

THE IMPACT OF THE ABSENT FATHER ON AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

By

Abishag Israel Douglas

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Science

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Abstract

This study focused on the challenges and hardships African American females have endured through their lived experiences of not having a father present when growing up. The lived experiences of the female participants were analyzed using qualitative phenomenological methodology. The participants were made up of African American women that did not have their fathers present in their lives growing up. Virtual interviews using Facetime and Zoom technology, as well as written interviews were the platforms utilized to collect data. The analyzation process used the six stages of phenomenological methods (Holroyd, 2021). This study provided insight into the lived experiences of African American females, as well as informed therapists and other health officials. Through this knowledge, therapists and other health care officials can possibly understand this population regarding lived hardships and emotional perplexities.

Keywords: African American daughters, fathers, absent, present

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Corey, the Love of my life! I also want to salute my late father Larry, and my mother Sandra. To the Israelite people worldwide, I will never forget the past and present struggles that we have experienced. We are a resilient group of people, and I am confident that the death, pain, and oppression that we have endured will not be in vain. My love will never waiver.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge the Most High God and Jesus for walking with me throughout personal, professional, and educational endeavors, I devote my life to you. I would also like to acknowledge the siblings, family, and friends that are **Actively** involved in my life; I have learned so much from you. I would like to acknowledge my chair members for helping me through this process. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge all the people without a voice, the oppressed, the people that were not fortunate enough to become properly educated or reach their full potential, the ones that were wrongfully murdered and never received justice, and the individuals that suffer from mental illness.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

A present father is vital for a child's physical and mental well-being. Interestingly, negative outcomes of an absent father are generally more prevalent with daughters in comparison to sons (Waters, 2019). Research has shown that females whose father was absent while growing up are more likely to experience educational failures, self-love issues, unplanned pregnancy, mental issues, decreased income, multiple sexual partners, and failed romantic relationships (Cabrera et. al., 2018). Such experiences can also have an impact on how the daughter parents her own child/ren in the future (Bhan et. al., 2019). Of particular importance is a father's role in shaping his daughter's sexual activities (Boyd et al., 2020). Research has outlined the critical component of a father's role in all African American children's lives in general (Julion et al., 2021). Additionally, research highlights that an African American daughter is more likely to experience absent fathers than any other female racial group (Rambert, 2021).

The research explored the lived experience of African American daughters with absent fathers. The African American daughters consisted of individuals whose father was absent from birth to 18 years of age. During this period in an individual's life, one's character and personality take shape leading into adulthood (Korhonen & Puhakka, 2021). In this study, this exploration occurred through interviewing adult African American daughters who have self-reported having an absent father as a child. Absent fathers, in this study, are defined as males that were not present in the lives of their children from the child's birth through age 18 (Wood & Brownhill, 2018). While future studies might look at the differences of impact between long-term absence versus being in and out of their child/ren's lives, for this study, the long-term and/or permanent absence of a father during childhood (ages birth to 18) of African American daughters were

examined. At the end of the study, the importance of African American daughters having a male figure in their lives, were better understood. Past studies suggested that the involvement of extended family members, as well as supportive father figures, can counteract fathers not being present; therefore, avoiding negative situations about fatherless daughters (Kang et. al., 2021).

The first chapter of this research outlined specific topics that relate to this study. The topics consisted of the following: background, the impact of a present and absent father, statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, nature of the study, research questions, framework of the study, the essence of the study, the definitions of the study, speculation of the study, outlining and extent, and the importance of the research and summary.

Background

A father's absence in his daughter's life, whether being willful or unwilful, can have lasting psychological effects (Kuppens et. al, 2020). Some fathers may not be present due to (but not limited to) reasons such as financial issues, unhappiness within the household, getting married and or having children at an early age, and lack of intimacy with the mother (Rejaän et. al., 2021). Other reasons include, but are not limited to, death, prison, drug and alcohol use, gang affiliation, infidelity issues, and questioning true paternity. As can be seen, some reasons are willful while others may not be. This study's research focused on the long-term and/or permanent absence of a father during the childhood (ages birth to 18) of African American daughters. Research shows that daughters are likely to not have a negative outlook on fathers that are not present because they are deceased as opposed to other unwilful actions such as prison or drug and alcohol abuse; however, fathers that are not present because they are self-willed or have separated or divorced from the mother, tend to have unfavorable or negative responses from the child (Kabátek & Ribar, 2021). While the differences in perceptions and effects may exist, for

this study, the absence of African American fathers (willful or not willful) and their impact on their daughters were examined together, while future research might decipher the differences.

The Impact of a Present Father

Research indicated that children, in general, have an inherent tendency to grow and adapt in a healthy manner when their father is active in their lives from birth to adulthood; the presence of a healthy father-daughter relationship can impact friendships, romances, decision making, healthy habits, and even likelihood to become involved with drugs and alcohol (Kuppens et. al, 2020). Bredtmann and Vonnahme (2019) also indicated that the presence of an active father influenced daughters' success, close relationships, and overall health all in a positive way. The presence of the father can also have an impact on the daughter's ability to understand her feelings and process internal struggles such as feelings and intuition, which can impact relationship connections (Svane et. al, 2021). Studies have shown that the women who have their fathers present throughout all stages of their life have lesser negative issues in their life, which include cognitive, social, and educational functioning (Bredtmann & Vonnahme, 2019).

The Impact of an Absent Father

Krampe and Newton (2012) presented research that suggests that fathers being absent has a lasting impact on children. More than half (and rising) marriages in the United States end in divorce, resulting in children having an absent biological father (Emerson, Harris & Ahmed, 2021). One factor that is a constant contributor to causing negative effects on fatherless daughters is the increasing divorce rate (Gonzalez-Val & Marcen, 2018). While not always the case, in some cases, when a parent divorces while their children are in the stage of early development to adolescents, the outcome can be dangerous when it comes to their well-being,

specifically for daughters, which can institute the perception of neglect (Korhonen & Puhakka, 2021).

Researchers suggested the importance of exploring the effects of African American daughters living without the presence of their father and the outcome on their adult life, making important data available that can be beneficial to mental health experts and other professionals that assist this population (Blau et. al., 2020). Studies shown that mothers that receive child support from absent fathers make less than mothers that receive child support from fathers that are present in their child's life; the same study showed that children in general that do not have a present father, are likely to make less money in the future as compared to those that have a present father (Bredtmann & Vonnahme, 2019). Research indicated that there are certain behaviors and life skills that a mother might not be able to provide as well as a father to their daughter (O'Donnell, 2018).

An absent father can impact their daughter psychologically as well as socially. Studies have found that daughters with absent fathers are more prone to drug use, more likely to drop out of school, have low self-esteem, failed marriages, and poor outlooks towards male authority than those who had a present father (Ostergaard & Thomson, 2020). Based on Obeid et al. (2021), the potential psychological effects of an absent father on a daughter are depression, anxiety, insecurities, and difficulties in personal relationships.

The presence or absence of a father can play a significant part in a daughter's development and life choices (Willoughby et. al., 2020). Even more specifically, studies highlight the critical component of a father's role in all African American children's lives in general (Julion et al., 2021), especially the life of an African American daughter (Rambert, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Studies such as Krampe and Newton (2012) address the absent father in the lives of children in general; however, there is a lack of studies that present the lived experiences of African American daughters with absent fathers during childhood (Cabrera et al., 2018). African American daughters are more likely to not have a father present. According to Dogan et. al (2022) research shows that children with an absent father translate to over 64% of African American children living in a single-mother household. This study's research provided additional information on the lived experiences of African American daughters who had an absent father. Exploration as to whether there are commonly shared themes for African American women's lived experiences were investigated. There is additionally a lack of descriptive effects the father's absence had on the daughters as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and in the decision-making process, were explored as well.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of African American women who grew up with absent fathers and the potential effects their absences had on them as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and the decision-making process. A qualitative phenomenological study was employed to accomplish this purpose. The main objective of this study was to explore how growing up with an absent father can affect the overall functioning of daughters in various areas of their lives.

Nature of Study Design

Qualitative research was the design of this study. This method was used because it focused on personal understanding. Qualitative research deals with individual or group experiences to provide data regarding a particular phenomenon (Maher & Dertadian, 2018). Qualitative research works best for this study because it enhanced the collection process in the methodological stage regarding the experiences of daughters with absent fathers. Researchers use qualitative studies to collect data via interviews to explain lived experiences of a particular phenomenon (Denny & Weckesser, 2019). In this study, the researcher examined African American women that had an absent father growing up. These individuals conveyed their lived experiences to achieve the purpose of this research study.

More specifically, this phenomenological study is important because it focused on the individual's lived experience; this type of research is used when understanding a particular phenomenon is needed (Steven & Ada, 2019). A phenomenological design allowed the researcher to obtain the lived experience and attempt to create meaning from the participant's experience. Additionally, this design was appropriate because the subjective insights and experiences of this population of people were central to comprehending this phenomenon. The researcher conducted interviews directly with potential African American daughters that were recruited from the various flyers that were distributed on the sidewalks of areas where there is a high traffic of African American women, such as beauty salons and clothing stores, in the Atlanta area. All the participants experienced living with an absent father first-hand.

Research Questions

Constructed on the purpose and the problem of this research study, the research questions were the following:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American daughters with absent fathers in various areas of their lives?
2. What are the common themes that project from the experiences of African American daughters?

Framework of the Study

Several theories were used to help develop the framework of this study, namely, Piaget's cognitive theory, Bowlby's attachment theory, Bandura's social learning, and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Each theory is briefly discussed in this section and elaborated on more in Chapter Two, along with identifying the significance of its usage in the framework. These theories provided supportive information and understanding of how imperative it is to have a father present in their daughter's life (Schroder et. al., 2019).

Piaget's cognitive theory addresses the thought process and the development of an individual, which impacts interaction and understanding of society (Hanfstingl et. al., 2019). Piaget's cognitive theory deals with the development of the child's brain and how logical understanding develops with age progression (Hanfstingl et. al., 2019). To understand this theory, an understanding of how the mind works is necessary. Cognition refers to the thoughts of an individual as well as the individual's memory capacity (Prasetyo, 2020). Cognitive development refers to mental progression throughout the years (DeRobertis, 2020). The cognitive theory revolves around an individual's modification of new things to match their initial

beliefs while modifying ideas to match their new things. This theory helps the researcher understand how the lack of paternal guidance impacts development and interaction issues (Prasetyo et. al., 2020).

Bowlby's attachment theory connects the relationship between a child and their caretaker, to the development of the child and how the relationship impacts social and personal relationships throughout the child's life (Main, 2021). The basis of Bowlby's Attachment Theory is that every child is automatically born with a function that implements attachments to others, which is a survival mechanism that enables the individual to survive (Lotz et. al., 2020). Bowlby believed that all people are born with instincts that promote feelings of attachment to others (Set, 2021). Bowlby also described the neurological effects of attachment, explaining that there are specific triggers or synapses in the brain that fire up once certain emotions occur, prompting attachment behaviors. Bowlby's attachment theory helps the researcher understand how being present and being involved as a father, impact the daughter's development through every stage of the child's life.

The third theory involved in this research is Bandura's social learning theory. Bandura's social learning theory deals with observation and involvement as a factor when it comes to psychological functioning (Stewart & Krivan, 2021). Bandura's theory deals with the way a child learns, which is described to be primarily through modeling play, and observation (Bernstein, 2018). Bandura's theory also implies that a child does not only learn from the straightforward structure but additionally from methods of observation. Bandura points out that children do not always need someone to show them how to behave; they can learn from observing others and trying new things (Bandura, 2019). Bandura's social learning theory helps the researcher understand that a child emulates everything that they see, which includes the

things they do not see-- therefore, even believing that all fathers are supposed to abandon their daughters.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory deals with social interaction and the development of thinking (Marginson & Dang, 2017). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is the last overarching theory used to guide this research. Vygotsky's theory revolves around the child learning from hands-on experience and interacting with the environment (Marginson and Dang, 2017). This theory promotes learning with others, which usually takes place in different diverse settings, including group dialogs, interactions, and peer groups (Lantolf and Xi, 2019). Vygotsky implies that interaction influences the development of an individual's mind. Vygotsky's theory deals with two levels of learning, which are interactive and integrated regarding the structure of the mind. The development of the child is believed to happen on two levels- social and individual. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory helps the researcher understand that the lack of interaction between the daughter and father can cause damage to the cognitive development of the daughter.

Essence of the Study

This research gained justification based on statistical data presented by Hitchens and Payne (2017) that the odds are greater that African American daughters will grow up in a single-mother household with no father present. There are research studies that have addressed absent fathers in the lives of children in general, however, studies of the lived experiences of African American women alone do not exist (Cabrera et. al., 2018).

Presently, there is a gap in research on how African American daughters are personally affected in the areas of decision making, education, home life, and their social life. The researcher addressed this literature gap by examining and providing descriptive details of the

personal experiences of African American daughters that did not have their father present during childhood.

This research helped fill the gap of missing specific details on the lived experiences of African American women with an absent father growing up. Filling this gap was important because it could potentially provide insight and research on the effects and the extent to which African American women do not have a father or male voice in their lives. The potential for an understanding surrounding the importance of young African American women having a father figure in their lives, even if it is a surrogate such as a grandfather, uncle, clergy member, or another authority figure hopefully becomes apparent.

Taking the previous research findings into consideration, this research study provided new findings that can provide an in-depth comprehension of African American women in their adulthood that did not have their fathers present in their lives while growing up. This absence impacted their career choices, decision making, and romantic relationships. The endeavors and strongholds that the African American daughters have endured from childhood to adulthood were also addressed in this study, which provided more insight into the issue.

The Definitions of the Study

The terms below are important to the current study.

Absent fathers: Males that were (willfully or unwilfully) not present in the lives of their children from ages birth to 18 (Wood & Brownhill, 2018).

Daughter-and father involvement: The quality of the relationship that is established based on the understanding and experience of the daughter (East et. al., 2020).

Lived experience: The understanding and perception of an individual or group regarding a particular subjective phenomenon (Gaille, 2019).

Decision-making: Assessing a situation either independently or as a group (Brocas & Carrillo, 2020).

Speculation of the Study

According to Steven et al., (2019), African Americans both males and females are known to be hesitant to seek therapy and discuss their personal lives. The researcher speculated that the participants might have reservations when it comes to honestly discussing their experiences, and thus were prepared to deal with African American women that might find it difficult to discuss their lived experiences. The researcher carefully attempted to reframe from any assumptions and biases during the interview, thus creating a space where the participants can feel comfortable and relaxed. Finally, the researcher explained to the participants that all data were confidential, and aliases were used during the research.

Outlining and Extent

The outline of this study focused on African American daughters that did not have their fathers present during early childhood leading to adulthood. This study focused on absent fathers due to willful or unwilling actions (e.g., divorce and separations, prison, and drug and alcohol use).

Importance of the Research

This research study is unique because it focused on the lived experiences of African American women that had an absent father. The results of the data collected could potentially

provide useful information on the various effects of having an absent father as a child. Additionally, the results provided the consequences on a daughter's life as they transition into adulthood. The data collected provide explanations of the decisions the participants have made as adults, as a direct result of not having their father present in their life; therefore, providing explanations of their outlook on life and how they interact socially. This information is important because it provided insight into the lived experiences of this group in hopes of benefiting counselors who can work with this population of women. This study helped the overall wellbeing and health of the daughters, which will potentially help decrease negative behaviors, interactions, thoughts, and relationship interactions.

Summary

The problem established for this study is the lack of focus on the effects on African American daughters having an absent father from birth to 18 years of age. There are present studies that explore daughters in general (Rutkowska et. al., 2020). However, there are no studies that provide detailed experiences of solely African American daughters who had an absent father and its effects. This study will fill the gap by providing descriptive detailed experiences for African American daughters whose fathers were absent and the effects on the daughters as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and in the decision-making process. The purpose of the phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of African American women who grew up with absent fathers and the potential effects their absences had on them as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and the decision-making process. Theories used to help develop the framework of this study includes Piaget's cognitive theory, Bowlby's attachment theory, Bandura's social learning, and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. The data collected allowed the researcher to analyze the information and provided descriptive

themes regarding the lived experiences of African American women that had absent fathers growing up.

Chapter Two consists of supporting literature that helped expand on the research problem in this study. The literature review addressed reasons for absent fathers, along with research that also addressed good and adverse consequences of growing up without a father present. Some of the areas that were discussed regarding the outcomes of not having a father present as a child include: education, decision making, career choices, psychological, lifestyle choices, relationships, and general social areas.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the rising divorce rate, more daughters are being raised without their fathers (DeIPriore et. al., 2019). In the past, research has shown that the absence of a father can cause lasting effects on the daughters, well past their adolescent years, which include mental and social issues in their adulthood. Statistically, studies have shown that having a mother and father present when raising children, will more than likely prepare the child to become more productive in society as an adult (Brandon et. al., 2019). Studies have also shown that females that do not have a father present in their lives are more than likely to become involved in negative situations such as early pregnancy and toxic relationships (Bhan et. al., 2019). Statistically, African American females are more than likely to struggle in society without the presence of their father, which includes issues in areas of relationships, finances, education, and motherhood (DeIPriore et. al., 2019). Many of the daughters risk the possibility of having issues such as low self-esteem, relationship issues, having children out of wedlock, teen pregnancy, living in an impoverished neighborhood, and not receiving the proper education, which leads to having issues starting a lucrative career (Campbell and Winn, 2018).

The purpose of the phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of African American women who grew up with absent fathers and the potential effects their absences had on them as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and the decision-making process. Examining the lived experience of African American females provided insight into the magnitude of having an absent father or if any male surrogate lead to positive or negative outcomes in the lives of the African American woman. There is limited research on how African

American daughters are affected in the areas of decision-making, education, home life, and their social life, and this study will explore their lived experiences in these areas.

Strategies for Finding Applicable Research

The researcher imputed several terms in the search engine to assist with finding reliable sources that relate to fathers that are not present in their daughter's lives. These terms include African American daughters, parental involvement, female lifestyle choices, pregnancy, absent father, and daughter -father relationships. Some of the search engines that were used include Liberty University's online library and Google Scholar. To properly present the literature that relates to the dissertation topic, the researcher began with the academic structure. The academic structure was followed by the consequences of both having and not having a father present in a daughter's life. Other areas that the researcher addressed include social interaction, education, mental issues, and promiscuity, to name a few. The research focused on African American women that did not have a present father in their lives and the effects of their father's absence. Several research studies focus on women that did not have a father present when they were growing up (Kabatek and Ribar, 2021); however, there is not much research focusing on the impact that having an absent father has on the African American women and how paternal absence affects several areas in their lives. At the end of the chapter, the researcher discussed the gaps in the literature regarding African American women that grew up without their fathers present in their lives.

African American women are not as researched in comparison to other racial female groups, which makes it difficult to understand the challenges of the African American woman (Wood & Brownhill, 2018). One of the reasons for the missing information is the lack of willing African American women to speak on their personal lived experiences to contribute to research

studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Studies have shown that the lack of trust in solutions to the problem within the African American community is a reason for the hesitancy when it comes to providing information regarding lived experiences (Klamer et. al., 2017). This research study was intended to respond to that cause.

Academic Theoretical Structure

Overarching theoretical constructs that guided this research include Piaget's Cognitive Theory, Bowlby's Attachment Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. These theories are used to shed light on how behaviors are manifested from interaction or the lack thereof, regarding the absent fathers in their daughter's lives. These were explained in detail as follows.

Piaget's Cognitive Theory

Piaget's Cognitive Theory deals with the development of the child's brain and how logical understanding develops with age progression (Hanfstingl et. al., 2019). To understand this theory, an understanding of how the mind works is necessary. Cognition refers to the thoughts of an individual as well as the individual's memory capacity (Prasetyo, 2020). Cognitive development refers to mental progression throughout the years (DeRobertis, 2020). The cognitive theory revolves around an individual modification of new things to match their initial beliefs while modifying ideas to match their new things.

Long- and short-term memory progression is an important part of mental development. Although this theory addresses both short and long-term cognitive development, Piaget primarily centers around long-term development. Piaget's cognitive theory came about while Piaget engaged in first-hand research by observing several children. Piaget concluded that all children

develop in certain stages- from birth through adolescence. Piaget asserted that (1) all stages occur in identical sequences, (2) an individual goes through every stage, (3) each stage morphs from the previous stage, and (4) all later stages encompass the previous stages (Hanfstingl et. al., 2019).

The four stages of cognitive development include, (1) Sensorimotor Stage, (2) Preoperational Stage, (3) Concrete Operational Stage, and the (4) Formal Operational Stage (DeRobertis, 2020). The Sensorimotor Stage occurs from birth until about age two. During this stage, the individual starts to use motor skills and senses to influence the thought process. It is also during this time that a child explores and learns about the world using movement and senses. According to Piaget, from around age two to seven, a child is in the Preoperational Stage. During this stage, objects are used by the children to express themselves. Although objects are used during this stage, the individual's sense of logic has not developed. The third stage is the Concrete Operational Stage, which spans from about age seven to 10. During this stage, children start to develop an understanding of logic for actions and behaviors. Although children at this stage understand logic, their reasoning is still limited. The final stage is the Formal Operational Stage, which spans from about age 11 and beyond. During this stage, the cognitive development is at a level of understanding hypothetical and factual ideas.

According to Babakr et al., (2019) considering the above stages, a daughter without a father present in her life will act a certain way during each stage. As a hypothetical example, during the Sensorimotor Stage, the child is in a phase where senses and motor skills are used to figure out the world. Therefore, as a child is learning through looking and grasping at things or people, she may start to realize that a father is not present. This can be dangerous due to the stage of the brain development in children (Winstanley, 2021).

Based on Enloe (2019) during the Preoperational Stage, when a daughter notices that her father is no longer in the household, she might start to question “why,” which can lead to confusion and curiosity. This situation risks the chance of the individual forming their thoughts, which can be misleading. Many of their curiosities come from learning from pictures that represent objects, such as pictures of fathers holding babies, in which the child will act out their curiosity during playtime or pretend to play with baby dolls.

According to Costa (2019) using the Concrete Operational Stage, the brain is at a point of development where logic is present. A child may start to understand that many children have both a mother and father, which could lead the child with an absent father to experience sadness, confusion, or a host of other emotions. These logic/assumptions can also be increased by going to school and noticing that their peers have both parents present.

Based on Kohler’s (2020) description of the concrete operational stage, the brain continues to develop and understanding starts to increase. During this time, moral thinking, including ethical and theoretical reasoning, is developed. Therefore, children may begin to form their explanations regarding why he or she has an absent father.... which could lead to self-blame and a hatred for the father.

Bowlby’s Attachment Theory

The basis of Bowlby’s Attachment Theory is that every child is automatically born with a function that implements attachments to others, which is a survival mechanism that enables the individual to survive (Lotz et. al., 2020). Bowlby believed that all people are born with instincts that promote feelings of attachment to others (Set, 2021). Bowlby also described the neurological

effects of attachment, explaining that there are specific triggers or synapses in the brain that fire up once certain emotions occur, prompting attachment behaviors.

The emotion of fear toward strangers, according to Bowlby, causes the individual to go into survival mode, which is prompted by evolution (Guillemot, 2018). The different emotions that are shown by babies such as crying, help put in place the people to whom the baby will eventually become attached, which is why when many babies are hungry, they cry, and their parents or guardians come to feed them. Such behavior prompts attachment to the people that the baby needs for survival. Bowlby's attachment theory also points out that only crying can prompt the people that are most attached to the baby to come to their rescue, which is the parents. Bowlby believed that this process is naturally directed towards the biological parents; this process is referred to as a social releaser (O'Donnell, 2018).

Bowlby's asserted that all children have a natural desire to become attached to either biological parents or foster parents (Gardenhire et al., 2019). Bowlby also acknowledged that the baby can be attached to people other than biological parents. Bowlby also explained that a baby most often attaches to the mother over the father, but still attaches to the father, nonetheless. According to McClean et al. (2021) when the father is not present in the baby's life, the baby does not have an attachment to their father or any male, which can cause the daughter to have attachment issues and become unaffectionate toward men as an adult.

Bowlby described that from birth to two years old, children need consistent affection and attention from parents. If the care from either parent comes after 24 months, or care starts after 12 months, the attention can be null and void (Kim & Koo, 2020). The first 24 months is the most important time for any child because this is the period when the child learns about relationships (Bosman et al., 2022). If the child does not get the proper affection during the first

24 months, this can cause long-term issues, such as maladaptive social, emotional, and mental development. According to Payne and Brooks (2019) if a father is in his daughter's life until the age of five and then he leaves her life, the daughter will feel a grudge against men and have a hard time emotionally connecting when she becomes of dating age (Kim & Koo, 2020).

Bowlby also asserted that if a child does not get affection, he or she will not form attachments and will most likely develop mental health issues (Bosemans et al., 2022). Some of the issues that are oftentimes associated with the lack of love or attachment include bad behavior, anger, irritation, depression, loveless relationships, and developmental issues (Payne & Brooks, 2019). The child may even start to normalize not having attachments (Coard, 2021). Bowlby also described that when parents leave their children, it triggers anxiety for the children. According to McClean et al., (2021) when a child is put in changing or difficult situations, emotions progress as the child gets older. The emotions usually increase in certain stages. The first stage is referred to as the protesting stage, where the child is filled with rage and often is angry and screams at the parent they are attached to.

Studies show that children in the adolescent stage will try to persuade their parents to avoid separation in comparison to other childhood stages (McClean et al., 2021). The next stage is referred to as despair, where the child seems to appear to be calm. However, the child is holding in emotions, isolated from others, and refusing love from anyone that is not their primary parent. The third stage is the detachment stage, where the child reframes from the isolation phase. During this time, normal behavior restarts, however, anger and rage are directed at the parent that left them. For example, if a father leaves his daughter at the age of five and returns when she is seventeen, the child can become enraged and not only take her anger out on her father but can potentially hurt herself or others.

The fifth reference to Bowlby's attachment theory is that all children mimic the patterns that they have experienced. When every child is born, the programming of attachment is triggered (Garenhire et al., 2019). This programming shapes how the child begins to see themselves, which can be either positive or negative. There are three outcomes in this reference. Whenever a caretaker shows attention and affection to the child, this enables the child to feel safe and promotes attachment to the caretaker, which is referred to as a positive outcome. When the child feels rejected by the primary caretaker, this prompts the child to feel rejected triggering avoidant behavior towards the caretaker, which can lead to anger and resentment toward the caretaker; therefore, being referred to as a negative outcome.

The third outcome involves resilience due to the primary caretaker not being around. This leads to the child eventually treating the primary in a manner that they feel they have been treated, which usually involves anger. As a hypothetical example, if a father abandons their daughter without an explanation, the daughter will become confused and try to block out anything or people that hurt her. However, she will have rage toward her father because she feels like her father is angry at her, which is an explanation for them leaving, based on what the daughter thinks.

Bandura's Social Learning

The third theory overarching theory guiding this research is Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Bandura's theory deals with the way a child learns, which is described to be primarily through modeling play, and observation (Bernstein, 2018). Bandura's theory also implies that a child does not only learn from the straightforward structure. Bandura points out that children do not always need someone to show them how to behave; they can learn from observing others and trying new things (Bandura, 2019). The first concept in Social Learning Theory is that people

learn through observation. This concept deals with children learning based on watching others do certain things such as mimicking certain behaviors. Bandura set a case study to further prove this concept using a doll names Bobo (Molavi et. al., 2018). During this case study, a man was observed by children; the man was yelling and screaming at the doll as the children watched. Once the children were given the doll to play with, they did the same thing that they observed the man do. This means certain positive and negative behaviors are triggered in children when observing certain scenarios.

The second concept is the mental state of the child. This concept deals with an individual's mind and how this plays a major part in their behavior. Many internal rewards can determine the behavior of a child (Solakoglu and Yuksek, 2020). The mental state of the child can determine how a child will react, regardless of what behavior they have observed. Another concept of the Social Learning Theory is understanding that learning a certain technique does not necessarily lead an individual to implement that technique into their daily lives. To understand if someone has a grasp on the concept of learning, they usually display a certain behavior that indicates they have learned a certain thing (Chia et. al., 2021).

However, there are times when an individual can learn something without showing change, which is seen in observational learning (Cooper and Klein, 2018). For example, a father leaves his daughter, and the mother teaches her daughter to not hold grudges towards anyone, even if you are hurt. However, the daughter becomes isolated and does not speak to her friends for several months. Although the daughter understands that she does not need to hold grudges, she feels sad and she is internalizing her feelings, that does not mean that she is holding anything against her friends; it just took a while for her to interact after a heartbreak.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory is the last overarching theory used to guide this research. Vygotsky's theory revolves around the child learning from hands-on experience and interacting with the environment (Marginson and Dang, 2017). This theory promotes learning with others, which usually takes place in different diverse settings, including group dialogs, interactions, and peer groups (Lantolf and Xi, 2019). Vygotsky implies that interaction influences the development of an individual's mind.

Vygotsky's theory deals with two levels of learning, which are interactive and integrated regarding the structure of the mind. The development of the child is believed to happen on two levels-- social and individual. Vygotsky stresses the importance of parents guiding their children and teaching them about social awareness. Language is also influenced by society and cultural interaction. The involvement of the parents is set to be the key factor when it comes to Vygotsky theory. Children often learn from other children, which is helpful to their learning. However, Vygotsky believed that parents are the main ingredient when it comes to learning certain behaviors and developmental issues. Vygotsky also placed great emphasis on the role of the father. According to his theory, both parents are needed for the child to develop normally (Hedges, 2021).

Review of Literature Relating to Topic

In the past, research has been done on the effects of women that did not have their fathers present when they were growing up, which is mostly focused on visible things such as sexual activity and social interaction (DeIPriore et. al., 2019). However, this research does not provide information on the lived experience of the African American woman who had an absent father, which is important because it will provide needed information on how not a father figure can impact the life of the daughter. In past studies, researchers have suggested that personal accounts

of African American daughters and the lack of having a father present should be explored (Barr et. al., 2018), focusing on their adult life as opposed to their childhood, which most of the research in the past does not focus on. This dissertation study will help fill the missing gap on this topic by focusing on the lived experience of African American women that had fathers that willingly or unwillingly decided not to be present in their daughter's lives.

African American fathers

According to Gamboa & Julion (2019), when a man becomes a father, the task can sometimes become overwhelming and stressful. Measuring absent fathers according to race, statistics has shown that absent African American fathers cause several issues in the African American community, with financial issues being the leading problem (Dogan et. al, 2022). Due to the absent fathers, more stress has been put upon the African American mother, leaving them to raise their children in single parent households; therefore, taking on the role of the mother and the father (Johnson-Eaddy, 2020). Due to several issues that has occurred within the African American community, such as slavery, criminal system and equality issues, the roles within the African American household have shifted (Dogan et. al., 2022).

This shift has created a community that is saturated with single mothers and emotionally scarred children (Yan et. al., 2021). This shift has also closed the space for African American fathers and embraced the so called independent African American woman/mother; however, the impact of not having a father is evident when it comes to the emotional and mental toll it has taken on the children (Coates et. al., 2019). Studies have shown that males that are absent in their children's lives, have a hard time considering themselves fathers (Thomas, 2019).

Studies have shown that many males that did not grow up their father or a surrogate father often struggle with understanding how a father should interact with their children (Cooper et.al., 2019). The father's absence creates female dominated households, which makes it seem normal not have a father in the household to help raise their children (Johnson-Eaddy, 2020). When a mother takes the place of the father and displays authoritarian behaviors, this is known as gatekeeping (Coates et. al., 2019). According to (Harris et. al., 2019), African American fathers and their parenting skills and involvement differ from the involvement and parenting skills of fathers from other races, due to various life difficulties such as financial issues and not having present fathers or male role models as a guide in their lives. Due to these differences, other areas are directly affected, which can include incarceration, education, and unemployment (Green, 2018). The economic and social issues that are a direct effect of discrimination, should be considered when it comes to the actions and thought processes of African American men that are not present in their children's life (Cooper et. al., 2019).

Although there are other aspects that affect the African American father, the relationship that the father had with his father also plays a role in how the father parents their child (Murray and Hwang, 2020). Studies also show that if a father had a negative relationship with his father, the same relationship type will be implemented when he has children of his own (Cooper et. al., 2019). Studies show that past relationships play a part in how an individual identifies themselves, which plays a role in social interactions and behaviors; therefore, the more an individual identifies with a certain behavior, it will reflect in the relationships they have with people, including their children (Blackshear et.al., 2019).

Effects of the Absent Father

Understanding the struggles and social issues of the African American father is important when it comes to determining what causes them to become absent fathers. Studies have shown that experiences as far back to childhood can influence the choices that the males make as an adult (Cooper et. al., 2019). Studies also show that African American fathers are more likely to be absent in their children's lives, which is unfortunate due to the important role that they play in raising children (Cross, 2021). Studies have also shown that a child having an absent father can be a direct cause of many subsequent problems young African Americans have, such as job and financial issues. Additionally, many struggles of violence and incarceration issues are more prevalent in male African Americans (Green, 2020).

Studies show that African American children are three times likely to grow up in poverty and have a higher risk of suicide, engaging in bad behaviors and having emotional issues when they have an absent father in their lives; therefore, these children will also more than likely experience some sort of mental health issues at some point in their lives (Baker et. al, 2018). Having an absent father growing up can cause a male to question his masculinity and cause confusion when it comes to the role of a male throughout the stages of their life (Thomas, 2019). Studies have shown that if an African American child's parents are not married, the father is more than likely going to be absent in their child's life, due to various reasons, willfully and unwilfully (Murray and Hwang, 2020). Studies have also shown that African American males that grew up with an absent father, are more than likely to be more aggressive in comparison to females which are more emotionally vulnerable and easily manipulated by the opposite sex in relationships (Yan et. al., 2021).

Significance of the Father's Involvement

This portion of the paper will be focused on the building blocks of a father-daughter relationship and how paternal involvement can have a positive effect on human development. The possible issues that can arise when fathers are absent in their daughter's life will be explored. The overall influence that a father has on his daughter will also be discussed.

Withdrawal of the Father

This study will focus on the available research that focuses on the outcome and impact of not having a father growing up. Several issues may arise from a father being absent in his daughter's life. Children can become overwhelmed with confusion when their parents abruptly pull away or put distance between themselves and their child, which leads the child to start to blame themselves for the change in the relationship they have with their parent (Trumbell et. al., 2018). Children who feel that their father has withdrawn may also feel very lonely and unhappy (Zemp et. al., 2018). Studies have shown that child development revolves around parental involvement. The study also indicates that the lack of involvement from the father has negative effects on the romantic relationship of their daughters as adults (Lin et. al., 2020). The absence of the father impacts the daughter as a child as well as an adult, which can have an impact on how the daughter interacts with their child as well as their child's father (Psychogiou et. al., 2021).

Paternal involvement is important when children are in their youth to prepare them for the challenges they will face as adults as well as the importance of a two-parent home in helping the child understand the importance of a solid family structure (Wang et. al., 2021). Although the mother is important in the development of the child, the involvement of the father is just as important as the mother, which is why the daughter must have tangible proof that she is loved by her father, which usually involves physical touch and involvement; therefore, emotional

attachment with the father is also important because it helps establish a child's personality (Wang et. al., 2021).

It is also potentially damaging to have a father to leave the home and his daughter without an explanation. A child's brain is not fully developed to understand certain life changes or events such as a father's withdrawal (Psychogiou et. al., 2021). This can lead to self-esteem issues and self-hate, and studies have shown that children are more than likely to blame themselves for the exit of a parent (Fuchs et. al., 2021). Personal affection is something that children must see to feel loved; therefore, as an example, if a child's father is present in the household but does not have any involvement with the child, the child can experience emotional withdrawal (Fuchs et. al., 2021).

Having a father withdraw from a child can also lead the child to become independent and focus on taking care of herself without the help of a man (Guedes et. al., 2018). According to Lee et. al. (2018), if a daughter has an absent father as a child, it can possibly lead to the daughter having abandonment issues as well as possibly developing personal issues with males in general, which originates from having an absent father in her life (Lee et. al., 2018).

Problems in the Family and Marriage

In this section, marriage and family issues will be discussed. This section will outline several issues that can occur within a household, which can lead to the father leaving the home and becoming an absent parent. This section is not implying that all absent fathers leave due to marriage and family issues, however, discussing issues in relationships can help with the question development during the interviewing process. This section will shed light on common

situations in marriages and relationships, which can occur before the father vacates the home and his daughter's life.

There are several benefits to being married such as having a helper, life partner, and establishing a support system. Several issues can cause a strain in the marriage, which can have several effects on the marriage, whether they are good or bad. Having a marriage that will not end in divorce, depends on how the couple communicates their differences and resolves the issues (Demir-Dagdas et. al., 2018). Studies have found that it is healthy to work through marriages, especially when the couple has children (McIntosh and Tan, 2017). Several issues can contribute to the problems in a marriage, however, one of the biggest issues in a marriage is money.

Money is a pivotal part of any relationship, and it is also a big issue when it comes to the dismantling of relationships, including marriages (Ardian et. al., 2018). Statistics have shown that many marriages often end because of financial issues, which include improper spending, gambling habits, and job difficulties (Miller, 2021). Finances are important in any relationship because money allows things to move smoothly within the marriage, which could help build a strong relationship between the husband and the wife. Financial issues can not only have a major effect on the parents, but it also affects the children as well. Statistics show that primary financial issues in marriage fall on the head of household, which typically the head of household in a heterosexual marriage is the man (Velderman et al., 2018).

In many two-parent heterosexual households, it is not unusual for the woman to stay at home with the children and the man to work. A woman that stays home with the children and focuses on making sure the household runs smoothly is considered a stay-at-home parent (McIntosh and Tan, 2017). In the case of the stay-at-home parent, all the financial burden falls on the man, which means he is responsible for making sure he has enough money to take care of

his wife and children; therefore, he will be blamed for financial issues. In many cases when the man can not properly provide for their family, this can lead to divorce or separation.

A domino effect can occur if the finances are not stable in the household, which can lead to constant verbal fights between the parents and reduced extracurricular activities for the children. In many cases, financial issues can cause other small arguments daily, which can cause stress and anxiety throughout the household. In the case where divorce happens because of money problems, not only is the structure of the household change, but the children also must go through a transition as well, especially if the father leaves the household and the mother must be the sole supporter of the family. Financial issues can also cause neglect from both parents, especially from the parent that is responsible for the finances, which means the parent that is responsible for providing for the family is never home due to money issues.

According to McIntosh and Tan (2017), if the father is the primary breadwinner and is constantly not at home due to work, this takes away the bonding time with his family, especially with his children. An absent father can cause the children to develop development issues, social issues, as well as emotional issues, which increase once the father, removes himself completely from the household. Once the father is gone from the household, the mother must leave her primary role as a stay-at-home spouse and return to the workforce, which causes the mother to also spend less time with the children. This causes a rift in the household, and it can cause the children to blame themselves for the divorce issues and develop anger toward their father for leaving the family. To avoid this issue, regardless of the problems that arise, the father must remain actively present in their children's lives.

Dynamics and Changes in the Family

In this section, relationship between the mother and father will be discussed. This section will outline several issues that can occur between a mother and father and how their actions can impact their daughter, which can lead to the father leaving the home and becoming an absent parent. This section is not implying that all absent fathers leave due to issues such as infidelity; however, discussing issues in relationships can help with the question development during the interviewing process. This section will shed light on common situations that happen in relationships, which can occur before the father vacates the home and his daughter's life.

Infidelity is another common reason for divorce in many marriages. Infidelity is an issue that causes pain and changes not only with the partner, but also changes the family dynamic as well. Many marriages are built on the foundation of trust and monogamy, which is why infidelity is considered breaking marital agreements. Although many marriages end after infidelity has taken place, however, many marriages survive after infidelity to understand why infidelity takes place, one must understand what is considered infidelity.

The act of a man or a woman being unfaithful either sexual or emotional with anyone to whom they are not married is considered the act of infidelity (Klimas et. al., 2019). The meaning of infidelity has evolved over the years, and it does not necessarily mean sexually, as most people only associated infidelity with being intimate with someone other than their partner decades ago the definition has evolved (Lopes et. al., 2020). The truth of the matter is that the couple will determine the meaning of infidelity, ranging from sexual to communication. There are several reasons that infidelity might occur in a marriage such as balance issues in marriage, money, gambling, alcohol, drugs or even having children.

The interesting thing regarding infidelity is that although many times both parties do not participate in the act of infidelity, it takes both partners to fix a marriage after one of the

individuals decides to step outside of the marriage, regardless of what form of infidelity that took place (Bendixen et. al., 2018). Asking the other person to forgive can cause many problems in a marriage, which can also cause issues when it comes to raising children. When infidelity affects the household, one parent might take the children and find a new home to live in, however this is not always the case.

When a child does not live in the household with both of their parents, it creates separation issues for the child, regardless of the father currently being present in the child's life (Thorson, 2019). Another issue with a divorce based on infidelity, it can influence how the children view marriage or being in a relationship (Parker, 2021). Studies have shown that ten out of fifteen children that have divorced parents have issues in their marriage and relationships as an adult (Haseli et. al., 2019). It is also difficult when divorce occurs when a child is in their adolescent age, which can cause issues with understanding divorce and why their parents are not together (Kato, 2021).

It is important that the father not only continues to show support for the decisions of the mother after a divorce, it is important to make sure that the children are also supported by the father as well (Kabátek and Ribar, 2021). Studies have shown that the parents that continue to put on a united front for their children, the children seemly have an easy time adjusting after a divorce, even if infidelity is the cause of the divorce (Gonzalez-Val and Marcen, 2018). However, studies have also shown that in families that do not put on a united front for the children after a divorce, the child usually has symptoms such as anger and resentment that come from the divorce, mostly for the parent that is not the primary parent or at the parent that has abandoned them (Emersonet et. al., 2021).

The aftermath of a divorce from infidelity can also cause the child to doubt the marriage process as a whole and become numb to the thought of a two-parent household. This can also cause issues with the primary parent and the parent that decides to move on to another relationship, which will cause the child to become angry at the parent and not accept the new spouse or partner of their parents (Rejaän et. al., 2021). Therefore, the father needs to continue to have a present relationship with their children, especially the female, which will avoid future relationship issues and avoid a constant rift with the daughter.

Engagement of the Father and Statistical Variations

One of the biggest issues that children face after a divorce is abandonment, usually from the parent that decides to leave the marriage, statistics show that the father is more likely to be the cause of the dismantling of the marriage, however, the women typically initiate the divorce (Aguirre, 2019). Although divorce has become common around the world, the issue of abandonment by the father is a growing issue in the past decades (Doherty et al., 2021). The concept of a blended family is not uncommon after a divorce (Sillekens and Notten, 2020). However common, a blended family takes a lot of adjustment not-- only for the parent but for the child-- especially when it comes to seeking attention from the primary parent.

Blended families can be difficult for children, especially after a difficult divorce. Many children are left trying to figure out how to keep the dynamics of their old life while living a new life, which can be complicated (Schramm and Becher, 2020). Other issues can arise when the child feels like she is abandoned in her own home, particularly when the primary parent is showing more attention to the other children in the home. This could make a child feel as if both of her parents have abandoned him or her, which can cause behavior changes including anger,

isolation, and depression (Fallesen, 2021). Another issue arises when the stepfather is present in the household but only focuses on his biological children.

When these instances occur, it can cause a child to feel as if she is not wanted by any man in her life. Another serious issue of abandonment arises when the father of the daughter, leaves the family and does not contact his child after he divorces her mother. This situation is the most devastating issue that can happen to a daughter, which can lead to issues in their adulthood regarding feeling complete. A child is sensitive to situations that involve a change within the family dynamics, especially when a divorce is involved. Specifically, with daughters, a father must be present in their lives to assist with their growth and development issues (Hald et al., 2020). A present father is important to a daughter because it paves the way for all her relationships with men in the past and future (Auersperg et. al., 2019).

Abandonment is a serious issue and the feeling of being replaced is by far the worst outcome of a divorce for a daughter, studies have shown that when husbands divorce their wives, abandon their children, and start a new family, this can cause lasting issues on the psyche of a daughter (Auersperg et. al., 2019). According to Cowley (2019), it is possible that a father being absent in his daughter's life can potentially lead to the daughter feeling abandoned by her father, particularly when the father has other children and is not absent in their lives. The daughter can grow up with insecurities and have an issue of abandonment or having attachment issues with her partner, which can cause the daughter to get caught in dangerous situations and hold on to unhealthy and abusive relationships just to keep a man in her life (Fischer and Khorunzhina, 2019).

Incarcerations and Illegal Activity

In this section, issues with the father being incarcerated or involved with illegal activity will be discussed. This section will outline issues that are considered illegal or imprisonment issues, which can cause the father to become an absent parent, and how it can affect the daughter. This section is not implying that all absent fathers leave due to issues such as being incarcerated or engaging in illegal activity, however discussing these issues can help with the question development during the interviewing process. This section will shed light on common situations that can happen before the father vacates the home and his daughter's life.

Research has been done on the high incarceration rate amongst black/African American men in the United States, which statistics show that black men are the highest amongst the races of incarcerated men, with Hispanic men coming in second (Assari et. al., 2017). Men of color lead in numbers when it comes to prisons and jail incarceration, which means that children are left fatherless, and women are left to raise the children on their own. Due to vast amounts of research that is available on incarcerated black men and the effects it has on the family; incarcerations will not be included in this research study as a reason for fathers not being present in their daughter's lives. However, this information is important because it provides information on another hurdle that the black man faces and many black girl's fathers are not present because of incarceration, which can still have effects on the daughter as an adult woman.

Studies have shown that the incarceration of black men increased daily, which means more black men are left in jail as opposed to at home with their family, studies also show how black men are becoming incarcerated at younger ages, as young as 15 years old (Fielding-Miller et al., 2018). There have been assumptions in the past decades that prisons hold innocent black men at a staggering rate, which has caused concerns when it comes to the equality of the justice system. The fight to change the justice system has been an ongoing issue, and light has been shed

on the injustices in hopes to involve change, particularly regarding the mass incarcerations of black and Hispanic men (Scanlon et. al., 2018). Although the ongoing issue of racial disparities in the courtroom and prisons is known, there has been little legislation or laws that have changed to rectify this issue (Dogan et. al., 2021).

Studies have also shown that over eighty-five percent of black men that are incarcerated are fathers, which means that the men are not present in their children's lives (Fielding-Miller et. al., 2018). This becomes a problem when it comes to properly raising children because depending on the age of the child when a father is incarcerated, the father can miss pivotal stages that are important in the child's life. Daughters that had incarcerated fathers growing up are at risk of having bad relationships, having self-blame, holding grudges towards their father, or displaying bad behavior due to the absence of their father.

Although it has been proven that all black and brown men that are incarcerated are not innocent, however, studies have shown that there is an enormous gap when it comes to the amount of black and brown men incarcerated in comparison to white men, as well as the amount of time that is given to black and brown men for crimes that they are convicted of, which is an indication on racial disparities and injustices amongst the judicial system, targeted towards minority groups (Pettit and Gutierrez, 2018).

A Father's Protection

Research has shown that women initially feel protected by their fathers, which leads to women desiring protection from their husbands; however, it is not uncommon for men to be viewed as protectors of the family, which is why men need to be present in the lives of their children (Creighton et. al., 2017). This information is important because in the case where the

father is absent in their daughter's life, it makes it difficult for women to form relationships with their male partners as they become adults (Langenbrunner et. al., 2020). The absence of the father can also lead the daughter to think that they can protect themselves and they do not need a man in their lives (Langenbrunner et. al., 2020). Studies have also shown that a percentage of women surveyed identified the absence of the father as the cause of same-sex marriages and relationships, which leads the woman to feel unprotected and unattracted from their male counterparts (Brandon et. al., 2019).

Although women are more than capable of choosing their romantic partner as well as protecting themselves, having a father figure around sets a positive example of how a man should behave towards women (Philip et. al., 2019). Positive imagery is important for any child. Regarding the father's involvement, studies have shown that when the father is present and active in their daughter's life, the daughter is more than likely to have a positive different-sex relationship as well as positive long-term marriages and relationships (Buttitta et. al., 2019). Studies have also shown that women who do not feel protected by their fathers are more than likely to engage in toxic relationships (Buttitta et. al., 2019).

Choices of the Father that have Affected the daughter

Decision-making is important in life, which stems from the nature and nurture of the individual, which means that choices that are made by the parents can influence the decisions that their children make as adults (Cameron et. al., 2017). Decisions are the outcomes or conclusions that have been made by an individual (Yang, 2017). The decisions that parents make can cause a lasting effect on their children, particularly the father to keep the topic of the dissertation in perspective. Several decisions are made by the father that can cause issues with their children, such as not being active in their children's lives.

According to Lazarides and Watt (2017), studies have shown that African American daughters are more likely to have absent fathers starting from childhood, in comparison to any other race, which the top reasons for the father being absent is death and incarceration. Decisions such as not being active are also choices that affect the father and daughter relationship. Active parenting involves taking care of children financially, physically, and emotionally and providing for basic needs (Cameron et. al., 2017). According to Lazarides and Watt (2017), studies have also shown that fathers that live in the home and do not actively engage with their children, is a form of absence, which can lead to the father physically abandoning their daughter; however, this study will not focus on fathers that are actively living with their daughter's. Children are susceptible to positive and negative decisions, which is why parents need to lead by example to avoid issues with their children making poor choices as adults.

Social and Mental Maturing

Situations of the past can have effects on an individual's present life; therefore, trauma can occur in many forms and can influence the individual's social and mental health (McMunn et. al., 2017). Having issues within the household is a situation that can cause lasting trauma (Young et. al., 2019). Children who witness abuse or friction between their parents can face lasting repercussions (McMunn et. al., 2017). Change in the household can promote self-blame and anger towards others, which in many cases, the child is angry with the parent that leaves the household.

Abandonment by a father is also a situation that can be traumatizing and can trigger issues such as mental disorders in daughters that have lived with the absence of their father (Bell et. al., 2019). In instances of paternal abandonment, the mother and the children must seek family and individual therapy (Flasbeck et. al., 2019). It is not uncommon for children to have a

hard time adjusting to their father leaving the house and they can develop mental and physical walls that block them emotionally and isolates themselves from others (Stevens and Jovanovic, 2019).

If the child does not engage in constant therapy to deal with the situation, these issues can persist into adulthood (Flasbeck et. al., 2019). According to Kleber (2019), trauma is defined as disturbing experiences that can be caused by a stressful event, which can include physical and emotional stress and can lead to long-term distress. Trauma can appear in different forms and can cause issues with daily living, therefore making it difficult for the individual to cope and grow (Young et. al., 2019). The individual must utilize therapy and medication if needed to restore balance.

Copulation

According to Ward-Peterson et. al. (2021), the guidance of the father can have an impact on their daughter's choice when it comes to romantic relationships and sexual encounters. Studies have shown that women that grow up without their fathers are at risk of engaging in promiscuous relationships (Briedite and Brokane, 2018). Many daughters who have been abandoned by their fathers may use sexual intercourse as a coping mechanism (Nguyen et. al., 2017).

Many women use sex to cope with feeling unwanted (Briedite and Brokane, 2018). Statistics have shown that African American women are more than likely to have children at a young age, with over eighty percent of those girls having an absent father in their lives (Dodd and Littleton, 2017). The absence of a father can lead to flawed thinking stemming from viewing negative behaviors from others and lack of guidance from primary caretakers, which the lack of a

father can include a surrogate father such as an uncle, grandfather, or clergy (Armstrong et. al., 2021).

Education

In this section, the possible effects of having an absent father will be discussed regarding their daughter's success in school and college. This section will outline how not having the guidance of a father can impact their daughter's educational choices. This section is not implying that all absent fathers cause their daughters to make poor choices regarding their educational endeavors; however, discussing the issue can help provide insight on the importance of education and help develop questions during the interviewing process. This section will shed light on how an absent father can impact their daughter in many areas, which can occur after the father vacates the home and his daughter's life.

Education is important and it leads to lucrative careers which enable freedom and leisure pleasures (Baumgartner, 2017). The choices that children make are influenced by the guidance and structure that they had while growing up, which usually comes from the parents or the caretakers. Having a solid education can open many doors for children that can have positive effects in adulthood as well. The typical child starts pre-school at four years old and continues through the twelfth grade; however, not all children are fortunate enough to attend college (Tichenor et. al., 2017). In ideal situations, parents or caretakers stress the importance of education as the child gets older (Webber, 2017). Having a proper education does not only help with career and social aspects, but it also helps with making choices that can alter the educational path of the individual. Education can enhance the mind of a child as well instill discipline and positive reinforcement at school, home and society.

Studies show that more women are going into the workforce and being educated at a higher speed in comparison to men, and many women are also juggling motherhood and a career (Tichenor et. al., 2017). More specifically, African American women are more likely to attend college than African American men (Cardoso et. al., 2021). Surprisingly, studies have shown that African American single mothers are more educated and have better jobs in comparison to black women that are married (Webber, 2017). The lack of a male presence is thought to have played a significant role in the increase of African American women returning to school, regardless of if the woman is not married, is raising children on their own, or did not have a father figure growing up (Baumgartner, 2017). Studies have also shown that African Americans have the lowest marriage rate and the highest divorce rate (Nidey et. al., 2020).

Relationship choices

In this section, the possible effects of having an absent father will be discussed and how not having the guidance of a father can impact their daughter's relationship choices with men in general. This section is not implying that all absent fathers cause their daughters to have resentment against all men, however discussing this issue can help provide insight on the importance of male interaction and help develop questions during the interviewing process. This section will shed light on how an absent father can impact their daughter in these areas, which can occur after the father vacates the home and his daughter's life.

Relationship choices are also important when it comes to the involvement of the father. Mothers can set an example for their daughters by having positive relationships in their lives. The absence of the father can also lead to the daughter being in a relationship that mimics the relationship she has with her father (Kammrath et. al., 2018). The absence of the father can also lead to the

daughter sabotaging a positive relationship out of fear of being abandoned (Edwards & Wang, 2018).

According to Frederiksen et al. (2021), the absence of the father can lead the daughter to seek the attention of men, regardless of whether the attention is positive or negative and if they are in a relationship with the male or an acquaintance. Many girls that do not have a father figure in their lives often grow up having issues interacting with men, which can lead to boundary issues in their romantic relationships (Frederiksen et. al., 2021). The woman might have issues being alone or having constant thoughts that her partner will leave her, which can turn into more serious issues such as borderline personality disorder (Tusiani-Eng and Yeomans, 2018).

A borderline personality disorder is a diagnosable mental disorder that affects the mood of an individual, affecting the thoughts and perceptions of others, which can affect the individual daily (Jowett et. al., 2020). When people develop this disorder, they often sabotage their relationships and often have no concept of boundaries when it comes to relationships. Many people with BPD even go as far as attempting to hurt themselves just to keep their partner from leaving. People that have BPD often go undiagnosed and never receive the proper medication or therapy to treat the disorder, which causes constant issues within their relationship and trouble finding a genuine connection with their partner.

The need for validation is another issue that can arise because of an absent father. Self-doubt is an issue that has been reported among women that grew up without their fathers (Du et. al., 2017). The issue of self-confidence comes from the absence of men praising the woman as a child (Schmidt and DePaul University, 2018). Adolescence and teenage praise by both parents are important for the growth of the child, which can lead to indecisiveness as an adult (Chan,

2021). This issue can also prevent the woman from making her own decisions without the approval of their partner or leaving a healthy relationship due to the opinions of others.

The notion that all men are the same can lead to issues in a relationship among women that grew up with an absent father from childhood. The emotional pain that stems from an absent father continues into adulthood, which can be either positive or negative. The woman can either have issues with her relationship because she assumes every man will leave her life, emulating the actions of her father, or remain positive and believe that good men do exist (Wood and Brownhill, 2018). According to Wood and Brownhill (2018), the absence of a father can potentially cause the daughter to prejudge and formulate negative assumptions toward men, which can cause the daughter to become angry and isolate herself from all-male involvement.

Women that have anger issues because of abandonment, usually experience isolation and have issues socially, statistics have shown that women who suffer from social issues usually were left alone in some way as a child (May & Dawson, 2018). Experiencing abandonment can lead to trust issues (Vu & Conant-Norville, 2021). Isolation can lead to social anxiety which can lead to interaction issues in families, jobs, and issues amongst peers (Galovan et. al., 2017). Having trust issues hinders the individual from forming healthy relationships and it can lead to avoidance of intimate relationships as well as friendships.

Dating older men is another sign of a woman that lacks the presence of a father. Dating an older male or female often stems from insecurities of some sort or represents the presence of something that has been missing in their lives (Edwards and Wang, 2018). Studies have shown that adults that were abandoned as a child, tend to date older people that would be around the same age as the parent that abandoned them (Watson and Stelle, 2021). Research has shown that

dating someone the age of one's parents triggers a form of security and fills a void of something they did not receive as a child (Wright and Brown, 2017).

Women typically date men that remind them of their fathers that abandoned them as a child and are often unaware that they are attracted to men like their father, regardless, of whether their father was present or not (Salisu, 2021). Adults that grew up in single-parent households often date people that emulate the parent that was absent in their lives; however, many times, the individuals are not aware that they are attracted to certain characteristics of the parent that hurt them (Watson and Stelle, 2021). Studies have also shown that women often date men that are like their father, due to the father being the first male role model, which can be damaging if the father is not a positive role model (Wright and Brown, 2017).

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review addressed many issues that can arise in a daughter that has an absent father in her life. Literature also addressed the positive effects of having a father present while growing up. However, information was needed on the lived experiences of African American girls that have an absent father from birth to eighteen. The lived experiences of six African American women was examined through individual interviews. Several steps were taken to properly collect the needed data from the women. Chapter 3 explained the process of collecting the data from these women to close the gap and provide helpful information regarding this topic.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of African American women who grew up with absent fathers and the potential effects their absences had on them as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and the decision-making process. The methods and specific procedures were outlined in this chapter. Other areas that were addressed in this chapter included trustworthiness, ethics, and an overall summary. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of African American daughters with absent fathers in various areas of their lives?
2. What are the common themes that project from the experiences of African American daughters?

A qualitative phenomenological research study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of African American daughters with absent fathers and the effects on their lives. Qualitative research gave an understanding of an individual's specific experience which is related to a particular phenomenon. Examining the practical experience of an individual regarding a phenomenon was described by using qualitative research (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). To collect in-depth information from an individual, while using appropriate methods, qualitative research was necessary (Bouncken et. al., 2021). To avoid collecting predetermined data from individuals, the researcher used qualitative research to capture lived experiences of each participant to understand a certain phenomenon (Smith, 2018). Using quantitative research did not yield in-depth data collection in comparison to qualitative. Open-ended questions were

used to collect data while implementing qualitative research (Denny & Weckesser). To illustrate the lived experiences of African American daughters that did not have their fathers present when they were growing up, this research specifically used a phenomenological design. Because other research studies did not line up with the justification of this research study, the researcher used phenomenological research to collect data.

Purpose of the Researcher

The researcher's responsibilities included recruiting the participants, collecting important information from the participants, examining the results, and interpreting the findings. The researcher also ensured that privacy and confidentiality were maintained during the entire process of the study. Ethics on all levels of the research journey were implemented and maintained by the researcher.

Procedures

The procedures were delineated in this section. This section addressed the process of selecting the participants, participant enrollment and collection of data, interview questions, analyzing data, dependability issues, and ethics.

Selecting Participants

Participant selection occurred by means of convenience sampling. According to Setia (2016) this mean of sampling is straightforward and a general technique used during dissertations. The participants in this study resided in Atlanta, GA United States and they all have experienced growing up without their fathers present in their lives. The women in this sub-population experienced the absence of their father due to willful or unwilling actions (e.g., divorce and separations, prison, and drug and alcohol use) or fathers leaving the home in general.

In this sample, the participants were between the ages of birth and 18 years old while living with an absent father. The above criteria were confirmed by all daughters participating in this research study.

Participant Recruitment and Collection of Data

The researcher created flyers to recruit potential participants for this study. The flyers advised the potential participants that a ten-dollar e-gift card will be provided after the interview is complete. The researcher printed the flyers and distributed them, on the sidewalks of areas where there is a high traffic of African American women, such as beauty salons and clothing stores, in the Atlanta area. The researcher gathered email addresses from everyone that took a flyer and the potential individual participant that took the flyer, advised the researcher that they needed time to consider. Consent forms were signed by all participants that volunteered for this study before the data collection process.

Denny and Weckesser (2019) acknowledged that interviews are the main instrument for collecting data for qualitative research of a particular phenomenon. The reason for conducting detailed interviews was to gather descriptive information from each participant to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences in the quest of creating the meaning of the data collected. After a review of the literature, 25 questions were created to address the research questions. During the data collection stage, the concepts of Moustakas (1994) were the focus on carrying the idea of interviews being an informal and collaborative process that uses open-ended questions. The researcher started the interviewing data collection process with an important social conversation to usher in a comfortable environment for participants as suggested by Moustakas (1994).

Interviews were scheduled based on the participants' availability. The researcher was responsible for collecting all the data and facilitating each interview. The interviews were estimated to last 30 minutes to 60 minutes. After the data was collected from the main source of interviews, the data collected was transcribed and sent through a member checking process to fully develop the data to assist with creating reliable themes and meaning. In addition to member checking to achieve the highest level of accuracy and trustworthiness, the researcher also used method triangulation in this research. This required the researcher to not only conduct interviews as the primary data collection method, but in addition generating full descriptive notes during the data collection phases. Compiling detailed notes during the data collection would provide a check and balance of the recorded interviews to support the goal of providing a creditable study.

The researcher collected the data by utilizing written/video interviews. This process assisted with ensuring both the researcher and potential participant were comfortable considering the current COVID-19 pandemic. An interview guide was used by the researcher to help with the direction of the interview. After each interview, the researcher sent a follow-up email to the participants within one to two weeks of the initial interview. The follow-up email allowed the participant to look over the transcribed interview and check for accuracy. Also, the follow-up email allowed the participant to give any positive or negative feedback, which enhanced the credibility of the data collected. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher organized and analyzed the data.

Interview Questions

1. What is the biggest reservation you had going into this interview today?

2. What is the most beneficial information about yourself you feel I need to know before we start the interview?
3. What made you decide to participate in this interview?
4. Tell me about the relationship you have with your children's father?
5. What is your opinion on the importance of having a father present in his daughter's life?
6. How did having an absent father affect your school life?
7. How would you describe having an absent father as a child? How did having an absent father impact your development and interactions as a child?
8. What is the most important aspect of receiving therapy as a child that had an absent father?
9. Explain how having an absent father affected your overall opinion on how fathers are supposed to interact with their daughters.
10. Who was the man in your life that you would say was a father figure, since your father was absent?
11. How did having an absent father affect your home life? How did having an absent father affect your school/social life?
12. How did having an absent father affect finances in the home with your mother as well as your own budgeting as an adult?
13. How did having an absent father affect your relationship with your mother?

14. Who was the primary person that taught you new things in your life, including education, social aspects?
15. How did having an absent father bring you closer to understanding social struggles of African American men in the community?
16. How did having an absent father affect your self-esteem and ignite self-hate and self-blame issues?
17. How did having an absent father force you to become independent early in your life and create the notion that you did not need a man to help take care of you as an adult?
18. How did having an absent father affect your romantic relationships?
19. How did having an absent father affect your view on marriage?
20. How did having an absent father lead you to think that you could protect yourself leading into adulthood?
21. How did having an absent father play a role in how you communicate with men in your life?
22. How did having an absent father lead you to handling positive and negative relationship issues in your life?
23. How did your father's abandonment and absence create trust issues in your life at any point?
24. How did having an absent father in your life impact your interactions with women as an adult?

25. What do you think is the most important aspect of this study and what advice would you give young girls that are dealing with the absence of a father?

Questions one to four promote the goal of establishing a social conversation to ensure a relaxed environment is created for the participant as recommended by Moustakas (1994).

Question five was created to capture the participants' opinion on having a two-parent household and to address Wang et. al. (2021) research concerning the importance of having a father present in the home to create a solid family structure. Question six focused on the literature from Marginson and Dang (2017) concerning the development of thinking and social interactions. It is noted that the lack of interaction between a daughter and father could potentially cause damage to cognitive development. Question seven was generated from the literature focused on Prasetvo et. al. (2020) concerning the impacts of development and interaction issues.

Question eight was created to assess the information presented by Flasbeck et. al. (2019) as it relates to the importance of a child to seek family and individual therapy surrounding the ramifications of growing up with an absent father. The literature focused on Stewart and Krivan (2021) is explored by presenting question nine to determine if the common experience of African American daughters was to emulate everything they see or do not see growing up. Question ten was derived from the literature surrounding Set (2021) as it relates to the fact that all people are born with instincts that promote feelings of attachment to others. Question 11 was formed from the theory of Vygotsky surrounding home life and how learning takes place from other children. Question 12 was generated based on research from Ardian et. al. (2018) explaining the importance of money and how it could have ramifications on a household.

Question 13 was formed to confirm if Bowlby's theory within the literature review is relevant to the current participants' experience. Question 14 gathers details to validate or

repudiate the notion presented by Bandura in the literature review as it relates to children being able to learn from observing others. Question 15 was used to gather data on the importance of the information presented by Vygotsky as it relates to children being taught about social awareness. Question 16 was generated to assess the literature that presents research from Trumbell et. al. (2018) concerning self-blame and any negative implications. Question 17 was used to focus on and validate the notion presented from Guedes et. al. (2018) research surrounding the topic of how having an absent father could potentially lead a daughter to become independent early and form the idea that they do not need assistance from a man to live.

Question 18 was formed to address Ardian et. al. (2018) literature and to review the common reasons a relationship might be undone. Question 19 was created to focus on the literature surrounding Parker (2021) and how it relates to infidelity and daughters' views on marriage. The literature focused on Langenbrunner et. al. (2020) is tested by using question 20 to explore whether a daughter felt that due to having an absent father they were forced to think they must protect themselves and do not require a man to do it on their behalf. Question 21 was created to determine if there are lasting repercussions to a daughter witnessing abuse as the literature by McMunn et. al. (2017) suggests.

Question 22 was formed to review the literature presented by Edward and Wang (2018) presenting the notion that an absent father in a daughter's life can often lead to them damaging future positive relationships while Question 23 was created to determine if this is the common thought for the participants. Question 24 was created to focus on the research presented by Frederiksen et. al. (2021) suggesting that daughters that do not have fathers in their lives often grow up having issues interacting with other men. A determination will be made if this is the general notion for the participants or not.

The above semi-structured interview questions were prepared in advance as guidance for the researcher. The researcher used video platforms to conduct the interviews. After the interviews were completed, the researcher saved the interview transcripts on a secure USB drive according to the participant identifier.

Analyzing Data

The researcher transcribed interviews, themes and meanings were created after all the data were fully reviewed. Holroyd (2001) outlines the six stages of phenomenological methods, which include (1) understanding data in its raw form, (2) forming a basic profile, (3) outlining a basic profile, (4) identifying specific patterns, (5) explanation of findings, and (6) analysis of results. The data analysis was based on and surrounding the concepts of Holroyd's methods. Once this was complete, all information was saved on a USB drive.

Understanding the raw data was the first step in phenomenological methods. In this stage, the researcher omitted all biases and assumptions to analyze the raw data. The data was then coded and separated into smaller codes, based on similar experiences from the participants. Forming a basic profile was the second step in phenomenological methods. In this stage, the data was summarized, and the participants are assigned numbers. The third stage was outlining basic profiles. In this stage, themes were formed based on the similar lived experiences of the participants. A theme was created for each category and the participant codes were added based on similar experiences in each category. The categories included decision making, location choices, mental health, relationships, children, education, finances, and social involvement as adults.

The fourth stage was identifying patterns. In this stage, the researcher compared similar responses to certain questions, including direct quotes. The fifth stage was the explanation of the findings. In this stage, the researcher identified the general and unique themes of the study. A combined description of the lived experiences for all samples was explained as well. The sixth stage was the analysis of results. In this stage, the researcher gave an overall summary of the findings and outlined the underlining issues of the participants regarding the phenomenological phenomena.

Dependability Issues

To construct a factual research paper, the researcher must make sure that the information is accurate, and that the data collected can be trusted and relied upon (Stieglitz et. al., 2018). The researcher strived to achieve accuracy and dependable information before the information was published. To capture accurate information, the researcher made sure that the participants in the study provided dependable/credible information, which relied on firsthand experiences (Kaur et. al., 2018). To make sure the information provided by the participants were credible, the researcher used member checking by sending an email summarizing the interview, which allowed the participants to comment, clarify and approve the information captured during the interview. The participant's feedback enhanced the credibility dependability of the research presented.

Generalized information is also known as transferable information (Alarid-Escudero et. al., 2017). The techniques and explanation of the methods allowed other researchers to understand the topic and utilize the data collected in future studies. Information that can be used by other researchers is considered dependable (Horsman, 2018). To make sure the information is considered dependable, the researcher recorded the steps that are taken. Objectivity is something

that must be considered when researching to enhance confirmability (Neugebauer et al., 2018). The researcher must acknowledge biases, relationships, opinions, and biases in self-reflections to avoid objections regarding the research data (Klamer et. al., 2017).

Ethics

The researcher provided all participants with forms of consent. The consent forms provided detailed information regarding the research study which included the purpose of the study, the data processing steps, and the researcher's contact information. To make sure the study is ethical, a consent form was necessary before the interview began, which provided detailed information to the participants regarding the research study. For the consent form to be accepted by the researcher, the participants signed and dated the form, which showed that the participants understood the details and nature of the research study.

Due to the sensitive topic of the study, the researcher was aware of the emotional and psychological issues that the participants may have due to the subject matter. However, the researcher made sure to pause the interview and assist the participants if they became overwhelmed. The researcher assisted them by stopping the interview and providing the needed mental health assistance. The researcher is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (GA) in the states of Kentucky, Iowa, and Ohio, but the participants will be located in the Atlanta, GA area. To make sure there is no bias being presented in this study, the researcher avoided using any participants that were considered family, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and former co-workers.

If any participants requested to remove themselves from this case study, the consent form allows any participant to withdraw from this study, even if the participant opted out after the

interview is given. The participants were informed that the data collected would not be utilized in this study for any participant that withdraws. The participants were informed that they would not be penalized if they withdrew from the study and the gift card that they will receive will not be required to be returned. The reader can view the consent form that was given to the participant in Appendix C.

Although the data that was collected were confidential, meaning the participants' names were not used, the researcher was aware of the participants' identities. The participants' names were also kept confidential during the data storage process. The researcher used numbers instead of the participants' names to store their data on a USB hard drive. The researcher used corresponding numbers to refer to the participants during the interview as well as the data analysis process, to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The researcher did not distribute the raw findings to any third parties, nor did the researcher share individual data of a participant with other participants. However, the results of the data were included in this research study, which are accessible to the public.

Summary

The purpose of the phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of African American women who grew up with absent fathers and the potential effects their absences had on them as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and the decision-making process. Qualitative phenomenological research gives an understanding of an individual's specific experience in which it relates to a particular phenomenon (Maher, L., & Dertadian). To collect in-depth information from an individual, while using appropriate methods, qualitative research was necessary (Smith, 2018). To avoid collecting predetermined data from individuals,

the researcher used qualitative research to capture lived experiences of each participant to understand a certain phenomenon (Gaille, 2019).

To get a complete understanding of the effects of having an absent father while growing up, the researcher included several participants to share their experiences. Five to ten participants were sought after for recruitment. Due to the current global pandemic, the researcher conducted all interviews over written interview/video platforms, to implement safety measures for everyone involved. The researcher analyzed the data collected from the participants and formed themes using the results. Holroyd (2001) outlines the six stages of phenomenological methods, which include (1) understanding data in its raw form, (2) forming a basic profile, (3) outlining a basic profile, (4) Identifying specifics patterns, (5) explanation of findings, and (6) Analysis of results. Chapter Four findings included statements from the participants taken from the interview as well as explanations of the results of the study.

Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of the phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of African American women who grew up with absent fathers and the potential effects their absences had on them as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and the decision-making process. Statistically, studies have shown having a mother and father actively parenting prepares children to become more productive in society as an adult (Brandon et. al., 2019). In this chapter, several elements were discussed such as qualitative research procedures, participants' demographics, detailed descriptions of the participants, themes, and summary. The two forms of data collection that were used by the researcher were demographic assessment forms and interview questions. The themes were developed based on the analyzed data from the interviews. In phenomenological research, it was important to analyze themes based on collected data (Bai et. al., 2021). The participants' lived experiences helped develop the presented themes.

A phenomenological research design was used to analyze the lived experiences of African American women that had absent fathers from birth to 18 years of age and to determine how their father's absence affected them as an adult at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and the decision-making process. This study used the following research questions as a guide, which include:

- What are the lived experiences of African American daughters with absent fathers in various areas of their lives?
- What are the common themes that project from the experiences of African American daughters?

The chapter addressed a brief description of the demographics of the participants/ data collection and analysis were addressed as well. The evidence of the reliability of the data collected was also addressed. Lastly, the results were presented, followed by a summary.

Participants

First, the participants filled out the demographic information form that was provided by the researcher. According to William (2021), when engaging in a qualitative phenomenological research study, it is important that the researcher use five to six lived experience interviews to reach saturation. On the information form, there were questions asked to provide the researcher with more details that enhanced the research study. The questions include age, marital status, current relationship status, current relationship with father, number of children, educational level, occupation, and income. As shown in Table 1 below, the ages of the participants ranged from 18-39 years of age. Three participants were divorced, and three participants were never married; however, all participants reported that they are currently single and do not have a current relationship with their father. Two participants reported not having any children, two participants reported having four children, one participant reported having one child and one participant reported to be pregnant.

One participant had a high school diploma, one participant had participated in a general education development program (GED), one participant had a nursing certificate, one participant had some college and two participants reported having a medical degree. One participant reported to be medical doctor, one participant reported to be a dentist, one participant reported to be a certified nurse assistant, one participant reported to be a waitress, one participant reported to work at a call center and one participant reported to be unemployed.

There were four participants in the income range of \$0 to \$50,000 and two participants in income range of \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Employment	Income Annually	Children	Marital	Relationship Status	Education	Current Relationship with father
Participant A	25	Waitress at Ruth Chris's Steak House	\$35,000	0	Not Married	Single	High school	None
Participant B	39	General Practitioner	\$90,000	4	Divorced (married 3 times)	Single	MD	None
Participant C	23	Customer Service Rep.	\$29,000	2	Not married	Single	Some College	None
Participant D	35	Dentist	\$84,000	0 (pregnant)	Divorced (married for 10 years)	Single	DDS	None
Participant E	18	Unemployed	Varies	1	Not married	Single	GED	None
Participant F	31	CNA	\$31,000	4	Divorced (married 4 times)	Single	Technical College Certification	None

Brief Description of Participants

Participant A

Participant A, a 25-year-old single African American female with no children. She has never been married. She has a high school diploma and works as a waitress at Ruth Chris Steak House making \$35,000 annually.

Participant B

Participant B, a 39-year-old African American female with four children. She has been married and divorced three times. She has a medical degree and is a general practitioner at a local hospital making \$90,000 annually.

Participant C

Participant C, a 23-year-old single African American female with two children. She has never been married. She has some college experience, and she works as a customer service representative making \$29,000 annually.

Participant D

Participant D, a 35-year-old single African American female that was pregnant during the time of this interview. She is divorced. She has a medical degree, and is a dentist making \$84,000 annually.

Participant E

Participant E, a 18-year-old single African American female with one child. She has never been married. She has a GED and is currently unemployed. She reported her annual salary as varied.

Participant F

Participant F, a 31-year-old single African American female with four children. She has been married and divorced four times. She is a certified nursing assistant certificate working as a CNA making \$31,000 annually.

Themes

After all interviews were completed and the data was transcribed, the researcher was able to analyze data to look for themes through thematic analysis . Understanding details and themes in this populations is pivotal to this research (Siddaway, 2020). The data gathered from statements that related to African American fathers being absent were coded. The themes are listed below along with examples of specific statements related to those themes for deeper understanding. The categories will be used as themes, which are categorized as emotional effects, interactions, understanding, relationships, and trust issues.

The themes were created through research analysis. The topic of African American daughters lived experience with an absent father is addressed using five themes and explanations derived from interview question responses:

- Emotional Effect- Internal thoughts, feelings, and memories regarding having an absent father. (Example of potential emotional effects: depression, anxiety, anger)
- Interactions- Behaviors and actions that can potentially relate to having an absent father. (Example of potential interactions: hostile, negative)
- Understanding- Analyzing social, self-reflection and consequences of having an absent father. (Example of potential feeling/emotions of understanding: sympathetic, compassion, considerate)

- Relationships- Participants' thoughts and engagements in relationships while having an absent father. (Example of potential relationship status: single, divorced, married)
- Trust Issues- Actions and thoughts of others because of having an absent father. (Example of potential results of trust issues: defensive, guarded, cautious)

Emotional Effect

This theme is connected to the effects of thoughts, feelings, and memories of the participants as related to having an absent father. These themes are common when referring to emotional effects. Research has shown that children and adolescents that experience issues at home or with parental separation, show signs of communication and emotional issues (Smith et. al., 2021).

The effects of having an absent father as an African American daughter was conveyed by all participants in this study. All participants were able to convey the importance of having a father in their lives. When participant A was asked about the importance of having a father, she stated, "Father's help you with your emotions and keep you safe." When asked the same question, participant C stated, "Having a father is important. I know if my father was in my life, I would not have made the mistakes I have made. I would have chosen a better man that loved me back and did not try to manipulate me." When participant E was asked the same question, she spoke about taking responsibility as a father. Participant E stated, "I mean obviously it is just as important as it is having a mother. You have sex; it's both parties' responsibility to take care of the child, it's that simple. Especially when it comes to females, you need a male presence."

Participants A, C and F, reported going to therapy; however, they overall suggested they didn't get anything out of therapy. Participant F stated, "I went to several therapists as a child but

none of them had an absent father so they couldn't help me. Now looking back, I should have opened more to them to get the help." When participant C was asked about the importance of therapy as a child, she stated, "I went to therapy as a child for acting up in school. I didn't understand why I was there, so I didn't take it seriously. When I was asked about my father, I shut down. So, I didn't get much out of therapy as a child because my mother never explained the importance of therapy to me." Participants B and D stated that they didn't receive therapy as a child. When asked about the importance of therapy, participant D stated, "I never had therapy as a child. My mother said that therapy was for white people. However, I wanted to go to therapy because I wanted someone to talk to that would listen to me."

When asked about the impact developmentally and interactive wise, there were mixed responses. Participants A, B and F, spoke about the hurt and pain they went through due to having an absent father. Participant A stated, "Having an absent father sucked, I was depressed. I wanted a father to take me to the park and play with me like the kids on tv. As a child I was bitter. I didn't surround myself with anyone that had a father in their life. I always felt like those type of people looked down on me." Bowlby also asserted that if a child does not get affection, he or she will not form attachments and will develop mental health issues (Bosemans et. al., 2022). When asked participant F the same question, she responded, "It was hard, lonely. I blamed myself, I didn't feel good enough. I was not able to be around people because I was afraid that someone would know that I was a bastard and my father abandoned me." However, some participants viewed it as a common thing to have an absent father, at that time.

Participant C stated, "I never knew anyone in my family that had a father-- it was normal to me. So, I had to watch television to know how it was like to have a father. I developed the mentality that no man was needed to make it in this world. My mom did it by herself so in my

childish mind, not having a father was not important. I was wild; I was what people would call a tom boy. I guess I acted like a boy because I was never treated like a princess. I was into sports.” When asked the same question, participant E stated, “Not having a father was not uncommon to me. I know many people, well most people in my family didn’t have their father growing up. Not my mother or grandmother or my cousins. It is a generational curse. It has become a norm in my family. I would say it didn’t affect me much, I feel like I’m okay, things could have been worse.”

Interactions

Studies have shown that father-child interactions help develop a child emotionally and socially, starting from infancy to adulthood (Park and No, 2021). It is important for a child to have a positive interaction with their father, which will help them interact with others outside of the household. However, having an absent father, the interaction aspect for the participants was affected. The correlation of this theme will connect to the other themes, due to interactions and experiences, which leads to understanding of some sort. These themes are common when referring to social interactions. Studies have shown that children that do not have a present father often are socially awkward at school and other social settings (Hertz et. al., 2019).

When the participants were asked about how fathers are supposed to interact with their daughters, all participants said the same thing, the father must be present. When asked this question to participant B, she stated, “I have always known that fathers were important. However, when my father left, I was lost, so I know that if you have a father that was in your life and then left, especially still being alive, you will be lost. I realized that fathers are just as important as mothers in your life.” Participant C stated, “As I got older, I started to understand how important it is for a father to interact with their daughter. A father needs to protect their daughters from men! There will always be a man that is waiting to use and abuse young women.

When I say abused, I mean take advantage of at a young age. I was that woman.” A present father is important to a daughter because it paves the way for all her relationships with men in the past and future (Auersperg et. al., 2019). Participant F stated, “I knew that fathers are supposed to be there regardless. I just got a shitty dad. I seen kids with their fathers, happy smiling. I just had to imagine my dad. It was bad.”

When asked about a male role model in their lives after their father left, three participants stated that they had surrogate father’s. Participant C stated, “My pastor, he was like a father to me.” Participant E stated, “My mom’s brother, my uncle. He lived with us, and he tried to help me, he put me on game and showed me love. However, he was killed when I was 14, so when he died, I was on my own in terms of having a male role model. He was a great man and he tried to help me. If he was still alive, I am sure I wouldn’t have made the mistake to have a son with a deadbeat man.” When asked the same question, participant F stated. “My grandfather was a great man. He did everything for me, he spoiled me. He died when I was 16 years old. He was the man I hoped my kid’s father would be, but I was wrong.” However, participant B reported that she didn’t have a father figure until she was an adult, she stated, “I didn’t have a father figure when I was growing up. I didn’t find a father figure until 10 years ago when I discovered God. My pastor is now my surrogate father. I turn to him for everything. I wish he had been there when my father left when I was younger. I would have been a better person.” While participant A reported not to have a male figure in her life after her father left, she stated, “I didn’t have a man in my life. Every father that spent time with their kids on tv, they were my role models. I lived in fantasy world.”

When the participants were asked how having an absent father affected the finances in the home as a child, all participants excluding participant D, stated that it caused their mother to

be at work most of the time. Participant A stated, “My mother never got to do anything. All she did was work to pay bills. Now, all I do is work to pay bills. I am no different than how my mother was when I was growing up.” Due to the absent fathers, more stress has been put upon the African American mother, leaving them to raise their children in single parent households; therefore, taking on the role of the mother and the father (Johnson-Eaddy, 2020). Participant C stated, “Well, my mother was always at work because she didn’t receive any child support or finances from anyone. When I was older, as an adult, I am not good with money because I never had the things I wanted as a child. So, when I get money, I use it to buy things for my kids so they can fit in. It causes me to be behind on bills or I spend my last, but I do it, so my kids won’t go through what I went through.”

Statistics have shown that many marriages often end because of financial issues, which include improper spending, gambling habits, and job difficulties (Miller, 2021). However, participant D had a different experience when it came to finances in the home as a child. She stated, “We didn’t struggle. We were well off. I never had to want for anything. My mother’s family is very rich. My mother is a judge, we are good at budgeting and saving money. I was raised to only spend money on things I need and is of use.”

When the participants were asked the question of who taught you new things in society and education, all six participants responded differently. The researcher will provide the response from each participant to show the differences between each participant and who helped them interact as a child. Participant A stated, “The television. I watched a lot of “Good Times” and “Family Matters” growing up. So, I would say Cosby and Carl Winslow.” Participant B stated, “I learned from white people. Before my dad left, I didn’t associate with them. My parents didn’t associate with them. But, after he left my mother for a white woman, I wanted to know

everything about them. Everything that they did, liked or knew, I wanted to replicate them. I learned from them the good and the bad.” Participant C stated, “My grandmother was my everything. She taught me everything. She was the one that pushed me to do things and be better. She has passed on now, but she was the person that believed in me and tried to make me into a good woman.”

Participant D stated, “My mother taught me everything. She has a reputation to uphold so I was well trained.” Participant E stated, “My uncle taught me everything. The little that I know, came from him.” Participant F stated, “My grandfather, he taught me everything I know. He was the only person that wanted to deal with me.”

Understanding

Explanations are important when it comes to understanding difficult events in an individual’s life. Studies have shown that the lack of understanding, acknowledgment and empathy has led to the growing trauma amongst African American individuals and families (Anderson and Stevenson, 2019). As a child, many children do not understand the reasoning behind actions of adults; however, their perspective on things may be influenced based on societal issues. This theme will connect to the other themes, due to experiences, which leads to understanding of some sort. These themes are common when referring to self-awareness. For black women, self-awareness of life traumas and situations are key to maintaining a balanced life (Adkins-Jackson, et. al., 2019).

When the participants were asked about the societal struggles of the African American man, they all understood the continuing social issues and even sympathy for their father.

Participant A stated, “I watched a lot of tv. and I noticed that a lot of black men in the news are

like my father. So, I feel like he couldn't help it. Maybe it is in a black man's nature." Participant C stated, "I can sympathize with some men. Not all black men are bad. I know some of them try and have been dealt bad cards. However, my father just didn't want to be a father. I don't think it is an excuse for not being a father unless your dad has passed away. Society is hard for black men, but that is still no excuse for most of them that are not in their kid's life." However participant B stated, "When my father left and I started hanging around white people, I started to notice just how broken black people are. I started to hate myself. I was embarrassed. I started to understand why my father left; he was tired of being the worst in society."

When asked about self-hate and self-esteem issues, there were different responses. Participant B stated, "I hated myself, I wanted to be white. I figured if I started to act white or do what white people did, he would come back and love me. I hated black people in general, I hated myself, to the point that I started to bleach my skin, wear blue contacts and dye my hair blonde. My father never showed up. It wasn't until I found God that I realized deep inside, I hated my father for leaving. I had to let go and start loving myself." Participant A stated, "I have always felt numb. I never thought about myself. I just take things one day at a time. I don't think it's that deep. It is what it is." Participant C stated, "As a kid, I didn't really think about it because it was normal to me. However, when I got older, I realized that I was acting out because I wanted a father. I wanted to be a boy because my father was not there and I don't have male siblings or relatives, so I was trying to understand what it meant to be a man." However, participant E response to this question was, "I didn't hate myself. I do still blame myself for ruining my mother's life. I think she didn't get a fair deal."

Relationships

Relationships can be lasting, and it is important that positive and healthy relationships are developed as a child, which will help the individual understand relationships as an adult. A healthy family dynamic is built upon the relationship between the parents and child (Petren et. al., 2019). The correlation of this theme will connect to the other themes, due to relationships and how they build trust between individuals. These themes are common when referring to emotional effects. Positive and negative relationships can dictate certain emotions in children and adults, particularly trauma and parental issues (Reigstad et. al., 2022).

When asked the question regarding independence and not needing a man, four out of six participants stated that their father leaving made them independent; however, the other two participants stated that they learned independence from their mother. Participant A stated, “I was forced to be at home by myself because my mother was always working. I had to learn how to take care of myself. You adapt. There is no need for anyone else to help me, I already know how to help myself.” Participant F stated, “My mother didn’t care about me, and it was clear my father hated me, so I had to be independent. When my grandfather died, I could only depend on myself. I wanted a man to take care of me but none of them felt like I was worthy enough either, so I was forced on all ends to be independent and take care of myself.”

Children who witness abuse or friction between their parents can face lasting repercussions (McMunn et. al., 2017). However, participant C stated, “I was always independent because I learned that from my mother. All she did was work so I got my worth ethic from my mother. When I started to notice men, I still worked but I was the one taking care of my man. I thought that that was the job of the woman to run the household so that is what I did. I guess I hurt myself. So, I figured every woman had to be independent.”

When it comes to relationships, all participants stated that they were not in a relationship, and they had no positive relationships in their life. Participant A stated, “I never had a relationship with a man. I see a few men but never a relationship. Who has time for other people?” Studies have also shown that women who do not feel protected by their fathers are more than likely to engage in toxic relationships (Buttitta et. al., 2019). Participant B stated, “It had a major effect on my life. I only dealt with white guys trying to feel the same love and emotions my father had for his white wife. I hated anything and anybody that was not white. To the point that I stayed with white men that abused me in more ways than one and put my kids through a lot of stuff just because I thought the world of my dad, who was a terrible man, and hated his kids.” According to Lee et al. (2018), if a daughter has an absent father as a child, it can lead to the daughter having abandonment issues as well as developing personal issues with males in general, which originates from having an absent father in her life (Lee et. al., 2018). However, Participant E stated, “When I wanted a man, I seen one. When I got tired of them, I dismissed them. Simple as that. I didn’t need a man for romance. That is the best way I can describe it.”

When asked about marriage, participant E stated, “Get out of here. Why would I get married? I don’t know a single person that had a great marriage. I am not the marrying type. I get tired of people so I would be a fool to try to commit. I’m not the faithful type. I guess I got that from my daddy.” To understand if someone has a grasp on the concept of learning, they usually display a certain behavior that indicates they have learned a certain thing (Chia et. al., 2021). Participant F stated, “I was married four times. I believe in marriage and love. I just picked men that didn’t want to settle down and commit to me, off paper I mean.” Studies have shown that ten

out of fifteen children that have divorced parents have issues in their marriage and relationships as an adult (Haseli et. al., 2019).

When the participants were asked about their communication with men, the responses were negative. Participant F stated, “I try to communicate with my ex’s, but they didn’t want to listen. So, we fussed and argued. I can say that I never had a calm conversation with my ex’s.” Participant E stated, “I treat men how they treat me. Men only want one thing, to screw you and leave you. I look at men the same way, never wanting a relationship or their money.”

Trust issues

When it comes to relationships, trust issues are a positive thing that comes from building relationships. When it comes to trust between a father and a daughter, the overall relationship and trauma level determines the level of trust between the two individuals. Studies have shown that the lack of trust in romantic relationships leads to problems, with many adult trust issues stemming from childhood traumas (Campbell and Stanton, 2019). This theme has a connection with all of the other themes. These themes are common when a parent or guardian is absent from their child’s life. Studies have shown that a child having a negative relationship with their father can cause attachment issues with friends, family and possibly romantic relationships, which can begin as early as middle school (Rotenberg et. al., 2021).

When asked about trust issues participant A stated, “I will never trust a man. They just let you down in the end.” Participant B stated, “I didn’t trust anyone black, I only trusted white people. I only trusted people that didn’t look like me. However, I put all my trust in white people, especially white men.” Participant F stated, “I only trusted my grandfather. My own sons have tried to fight me in the past.” When asked about trust issues with women, participant C

stated, “I don’t trust anyone. The only person I trust is my grandmother because she was the only person that was there for me when I was growing up.” Participant D stated, “I don’t trust my mother and any woman that thinks that raising a daughter on their own is healthy.” However, participant E stated, “I get along great with the women. No issues in that department.”

When asked about the advice they will give young girls with absent fathers, participant A stated, “never depend on a man. Just because someone brought you in this world, does not mean they love you.” The absence of the father can also lead the daughter to think that they can protect themselves and they do not need a man in their lives (Langenbrunner et. al., 2020). Participant B stated, “get help when your father walks out. Do not place the blame on anyone but your dad. Don’t hold grudges; forgive your father and let God deal with him. Don’t isolate yourself from anyone or place judgment. If you don’t get help and continue to love yourself, you will make mistakes that you can never recover from. It is up to your father to come back to you.” Participant C stated, “Get therapy and ask questions as to why it is important to get early help. Don’t be a mattress for a man, don’t let the actions of your father ruin your life.”

On this theme, Participant D stated, “My advice is that there are two sides to every story. Don’t just get mad at your father. Seek the truth first before you judge.” Participant E stated, “I would say all men are alike, don’t expect much from them. There are not many men like my uncle, he was great. Don’t give these assholes a pass, make them take care of their responsibility. I know I didn’t force my son’s father; but if I knew what I knew now, I would have at least put him on child support. Just because he needs to feel what I am feeling.” Participant F stated, “Take therapy seriously. don’t hold on to stuff. What goes around comes around. Love yourself even when no one loves you back. Take one day at a time.”

Summary

The purpose of Chapter Four explored the lived experiences of African American daughters with absent fathers. An outline of the participants, demographics, and interview questions were collected. To understand the lived experience of having an absent father, the researcher used the phenomenological study design. Examining the practical experience of an individual regarding a phenomenon was described by using qualitative research (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). The study outlined how having an absent father can affect many areas in the daughter's life as a child as well as an adult. Some of the areas that were affected include home, school, social and intimate relationships.

Considering all of the data gathered during the study was enough information to reach saturation and develop five themes, which were emotional effect, interactions, understanding, relationships, and trust issues, which present the core issues of daughters having an absent father. Once the researcher started to hear comparable statements from the participants, is when she considered the idea that data saturation was achieved.

Health care advocates such as mental health therapists, counselors and social workers can assist African American daughters with absent fathers by providing aid based on the needs of everyone. Chapter Five presented the findings and provide recommendations for African American daughters with absent fathers.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

Chapters one through four presented, displayed and outlined data. Chapter Five included a discussion of the findings, as well as recommendations for health care advocates, recommendations for research in the future, and a conclusion and summary. Research has showed the importance of having a present father, while research has also showed the effects of having an absent father as an African American daughter. There has been research in the past that outlines absent fathers in their children's life, however there are few studies that focus on the lived experience of the African American daughter with an absent father. To avoid collecting predetermined data from individuals, the researcher used qualitative research to capture lived experiences of each participant to understand a certain phenomenon (Gaille, 2019).

The lack of guidance as it pertains to helping daughters with absent fathers is a concern. Studies have shown that fathers that did not have a father will lack the understanding of the importance of being in their child's life and their responsibility as a father (Gamboa and Julion, 2019). A qualitative study was used to understand the lived experience of African American daughters with absent fathers since childhood. Five themes were produced based on data collected and analyzed. Research literature from previous studies help provide supporting and lacking information on African American daughters with absent fathers. This research study was aimed to understand the lived experience of the African American daughter and the effects that are caused by having an absent father.

Studies have shown that mothers have a harder time raising their children when a father is not present to help with the parental responsibilities (Young et. al., 2022). Studies have shown

that the earlier both parents engage in involvement with their children, the more likely the child will have positive developmental stages (Liu et. al., 2020). The effects of not having a present father can cause extensive damage, even into adulthood. Studies have shown that daughters that grow up without their father, can have “daddy issues” into adulthood and develop trust issues with men (Walters, 2019). Using several theoretical methods helped further the readers’ understanding of the importance of having a father in a child’s life. The participants were unknown to the researcher and the researcher informed the participants on the essence of the study, which they were able to convey their lived experience of having an absent father. This study identified the aftermath of fathers leaving their daughters when they were children and discussed how they are currently impacted as adults.

The purpose of this study was to shed light on a common issue that has not yet been properly addressed, through the lives of daughters that have experienced this type of trauma. Due to the lack of information on this topic, this study provided needed understanding and help progress in future research studies. Health care advocates such as mental health therapists, counselors and social workers can use this study to further their understanding on this issue. To find information on the research question, six African American females volunteered to participant in this research study. All the participants were residents of the Atlanta, GA area. The forms that were used to collect the data consisted of personal information forms, interviews and documentation that was collected during the interviews.

After all interviews were given, the researcher carefully examined the data that was collected from the interviews and compared the information. After carefully analyzing the data, five themes were identified, themes which were relatable to all participants. The five themes were the foundation of the qualitative discussion. The researcher allowed all participants to review

their interview to ensure the data that would be reported is correct. The researcher attempted to fill the gap of reporting the lived experiences of African American daughters that had absent fathers.

Based on the data collected, the five themes that were developed are: (a) emotional effects, (b) interactions, (c) understanding, (d) relationships, and (e) trust issues. The participants effectively expressed their lived experience regarding having an absent father. Although all the participants come from different levels of society, some share similar experiences. When the participants were asked about the importance of having a father in their lives, they all shared similar responses regarding its importance. The similar responses ranged from thoughts of having a father in one's life being important to potentially alter future mistakes. The participants shared different views on the effectiveness of therapy, that was taken note of. Views ranged from some going to several therapists as children and feeling that valuable help was not received because the therapist could not personally relate. On the other side were individuals who never went to a therapist a day in their life. This observation showed how a connected group of similar individuals could still experience many different other elements of life.

There were also different emotional effects on the participants when it came to the impact of having an absent father. The different emotional effects went into many directions concerning the feeling of different participants. It was interesting to see how one participant could feel depressed and think that having an absent father as lame, because many other individuals having a father in their lives and seeming happier than they were. On the other hand, seeing another emotional effect that was completely in a different direction was worth noting. Hearing comments such as why would I be sad for not having a father around; having an absent father is nothing new and a norm within one's community. It was ear catching to hear the fact that being

depressed in certain communities had no place to stay because it is an adopted way of life for many. A father's absence creates female dominated households, which may make it seem normal not having a father in the household to help raise their children (Johnson-Eaddy, 2020).

When the participants were asked about how a father was supposed to interact with their daughter, the participants stated the same thing in different ways, i.e., the father should be present. Several of the participants felt that having a father around was important and equally to having a mother around to help raise them. This is a communication that even though a father is absent, the communication of the importance of the missing father still found a way to reveal itself to this population. When it comes to having surrogate male role models, half of the participants reported having a male role model. This could potentially be one of the means of the previous comment above of the importance of a missing father being revealed. Some of the role models identified were grandfathers. On the other hand, some of the participants didn't have any surrogate role models and lived in fantasy worlds to compensate for the missing father.

Another element of the study that was worth nothing was when it came to ways certain participants were taught new things, some learned many valuable lessons from television programs such as, "Good Times" and "Family Matters". Some of the participants learned from other cultures ways of life. Lastly, some simply learned from the person that was raising them, their mother.

Many of the participants stated that their father being absent led them to become independent. Another shocking thing that the data revealed is that none of the participants were currently in a relationship or currently married. Some of the participants felt they didn't know any happily married individuals, they are easily annoyed, or they were not a faithful person.

It was interesting to discover within the data how trust issues did play a big part within some of the participants life. Some felt that a women should never trust or depend on a man. Another perspective was shared that individuals should seek help and never blame others, there is only one person to blame and that's the individual who decided to abandon their child/children. It was fascinating to see how an individual who has been hurt could voice such a mature perspective.

All the themes were able to address individual lived experiences of African American daughters with absent fathers. First, daughters that grow up with absent fathers are not likely to repeat the same behavior and become absent mothers. This study will allow implications for health care providers to better assist daughters with absent fathers. This study will help the providers understand that the responsibility of fathers provides finances and guidance, as well as the reasons for being an absent father. Second, health care providers can advise fathers to engage in activities with their daughters, regardless of if they are living in the home or not.

The overall goal of the study was to collect information, which will assist healthcare providers and advocates to understand the emotions, thoughts, and perspectives of African American daughters with absent fathers. This information provided an in depth understanding of young African American daughters with absent fathers. As a healthcare provider, it is important that all assumptions and bias are removed to have a solid clinician and client relationship; therefore, it is important to allow the provider to be empathic and use positive approach when it comes to assisting the African American daughters.

Implications

There are consequences when participants feel as if their needs are being overlooked., This oversight can affect all aspects of their lives, physically and emotionally. The participants felt that they had many unmet needs; however, they acknowledged that they were willing to seek help from healthcare providers and advocates, such as social workers, teachers, and mental health therapists. The implications of this study include, providing individualized support for the participants based on their personal needs. Expressing the needs of the participants to teachers, social workers, and mental health therapists. Working with existing community programs. Establishing mentoring programs and encouraging relationships with the healthcare provider and the daughter. Lastly, encouraging activities outside of the home to build social relationships and establishing parenting classes.

Limitations

Since this study only utilized individual interviews for data collection, limitations were created. The way the participants present and describe their story limits the data collected. Because the researcher engaged in one interview per participant, it was not possible to collect what could amount to several decades of information.

Limitations were also present in the area of a big variance amongst the educational levels of the participants. All the participants were also single during the study. Both limitations could potentially influence the present results, considering the possible outcome of incorporating individuals with a more diverse educational background and participants who are engaged and/or married. Future research could likely benefit from including a more diverse population of African American daughter who have attended college obtaining a 4-year and master's degrees and who are engaged and/or married.

Recommendations

Although the study reveals some perspectives of African American daughters with absent fathers, this topic should be explored more in detail. Studies of African American daughters with absent fathers between the age of five until eighteen years old could provide different results. Conducting more interviews will help reframe stereotypes and assumptions, while providing more needed literature for this topic. The researcher also recommends enlarging the area of participants to help collect more data on African American daughters with absent fathers in different areas such as educational and relationship status. It might be helpful to this topic if the lived experience of African American mothers raising daughters without the presence of their daughter's father is examined as well. This will help shed light on the perspectives of the African American mother and daughter. The African American mother can provide detailed information on the struggles that they face and their opinion on what they think is needed to assist the mother as well as the daughter in these situations. Research on the perspective as to why the daughters think their father's left, will add to the study as well. Family therapy consisting of African American mothers and daughters will help provide information on this topic. Finally, interviewing social workers, mental health professionals as well as school administration will also provide needed information on ways to help daughters with absent fathers.

Conclusion

The data has shown that the absence of an African American father cause disruptions in the family home. In particular, the father's absence will affect the mother and the daughter. The absence of an African American father can potentially affect the child in many ways including education, health, teen pregnancy, financially, mentally, emotionally, and socially (Walters,

2019). These affects can also affect the African American daughter in her adult life as well, including her romantic relationships.

It is also important that research is conducted on the perspective of the African American father as well, which will shed light on their reasoning. The absence of the African American father can also influence the relationship between the mother and the daughter. This absence can either create positive attachments or negative interactions between the mother and the daughter.

The data collected likely suggests that the African American daughters understood the role of a father; however, many of the daughters accredited their father's absence to the lack of wanting to take responsibility for their offspring. The participants expressed their frustrations and barriers they had to face due to lack of guidance. The participants also expressed the emotions and behavior issues that were caused due to not having a present father and having a mother that worked most of the time. The daughters expressed how the absence of their father, affected their relationships with men in adulthood, which resulted in all the participants being single or divorced.

The study also showed that having a surrogate father can have a positive effect on the African American daughter, especially if the interaction is consistent and uninterrupted. The data showed that the absence of the father effected those daughters that had support, did not have support, and the daughters that had surrogate fathers; thus, the presence of the father is importance regardless of financial status and having a support system. Studies have shown that surrogate fathers can have a positive impact on the lives of children with absent fathers (Nathane and Khunou, 2021).

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APPENDIX A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 23, 2022

Abishag Douglas
Courtney Evans-Thompson

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY22-23-111 THE IMPACT OF THE ABSENT FATHER ON AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Dear Abishag Douglas, Courtney Evans-Thompson,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: September 23, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

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

APPENDIX B

Research Participants Needed

THE IMPACT OF THE ABSENT FATHER ON AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

- Are you an African American Daughter?
 - Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Was your father absent in your life from birth to 18 years of age?

If you answered **yes** to each of the questions listed above, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

The purpose of the phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of African American women who grew up with absent fathers and the potential effects his absences had on them as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and in the decision-making process.

1. Participants will be asked to participate in an audio recorded interview via a video-chat platform. (The interview is estimated to take 30-60 minutes.)
2. Review/validate your interview transcripts for accuracy.
(After the study's interview data is collected and transcribed, you will be asked to verify certain responses to questions asked in the interview process for quality assurance.)

While there is no direct benefit to you, you will be adding your detailed information to the field of information on this topic for a better understanding of this group of women.

Upon completing all procedures, participants will receive a \$10 Shell gas gift card.

If you would like to participate, please contact the researcher at the phone number or email address provided below.

A consent document will be provided when you contact the researcher or sent as a part of a follow-up email.

Abishag I Douglas, a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Abishag Douglas at [REDACTED]@liberty.edu for more information.

APPENDIX C

Consent

Title of the Project: THE IMPACT OF THE ABSENT FATHER ON AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Principal Investigator: Abishag Douglas, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an African American daughter/female 18 years old who experienced having an absent father for a period between birth and 18 years old. 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 phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of African American women who grew up with absent fathers and the potential effects his absences had on them as adults at home, in school or work, in their neighborhoods, and in the decision-making process.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Take part in an audio recorded interview via video-chat platform. The interview is estimated to take roughly 30-60 minutes.
2. Validate your interview transcripts for accuracy. After the study's interview data is collected and transcribed, you will be asked to verify certain responses to questions asked in the interview process for quality assurance.

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 adding significant information to the existing data on the topic which may lead to an enhanced understanding of African American daughter who experienced living with an absent father.

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. Some subjects in the interview phase may discuss vulnerable topics that could potentially cause anguish. Factoring this in, you will be observed carefully to avert this from occurring by any means necessary. Experiencing significant distress could translate to termination of your participation. Additionally, if I become privy to information that triggers the mandatory reporting requirement, such as child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, this may become a risk to you as a participant. I am a mandatory reporter and have a duty to report such instances to the authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by using pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted virtually with headphones for privacy.
- 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.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. A \$10.00 Shell gas gift card will be issued to each participant after the interview concludes. If a participant withdraws from the study, they are still eligible to receive the gift card.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

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

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

The researcher conducting this study is Abishag Douglas. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her [redacted]@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Courtney Evans at [redacted]@liberty.edu.

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

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

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered

and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

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

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

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

1. What is the biggest reservation you had going into this interview today?
2. What is the most beneficial information about yourself you feel I need to know before we start the interview?
3. What made you decide to participate in this interview?
4. Tell me about the relationship you have with your children's father?
5. What is your opinion on the importance of having a father present in his daughter's life?
6. How did having an absent father affect your school life?
7. How would you describe having an absent father as a child? How did having an absent father impact your development and interactions as a child?
8. What is the most important aspect of receiving therapy as a child that had an absent father?
9. Explain how having an absent father affected your overall opinion on how fathers are supposed to interact with their daughters?
10. Who was the man in your life that you would say was a father figure, since your father was absent?
11. How did having an absent father affect your home life? How did having an absent father affect your school/social life?
12. How did having an absent father affect finances in the home with your mother as well as your own budgeting as an adult?

13. How did having an absent father affect your relationship with your mother?
14. Who was the primary person that taught you new things in your life, including education, social aspects?
15. How did having an absent father bring you closer to understanding social struggles of African American men in the community?
16. How did having an absent father affect your self-esteem and ignite self-hate and self-blame issues?
17. How did having an absent father force you to become independent early in your life and create the notion that you did not need a man to help take care of you as an adult?
18. How did having an absent father affect your romantic relationships?
19. How did having an absent father affect your view on marriage?
20. How did having an absent father lead you to think that you could protect yourself leading into adulthood?
21. How did having an absent father play a role in how you communicate with men in your life?
22. How did having an absent father lead you to handling positive and negative relationship issues in your life?
23. How did your father's abandonment and absence create trust issues in your life at any point?

24. How did having an absent father in your life impact your interactions with women as an adult?
25. What do you think is the most important aspect of this study and what advice would you give young girls that are dealing with the absence of a father? \