



STUDY GUIDE

Are Fathers Necessary?

KEY TERMS:

role model
relate

wild nature
security

common sense
father figure

| Detail Focus: Complete this section <i>during</i> the video. | Main Summary Focus: Complete this section <i>after</i> the video. |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Who stated in a Father's Day speech that "Fathers are critical to the foundation of each family?"</p> <p>2. Why do most single mothers find it more and more difficult to control their sons as those sons get older?</p> <p>3. In general, moms give love and dads give what?</p> | <p>1. Why are fathers necessary?</p> <p>2. What can the consequences be for children who grow up in fatherless homes?</p> |

Discussion & Review Questions

1. At the beginning of the video, Mr. Prager asks, “Are fathers necessary? For all of recorded history, the need to explain why fathers are necessary would have been regarded as, well, unnecessary. It would have been like explaining why water, or air, is necessary. But we live at a time in which the obvious is routinely denied.” Do you think that fathers are necessary? Why or why not? Why do you think that the ‘obvious is routinely denied?’ Explain.
2. Further along in the video, Mr. Prager contends that, “Both boys and girls need fathers. We’ll begin with boys. A boy has no built-in understanding about how to be a man- meaning a good and responsible man. Male nature is wild- most obviously regarding sex and violence. If a boy does not have a father who models how a man controls himself, he will most likely not know how to control himself- let alone want to.” Do you agree with Mr. Prager that a boy needs a father to model for him how to be a good man? Why or why not? What might be some additional important reasons that a boy needs a father?
3. Mr. Prager goes on to point out that, “As regards daughters, the father is the man girls learn to relate to. Without a father to relate to and bond with, there are at least two destructive consequences. First, she will not know how to choose a man wisely. She will not know how a man should treat her, and she may well end up with a man who mistreats her. Second, to fulfill her desire to bond with a man, as primal a yearning in most women as bonding with a woman is in most men, she will go from man to man. Girls without fathers in their lives are far more likely to be sexually promiscuous, and to begin sexual activity at an earlier age, which in turn are reasons many young women are depressed.” In what ways, specifically, do fathers and daughters often bond and relate to each other? What might some other negative consequences be for daughters who grow up without fathers?
4. Later in the video, Mr. Prager explains that, “...fathers give both sons and daughters the thing children need most: a sense of safety and security. As much as children need love, they need a sense of security even more. And in general, Moms give love and Dads give security.” In what ways, specifically, do dads provide a sense of security? What might the short and long-term consequences be for a child that does not have a full sense of love and security?
5. At the end of the video, Mr. Prager concludes that, “I learned how necessary fathers are, not only by having one and being one, but by the many people, men and women of all ages, who have told me that they see me as a ‘father-figure.’ I am honored to fill that role. The good news is that many men can fill it: grandfathers, uncles, teachers, mentors, clergy, and yes, even a man on the radio. But some man has to be your father.” Do you agree with Mr. Prager that having at least a ‘father figure’ is important? Why or why not? Why do you think that Mr. Prager pontificates that ‘some man has to be your father?’ Explain.

Extend the Learning:

Case Study father-absent homes

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Father-Absent Homes: Implications for Criminal Justice and Mental Health Professionals,” then answer the questions that follow.

1. What does the extant literature suggest about children raised in single-parent households? What does the article aim to examine? What do the findings suggest? How long can the psychosocial problems afflicting children in households lacking a father persist, and what increases over that time? Why might children who grow up without their fathers come to resent paternal-figures? Where do those feelings come from? What is the inability to form a strong caregiver bond associated with? What can promote empathy and self-control for a child throughout life? What are children who grow up in father-absent homes much more likely to be the victim of? What does the absence of a father result in for the child, in terms of psychology? Mounting stress over the considerable responsibilities of parenthood may increase the risk of a single mother doing what? Fathers who are what, have children who are more physically fit over absent fathers? What is predictive of juvenile delinquency? In the study of female inmates, how many came from father-absent homes? Children who come from father-absent homes are at a greater risk for using what? What percentage of gang members come from father-absent homes? Coming from a fatherless home can contribute to a child having more what? Children who do not grow up with a father are also more likely to be what and to exhibit what? Evidence suggests that what may have a negative impact on a child’s overall academic performance? Which children are more likely to drop out of school? Which African-American boys demonstrate significantly higher grade point averages and are less likely to be truant from school? Which children are four times more likely to be living in poverty? Which children may also be more likely to shoplift and become chronic shoplifters? What can be a protective factor against child and adolescent substance use? What is the conclusion of the article?
2. Why do you think that so many kids live in father-absent homes? What do you think might happen if more mothers knew the information in this article? Explain. Why do you think that so many single mothers choose to remain single? Explain. Given that all of this information is readily available, why do you think more is not done to help both single mothers and the children who live in father-absent homes? Explain.
3. Why do you think that a certain amount of people are now questioning whether fathers are necessary or not? Explain.

Father-Absent Homes: Implications for Criminal Justice and Mental Health Professionals

by: Jerrold Brown, MA, MS, MS, MS

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ABSTRACT

The number of single-parent households in the United States has reached high levels in recent decades. As the extant literature suggests that children raised in single-parent households experience more physical and psychological problems compared to those raised in two-parent households, the implications of homes in which fathers are absent may be important to explore for criminal justice and mental health professionals. The present article aims to examine the extant literature base on father-absent homes, seeking to provide a fair and balanced account of this phenomenon. Specifically, we highlight ten adverse outcomes associated with homes missing a father. Findings suggest that a negative developmental trajectory may result for children lacking a father in the home, albeit further research in this area is warranted.

Please note: This article is part one of a two part series that focuses on the topic of parental absence. Part two of this series will examine the impact of mother-absent homes and its implications for criminal justice and mental health professionals.

INTRODUCTION

The number of children who grow up without a father in the home in the United States has reached concerning levels. There exists a considerable research base that suggests that children raised in households lacking a father experience psychosocial problems with greater frequency than children with a father in the home (Allen & Daly, 2007). These problems have been found to extend into adolescence and adulthood and include an increased risk of substance use, depression, suicide, poor school performance, and contact with the criminal justice system (Allen & Daly, 2007). Lack of paternal involvement has also been associated with a higher likelihood of being bullied and experiencing abuse (Allen & Daly, 2007). Educating uninvolved fathers and helping them play a more active role in their child's life could benefit both families and communities. To bring this into focus, the present article aims to highlight ten adverse outcomes that may result from the absence of a father in a child's life: (1) Perceived abandonment, (2) attachment issues, (3) child abuse, (4) childhood obesity, (5) criminal justice involvement, (6)

gang involvement, (7) mental health issues, (8) poor school performance, (9) poverty and homelessness; and (10) substance use.

ADVERSE OUTCOME 1: Perceived Abandonment

Children who grow up without their fathers may come to resent paternal-figures due to perceived abandonment. These feelings may burgeon from a lack of trust and result in a heightened sense of anger. As a child grows into adolescence and young adulthood, these problems may contribute to contact with the criminal justice system, use of illicit substances, as well as a variety of mental health problems. These consequences may result in interpersonal dilemmas including the inability to develop strong social bonds. For example, anger stemming from abandonment can make it difficult for juveniles to establish friendships and relationships (Poehlmann, 2005).

ADVERSE OUTCOME 2: Attachment Issues

Attachment refers to the deep emotional bond that develops between a caregiver and a child (Bowlby, 1988). Children who come from a father-absent home are more likely to experience attachment-related problems than those from a two-parent household (King, 1994; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Seltzer, 1991). This may result in serious emotional issues throughout the lifespan. The inability to form a strong caregiver bond is associated with hypervigilance to anger and a misappropriation of hostile intent to neutral stimuli, both of which may result in conduct problems in the child. Such misconduct may have the unintended consequence of creating difficulties in the development of friendships and healthy romantic relationships (Hirschi, 1969; Jensen, 1972; Johnson, 1987). The active involvement of a father with his children can promote empathy and self-control for the child throughout life.

ADVERSE OUTCOME 3: Child Abuse

Many previous publications have linked the absence of a father in the home to higher risk conditions for mothers and their children. Children that grow up in such households are much more likely to be the victim of physical (including sexual) abuse and neglect compared with those who grow up in a two-parent household (Smith, Selwyn, Hanson, & Nobel, 1980). Children who grow up in a single parent home are twice as likely to be the subject of physical and/or emotional abuse (America's Children, 1997). In addition, the absence of a father results in an increased psychological burden on the child, as he or she must make sense of why his or her father is not present. This burden extends beyond the child to alternative caregivers such as the child's mother. Indeed, the needs of a child are hard to meet, even when a mother is very loving, committed, and caring. When children are surrounded by multiple caring adults (e.g., mothers, extended family members, community members), they are more likely to thrive and feel supported. If the mother is the only caregiver of the child, mounting stress over the considerable responsibilities of parenthood may increase the risk of her harming her children or herself.

ADVERSE OUTCOME 4: Childhood Obesity

Children with higher body mass indices (BMI) are more likely to come from father-absent homes (Finn, Johannsen, & Specker, 2002; Strauss & Knight, 1999). Another study found that a

father's parenting style was a better predictor of whether a child would become obese (Wake, Nicholson, Hardy, and Smith, 2007). Fathers who were present and used more authoritarian parenting styles had children who were more physically fit than fathers who were absent and, if sporadically involved, used more of a permissive approach. Mothers' parenting styles had little to no effect on obesity and fitness levels.

ADVERSE OUTCOME 5: Criminal Justice Involvement

Family structure and the lack of paternal involvement are predictive of juvenile delinquency. The more opportunities a child has to interact with his or her biological father, the less likely he or she is to commit a crime or have contact with the juvenile justice system (Coley and Medeiros, 2007). In a study of female inmates, more than half came from a father-absent home (Snell, Tracy, & Morton, 1991). Youths who never had a father living with them have the highest incarceration rates (Hill, O'Neill, 1993), while youths in father-only households display no difference in the rate of incarceration from that of children coming from two-parent households (Harper and McLanahan, 2004). In addition, children who come from father-absent homes are at a greater risk for using illicit substances at a younger age (Bronte-Tinkew, Jacinta, Moore, Capps, & Zaff, 2004). The absence of a father in a child's life may also increase the odds of his or her associating with delinquent peers (Steinberg, 1987).

ADVERSE OUTCOME 6: Gang Involvement

A high percentage of gang members come from father-absent homes (Davidson, 1990), possibly resulting from a need for a sense of belonging. Gaining that sense of belonging is an important element for all individuals. Through gangs, youth find a sense of community and acceptance. In addition, the gang leader may fill the role of father, often leading members to model their behaviors after that individual (Leving, 2009). Having a father in the child's life greatly reduces the likelihood of a child joining a gang (Leving, 2012).

ADVERSE OUTCOME 7: Mental Health Issues

Coming from a fatherless home can contribute to a child having more emotional problems, such as anxiety and depression. Fatherless children may start thinking that they are worth less than other children who have fathers and wonder why their father abandoned them. This may also lead to an increased risk of suicide and/or self-injurious behaviors. Children who do not grow up with a father are also more likely to be aggressive and exhibit other externalizing problems (Osborne & McLanahan, 2007). Children from a father-absent home are also more likely to become depressed, have suicidal thoughts, anxiety, social withdrawals, and school absences if they see or hear their parents fighting (Flouri, 2007). The mental health aspects associated with divorce on children will be discussed in a future article.

ADVERSE OUTCOME 8: Poor School Performance

Evidence suggests that not having a father at home may have a negative impact on a child's overall academic performance. Research has shown that children who come from a father-absent home are more likely to drop out of school when compared to children who live in a two-parent

household (Whitehead & Holland, 2003; Popenoe, 1996; Blankenhorn, 1995; McLanahan, & Sandefur, 1994; Sampson, 1987). Children from father-absent homes are also less likely to pursue higher education (Keith & Finlay, 1988). It is important to note that African American boys who identify their father as their role model demonstrate significantly higher grade point averages and are less likely to be truant from school (Bryant, 2003).

ADVERSE OUTCOME 9: Poverty and Homelessness

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), children from absent-father homes are four times more likely to be living in poverty. Often children with an absent father also have less networking connections to aid them in the working world (Coleman, 1988). Furthermore, studies have shown that the cause of the father's absence matters little in relation to poverty and divorce (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998; McLanahan & Casper, 1995). Poverty also presents a obstacle for children pursuing well-paid jobs, which can result in increased stress and frustration (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Merton, 1957). Children from father-absent homes may also be more likely to shoplift and become chronic shoplifters (Manning & Lamb, 2003).

ADVERSE OUTCOME 10: Substance Use

Children who grow up in a home where a father is not present are at a greater risk for abusing alcohol and other drugs (Hoffmann, 2002). In one study, researchers examined the impact of father-absence on African American boys (Mandara & Murray, 2006). According to their findings, the boys who came from a home without a father were more likely to use drugs than boys who came from a home where a father was present. Involvement of a father can, hence, be a protective factor against child and adolescent substance use.

Conclusion

Given the large research base suggesting that children who grow up in homes without a father present adverse outcomes at rates significantly above those with fathers present, attention to this phenomenon is perhaps warranted by clinicians, researchers, and policymakers. It is important to point out that not all children who are raised in a father-absent home will experience adverse outcomes. This said, available evidence cannot be ignored. Rather, further investigation into single-parent homes and potential differences for children's developmental trajectories if they are raised solely by their fathers compared to their mothers could make a major contribution to the field.

About the Author

1. Jerrod Brown, MA, MS, MS, MS, is the Treatment Director for Pathways Counseling Center, Inc. Pathways' focus is to provide programs and services that benefit individuals impacted by mental illness and addictions. Mr. Brown is also the founder and CEO of the American Institute for the Advancement of Forensic Studies (AIAFS).

About the Contributors

2. Russ Wentz, MA, obtained his Master of Arts degree in mental health from Adler Graduate School. Mr. Wentz is currently employed at Pathways Counseling Center as a Mental Health Practitioner working with forensic clients diagnosed with mental and chemical health disorders.

3. Erv Winkauf, MA, is a retired 40-year law enforcement veteran who also has 19 years of teaching experience. He currently serves as Chairperson of the Criminal Justice Department at Concordia University in St. Paul.

4. Janina Wresh has 19 years of varied experience in law enforcement, including positions within forensics crime laboratories, courts, and adult detention centers. She has served in the following capacities: Deputy sheriff, police officer, domestic abuse response specialist, crisis intervention specialist, and crime scene technician. Ms. Wresh also serves as AIAFS' Chief Operating Officer, is a college Adjunct Professor of Criminal Justice, and is the Founder and President of the Minnesota Association of Evidence and Property Specialists.

5. Karina A. Forrest-Perkins, MHR, LADC, is currently the Executive Director at Wayside Treatment Center for co-occurring treatment for women and children. Ms. Forrest-Perkins serves as a national consultant for the adaptive impact of stress on the developing brain, substance use disorders, trauma informed care, and the integration of health/behavioral health systems for comprehensive care.

6. Lori Borschke is the owner and executive director of Pathways Counseling Center, Inc. Additionally, Ms. Borschke is the chief advising officer for AIAFS. Her education and experiential background is in human services, criminal justice studies, and business.

7. Mario L. Hesse, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at St. Cloud State University.

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QUIZ

Are Fathers Necessary?

- 1. Who stated in a Father's Day speech that "Fathers are critical to the foundation of each family?"**
 - a. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg
 - b. Barack Obama
 - c. Hillary Clinton
 - d. Bill Clinton

- 2. Most males in prison for violent crimes grew up without a father.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

- 3. _____ suggests that a mother simply cannot model what a boy should be any more than a man can model to a girl what a woman should be.**
 - a. Economic data
 - b. Long-term psychological study
 - c. Common sense
 - d. An important legal ruling

- 4. Fathers give both sons and daughters the thing children need most: _____.**
 - a. life lessons
 - b. nurturing love
 - c. a sense of safety and security
 - d. an allowance

- 5. Who can fill the role of a 'father figure?'**
 - a. uncles
 - b. mentors
 - c. clergy
 - d. all of the above



QUIZ: ANSWER KEY

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