



STUDY GUIDE

WHY GOD IS A HE

KEY TERMS: just
father

gender
role model

relate
morality

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section during the video. Include definitions and key terms.

CUE COLUMN: Complete this section after the video.

What is the Bible preoccupied with?

What happens when young people do not have a father figure to model and promote good behavior for them?

Why couldn't a neuter noun be used to describe God?

How does depicting the God of the Bible as a male authority figure benefit both men and women?

In the report released by the Minnesota Psychological Association, how many female inmates came from father-absent homes?

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- At the beginning of the video, Mr. Prager notes that, “One of the criticisms many people make against the Bible is that it depicts God in male terms. The most obvious example is God is referred to as ‘He.’” Why do you think that some people view depicting God in male terms as negative? Explain. Do you agree that God should be referred to using masculine pronouns? Why or why not?
- When discussing the reasoning behind using the masculine pronoun to describe God in the Bible, Mr. Prager explains that, “...it is in both men’s and women’s interests to depict God in the masculine. Here’s why: Without a father or some other male rule-giver, young men are likely to do great harm. If there is no male authority figure to give a growing boy rules, it is very difficult for him to control his wilder impulses.” Why do you think that young males need a male authority figure to help them transform into good men? Explain. Why do you think that Mr. Prager states that it is in the interest of both men and women for God to be depicted as male? Explain.
- Mr. Prager goes on to share with us the importance of a male authority figure by pointing out that, “As President Barack Obama told an audience in 2008, ‘Children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools, and twenty times more likely to end up in prison.’ Commenting on that speech, Dr. Alvin Poussaint, a psychiatrist with Harvard Medical School, confirmed these statistics: ‘The absence of fathers corresponds with a host of social ills, including dropping out of school and serving time in jail.’” Why do you think that a father figure is so critical to a child’s development, especially in terms of learning to be a civilized person? Explain. What other consequences might a child endure as part of not having a father figure in his or her life? Explain.
- Later in the video, Mr. Prager explains that, “...if one’s primary goal is a good world—specifically, a world with far less murder, child abuse, theft, and rape—a God depicted in masculine terms (a Father in Heaven), not a Goddess (a Mother in Heaven), must be the source of moral commands such as ‘Do not murder’ and ‘Do not steal.’ If the father figure/rule-giver that boys need is not on Earth, a morally authoritative masculine God can serve as an effective substitute. Any discomfort you might feel with a masculine depiction of God is not comparable to the pain we will all feel if boys are not civilized into good men.” Why do you think that God can be an effective father-figure substitute as a transformative mechanism for young males? What do you think Mr. Prager means by his last statement in this passage? Explain.
- Towards the end of the video, Mr. Prager warns that, “It is therefore ironic that some women are attempting to render the God of Western religious morality less masculine. Because if their goal is achieved, it is women who will suffer most from lawless males.” Why do you think that some women are trying to render God as less masculine? In what ways might women suffer from ‘lawless males?’ 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.

- How long do problems associated with not having a father in the home persist for children that have been raised in such homes? Who could benefit from educating uninvolved fathers and helping them play a more active role in their child's life? Who may children who grow up without their fathers come to resent, and why? What can make it difficult for juveniles to establish friendships and relationships? What can the active involvement of a father with his children can promote, and for how long? How much more likely are children who grow up in a single parent home to be the subject of physical and/or emotional abuse? Why does the absence of a father result in an increased psychological burden on the child? What scaling condition makes a child less likely to commit a crime or have contact with the juvenile justice system? Which youths have the highest incarceration rates? Which kids 'are at a greater risk for using illicit substances at a younger age' and may have increased odds of 'associating with delinquent peers?' What role might a gang leader fill, and what type of modeling may occur under such a condition? What condition 'greatly reduces the likelihood of a child joining a gang?' What may fatherless children start thinking when comparing themselves to other children? What might the consequences of a father-absent home be on a child, in terms of mental health? What types of children are 'more likely to be aggressive and exhibit other externalizing problems?' What do African American boys 'who identify their father as their role model' demonstrate in terms of school? How much more likely are children from absent-father homes to be living in poverty? What types of children 'may also be more likely to shoplift and become chronic shoplifters?'
- Why do you think that the consequences of young people growing up without a father figure are so numerous and so broad? Explain. What, specifically, about a father figure helps boys to control their wild impulses and to learn to behave in society? Explain. What factors do you think contribute to God being able to substitute as a father figure in a young person's life? Explain.
- Would you consider the research data presented in the article to be valid evidence of Mr. Prager's claims in the video? Why or why not? What are the main tenets of Mr. Prager's argument in the video? What is Mr. Prager's thesis in the video? Do you agree with Mr. Prager's thesis in this video? Why or why not?



QUIZ

WHY GOD IS A HE

1. The Bible is preoccupied with making a kinder, less violent, more just world
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. God _____.
 - a. is feminine
 - b. is masculine
 - c. is neuter
 - d. transcends gender

3. To transform a wild boy into a good man, a _____ role model is as necessary as a male rule-giver.
 - a. female
 - b. male
 - c. community
 - d. government

4. The problem of mayhem and violence is _____.
 - a. a fabrication
 - b. rooted in capitalism
 - c. easily solved by a loving mother
 - d. overwhelmingly a male one

5. Who will suffer most from lawless males?
 - a. Women
 - b. Men
 - c. Christians
 - d. None of the above.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

WHY GOD IS A HE

1. The Bible is preoccupied with making a kinder, less violent, more just world
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. God _____.
 - a. is feminine
 - b. is masculine
 - c. is neuter
 - d. transcends gender

3. To transform a wild boy into a good man, a _____ role model is as necessary as a male rule-giver.
 - a. female
 - b. male
 - c. community
 - d. government

4. The problem of mayhem and violence is _____.
 - a. a fabrication
 - b. rooted in capitalism
 - c. easily solved by a loving mother
 - d. overwhelmingly a male one

5. Who will suffer most from lawless males?
 - a. Women
 - b. Men
 - c. Christians
 - d. None of the above.

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

by: Jerrod Brown, MA, MS, MS, MS
Category: Industry News

Aug
04

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 an 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.

References

Allen, S., & Daly, K. (2007). *The effects of father involvement: An updated research summary of the evidence*. Guelph: Father Involvement Research Alliance.

America's Children. (1997). *Key national indicators of well-being*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.

Blankenhorn, D. (1995). *Fatherless America: Confronting our most urgent social problem*. New York: Basic Books.

- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Clinical applications of Attachment Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Bronte-Tinkew, J., Moore, K. A., Capps, R. C., & Zaff, J. (2004). The influence of father involvement on youth risk behaviors among adolescents: A comparison of native-born and immigrant families. *Social Science Research*, 35, 181-209.
- Bryant, A. L. (2003). Role models and psychosocial outcomes among African-American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 18, 36-87.
- Cloward, R. A., & Ohlin, L. E. (1960). *Delinquency and opportunity*. New York: Free Press.
- Coleman, J. (1988). Social capital and the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.
- Coley, R. L., & Medeiros, B. L. (2007). Reciprocal longitudinal relations between nonresident father involvement and adolescent delinquency. *Child Development*, 78, 132-147.
- Davidson, N. (1990). Life without father. *Policy Review*, 51, 40.
- Finn, K., Johannsen, N., & Specker, B. (2002). Factors associated with physical activity in preschool children. *Journal of Pediatrics*, 140, 81-85.
- Flouri, E. (2007). Fathering and adolescents' psychological adjustment: The role of fathers' involvement, residence and biology status. *Childcare, Health & Development*, 34, 152-161.
- Furstenberg, F. F., & Cherlin, A. J. (1991). *Divided families*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Garfinkel, I., & McLanahan, S. (1990). The effects of child support provisions of the Family Support Act of 1988 on child well-being. *Population Research & Policy Review*, 9, 205-234.
- Harper, C., & McLanahan, S. (2004). Father absence and youth incarceration. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 14, 369-397.
- Hill, M. A., & O'Neill, J. (1993). *Underclass behaviors in the United States: Measurement and analysis of determinants*. New York: City University of New York.
- Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hoffmann, J. P. (2002). The community context of family structure and adolescent drug use. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 64, 314-330.
- Jensen, G. F. (1972). Parents, peers, and delinquency action: A test of the differential association perspective. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78, 562-575.
- Johnson, R. E. (1987). Mothers' versus fathers' role in causing delinquency. *Adolescence*, 22, 305-315.
- Keith, V. M., & Finlay, B. (1988). The impact of parental divorce on children's educational attainment, marital timing, and likelihood of divorce. *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 50, 797-809.
- King, V. (1994). Nonresident father involvement and child well-being. *Journal of Family Issues*, 15, 78-96.

- Leving, J. (2009, March 5). Absent fathers & youth violence. Retrieved from <http://divorcemagazine.wordpress.com/2009/03/05/absent-fathers-youth-violence>
- Mandara, J., & Murray, C. B. (2006). Father's absence and African American adolescent drug use. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 46, 1-12.
- Manning, W. D., & Lamb, K. A. (2003). Adolescent well-being in cohabiting, married, and single-parent families. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 65, 876-893.
- Merton, R. (1957). *Social theory and social structure*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- McLanahan, S., & Casper, L. (1995). The American family in 1990: Growing diversity and inequality. In R. Farley (Ed.), *State of the union, II* (pp. 1-45). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. (1994). *Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Osborne, C., & McLanahan, S. (2007). Partnership instability and child well-being. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 69, 1065-1083.
- Poehlmann, J. (2005). Representations of attachment relationships in children of incarcerated mothers. *Child Development*, 76, 679-696.
- Popenoe, D. (1996). *Life without a father*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sampson, R. J. (1987). Urban Black violence: The effect of male joblessness and family disruption. *American Journal of Sociology*, 93, 348-405.
- Seltzer, J. (1991). Relationships between fathers and children who live apart: The father's role after separation. *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 53, 79-101.
- Snell, T. L., & Morton, D. C. (1994). *Women in prison: Survey of prison inmates, 1991*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Smith, S. M, Hanson, R, & Nobel, S. (1980) Social aspects of the battered baby syndrome. In J. V. Cook & R. T. Bowles (Eds.) *Child Abuse: Commission and Omission*. Toronto: Butterworths.
- Steinberg, L. (1987). Single parents, stepparents, and the susceptibility of adolescents to antisocial peer pressure. *Child Development*, 58, 269-275.
- Strauss, R. S., & Knight, J. (1999). Influence of the home environment on the development of obesity in children. *Pediatrics*, 103, e85.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. (1998). *Current population reports, P20-514, Marital Status and Living Arrangements, March 1998*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wake, M., Nicholson, J. M., Hardy, P., & Smith, K. (2007). Preschooler obesity and parenting styles of mothers and fathers: Australian national population study. *Pediatrics*, 12, 1520-1527.
- Whitehead, M., & Holland, P. (2003). What puts children of lone parents at a health disadvantage? *Lancet*, 361, 271.