased awareness in how important it is to keep the family nucleus intact. A father's physical presence is significant to his offspring, the family system and society.

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 the subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- 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 be compensated for participating in this study. Four $25 Amazon gift cards will be raffled within each group when the number desired for the study has been reached..
Participants obtained through Amazon Turk (MTurk) will be compensated $2 for completing the survey.
All participants will be asked to email me once they complete the survey so they can be entered into the raffle.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher ██████████████████████████████████ Kimberly Davis, ████████ ████. Recruitment for this study is open to any adult males over the age of 18 and could ███ their friends or family. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, the study will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated nor will the volunteers have any contact with other participants. Should volunteers choose to disclose their participation in the study, it is at their own admission.

This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on 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 questions or withdraw at any time prior to 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 exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Kimberly Davis, ██████████ 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. Jeremiah Sullins, 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 ██

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

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact Kimberly Davis using the information provided above.

Appendix B

Volunteer Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed!

Investigating: Who Is Leading Today's Family? The Detriments of an Absent Father

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of father presence and if there is a correlation to a son's level of aggression, emotional intelligence and attachment level.

Study Open Until October 28, 2022

- Are you a male, age 18 or older?
- Is English your main language?
- Do you have access to the internet?

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS LISTED ABOVE, YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY.

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. A consent document is provided on the first page of the survey.

If you would like to participate, please use the link here or scan the QR Code below:

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER A TOTAL OF 107 QUESTIONS THAT MAY TAKE AN AVERAGE TIME OF 20 MINUTES TO COMPLETE:

DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY
REVISED ADULT ATTACHMENT SCALE – CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS
FATHER HUNGER SCALE
SCHUTTE SELF-REPORT INVENTORY
BUSS-PERRY AGGRESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Participants can choose to be entered into a raffle for one of four $25 Amazon gift cards at the end of the two weeks when the survey closes.

Kimberly J. Davis, a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Science at Liberty University is conducting this study. Please Contact Kimberly J. Davis at _____ for more information.

Liberty University IRB –

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire	
Response Item	Item Options
1. Did you grow up with your biological father?	Yes, No (Both answers will allow participation in study)
2. What is your gender?	Male, Female (Upon answering "Female", participant will be exited from study)
3. What is your ethnicity/race?	Hispanic or Latino, African/Black, Asian, Caucasian, America /Native Indian, Prefer not to say, Other
4. What is your age group?	18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, 75 or older
5. What is your marital status?	Married, Single, Divorced, Remarried, Dating, Living with Partner, Prefer not to say
6. What is your parent's marital status?	Married, Single, Divorced, Remarried, Dating, Living together, Mother deceased before age 18, Father deceased before age 18, One parent remarried, Prefer not to say (Participant will be allowed to select more than one answer if applicable)
7. Did your father serve in the Armed Forces between your ages of birth and 18?	No, Yes (If yes, another prompt to answer which branch of service) Army, Air Force, Marines, Navy, Coast Guard, Air National Guard, Army National Guard, Reserves
8. In which State do you currently reside?	
9. In which State did you primarily grow up in?	
10. Which best describes your employment?	Employed, Part-time, Looking for work, Disabled, Retired, Unemployed, Student
11. Growing up, who did you primarily live with?	Mother, Father
12. How much time did you spend with each parent from birth to 5 years old?	Mother /Father (Participant will be allowed to move sliding scale from 0-25-50-75-100%)
13. How much time did you spend with each parent during elementary school?	Mother /Father (Participant will be allowed to move sliding scale from 0-25-50-75-100%)
14. How much time did you spend with each parent during middle school?	Mother /Father (Participant will be allowed to move sliding scale from 0-25-50-75-100%)
15. How much time did you spend with each parent during high school?	Mother /Father (Participant will be allowed to move sliding scale from 0-25-50-75-100%)