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Behavioral Impacts of Father Absence on Middle School African American Boys

Ivy J. Johnson
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Ivy Johnson

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Behavioral Impacts of Father Absence on Middle School African American Boys

by

Ivy J. Johnson

MS, Walden University, 2015

MEd, University of Houston, 2008

BBA, University of Houston, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School Psychology

Walden University

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Abstract

Father absence is the experience of children who grow up in households without their biological father. The African American population experiences the highest level of father absence of all demographic groups in the United States. Research shows that father absence influences school behavior. There is a lack of literature evaluating the extent to which father absence affects children, particularly African American boys, at different stages of development. This quantitative study was used to evaluate how father absence affected school behavior of African American boys, ages 13-15, in the middle school setting, in Houston, TX. Guided by attachment theory, the research question for this study asked how father absence impacts the school behavior of African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 from mother-only homes when compared to school behavior of African American boys from intact families. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to examine overall and types of externalizing behavior of 60 purposive sampled participants identified from the Child Behavior Checklist-Teacher Report Scale subscales. Results indicated that African American boys from father absent homes displayed an overall higher rate of externalizing behavior than same-aged peers from intact families on all 3 dependent variables (Overall, Rule-Breaking, and Aggressive Behavior). This study is an important contribution to the existing literature and enhances social change initiatives by bringing increased focus on school behavior, adolescent behavior, middle school practices, and behavior interventions. Specifically, the results of this study can be used by educational stakeholders to develop early intervention and prevention programs to address behaviors associated with the absent father experience.

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Dedication

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,” Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV).

All honor, praise, and glory belongs to The Most High God, Jehovah for blessing me with the opportunity, will, and strength to not only begin this journey, but to finish strong!

This is dedicated to my greatest gift, Joey Iman. Of all of my life accomplishments, you are the greatest of them all. God blessed me with you and my prayer is that I am as much of a blessing to you as you are to me. I pray that you always know your worth, for you are fearfully and wonderfully made. Do not ever be afraid to shine. Never dim your light because others do not appreciate your brightness. Let your light shine, Babydoll!

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“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Galatians 6:9 (NKJV).

I am grateful to my family for being a team of encouragers during those weary times. To my mother, Rosa, the love you have showered me with all of my life filled me with the confidence needed to set such a goal as this. To my father, Cullen, seeing me as a genius emboldened me not to shy away from my intelligence. To my prayer warrior sisters, Shellie and Shretha, you gave me what I needed, when I needed, and when you could not, you lifted me up to God, the Ultimate Source. Thank you to my family and sister-friends for cheering me on along the way. Thank you to Aunt Maureen and Angela for your special assistance that was essential during this process and for being an example of higher education for the family. Thank you to my colleagues for your continued encouragement and to all educators who took time out to provide feedback for this study.

To my committee and professors, thank you. Dr. Little, you have been an amazing chairperson and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you. Dr. Trimble, thank you for your tough love and encouraging words during this process, you are a blessing. Dr. Murray, thank you for your guidance and feedback. Dr. Lionetti, thank you for your encouragement over the years and for making school psychology look so cool.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Father absence is the experience of children who grow up in a household without their biological father. The number of children growing up in households with absent fathers is increasing yearly (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015; Carlson, 2006; U. S. Census Bureau, 2014). Research shows that family issues like father absence tend to influence school behavior for many children. In many cases, school behavior is a direct reflection of the home life of a child. In their studies of father absence, Booth, Scott, and King (2010), and Carlson (2006) found that there is a link between father presence and involvement and school behavior. In this study, I evaluated how father absence affects school behavior in African American adolescent boys ages 13-15.

This study was needed to address several areas of concern as they relate to African American boys. The results of this study will inform the development and improvement of interventions for school behavior of African American boys. This study will also help influence the promotion of father involvement. Its results shed light on the impact that father involvement has on adolescent behavior in school and in society, and educational stakeholders can use my findings to better understand the impact father absence has on adolescents.

Background

The impact of living in a father-absent household manifests in a number of ways including depression, delinquency, and both internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems (Carlson, 2006; Coley & Medeiros, 2007; Demuth & Brown, 2004; East,

Jackson, & O'Brien, 2006; King & Sobolewski, 2006). Researchers have shown that youth from intact families, where the youth lives with both biological parents, have less maladaptive behavior than peers from non-intact families. Maladaptive behavior can be characterized as actions that contradict society's expectation of proper behavior.

Externalizing behaviors like impulsivity, hyperactivity, aggression, defiance, and delinquency are types of maladaptive behavior (Mash & Wolfe, 2010). According to East et al. (2006), father absence is associated with maladaptive behaviors that create a number of life adversities. Compared to other types of family structures, youth from intact families typically demonstrate the lowest rate of antisocial behaviors (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004). These types of behaviors are demonstrated in various settings including the home, community, school, public, and private places. In the school setting, maladaptive, externalizing behaviors like those mentioned above are likely to result in some type of referral or disciplinary action.

The educational experience of children living in two-parent homes is often quite different from the educational experience of children living in father-absent homes. Comparisons of the two family structures have shown that children from father-absent homes are more likely to experience higher rates of disciplinary problems (DeBell, 2008; East et al., 2006; Mulkey et al., 1992). Children living apart from their biological father tend to have greater occurrences of school suspension and expulsion (Carlson, 2006; DeBell, 2008). DeBell (2008) found that children living in a home without their biological father are more likely than peers from two-parent homes to have been expelled or suspended from school. The likelihood of violent or aggressive behavior is increased

in children from single-parent homes. Mulkey et al. (1992) argued that the demonstration of aggressive behavior is more prevalent in African American children from single-parent homes than it is in peers from two-parent homes. Caldwell, Rafferty, Reischl, DeLoney, and Brooks (2010) identified single-parent homes as a risk factor that is linked to violent behavior in adolescents.

In this study, I focused on examining externalizing behavior that is manifested in the school setting by adolescent boys with absent fathers in comparison to adolescent boys from intact families. While the main focus was to evaluate the school behavior of adolescent African American boys with absent fathers, it is important to highlight research that identifies the significant impact of a father-child relationship involving both resident and non-resident fathers. Children and adolescents with close relationships with their biological father tend to demonstrate fewer behavior problems than peers with distant or no relationships with biological fathers (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Hofferth, Forry, & Peters, 2008; King, 2006). King and Sobolewski (2006) found that adolescents who are close to non-resident fathers displayed fewer externalizing problems like antisocial or aggressive behavior than peers who are not close to non-resident fathers. Choi and Jackson (2011) found that frequent father-child contact is associated with fewer behavior problems.

Many researchers that have addressed the issue of father absence have examined a broad range of ages and ethnicities. In their studies of father absence, Booth, Scott, and King (2010) identified a need for further research in the area of evaluating the extent to which father absence affects children at different stages of development. Apel and

Kaukinen (2006) recommended exploration of specific classifications of family structure types in order to better examine the effects of father absence. However, there is a lack of literature on the school behavior of African American boys with absent fathers, and there is little to no literature on the direct relationship between externalizing behaviors and father absence. DeBell (2008) argued that most research related to father absence only indirectly links father absence to a variety of disadvantages. In this study, I directly measured externalizing behavior as it relates to father absence concerning African American boys in the middle school setting.

This study of the effects of father absence on African American boys in the school setting is necessary to impact the areas of school behavior, adolescent behavior, middle school practices, and behavioral interventions. The development and implementation of behavior prevention and intervention programs in the school setting could decrease behavior problems in the target population. Since maladaptive and externalizing behaviors are not only demonstrated in the school setting, but also at home and in the community, organizations within communities would benefit from knowledge about the effects of father absence. This study will provide families, educational systems, and communities information on the important role a father plays in the social, emotional, and psychological development of a child.

Problem Statement

The African American population experiences the highest level of father absence (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015; DeBell, 2008). Sixty-seven percent of the overall population of children under the age of 18 living in single-parent homes are African

American (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). Father absence can be associated with a number of adversities including behavioral problems, poor academic performance, and maladaptive behavior (East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2006). The current data regarding the effects of father absence includes that from broad age ranges and for a variety of ethnic groups. However, there is a lack of data specific to different stages of development. There is also a lack of literature examining school behavior for African American boys with absent fathers. The problem I addressed in this study is the effect father absence has on adolescent African American boys in the middle school setting. This study provides insight on the emotional and psychological well-being of African American adolescent boys in the academic setting. This study will provide the field of education specific information related to negative school behavior of African American boys with absent fathers and how this behavior impacts families as well as communities.

Purpose of the Study

I designed this quasi-experimental quantitative study to evaluate how father absence affects school behavior in African American boys ages 13-15 when compared to same age peers from intact families. Specifically, I tested the theory of attachment that relates father absence to school behavior of African American adolescent boys. The independent variable, father absence, was defined as a biological father not living in the home with the adolescent and having never had a marital relationship with the biological mother. Externalizing school behavior, the dependent variable, was defined as conduct or behavior problems that hinder the academic environment.

My intent was to identify and explore the frequency of externalizing behaviors among African American boys with absent fathers as compared to peers from intact families. I used multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to evaluate overall and types of externalizing behavior identified from the *Child Behavior Checklist - Teacher Report Scale* (CBCL-TRF; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Specifically, I compared scores on the CBCL externalizing scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) of adolescent African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 in grades 6 through 8 with absent fathers to those of African American boys of the same age group from intact families.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Research Question 1: Does father absence influence school behavior, as measured by overall externalizing behavior scores on the CBCL-TRF, of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families?

H_0 1: Father absence does not influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior scale score of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families.

H_1 1: Father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior scale score, of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families.

Research Question 2: Do African American boys with absent fathers exhibit more externalizing behaviors in the school setting as measured by the CBCL-TRF

externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families?

H₀₂: African American boys with absent fathers do not have higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families

H₁₂: African American boys with absent fathers have higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework for this study is based on attachment theory. Attachment theory, influenced by a psychoanalytic perspective, is based on the idea that early family relationships and experiences have a profound effect on personality development (Bretherton, 1992). The theory illuminates the emotional bond created between a child and a caregiver, and how emotional distress is associated with early family experiences such as attachment (Bretherton, 1992). While attachment theory has an emphasis on the mother-child bond, it does not ignore the importance of the bond between father and child. Children form emotional bonds to caregivers, and these bonds carry on into adulthood (Simpson & Belsky, 2007). Potentially, a child can successfully or unsuccessfully bond with a parent, caregiver, or important figure.

Several elements of attachment theory are relevant to this study of father absence and adolescent behavior. Particularly, proximity maintenance, the establishment of a safe haven and secure base, and the demonstration of protest, despair, or detachment

(Simpson & Belsky, 2007). I discuss these themes in detail in Chapter 2. Proximity maintenance, an individual's need for closeness to a particular individual, can be related to a boy's desire to be in close proximity to his father. An adolescent's inability to establish a secure base or safe haven can prevent him from receiving the comfort typically provided by his father in times of stress. The absence of a secure base or safe haven may cause the adolescent to form attachments with inappropriate individuals or respond in maladaptive ways. The attachment figure is considered the secure base for the child, where they get reassurance. The figure serves as a base from which the child is able to safely explore the world. Children expect caregivers to provide them with protection in times of danger. When a child feels that he has a secure attachment, he is more likely to feel free to explore because he has a secure base to return to in times of danger. When the base is not secure, the child's exploration of the world is negatively impacted (Bretherton, 1992). Finally, protest, despair, or detachment are considered three phases of the child's separation response. Protest is associated with separation anxiety or the anticipation of being separated. Attachment theory proposed that infants and children experience separation anxiety when presented with situations that induce escape and attachment behavior, but there is not attachment figure available (Bretherton, 1992). Despair is associated with grief or mourning due to separation. The grief and mourning process takes place when attachment behaviors are activated and the attachment figure is not available when a child has the desire to be with his caregiver. Detachment or denial is associated with defiance or repression. Well loved and attached

children are more likely to develop self-reliance rather than maladaptive separation behavior (Bretherton, 1992; Simpson & Belsky, 2007).

In his initial studies of attachment, Bowlby concluded that infants and children need warm, intimate, and continuous relationships with a caregiver in order to grow up mentally healthy (Bowlby, as cited in Bretherton, 1992). Attachment theorists posited that emotional disturbances could be attributed to early family experiences (Bretherton, 1992). Attachment theory examines how the connection between a child and a caregiver can be disrupted through separation, deprivation, or bereavement. In studying maladjusted children, theorists found that their affect and delinquent behavior was associated with deprivation and separation. Theorists proposed that separation is a well-defined event that affects the child, the parent, and their relationship with one another. Attachment theorists propose that separation is an event that is easily isolated in order to examine what influence it has on familial interactions (Bretherton, 1992).

Negative school behavior can be an act of protest, despair, or detachment, a response to unsatisfactory attachment (Bretherton, 1992; Simpson & Belsky, 2007). Attachment theory is associated with my study in that I aimed to examine maladaptive behavior resulting from a dysfunctional father-son relationship. I focused on how attachment difficulties can translate to maladaptive behavior; I also made a correlation between unsatisfactory father-son attachment and maladaptive behavior.

Nature of the Study

This study is a quasi-experimental quantitative study design. A quasi-experimental design was selected because the target group for the study is a specific

group, African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15. The target group of participants was from father-absent homes, while the control group of participants was from intact families. I used MANOVA to evaluate overall and types of externalizing behavior identified from the CBCL-TRF of African American boys with absent fathers as compared to peers from intact families. Father absence was the independent variable. The dependent variable was externalizing school behavior, specifically identified from the externalizing behavior subscales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) of the CBCL-TRF.

The study population was African American adolescent boys between the ages of 13-15, in grades 6-8 within the middle school setting, who come from mother-only households. The control group population was African American adolescent boys between the ages of 13-15, in grades 6-8 within the middle school setting, who come from intact families. Study participants were from Houston, TX and surrounding areas. For the purpose of this study mother-only households were defined as family structures with no adult male figure living in the home. Study participants had fathers that lived in the same city as them, but did not interact with these adolescents. I selected participants using a purposive sampling method. I chose the purposive sampling strategy because I asked teachers to provide data about a specific population, African American boys ages 13-15. I contacted sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers and asked them to complete the teacher's report form of the CBCL-TRF based on their knowledge of students meeting the participant and control group criteria. It is important to note for the purpose of this study that teachers were the data collectors and the African American adolescent

boys were participants. The data collected from teachers provided information about the behavior of the participants. I used the reported data to measure overall externalizing behavior that was observable in the school setting. The details of the methods and procedures I used in this study are fully explained in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Attachment: The feeling or emotion that binds people to one another. Bretherton (1992) defines it as instinctual responses that bind one person to another.

Attachment figure: The individual that the child feels closest to. The attachment figure is usually the person who is most responsive and social with the child. This term can also be used interchangeably with caregiver (Bretherton, 1992).

Caregiver: The person who regularly looks after the child; interchangeable with attachment figure (Bretherton, 1992).

Delinquent behavior: When the child or adolescent engages in activities that are improper, inappropriate, and possibly illegal (Rodney & Mupier, 1999).

Deprivation: The absence of the emotional bonding that would encourage attachment (Bretherton, 1992).

Despair: A state of mourning where the child displays withdrawal and lack of interest in anything. This phase takes place after protest of separation from attachment figure (Bretherton, 1992).

Detachment: Takes place when the child chooses to no longer show interest in or engage emotional connections to the attachment figure. The child may even reject the

attachment figure. During this phase the child is more interested in the environment than the attachment figure (Bretherton, 1992).

Educational stakeholders: The term used to describe individuals with a vested interest in the well-being of students. This group includes parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, mental health professionals, as well as community members.

Externalizing behaviors: Continuous maladaptive behaviors that include a mixture of impulsive, overactive, aggressive, and delinquent acts (Mash & Wolfe, 2010).

Father absence: The term used to describe the experience of a child living in a household without his biological father. There is no face-to-face interaction or physical contact between the father and the adolescent male. In many instances, father absence can describe a variety of situations. For the purposes of this study, father absence is defined as a biological father who was not living in the home with the adolescent and who never had a marital or co-habiting relationship with the biological mother. Additionally, father absence in this study includes households that have no adult males (grandfather, mother's boyfriend, step-father, uncle) living in the home. The father absence experience explored in this study involves the father-son relationship where there is little to no contact between the father and son.

Intact family: A family in which the biological parents of the adolescent are married to one another and living in the same home with the adolescent (Adams, Benschhoff, & Harrington, 2007; Apel & Kaukinen, 2006).

Internalizing behaviors: Inner-directed patterns that are covert in nature in comparison to overt patterns found with externalizing behaviors. Internalizing behaviors

are subtle behaviors that usually are undetectable by those in a child's social environment, particularly in the school setting. Internalizing behaviors include social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, or substance abuse (Gresham & Kern, 2004).

Maladaptive behaviors: Dysfunctional actions that hinder a person from adjusting to certain situations (Caldwell et al., 2010). Mash and Wolfe (2010) define maladaptive behavior as actions that are contrary to family or societal expectations that typically violate the rights of others.

Mother-only household: For the purpose of this study, this is a household where the biological mother is the only adult in the home and there are no adult males living in the home. This term is interchangeable with mother-led, mother-headed, and single-mother household (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006; DeBell, 2008; U. S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Protest: The child's display of anger at the separation from the caregiver or attachment figure (Bretherton, 1992; Simpson & Belsky, 2007). In small children, protest can include crying, screaming, and/or clinging to the caregiver to prevent the separation. In adolescents, protest can be anger at varied levels including verbal defiance, becoming argumentative, or shutting down (Konishi & Hymel, 2014).

Proximity maintenance: An individual's need for closeness to a caregiver or attachment figure (Simpson & Belsky, 2007)

Safe haven: The place where a child receives comfort from the attachment figure in times of stress (Bretherton, 1992; Simpson & Belsky, 2007).

Secure base: The role the caregiver plays for the child as a dependable person to return to during exploration of the environment (Bretherton, 1992).

Separation: Removal from the attachment figure (Bretherton, 1992).

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, I assumed that responses provided by participants were true and accurate. Participants were assured that I would respect anonymity and confidentiality. I also assured participants that they could withdraw from participating in this study at any time. Using a purposive sample, I assumed that the sample was an accurate representation of African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 in the middle school setting.

I also made assumptions concerning mothers for the purpose of this study. One assumption was that the biological mother is equipped with adequate parenting skills and a quality relationship with her adolescent son. Another assumption was that mothers have good emotional and mental health.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how father absence affects school behavior in African American boys ages 13-15. My intent was to identify and explore the frequency of externalizing behaviors among African American boys with absent fathers as compared to peers from intact families. Findings from this study can be used by educational stakeholders to develop interventions and programs to address the population of boys with absent fathers. The behaviors that I have identified as those common to boys with absent fathers can be targeted in the school setting to assist young men in making positive changes in their lives. Since there is a lack of research on the effects of father absence on African American adolescent boys, findings from this study

can be used to tailor interventions for the identified population. Behaviors identified as linked to boys with absent fathers will become the focus of developed programs to address the targeted behavior.

The study scope was limited to African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15. Other ethnicities, girls, and African American boys over 15 and under 13 were excluded. As suggested by Booth, Scott, and King (2010), there is a lack of research examining the effects of father absence on the stages of development. There are studies that specifically address the effects of father absence on broad groups of adolescents (Booth et al.; Jackmon, 2006), females (Mitchell, Booth, & King, 2009), and young children (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Choi & Jackson 2011). Studies have also been conducted to examine how father absence influences general behavior (Carlson et al.; Choi & Jackson 2011) as well as specific behaviors like delinquency (Coley & Medeiros, 2007; Demuth & Brown, 2004), substance abuse (Mandara & Murray, 2006), and self-concept (Beaty, 1995; Denny & Martin, 2004). There is an absence of studies on an isolated group like African American males between the ages of 13 and 15. It is important to examine this particular population because of the influence of many events at this stage of development. During adolescence, youth are experiencing not only physical development, but also social and emotional development. Between the ages of 13 and 15 adolescents are typically in middle school. I selected this age group to isolate it in an effort to focus on experiences common to the selected population. In this examination of this specific group, I have worked to provide rich data that can be used by educational stakeholders to develop programs and interventions. I conducted this study

after determining that it would be helpful to examine the effects on this particular population in order to develop early interventions as well as prevention programs. The results of this study will be useful to future studies involving African American boys with absent fathers who demonstrate problematic behavior in school. Generalization to other groups is not encouraged as the nature, characteristics, needs, and experiences of the targeted population are unique.

For the purpose of this study, I established parameters regarding the father's living situation and the household make up. For participants in this study, the biological father did not live in the same home as the adolescent male and had never had a marital or co-habiting relationship with the biological mother. Additionally, there were no other adult males (grandfather, mother's boyfriend, step-father, uncle) living in the home with the adolescent.

Limitations

This study is limited in that the participants were selected using a purposive sample rather than a random sample, eliminating the possibility for a population that is not representative of the targeted population. The sample only consisted of participants living in Houston, Texas and surrounding areas; therefore, the sample is not reflective of a more broad population, but limited to the targeted area.

Environmental factors outside of the adolescent's home mark another limitation to this study. Examples of environmental factors include but are not limited to level of drug or crime activity in the adolescent's community. Access to community resources is also

a limitation related to environmental factors. Due to time constraints of this study, I was unable to examine longitudinal effects.

Lack of prior research studies on the specified group posed another limitation to this study. Prior researchers may have identified factors that I could have considered in this study. Participants' predisposition for externalized behavior is a limitation that could not be predicted. It is possible that some young men who persistently misbehave or may have an undiagnosed mental disorder could have been a part of the participant pool for this study. I did not consider a participant's predisposition to mental illness in this study. I did not expect my prior experience as a middle school teacher working with students of the target population to impose bias on carrying out the study. Teachers used in this study to collect data on the target population are allowed to provide information on one to three boys who meet the study criteria. It is possible that teachers who provided information on more than two boys could have fallen into a response set, answering questions similarly for different participants. This limitation does not pose a serious threat to data validity because there were a number of teachers providing information rather than a select few. Another limitation to this study was that I assumed that boys with absent fathers have more externalizing behavior than boys from intact families. Consideration should be given to the possibility that other variables, not addressed in this study, may affect behavior.

Significance

Studying the effects father absence has on adolescent school behavior will be beneficial in several ways. This study is significant to the areas of school behavior,

adolescent behavior, middle school practices, and behavioral interventions. Data from this study is useful to the development of early intervention and prevention programs to prevent or reduce the behaviors identified as associated with African American boys with absent fathers. Prevention programs can focus on the preventing the development of behavior problems associated with having an absent father.

The results of this study is useful to identify or develop effective interventions to be used with African American boys with absent fathers to improve behavior. Teachers, administrators, counselors, and mental health professionals who work with this population can use my findings to better understand effective techniques and strategies for addressing the needs of this population. Findings from this this research may provide more insight into the causes of behavioral problems related to father absence. Prevention program developers aiming to educate teens and young adults about the potential issues that can be the result of single parenthood and ineffective co-parenting will find this study useful. Data from this study can also be used to develop programs that promote fatherhood. Results from this study can also be used to enhance existing behavior interventions using identified information related to father absence. This could increase the efficacy of the existing interventions and improve the integrity of the intervention.

Summary

Father absence is the experience of children who grow up in a household without their biological fathers. These children lack face-to-face interaction and physical contact with their biological fathers. The number of children growing up in households with absent fathers is increasing yearly, with the African American population experiencing

the highest level of father absence (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015; Carlson, 2006; DeBell, 2008; U. S. Census Bureau, 2014). Children who grow up in households without a father are more likely to develop depression, engage in delinquent behavior, and display internalizing or externalizing behaviors.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how father absence affects school behavior in African American boys ages 13-15. In this study, I tested the theory of attachment that relates father absence to school behavior of African American adolescent boys. The independent variable for this study was father absence, and the dependent variable was externalizing behavior defined by CBCL-TRF subscales and observed in the school setting. Using a survey method to evaluate overall externalizing behavior, I designed this study to answer the following research questions:

1. Does father absence influence school behavior, as measured by overall externalizing behavior scores the CBCL-TRF, of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families?

2. Do African American boys with absent fathers exhibit more externalizing behaviors in the school setting as measured by the CBCL-TRF externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families?

Using attachment theory as a framework for this study, I examined father absence. Attachment theory focuses on early family relationships and experiences, and their effect on personality development. Essentially, attachment theory evaluates the emotional bond created between a child and a caregiver. I focused on how attachment difficulties can

translate to maladaptive behavior, and aimed to make a correlation between maladaptive behavior and the dysfunctional father-son relationship.

This study will promote positive social change inasmuch as it provides information to a variety of people regarding factors that influence school behavior as it relates to African American boys with absent fathers. The data gathered from this study may be useful to professionals developing effective prevention programs as well as strengthened interventions to improve behavior of African American adolescent boys. Professionals may also be able to use data from this study to promote effective fathering.

In Chapter 2, I present a literature review that includes an overview of father absence as well as an extensive discussion of the components that affect the concept of father absence.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to evaluate how father absence affects school behavior in African American boys ages 13-15, in the middle school setting. I tested the theory of attachment that relates father absence to school behavior of African American adolescent boys. My intent was to identify the most prevalent externalizing behaviors among African American boys with absent fathers.

This study is relevant to promoting positive social change for school administration, behavioral interventions, and parenting. The results of this study will help educational stakeholders identify, develop, or enhance effective interventions to be used with African American boys with absent fathers to improve behavior. Teachers, administrators, counselors, and mental health professionals who work with this population can use my findings to develop more effective strategies. This study can also help practitioners seeking to develop programs that promote effective parenting.

Several current issues contribute to the need for this project. One issue to consider is that African American students are over three times more likely to receive office referrals for problem behavior than their White peers (Kaufman et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2011). Another issue to consider is that children living apart from their biological father tend to have greater occurrences of disciplinary consequences, school suspension, and expulsion (Carlson, 2006). In 2013, 67% of African American children under the age of 18 lived in single parent homes (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). In 2010, 52% of African American families with children were households with single mothers (U.S.

Department of Commerce, 2012). In 2008, 69% of the overall population of school age children and adolescents living in households without their biological fathers were African American (DeBell, 2008). This review begins with a discussion and general overview of father absence. Next, I discuss the connection between attachment theory and father absence. The review also includes a thorough discussion of a variety of factors that influence school behavior including self-concept, child well-being, and maladaptive behavior. In looking at the effects of father absence on adolescent school behavior, I also discuss father involvement and effective father-son relationships.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted this literature review using the following online databases through Walden University: PsychINFO, PsycARTICLES, Sage, Mental Measurements Yearbook, Academic Search Complete, and Education Research Complete. I accessed additional articles using Google Scholar. The search terms I used were *father absence*, *father absence AND adolescent behavior*, *father absence AND child well-being*, *adolescent behavioral outcomes*, *African Americans AND school discipline*, and *family structure*. I also reviewed a few doctoral-level textbooks about one or more of these search topics. I focused the search on articles written in or after 2006.

Overview of Father Absence

Father absence is the term used to describe the experience of children living in a household without their biological father. The United States has the highest level in the world of families without fathers (Jackmon, 2006). According to the 2014 U. S. Census, 10 million women were raising children as single mothers, and 24 million children were

living in household without fathers. The African American population experiences the highest level of father absence, with 67% of African American children living in single-parent households (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015), 35% of all children live in single-parent homes. Of the population of children under 18 years old, 26% live in mother-only households (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). Of the population of children living in mother-only households, 51% are males (U. S. Census Bureau, 2014). The U. S. Census (2014) reported that 90% of all male children living in mother only households are African American.

Research shows that adolescents who grow up in homes absent of a father are at risk for alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, and behavioral or psychiatric problems (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006; Booth et al., 2010; Carlson, 2006; DeBell, 2008). Carlson (2006) examined the relationship between father involvement and internalizing and externalizing behavior in adolescents. In Carlson's study, externalizing behavior included aggression and antisocial behavior and internalizing behavior included depression, anxiety, and self-esteem. Carlson found there to be a significant difference between the behavior of adolescents living with married biological parents and adolescents in different family structures. Adolescents who were born to unwed mothers who remained unmarried were among the family structures with the highest level of behavior problems in all examined behavior outcomes. Ultimately, Carlson concluded that father involvement positively impacts adolescent behavior, while father absence negatively impacts adolescent behavior.

When compared to children living in father-present homes, those in father-absent homes have an increased chance of having educational problems including, poor academic performance, grade retention, and higher occurrences of disciplinary problems (DeBell, 2008). African American adolescents experiencing father absence are at greater risk of using alcohol or drugs than African American adolescents with fathers who are present (Mandara & Murray, 2006). Boys with absent fathers are more likely to demonstrate anti-social behavior than boys living in a two-parent home (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006). Similar to Madara and Murray (2006), Booth et al. (2010) found that boys with fathers in the home have less substance abuse than boys with absent fathers. Father involvement decreases the likelihood that adolescents will demonstrate internalizing or externalizing behaviors (Carlson, 2006). These issues create a need to evaluate the effects of father absence.

Father absence is one of the many factors that sometimes put children at a disadvantage, often indirectly by causing other problems such as poverty. Of the population of children living in households with incomes of \$25,000 or less, 63% have no biological father at home (DeBell, 2008). Booth et al. (2010) found that adolescents living in nonresident-father homes were more likely to have parents with lower levels of education and income. DeBell (2008) found that about 62% of children of parents who both did not have a high school diploma or equivalent live in an absent-father home, compared to 18% of children who have at least one parent with a post-high school education. According to the 2014 U. S. Census, of the population of children living in mother-only households, only 11% of the mothers have a bachelor's degree or higher

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). When compared to children born to married mothers, children born to single mothers exhibit higher levels of externalizing behavior (Hofferth, 2006; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007). Low parental involvement and living in a single-mother home have been identified as risk factors associated with violent behavior in adolescents (Caldwell et al., 2010).

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in attachment theory, which I used to focus on how attachment difficulties can translate to maladaptive behavior. Attachment theorists were interested in the relationship between early family relationships and the development of personality. Attachment theorists associated emotional distress with experiences in the family (Bretherton, 1992). Attachment theory correlates with my study in that I aimed to examine maladaptive behavior resulting from a dysfunctional father-son relationship. It is important to note that the maternal role is emphasized in attachment theory, but did acknowledge fathers as a secondary alternative to mothers. Steele, Steele, and Fonagy (1996) argued that while the father attachment is not as significant as the mother attachment in infancy, there are long-term effects of a father-infant attachment. Social interactions with peers have been associated with father-infant attachment (Steele et al., 1996).

Attachment theorists believed that children got help through the helping of parents (Bretherton, 1992). In this study, I also intended to evaluate ways to promote effective parenting. A cornerstone to attachment theory is that in order for children to have emotional stability, they need a close and consistent relationship with a caregiver.

When children have an attachment figure, also known as a *secure base*, they are free to explore the world around them without fear of abandonment. Children must be confident in their dependence on parents before they begin to experience unfamiliar situations (Bretherton, 1992). Attachment theory emphasizes emotional bonds between people. Children form emotional bonds to individuals that carry on into adulthood (Simpson & Belsky, 2007). Potentially, a child can successfully or unsuccessfully bond with a parent or important figure. Belsky (1996) argues that infants who are securely attached to both parents function more efficiently at an older age than those who are securely attached to only one parent or have no secure attachments at all.

Several elements of attachment theory are relevant to father absence and adolescent behavior. Particularly, proximity maintenance, the establishment of a safe haven and secure base, and the demonstration of protest, despair, or detachment (Simpson & Belsky, 2007). Proximity maintenance refers to the need for individuals to feel closeness to another individual. In terms of this study, an adolescent boy may have a desire to be close in proximity and relationship to his father. When there is lack of proximity maintenance, an adolescent may respond in maladaptive ways. *Secure haven* and *secure base* refer to the place an individual is able to receive comfort from an attachment figure in times of stress. An adolescent's inability to access the comfort provided by his father in stressful times can cause him to make inappropriate attachments to individuals or respond to stress in maladaptive ways. Attachment theorists believed that separation was a concrete event that affected the child and the parent-child relationship. Theorists posited that there are three responses to separation: protest,

despair, and denial or detachment (Bretherton, 1992). An adolescent male's response to separation from his father can be evident in his behavior. Negative school behavior can be an act of protest, despair, or detachment—a response to separation or unsatisfactory attachment (Simpson & Belsky, 2007).

Adolescent boys who grow up in father-absent homes are likely to create their own male role models even if they find security and identity in less productive individuals (Sylvester, 2010). When an adolescent male is unable to receive the love and affection he may be in search of, he may detach from his family and become susceptible to negative influences outside of the home. Adolescent boys can become vulnerable to outside influences and attempt to bond with males involved with drugs, crime, or gangs. Demuth and Brown (2004) found that parent-child attachment influences delinquency greater than direct controls like parental involvement and supervision. A parent's presence psychologically and emotionally has a greater impact than a physical presence (Demuth & Brown, 2004). Healthy or secure attachment provided through the father-child relationship influences a child's ability to develop and demonstrate self-control and empathy. Insecure attachment can result in lower levels of self-control and increased violent behavior (Sylvester, 2010).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Statistics

The number of children growing up in households with absent fathers is increasing yearly (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015; Carlson, 2006; U. S. Census Bureau, 2014). Carlson, McLanahan, and Brooks-Gunn (2008) found that approximately

one year after birth, 48% of fathers are living in separate dwellings as their child. This figure rises to 56% by the time the child is 3 years old and 63% by the time the child is 5 years old. Living in separate dwellings often influences a non-resident father's involvement. Carlson et al. also found that by the age of 5, 37% of non-resident fathers had not even seen their child over a 2 year period. The African American population experiences the highest level of father absence. In 2008, DeBell (2008) reported 69% of the overall population of school age children and adolescents living in households without their biological fathers (DeBell, 2008). The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015) reported that 35% of the population of children under the age of 18 live in single parent homes, with 26% of those children living in mother only households. According to the 2012 U. S. Census, the trend from 2000 to 2010 demonstrated that over 30% of the population of African American children lived in mother only households.

Benefits of Having a Father in the Home

Research suggests that it is beneficial to have two parents in the home so that children can be effectively disciplined and supervised (East et al., 2006; Mulkey et al., 1992). Caldwell et al. (2010) argued that socialization typically begins in the home through instruction from parents. Socialization through home instruction and parenting is likely to teach children appropriate ways to deal with environmental stress. Three characteristics of parenting have been identified to influence risky behaviors of African American youth: monitoring, involvement, and parent-child communication. Monitoring involved parents knowing their child's whereabouts and having knowledge of the child's activities, including homework, after-school, evenings, and weekend activities. Physical

and emotional support is considered involvement, particularly in the form of contact. The level of contact is important, as contact can range from no contact to extensive contact with an emphasis on quality and not quantity. As with involvement, quality is emphasized with parent-child communication, which is measured by the ease of which parent and child can discuss anything (Caldwell et al., 2010). Demuth and Brown (2004) found that parental involvement, supervision, and relationship quality is higher in families when both biological parents are present in the home, as parents are able to share the load. These parenting characteristics can curtail an adolescent's engagement in unsatisfactory activities.

Another benefit of two-parent families is that there is a decreased amount of adolescent delinquency when compared to single-mother families. Adolescent delinquency is greater in single-mother families when compared to mother-stepfather families (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Demuth & Brown, 2004). The three characteristics (monitoring, involvement, and parent-child communication) identified by Caldwell et al. (2010) are likely to be present and effective in a two-parent home. Research shows that it is beneficial to adolescent behavior to have a father in the home, even if it is not the biological father (Booth et al., 2010).

Apel and Kaukinen (2006) found significant differences in antisocial and delinquent behavior of youths from intact families and those from non-intact families. Youths from non-intact families displayed more antisocial and delinquent behavior than youths from intact families (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006). Family structure is not only associated with delinquency but also associated with school performance. Adolescents

tend to have an overall better well-being when they have close relationships with resident fathers (Booth et al., 2010). Adolescents who reported not having a close relationship with a non-resident father demonstrated more externalizing and internalizing problems and poorer performance than compared to adolescents who are not close to a resident father (King, 2006, King & Sobolewski, 2006). Booth et al. (2010) acknowledge that adolescents with poor relationships with resident-fathers still perform better, both academically and behaviorally than those with distant relationships with a non-resident father. These findings demonstrate that a father in the home is influential to adolescent outcomes.

Father Involvement

Thomas, Krampe, and Newton (2008) argued that even in cases where the father does not remain in the home, fathers should still have a functioning relationship with their children. According to Carlson (2006), resident father involvement is more beneficial than non-resident father involvement. Carlson (2006) also found that while adolescent behavior is better when the father lives in the home with the adolescent, non-resident father involvement produces better behavior outcomes than those of adolescents with absent fathers. In instances where it is not possible for the father to live in the same home as the child, it has been found that some form of involvement is still beneficial to the child. Non-resident father involvement is better than no involvement at all (Carlson, 2006; Thomas et al.). Involvement was one of the parental behaviors identified by Caldwell et al. (2010) as a variable associated with lower incidence of risky behavior in African American youth. Active non-resident father involvement results in better

behavior outcomes for children when compared to children in single-parent families with absent fathers (Choi & Jackson, 2011). Father involvement, even if it is from a non-resident father is associated with greater levels of well-being and positive child outcomes (Carlson,; Choi & Jackson; Coley & Medeiros, 2007; King, 2006; Mitchell, Booth, & King, 2009).

Studies show that father involvement has a direct effect on adolescent behavior (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Carlson, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004). Demuth and Brown found that even non-resident father relationships are influential. Non-resident father involvement is negatively associated with adolescent delinquency, as non-resident father involvement increases, adolescent delinquency decreases (Choi & Jackson, 2011; Coley & Medeiros, 2007; Demuth & Brown). Coley and Medeiros identified a bidirectional relationship between father involvement and adolescent behavior. Over time, involvement by a non-resident father has been found to influence decreases in adolescent delinquency (Carlson; Coley & Medeiros).

Carlson (2006) found that father involvement is significantly associated with fewer internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems. Carlson argued that any type of involvement, whether high or low, has a beneficial effect on adolescent behavior compared to no involvement at all. Parental monitoring has been identified as an essential parenting behavior that is associated with positive outcomes in youth. Monitoring by non-resident fathers influenced a decrease in aggressive behavior in sons (Caldwell et al., 2010). Low parental involvement and living in single-mother homes have not only been identified as risk factors associated with substance abuse in

adolescents, but also violent behavior (Caldwell et al.). Choi and Jackson (2011) identified non-resident father involvement in poor and lower income African American, single-mother homes as a determinant of a child's behavioral development.

According to Demuth and Brown (2004), relationship quality has a significant effect on adolescent delinquency. A strong bond between a son and his biological father is not always possible. Booth et al. (2010) found that it is more beneficial for adolescents to have a close bond to a non-resident father than to have a weak bond to a resident father. Behavior problems are negatively associated with time with, support from, and closeness to a father (Amato & Rivera, 1999). Videon (2002) argued that good relationships between non-resident fathers and their children that include frequent contact can result in lower externalizing behavior than in cases of unsatisfactory relationships between non-resident fathers and their children. Adolescents who are close to their non-resident fathers reported to have higher self-esteem, less delinquency, and fewer depressive symptoms than adolescents who are not close to their resident fathers (Booth et al., 2010). King and Sobolewski (2006) found that even in cases where the mother-child relationship was weak, a strong father-child relationship with a non-resident father still can influence the child to demonstrate fewer acting out behaviors in school when compared to adolescents with weak relationships with both parents. Adolescents are at a higher risk of maladaptive behavior when they have poor relationships with both a resident mother and non-resident father (King & Sobolewski,). These findings confirm the Demuth and Brown argument that the relationship quality is essential to adolescent behavior.

Self-Concept

Father absence can influence adolescent development from an early age. According to Denny and Martin (2004), early experiences of father absence affect the child's self-description, which in turn contributes to the types of self-attributions developed in adolescence. Father absence influences the way an adolescent male develops a masculine self-concept. Beaty (1995) argued that father absence has a profound effect on children who experience that absence prior to the age of 5, particularly males, including difficulties in peer relationships. Peer relationships translate to the school setting, especially in children with externalizing behavior. Male adolescents with absent fathers exhibit tendencies to disfavor competitive sports, engage in female-aggressive behavior, and can be ambiguous about masculinity (Beaty). In the school setting, an adolescent male could develop poor peer relationships with other male athletes because of his disfavor of competitive sports. An example of female-aggressive behavior in the school setting can involve inappropriate behaviors toward female students, like sexual harassment, verbal, or physical abuse.

Chen (2007) addressed ambiguity about masculinity by arguing that boys tend to learn about being male, male interests and activities, and social behavior from their fathers. Having a warm relationship with a father, influences the development of positive self-esteem as well as gender role behavior (Chen). African American boys raised in father absent homes are likely to be emotionally fragile because they lack instruction in appropriate male behavior. Beaty (1995) argued that a plausible rationale for the

development of such tendencies is the absence of appropriate male role models during early childhood.

School Setting: Academic Achievement and School Behavior

Booth et al., (2010) used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to evaluate the relationship between father residence and closeness when it comes to adolescent problem behavior. The study focused on two situations in the examination of the relationship between parent closeness and adolescent behavior. The first situation explored behavior outcomes of adolescents who were close to resident fathers when compared to adolescents with non-resident fathers. The second situation explored behavior outcomes of adolescents who were close to non-resident fathers when compared to adolescents who were close to their resident fathers (Booth et al., 2010).

Booth and colleagues (2010) argued that adolescents with strong relationships with resident fathers perform better in the academic setting than adolescents with a non-resident father. Children who grow up with absent fathers perform at a lower rate in school than children who grow up with both biological parents. Booth et al. found that even when adolescents report not being close to a resident father, they have better grades than adolescents who are not close to non-resident fathers. Compared to children living in two-parent homes, those in father absent homes have a greater chance of experiencing educational problems, which include poor academic performance, grade retention, and higher occurrences of disciplinary problems (DeBell, 2008; East et al., 2006; Mulkey et al., 1992). East et al. argue that in many cases single mothers must work full time and sometimes have multiple jobs to support her family. The extra time the mother has to

spend away from the home results in her having less time to monitor and supervise school performance, potentially leading to poor academic achievement and delinquency (East et al.). Mulkey and colleagues argued that single-parents have more difficulty in managing a child's behavior due to demands of financially maintaining the household.

The study done by Booth et al., (2010) as well as others included in this chapter utilized archived data rather than a purposive sampling method as I intend to use in this. A study using archived data could seem like a weaker study when compared to a study using current sampling methods. Another weakness of the study conducted by Booth and colleagues (2010) is that some subpopulations within the data sample were oversampled which made it difficult to efficiently analyze the effects on a particular ethnic group. Booth et al. did effectively include positive attributes of adolescent well-being, providing specific measures of relationship attributes that could be further studied. Booth et al. also effectively analyzed the relationship quality of both resident and non-resident fathers and how these relationships impact the well-being of adolescents.

Research shows that children who reported that they were close to their biological fathers were more likely to get better grades in school and demonstrate fewer behavior problems than peers who reported not being close to their biological father (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Hofferth, Forry, & Peters, 2008; King, 2006). DeBell (2008) found that 16% of children with absent fathers have repeated a grade, compared to 7% of children from two-parent homes. Adolescents with distant relationships with resident fathers tend to make better grades than adolescents with distant relationships to non-resident fathers. DeBell also found that children with absent fathers were suspended at a rate of 18%,

compared to a rate of 7% for children with present fathers. Adolescents who reported to not have a close relationship with a non-resident father demonstrated more externalizing and internalizing problems and poorer performance compared to other adolescents (King & Sobolewski, 2006). As academic performance and behavior in school are indicators of success, these statistics suggest that children with absent fathers are less likely to finish high school and attend college (DeBell).

Maladaptive Behavior

Father absence is not only associated with poor academic performance, but also associated with behavioral problems, substance abuse, risky sexual activity, and maladaptive psychological well-being (East et al., 2006). Mash and Wolfe (2010) define maladaptive or anti-social behavior as actions that are contrary to family or societal expectations that typically violate the rights of others. Caldwell, Rafferty, Reischl, DeLoney, and Brooks (2010) argued that the development of aggressive behavior is normal, however this behavior should decrease as children learn socially acceptable ways to respond to environmental stress, which typically begins with parents. Choi and Jackson (2011) argued that frequent contact between the father and child and adequate parenting from the father is associated with fewer child behavior problems. Low parental involvement and living in a single-mother home have been identified as risk factors associated with violent behavior in adolescents (Caldwell et al.). Boys who grew up without a father figure demonstrated more anti-social behavior than peers who did have a father figure or grew up in two-parent homes (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004; Eitle, 2006).

Adolescents who come from single-parent homes demonstrate more delinquent behavior than peers who come from homes with both biological parents (Carlson, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004; Rodney & Mupier, 1999). Demuth and Brown (2004) used data from National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health to investigate the relationship between family structure and delinquency in adolescents. While most studies only tend to compare biological couples in a marital relationship to single-mother families, the study completed by Demuth and Brown expanded the scope to include single-father families. Demuth and Brown considered the following family structures; biological married couples, single-mother, single-father, mother-stepdad, and father-stepmom. In this study, I examined single-parent families to determine if parental absence or specifically, father absence contribute to higher levels of adolescent delinquency when compared to adolescents in two-parent families. What Demuth and Brown found was that adolescents, specifically males, from single-father families had the highest level of delinquency. The father-stepmom structure was the second highest level of delinquency, single-mother was the third highest, and mother-stepdad was the fourth highest (Demuth & Brown, 2004). A weakness of Demuth and Brown is that there are many factors that could contribute to delinquency, including household size or race. What Demuth and Brown did well was emphasis that parent closeness affects delinquency the most. They also highlighted the importance of parent-child attachments (Demuth & Brown, 2004).

Adolescents born outside of marriage whose mother remained unmarried had the greatest behavior problems, scoring significantly higher on outcomes for aggression, depression, and low self-esteem (Carlson et al., 2008). According to Rodney and Mupier

(1999), African American adolescent boys with absent fathers experience more conduct disorder related behavior than African American adolescent boys with fathers that are present. Conduct disorder related behavior includes, but is not limited to running away from home, stealing, lying, skipping school, setting fires, animal cruelty, vandalism, physical aggression and fighting, theft, using weapons, and rape (Rodney & Mupier). Rodney and Mupier found statistically significant differences in conduct disorder related behavior of African American boys with absent fathers and that of African American boys with present fathers. Identified behaviors included running away from home, school suspension, and getting in trouble with the law. Results indicated that 5% of father-absent adolescents reported to have run away from home compared to 0.9% of father-present adolescents. School suspension in the studied population was 74% for adolescents with absent fathers and 54.5% for adolescents with present fathers. Father-absent adolescents were reported to have been in trouble with the law at a rate of 41.9% while father-present adolescents reported to have been in trouble with the law at a rate of 28.6% (Rodney & Mupier).

Low parental involvement and living in single-mother homes have also been identified as risk factors associated with substance abuse in adolescents (Caldwell et al., 2010). When compared to adolescent males with present fathers, adolescent males with absent fathers were more likely to use drugs (Mandara & Murray, 2006). In their study of father absence and drug use in African American males, Mandara and Murray (2006) found that father absence was the main predictor of substance abuse. Adolescent males with absent fathers were more likely to use a combination of cigarettes, marijuana, and

alcohol than adolescent males with present fathers (Mandara & Murray). Booth et al. (2010) found that even when adolescents report not being close to a resident father, they engage in less substance abuse than adolescents who are not close to non-resident fathers. Booth et al. findings indicate that having a father present in the home influences an adolescent's decision to engage in substance use regardless of the quality of the relationship.

Related Variables

Related variables identified for this study include age of mother, living arrangement, number of siblings, education level of mother, and household income. One of the variables identified in this study is living arrangement, which could include the size of the household. Household size is positively associated with delinquency (Demuth & Brown, 2004). More people residing in one household will likely influence an adolescent to avoid the home and engage in delinquent activities. Another variable identified in this study is education level of the mother. Of the population of children living in households with an absent father, 62% have parents without a high school diploma, while 18% have at least one parent with a post high school education (DeBell, 2008). Demuth and Brown found that delinquency is negatively associated with parental education. In households where parental education is greater than a high school diploma, there is likely to be less delinquency in adolescents. An alternative factor that may influence non-resident father involvement is maternal behavior. Guzzo (2009) argues that maternal behavior can contribute to a decline in non-resident father contact. When a

mother enters into a new relationship, father involvement can decrease. This decrease is more likely when the mother begins to co-habitat with the new partner and he becomes involved in the life of the child (Guzzo, 2009).

Social Impact

While there has been a great deal of research done on father absence, there is a lack of research related specifically to African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 with absent fathers. The research that is currently available, addresses various aspects of this particular population, but little to no research that addresses this population specifically. Booth et al. (2010) suggest that the link between father absence and problem behavior is stronger for adolescents ages 12 to 17 than it is for children ages 6 to 11. Conducting a study specifically examining the effects of father absence on African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 will illuminate needs of this group, leading to the design of programs tailored to this population.

This study is relevant to promoting positive social change by creating opportunities to educate communities about the effects of father absence on African American boys. Sharing the results of this study will allow people to gain insight to how father absence can influence adolescent behavior both in school and in the community. Education for parents is needed, and data from this study can provide information that will be useful in the development of resources to be used in educational prevention and intervention programs.

Parents as well as potential parents need to be educated about the effects father absence can have on adolescent behavior. Choi and Jackson (2011) argue that parenting

adequacy is an acknowledged predictor of child outcomes. Initiatives should be developed to promote and encourage responsible fathering and father involvement regardless of residence. There is a need to help fathers to enhance parenting, communication, and relationship skills that can help reduce conflict between mothers and non-resident fathers. According to Demuth and Brown (2004) relationship quality, involvement, and supervision can all influence adolescent delinquency, even in single-parent or step-parent families. Therefore, education programs and services focusing on adequate parenting should be extended to not only non-marital couples and non-resident fathers, but married couples as well. Being inclusive in the education process would allow the target audience to be reached directly and indirectly. In educating all, fathers can receive information directly through programs or indirectly from family members or friends who participated in a program that promoted active fathering.

Programs can also be developed to increase parental involvement. Caldwell et al. (2010) argue that low parental involvement is associated with violent behavior and substance abuse in adolescents. A program that teaches parents, especially fathers ways to be more involved in the lives of their children will help decrease violence and substance abuse in adolescents. Data gathered from this study can be shared with program participants to support the need for increased parental involvement.

Active fathering is beneficial for school achievement and positive behavior (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Hofferth et al., 2008; King, 2006). To encourage successful achievement and positive behavior, programs can be developed to use in schools to help boys be successful in spite of home structure. Beaty (1995) argues that male adolescents

with absent fathers tend to disfavor competitive sports and engage in female-aggressive behavior. A male with these types of behaviors is likely to display them in the school setting. Schools will benefit to have programs in place to help adolescent boys develop coping skills and effective ways to express anger.

Schools and communities will benefit from the development of programs that focus on the relationship between sons and non-resident fathers. These programs have been found to enhance attitudes and behaviors of both the father and the son. Father-son intervention programs influence sons to increase their intent to avoid violent behaviors (Caldwell et al., 2010). A father with enhanced parenting skills will connect to his son more consistently and discourage the development of maladaptive behaviors. This can affect his sons behavior in the community as well as in school. A son with better coping skills will be less likely to engage in delinquent behavior in the community or aggressive in school.

Prevention and intervention can also take place within schools. Since the focus of this study is on how father absence affects behavior of African American adolescent males in the school setting, the results can also be used to develop school programs. Data gathered in this study can be used to develop prevention and intervention programs targeting adolescent boys with absent fathers. These programs can help adolescents develop better coping skills in dealing with the reality of having an absent father.

Summary and Conclusions

This quasi-experimental quantitative study is designed to evaluate how school behavior of African American boys ages 13 to 15 is affected by father absence. For the

purpose of this study, *father absence* is defined as the experience of a child living in a separate household than his biological father. Using attachment theory as a theoretical foundation, I examined father absence and its relationship to school behavior.

Attachment difficulties can transform into maladaptive behavior in a variety of forms. In this study I looked at those various forms of maladaptive behavior that surface as a result of adolescents living without a father. This study will help fill the void in research regarding father absence and African American adolescent males.

With the United States of America having the highest level of families without fathers, the number of children growing up in households with absent fathers is increasing yearly (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015; Carlson, 2006; DeBell, 2008; U. S. Census Bureau, 2014). Research shows that adolescents living in households that are absent of fathers are at an increased risk of academic and behavior problems in school, delinquency, violent behaviors, and substance abuse (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006; Booth et al., 2010; Carlson, 2006; DeBell, 2008; East et al., 2006; Jackmon, 2006). Children who have a relationship with their biological fathers perform better in school than those who do not have a relationship with their biological father (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Booth et al., 2010; Hofferth et al., 2008; King, 2006). Adolescents who grow up in a home without a father also are likely to demonstrate more delinquent behaviors than adolescent who come from homes with both biological parents (Carlson, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004; Rodney & Mupier, 1999). Examining the research concerning the type of behaviors that result from father absence signifies the importance of having two parents in the home.

When biological fathers are not able to be in the same home as their children, a functional relationship should still exist (Thomas, Krampe, & Newton, 2008). When a father is directly involved in the life of his child, he is able to influence that child's behavior for positive outcomes. Positive outcomes include decreased delinquency, violent behavior, and increased self-concept (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Carlson, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004).

Finally, through this study, I will contribute to the creation of prevention and intervention programs to socially impact the epidemic of father absence. Education is a key component of promoting social change by improving the state of fathering and the response of children not being fathered. Communities as well as schools will benefit from programs developed to educate parents, potential parents, children, and adolescents about the effects of father absence. Using the data gathered from this study, I will encourage positive behavior, successful achievement, active fathering, and improved relationship quality.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the research method explain in detail. Chapter 3 will contain a discussion of the research design, population, and sample selection. Chapter 3 will also include a discussion of the recruitment process as well a data collection procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

I designed this quasi-experimental quantitative study to evaluate how father absence affects school behavior in African American boys ages 13-15. I tested the theory of attachment that relates father absence to school behavior of African American adolescent boys. My intent was to identify and explore the frequency of externalizing behaviors among African American boys with absent fathers compared to peers from intact families. I used MANOVA to evaluate overall and types of externalizing behavior identified from the CBCL-TRF (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). This chapter contains a discussion of research design, methodology, and ethical procedures related to this study. I also discuss the variables of this study, and offer a detailed discussion of population selection and participant recruitment. Additionally, I discuss testing instruments are, as well as the reliability and validity of the testing instruments I used.

Research Design

In this quasi-experimental quantitative study, I used MANOVA to evaluate overall and types of externalizing behavior identified from the CBCL-TRF. I identified the frequency of externalizing behaviors of African American boys with absent fathers as compared to peers from intact families. The independent variable for this study was father absence, defined as a biological father not living in the home with the adolescent and never having had a marital relationship with the biological mother. The dependent variable was externalizing school behavior, based on the externalizing behavior subscales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) of the CBCL-TRF.

I used a data sheet (see Appendix D) and the CBCL-TRF to collect data to measure the variables of father absence and externalizing school behavior. Specifically, I used the data sheet to determine if participants met the criteria for the target group or the control group, and the CBCL-TRF to quantify externalizing school behavior. The first research question was: Does father absence influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior scores of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families? The second research question was: Do African American boys with absent fathers exhibit more externalizing behaviors in the school setting, evidenced by higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing behavior scales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) than African American boys from intact families? MANOVA was used to explore differences in externalizing behavior in the school setting of African American boys ages 13-15 with absent fathers compared to externalizing behavior of African American boys of the same age with intact families.

A potential time constraint with the design choice was that data was collected from teachers and needed to be collected during a school year. There were resource constraints consistent with the design choice. The quasi-experimental quantitative design of this study was consistent with research designs needed to advance knowledge in the discipline because the examination of the externalizing scales of the CBCL-TRF through the use of MANOVA provided a narrow, more focused view of how aggression and rule-breaking are affected by father absence.

Methodology

I used MANOVA to evaluate overall and types of externalizing behavior identified from the CBCL-TRF. Specifically, I compared scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) in adolescent African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 in grades 6 through 8 with absent fathers compared to African American boys of the same age group from intact families.

Population

The target population for this study was African American adolescent boys between the ages of 13-15, in grades 6-8 within the middle school setting, from mother-only households. For the purpose of this study, *mother-only households* were defined as family structures with no adult male figure living in the home. Study participants had fathers who lived in the same city as them, but who did not interact with these adolescents. The control group population was African American adolescent boys between the ages of 13-15, in grades 6-8 within the middle school setting, from intact families. The estimated target population size was 60, with 30 participants in the target population and 30 participants in the control group.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method. I contacted sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers and asked them to complete the teacher's report form of the CBCL-TRF based on their knowledge of students meeting the participant and control group criteria. I selected the purposive sampling strategy because teachers were used to provide data about a specific population, African American boys ages 13-15.

Using a purposive sample, rather than a random sample, eliminated the possibility for a population that was not representative of the targeted population.

The sample was drawn from teachers based on their knowledge of students meeting the participant and control group criteria. I initially contacted teachers through social media networks. Using social media networks, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers were asked to respond to the flyer if they were currently teaching or had taught in the past school year any African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 who have absent fathers or have intact families. For the purpose of this study, *mother-only household* was defined as a family structure with no adult male figure (grandfather, mother's boyfriend, step-father, uncle) living in the home. Teachers who responded to the initial flyer were then contacted as part of the data collection phase.

The sampling frame was African American boys between the ages of 13-15 who were in grades 6-8 with absent fathers. The control group was African American boys between the ages of 13-15 in grades 6-8 from intact families. All girls and boys of other races were excluded from this study.

Effect Size

I conducted a power analysis for ANOVA to determine sample size. In order to get a moderate effect size of .05, I needed a total of 60 African American boys. The target population had 30 boys and 30 boys were needed for the control group. This sample size was large enough to produce results that yielded a significant value at the .05 level at the confidence level of 95% (Friendly, n.d.).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I gathered data for this study from sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers who were teaching or had taught in the past school year African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15. To recruit teachers, I distributed flyers (See Appendix A) using social media networks (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). Teachers were asked to respond to the flyer if they were teaching or had taught in the past school year any African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 who had absent fathers or were from intact families. The flyer included an email address for teachers to send me an email response. Teachers who responded to the initial flyer were then contacted as part of the data collection phase.

Once teachers sent their email responses to the flyer, an email I sent an email requesting their name, phone number, mailing address, and if they were willing to complete more than one survey. According to how many participants for whom teachers had to provide data, I then sent teachers a study data packet for each participant containing a letter explaining the research study (see Appendix B), a data sheet (see Appendix C), the teacher's report form of the CBCL-TRF, and an informed consent form. The data collection packet included a self-addressed return envelope used to return the completed packet. The introduction letter explained the purpose and goal of the research study. The data sheet asked teachers the following information: contact information only to be used for follow-up if needed, grade level taught, age, race, and sex of student they answered questions about, and if they taught him during the 2015-2016 or 2016-2017 school year, and if the student came from a father absent home or an intact family.

Teachers were then asked to complete the teacher report form of the CBCL-TRF based on their knowledge of students meeting the participant and control group criteria. I asked teachers to consider answering questions for more than one student, but no more than three students. Teachers were sent one packet per student they had identified as meeting the study criteria. The informed consent form communicated that teachers were not obligated to complete the packet and had the option to decide not to provide data for the study at any time before returning the packet. The completed packet was returned using the self-addressed envelope to a post office box I used only for the research study.

If data collection packets were not returned after 2 weeks, I sent teachers an email reminder requesting the packet. After a reminder, if the data packet still was not returned, I did not contact the teachers again and made further recruitment attempts. The teacher recruitment process continued on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) until 30 participants for each group were obtained.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The CBCL, also referred to as the *Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment* (ASEBA) was developed by Thomas M. Achenbach and published in 1991 (Achenbach, 1994; Spies & Plake, 2005). The CBCL is a standardized instrument used to measure emotional and behavioral problems in children and adolescents (Impara & Plake, 1998). One of the functions of the CBCL is to help identify children who may need emotional, behavioral, or social support. I used the CBCL-TRF to measure externalizing behavior in study participants. The CBCL-TRF takes 15-20 minutes to complete. The externalizing scales included on the CBCL are Rule-Breaking Behavior

and Aggressive Behavior (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Externalizing behavior was measured using CBCL-TRF subscales, Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior. Externalizing behavior scale scores were calculated by scoring the completed CBCL-TRF. The CBCL can be scored by hand, or using a web-based or computer-based program. Raw scores on the CBCL were converted to T scores. Scores less than 65 on the CBCL-TRF are classified as normal. Borderline clinical scores are from 65 -70. T scores above 70 are considered clinical (Achenbach, 1994). The CBCL-TRF was appropriate for this study because it is an instrument that includes measures of externalizing behaviors in the school setting. In this study, I intended to evaluate the externalizing behaviors of African American boys with absent fathers compared to externalizing behaviors of African American boys from intact families.

The instrument was normed to reflect a national representation sample, with a balance of region, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and residence (Impara & Plake, 1998). Test-retest reliability of scale scores is high, between .80s and .90 for a mean test-retest reliability of .90. The test-retest reliability on problem scales has a mean of .90; specifically problem scales relevant to this study Rule breaking .83, Aggressive Behavior .88, externalizing behavior .89. The DSM-oriented scales have a mean of .85; specifically ADHD scale .95, oppositional defiant problems is .91, conduct problems is .71 (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001).

According to the review of Michael Furlong, the internal consistencies of the Externalizing and Total Problems scales are good, in the range of .92 to .96 (Impara & Plake, 1998). The internal consistency of problem scales and the DSM-oriented scales

for the CBCL-TRF ranged from .73 to .94 (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Furlong also reported that the internal consistency for the Aggressive Behavior scale was strong at .92 (Impara & Plake, 1998). Beth Doll reviewed the CBCL and reported that the empirical development of the instrument resulted in validity that she considered to be impressive. Doll stated that the CBCL had extensive empirical validity research, making it a preferred instrument to use for research. A review by Michael Furlong reported that in the field of child psychopathology, when it comes to validity, the CBCL is the standard to which other instruments are held. The CBCL was found to have high concurrent validity as well as moderate to high construct validity based on correlations with similar instruments (Impara & Plake, 1998).

The CBCL was purchased through the publisher, *Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment* (ASEBA). ASEBA offered a discounted rate on materials ordered by students conducting research. Order fulfillment granted permission to use the materials that were ordered.

Operationalization

The independent variable identified for this study was father absence when comparing African American boys from father absent homes to boys from intact families. Father absence was defined as a biological father not living in the same home with the adolescent, who never had a marital relationship with the biological mother. An *intact family* was one in which the biological parents of the adolescent are married to one another and living in the same home with the adolescent (Adams & Harrington, 2007). Father absence and intact family were measured using the data sheet completed by

teachers. Participants either came from father absent homes or intact families. The dependent variable in this study was externalizing behavior. Externalizing behavior was defined as continuous maladaptive behavior that included impulsivity, aggression, and delinquent acts (Mash & Wolfe, 2010).

Statistical analysis, specifically MANOVA, was conducted using SPSS software. The analysis compared scores on the externalizing scales of the CBCL, Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior. The use of MANOVA was appropriate because the dependent variables identified as externalizing behaviors were related. The results of the statistical tests were interpreted based on the data results from running the MANOVA. The research questions and hypotheses to be analyzed were:

Research Question 1: Does father absence influence school behavior, as measured by overall externalizing behavior scores on the CBCL-TRF, of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families?

*H*₀1: Father absence does not influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior scale score of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families.

*H*₁1: Father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior scale score, of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families.

Research Question 2: Do African American boys with absent fathers exhibit more externalizing behaviors in the school setting as measured by the CBCL-TRF

externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families?

H₀₂: African American boys with absent fathers do not have higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families

H₁₂: African American boys with absent fathers have higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families.

Threats to Validity

Potential threats to validity were minimal for this study. Teacher bias was a potential threat to validity. It was possible that some teachers rated students harshly. The possibility of this threat is minimal because data from this study was gathered from a number of teachers, reducing the likelihood that teacher bias significantly impacted the validity of this study. Another threat to validity was the possibility that a teacher shares with a participant that information about him was being used in this study. To address this potential threat, teachers were provided confidentiality information. Teachers were also instructed not to provide names of study participants. The only information requested about participants was race, grade, age, and if he was from a single mother home or an intact family. As stated before, it was important to note for the purpose of this study that teachers were the data collectors and the African American adolescent boys were participants. The data collected from teachers provided information about the behavior of the participants.

Ethical Procedures

All information provided was kept confidential. Personal information was not used for any purpose outside of this research project. Data collected for this study was kept secure in a locked file cabinet to which only the researcher had access. Data will be kept for a period of at least five years, as required by Walden University. Walden University's approval number for this study is 12-01-16-0161681. All data will be shredded when it is permitted to be discarded.

Summary

This quasi-experimental quantitative study was designed to evaluate how father absence affects school behavior in African American boys ages 13-15 using the theory of attachment that related father absence to school behavior. My intent of this study was to identify and explore the frequency of externalizing behaviors among African American boys with absent fathers compared to peers from intact families. I evaluated overall and types of externalizing behavior identified from the *Child Behavior Checklist - Teacher Report Scale* (CBCL-TRF; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) by identifying the frequency of externalizing behaviors of African American boys with absent fathers as compared to peers from intact families. The independent variable for this study was father absence, defined as a biological father not living in the home with the adolescent that never had a marital relationship with the biological mother. The dependent variable was externalizing school behavior, based on the Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking subscales of the CBCL-TRF.

Data to measure the variables of father absence and externalizing school behavior was collected using a data sheet to determine if participants met the criteria for the target group or the control group. I used a purposive sampling method to select participants through sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers based on their knowledge of students meeting the participant and control group criteria. In chapter 4, I discuss the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how father absence affects school behavior in African American boys ages 13-15 when compared to same-age peers from intact families. Father absence, defined as a biological father not living in the home with the adolescent who never had a marital relationship with the biological mother, is the independent variable. Externalizing school behavior, the dependent variable, was defined as the CBCL-TRF externalizing behaviors scores which included the Overall Externalizing Behavior composite and the two subscales that make up the composite, Rule-Breaking Behavior scale and Aggressive Behavior scale. In this study, I aimed to answer two research questions. The first research question was: Does father absence influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing scores of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families? Based on the first research question, I hypothesized that father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior scale score, of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families. The second research question was: Do African American boys with absent fathers exhibit more externalizing behaviors in the school setting, evidenced by higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing scales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) than African American boys from intact families? Based on the second research question, I hypothesized that African American boys with absent fathers have higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing

behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families. In this chapter, I discuss data collection details, including information about the data collection process, data sample, and data analysis. This chapter also includes detailed information about the results of this study. The results discussion includes descriptive statistics associated with the study sample, evaluations of statistical assumptions, and statistical findings as they relate to the research questions and hypotheses. This chapter will conclude with summarized findings of the research questions.

Data Collection

Data collection began December 2016 and concluded May 2017. Participation recruitment was initiated on the social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. I posted a recruitment flyer targeting sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers who were teaching or had taught in the past school year African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15. Teachers were asked to respond to the email address included on the recruitment flyer and to share the study information with colleagues. I then contacted teachers who responded to the initial flyer via an email message requesting their name, phone number, mailing address, and if they were willing to complete more than one survey. According to how many participants for whom teachers had to provide data, I then sent teachers a study data packet for each participant containing a letter explaining the research study (see Appendix B), a data sheet (see Appendix C), the teacher's report form from the CBCL-TRF, and an informed consent form. The data collection packet included a self-addressed return envelope used to return the completed packet. The

introduction letter explained the purpose and goal of the research study. The data sheet asked teachers the following information: contact information only used if follow-up was needed, grade level taught, age, race, and sex of student they answered questions about, and if they taught him during the 2015-2016 or 2016-2017 school year, and if the student came from a father-absent home or an intact family. Teachers were then asked to complete the teacher report form of the CBCL-TRF based on their knowledge of students meeting the participant and control group criteria. The informed consent form communicated that teachers were not obligated to complete the packet and had the option to decide not to provide data for the study at any time before returning the packet. The completed packet was returned using the self-addressed envelope to a post office box I used only for the research study.

I made several recruitment attempts. Each recruitment attempt included posting to social media platforms. In some cases, responses were received within a few hours of the social media posting. In other instances, I received responses days or weeks after the social media posting. Several teachers who saw the recruitment posting informed me of their intent to share the research information with colleagues. Some teachers sent emails stating that a colleague referred them to the study. If data collection packets were not returned after 2 weeks of being sent, I sent teachers an email reminder requesting the packet. The recruitment process continued until May 2017 when data on 30 boys from father-absent homes and 30 boys from intact families were received.

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

As described in Chapter 3, I used a purposive sample, where sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers with recent experience with African American adolescent boys provided data about the population identified for this study. The purposive sampling strategy was selected because educators would be able to provide data about student behavior. The sample totaled 60 participants, all of whom were African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15. Of the total participants, 30 were from father-absent homes and 30 were from intact families. The groups of boys from father-absent homes were identified as the target group and the group of boys from intact families were identified as the control group. The selected sample was highly representative of the population of interest.

I collected data to measure the independent variable, father absence and the dependent variable, externalizing school behavior, were collected using a data sheet (see Appendix C) and the CBCL-TRF. Specifically, I used the data sheet to determine if participants met the criteria for the target group or the control group. I used the CBCL-TRF to quantify externalizing school behavior by providing a score for overall externalizing behavior, as well as a score for rule-breaking behavior and aggressive behavior.

Results

Descriptive Statistics of Sample

Based on the data collected from teachers, of the total sample ($N = 60$), 60 (100%) were African American, 60 (100%) were adolescent males, ages 13-15. Of the

total sample ($N = 60$), 30 (50%) were from father-absent homes, and 30 (50%) were from intact families. Between-subjects factors are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Group Between-Subjects Factors

Group	<i>n</i>	%
Father-absent home	30	50.0
Intact family	30	50.0

I collected school behavior data using the CBCL-TRF. The Overall Externalizing Behavior score for those in the father-absent home group was $M = 65.40$, $SD = 10.03$, and for those in the intact-family group it was $M = 54.07$, $SD = 7.72$. The Rule Breaking Behavior score for those in the father-absent home group was $M = 65.13$, $SD = 9.64$, and for those in the intact-family group it was $M = 56.80$, $SD = 5.84$. The Aggressive Behavior score for those in the father-absent home group was $M = 65.97$, $SD = 9.39$, and for those in the intact-family group it was $M = 54.27$, $SD = 4.86$. Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for each group as measured by the Externalizing Behavior scales of the CBCL-TRF.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Externalizing School Behavior

Scale	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>n</i>
Overall Externalizing	Father absent	65.40	10.03	30
	Intact family	54.07	7.72	30
	Total	59.73	10.55	60

Rule Breaking Behavior	Father absent	65.13	9.64	30
	Intact family	56.80	5.84	30
	Total	60.97	8.95	60
Aggressive Behavior	Father absent	65.97	9.39	30
	Intact family	54.27	4.86	30
	Total	60.12	9.47	60

Statistical Assumptions

Statistical analyses were performed to ensure the data met the assumptions of the MANOVA analysis. I evaluated nine assumptions of the MANOVA as follows:

- Assumption 1: The data consisted of two or more dependent variables (Overall Externalizing, Rule-Breaking Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior) measured at the interval level (continuous data).
- Assumption 2: The data consisted of one independent variable (father absence) with two categorical independent groups (father absent and intact family).
- Assumption 3: The data consisted of independent observations. There was no relationship between the observations in each group. There also is no relationship between the groups themselves. For example, each student in the father absent group is independent from all other students in that group. Additionally, each student is only part of either the father absent group or the intact-family group.
- Assumption 4: There was an adequate sample size for analysis. There were a total of 60 participants, 30 boys in the father absent group and 30 boys in the intact-family group. There were more cases in each group than the number of dependent variables, therefore this assumption is met.

- Assumption 5: Using a SPSS, no univariate or multivariate outliers were detected. A matrix scatterplot was created to detect univariate outliers in both groups of the independent variable (father absent, intact family) for all of the dependent variables (Overall Externalizing, Rule-Breaking Behavior, Aggressive Behavior). Multivariate outliers were examined using Mahalanobis Distance (MD). A MANOVA with three dependent variables as used in this study identifies 16.27 as the maximum allowable critical value. For this study, $MD = 13.943$, indicating this assumption criterion was met.
- Assumption 6: Multivariate normality was tested using Shapiro-Wilks test, with $\alpha = .05$ level of significance. For the Overall Externalizing scale, $p = .151$ for the intact-family group and $p = .170$ for the father absent group. The assumption of normality was met, indicating the dependent variable of overall externalizing behavior was normally distributed for both groups. Additionally, the two scales that make up the Overall Externalizing scale (Rule Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) were analyzed. For the father-absent group, $p = .229$ for Rule Breaking Behavior and $p = .352$ for Aggressive Behavior, also indicating normal distribution. However, for the intact-family group, $p = .018$ for Rule Breaking Behavior and $p = < .001$, indicating a departure from normality. In terms of Rule Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior for the intact-family group violating this assumption, an examination of the distribution was conducted. The distribution illustrated a slight positive skew. While there were no outliers from either scale, both scales contained a higher frequency of low

scores and lower frequency of high scores in comparison to the father-absent group. Intact families tended to have more boys with low levels of aggressive and rule breaking behavior compared to father-absent families. This type of skew for the intact group is an expected outcome. Additionally, the Rule Breaking Behavior scale and Aggressive Behavior scale make up the Overall Externalizing Behavior scale which yielded $p = .151$ and $p = .170$ for the intact family and father-absent groups respectively. Therefore, this departure from normality is considered unsubstantial, given that MANOVA is robust for violations of multivariate normality (Green & Salkind, 2008). Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for all of the scales for each group of participants.

Table 3

Tests of Normality

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Overall Externalizing	Intact	.111	30	.200*	.948	30	.151
	Family Father Absent	.095	30	.200*	.950	30	.170
Rule Breaking Behavior	Intact	.176	30	.019	.913	30	.018
	Family Intact Family	.110	30	.200*	.955	30	.229
Aggressive Behavior	Intact	.255	30	.000	.816	30	.000
	Family Intact Family	.100	30	.200*	.962	30	.352

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

- Assumption 7: There is a linear relationship between each pair of dependent variables for each group. SPSS was used to generate a scatterplot matrix. Examination of this matrix supported this assumption.
- Assumption 8: Homogeneity of equality of covariance matrices was examined using Box's M test of equality of covariance matrices using SPSS, with $p < .001$ as a criterion. The level of significance for the test was below .001. *Box's M* (30.271) was significant, ($p = < .001$), indicating significant differences between the covariance matrices, which violates this assumption. In cases where there are significant differences, Wilk's Lambda is not the appropriate test. When there are significant differences, the Pillai's Trace test should be used to interpret the multivariate F , as this statistical test is considered robust (Green & Salkind, 2008).

Table 4

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices^a

Box's M	30.271
F	4.761
df1	6
df2	24373.132
Sig.	.000

Note. a. Design: Intercept + Family. Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.

- Assumption 9: The test for multicollinearity was conducted using SPSS. The correlation between Overall Externalizing and Rule Breaking Behavior was $p = .907$. The correlation between Overall Externalizing and Aggressive

Behavior was $p = .929$. The correlation between Aggressive Behavior and Rule Breaking Behavior was $p = .826$. The correlations greater than .9 can best be explained again by noting that the Overall Externalizing score is a composite of both the Rule Breaking Behavior score and the Aggressive Behavior score. Table 5 shows the correlations of the dependent variables.

Table 5

Correlations

		Overall Externalizing	Rule Breaking Behavior	Aggressive Behavior
Overall Externalizing	Pearson Correlation	1	.907**	.929**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	60	60	60
Rule Breaking Behavior	Pearson Correlation	.907**	1	.826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	60	60	60
Aggressive Behavior	Pearson Correlation	.929**	.826**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	60	60	60

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Statistical Analysis

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how father absence impacts the school behavior of African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 from mother only homes when compared to school behavior of African American boys from intact families. Father absence was the independent variable. Overall externalizing school behavior,

rule-breaking behavior, and aggressive behavior were the dependent variables. The first research question was: Does father absence influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing scores of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families? The second research question was: Do African American boys with absent fathers exhibit more externalizing behaviors in the school setting, evidenced by higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing scales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) than African American boys from intact families?

The Relationship Between Father Absence and School Behavior

The first hypothesis stated, father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior scale score, of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families. The second hypothesis stated, African American boys with absent fathers have higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families. Through SPSS, a MANOVA was conducted, using the Pillai's trace test. The study test was computed using alpha level of .05 to examine the p -value linked with the F statistic and the hypotheses. Both hypotheses, that father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior and types (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) scale scores, of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families, was evaluated with regard to this p -value.

For the specified alpha level of .05, if the p -value was less than alpha, then the hypothesis would be accepted. The statistical analysis using Pillai's trace indicated there was a significant effect of father absence on overall externalizing school behavior of African American boys, demonstrated with the multivariate F , $V = .40$, $F(3, 56) = 12.33$, $p < .001$. The univariate test for the Overall Externalizing Behavior composite revealed that there was a significant effect, $F(1, 58) = 24.057$, $p < .001$. This result indicated that the first hypothesis stating father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing behavior scale score, of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families is supported. The univariate test for the Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior subscales revealed that there was a significant effect for Rule-Breaking $F(1, 58) = 16.399$, $p < .001$, and Aggressive Behavior $F(1, 58) = 36.725$, $p < .001$. These results also indicated support for the second alternative hypothesis, African American boys with absent fathers have higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing behavior scales (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) than African American boys from intact families. Since the p -value was less than alpha, both hypotheses stating that father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing and types (Rule-Breaking Behavior and Aggressive Behavior) behavior scale scores, of African American adolescent boys compared to African American boys from intact families were accepted. Table 6 illustrates the Pillai's trace examination of the p -value linked with the F statistic and the hypotheses that resulted in the study's findings. Univariate tests are illustrated in Table 7.

Table 6

Multivariate Tests^a

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.989	1614.082 ^b	3.000	56.000	.000	.989
Family	Pillai's Trace	.398	12.329 ^b	3.000	56.000	.000	.398

Note. a. Design: Intercept + Family. b. Exact statistic. c. Computed using alpha = .05

Table 7

Tests of Between-Subject Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Mean df Sq.	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power*	
Family	Overall	1926.667	1	1926.667	24.057	.000	.293	24.057	.998
	Externalizing								
	Rule	1041.667	1	1041.667	16.399	.000	.220	16.399	.978
	Breaking Behavior								
	Aggressive Behavior	2053.350	1	2053.350	36.725	.000	.388	36.725	1.000

Specifically, the Overall Externalizing Behavior score for those in the father absent home group ($M = 65.40, SD = 10.030$) was higher than the Overall Externalizing Behavior score for those in the intact-family group ($M = 54.07, SD = 7.719$). This difference indicated that teachers reported more overall externalizing school behavior of African American boys from father absent homes compared to the overall externalizing school behavior of African American boys from intact families. Likewise, the Rule-Breaking Behavior score for those in the father absent home group ($M = 65.13, SD = 9.641$) was higher than the Rule-Breaking Behavior score for those in the intact-family group ($M = 56.80, SD = 5.836$). This difference indicated that teachers reported more rule-breaking behavior in African American boys from father absent homes compared to rule-breaking behavior of African American boys from intact families. Continuing the pattern, the Aggressive Behavior score for those in the father absent home group ($M = 65.97, SD = 9.390$) was higher than the Aggressive Behavior score for those in the intact family-group ($M = 54.27, SD = 4.863$). This difference indicated that teachers reported more aggressive behavior in African American boys from father absent homes compared to rule-breaking behavior of African American boys from intact families. Scores of 65 or higher on the CBCL are classified as clinically significant (Achenbach, 1994). For the father absent group, the mean for all three dependent variables (Overall Externalizing, Rule-Breaking Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior) fell in the clinically significant range, at least 1.5 standard deviations above the mean for the CBCL-TRF. The mean for all three dependent variables for the intact-family group fell in the normal range. The univariate statistics for externalizing school behavior are illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8

Univariate Statistics for Externalizing School Behavior

Scale	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>n</i>
Overall Externalizing	Father absent	65.40	10.030	30
	Intact family	54.07	7.719	30
	Total	59.73	10.554	60
Rule Breaking Behavior	Father absent	65.13	9.641	30
	Intact family	56.80	5.839	30
	Total	60.97	8.950	60
Aggressive Behavior	Father absent	65.97	9.390	30
	Intact family	54.27	4.863	30
	Total	60.12	9.474	60

Summary

School behavior data were collected using the *Child Behavior Checklist - Teacher Report Scale* (CBCL-TRF). Study data was collected from teachers, yielding the total sample of 60 African American adolescent males between the ages of 13 and 15. Of the total sample, 30 were from father absent homes and 30 were from intact families. Statistical analyses were performed using MANOVA and assumption testing was conducted. Statistical analyses revealed a significant relationship between the father absent group and overall externalizing behavior scores. Analysis also revealed a significant relationship when subscales of externalizing behavior of the father absent group was examined. In terms of answering the two research questions, the study's

findings indicated significant difference and the alternative hypotheses were accepted. Based on the first research question, the study's findings indicated that father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing scores of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families. The Overall Externalizing Behavior score for those in the father absent home group ($M = 65.40, SD = 10.030$) was higher than the Overall Externalizing Behavior score for those in the intact family group ($M = 54.07, SD = 7.719$). Based on the second research question, African American boys with absent fathers exhibit more externalizing behaviors in the school setting, evidenced by higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing scales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) than African American boys from intact families. The Rule-Breaking Behavior score for those in the father absent home group ($M = 65.13, SD = 9.641$) was higher than the Rule-Breaking Behavior score for those in the intact family group ($M = 56.80, SD = 5.836$). The Aggressive Behavior score for those in the father absent home group ($M = 65.97, SD = 9.390$) was higher than the Aggressive Behavior score for those in the intact family group ($M = 54.27, SD = 4.863$). Chapter 5 will include a discussion of interpretations of the findings of this study as well as recommendations for further research and positive social change implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Based on the identified gap in the empirical literature established in Chapter 2 regarding maladaptive school behavior of African American boys with absent fathers, I conducted this study to evaluate how father absence affected school behavior, specifically the overall and types of externalizing behavior identified from the CBCL-TRF in African American boys ages 13-15 when compared to same-age peers from intact families. In this study, I aimed to contribute data to address the gap in existing literature regarding the examination of school behavior of African American boys with absent fathers in the middle school setting.

For this quantitative study, I used a quasi-experimental design because the target group for the study was a specific group, African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15. Father absence was the independent variable. The target group of participants were boys from father-absent homes, while the control group of participants were boys from intact families. The dependent variables were externalizing school behaviors, specifically identified from the externalizing behavior scales (Overall Externalizing, Aggressive Behavior, and Rule-Breaking Behavior) of the CBCL-TRF.

The study population was African American adolescent boys between the ages of 13 and 15, in grades 6-8 within the middle school setting, who came from mother-only households. The control group population was African American adolescent boys between the ages of 13 and 15, in grades 6-8 within the middle school setting, who came from intact families. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method.

Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers provided data on the participants by completing a profile sheet and the teacher's report form of the CBCL-TRF based on their knowledge of students meeting the participant and control group criteria.

I analyzed study data using MANOVA to evaluate overall and types of externalizing behavior identified from the CBCL-TRF. The MANOVA statistical test consisted of three dependent variables (Overall Externalizing Behavior, Rule-Breaking Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior) and one independent variable (family) with categorical data (father-absent and intact family). The MANOVA statistical analysis enabled me to examine the existence of differences between externalizing school behavior of African American boys from father-absent homes compared to that of African American boys from intact families.

Key Findings

The statistical analysis (MANOVA) using Pillai's trace indicated there was a significant effect of father absence on overall externalizing school behavior of African American boys. An examination of the univariate analyses indicated that externalizing behavior problems of boys from father-absent homes scored higher for each dependent variable (Overall Externalizing, Rule-Breaking, and Aggressive Behavior) than behavior of same aged peers from intact families. Data analysis results support the first hypothesis that father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing scores of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families. Analysis results also support the second hypothesis that African American boys with absent fathers exhibit more

externalizing behaviors in the school setting, as evidenced by higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing scales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) than African American boys from intact families.

With the study's first research question, I examined whether father absence influenced school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing scores of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families. The Overall Externalizing Behavior score for those in the father-absent home group was higher than the Overall Externalizing Behavior score for those in the intact-family group. Data analysis findings indicated that the answer to the first research question is that father absence does influence school behavior, as measured by the CBCL-TRF overall externalizing scores of African American adolescent boys ages 13-15 compared to African American boys ages 13-15 from intact families.

With the study's second research question, I examined whether African American boys with absent fathers exhibited more externalizing behaviors in the school setting, evidenced by higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing scales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) than African American boys from intact families. The Rule-Breaking Behavior score for those in the father absent home group was higher than the Rule-Breaking Behavior score for those in the intact-family group. The Aggressive Behavior score for those in the father absent home group was higher than the Aggressive Behavior score for those in the intact-family group. Data analysis findings indicated that the answer to the second research question is that African American boys with absent fathers did exhibit more externalizing behaviors in the school setting, evidenced by

higher scores on the CBCL-TRF externalizing scales (Aggressive Behavior and Rule-Breaking Behavior) than African American boys from intact families. Scores of 65 or higher on the CBCL are classified as clinically significant (Achenbach, 1994). For the father-absence group, the mean for all three dependent variables (Overall Externalizing, Rule-Breaking Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior) fell in the clinically significant range. The mean for all three dependent variables for the intact-family group fell in the normal range. The mean for the father-absent group for all three dependent variables (Overall Externalizing, Rule-Breaking Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior) is at least 1.5 standard deviations above the mean for the CBCL-TRF in the clinically significant range.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study can be used to confirm and extend knowledge in the discipline based on what has been found in the peer-reviewed literature presented in Chapter 2. In Chapter 2, I noted that while a body of literature exists on father absence, there is a lack of research specifically related to African American boys and the extent to which father absence affects them. This study's findings can contribute to the research regarding school behavior and African American boys with absent fathers. In Chapter 2, I also noted that compared to children living in two-parent homes, those in father-absent homes had a greater chance of experiencing educational problems, which included poor academic performance, grade retention, and greater occurrences of disciplinary consequences, school suspension, and expulsion (Carlson, 2006; DeBell, 2008; East et al., 2006; Mulkey et al., 1992). Booth et al. (2010) argued that children growing up in father-absent homes had an overall academic performance that was lower than children

growing up in a two-parent home. When students receive disciplinary consequences, they are often removed from the educational setting. It is likely that frequent removal from the educational setting can negatively influence academic performance. The behavior reported by teachers who participated in this study on African American male students demonstrated that difference. For instance, Rule-Breaking Behavior on the CBCL-TRF quantified behavior like class and school rule violations, deceptive behavior, stealing, and inappropriate conduct. This study's data showed that boys in the father-absent home group demonstrate more rule-breaking behavior than that of boys in the intact-family group. Using this example, it is likely that boys from the father-absent home group received more disciplinary consequences that include but are not limited to classroom removal or suspensions. Those students with frequent violations may miss out on instruction due to their behavior, which could lead to poor academic performance.

This study's findings confirm the association of school behavior in adolescent to boys from father absent homes. Adolescents who engage in high levels of rule-breaking and aggressive behavior, as measured on the CBCL-TRF are likely to receive disciplinary consequences, suspensions, and expulsions. In this study, I examined externalizing behavior, specifically rule-breaking and aggressive behavior of adolescent African American boys in the middle school setting. Study data show that compared to the group of adolescent African American boys from intact families, the group from father-absent homes averaged higher scores of overall externalizing behavior as measured by the CBCL-TRF. These findings confirm the findings of Carlson (2006) that father involvement is significantly associated with fewer internalizing and externalizing

behavioral problems. Carlson argued that father involvement decreases the likelihood that adolescents will demonstrate internalizing or externalizing behaviors (Carlson, 2006).

Several studies I discussed in Chapter 2 showed that boys without a father figure typically demonstrate more anti-social behavior than peers with a father figure or a two-parent family (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004; Eitle, 2006). Caldwell et al. (2010) identified single-parent homes as a risk factor that is linked to violent behavior in adolescents. Apel and Kaukinen (2006) reported significant differences in antisocial and delinquent behavior of youths from intact families and those from non-intact families. I used the Aggressive Behavior subscale of the CBCL-TRF to evaluate the level of behaviors like anger, defiance, verbal aggression, destructive behavior, and physical aggression. As reported earlier, the father-absent home group scored higher on the Aggressive Behavior subscale than the intact-family group. These data also confirm the research that links father absence and delinquent or violent behavior. The behaviors reported on the CBCL-TRF, if left unchecked, could escalate to more violent behavior.

The father absent group had a higher score on the Rule-Breaking subscale of the CBCL-TRF. The Rule-Breaking Behavior subscale evaluated a student's overall ability to follow typical school rules. The subscale contained items to evaluate student engagement of substance abuse. Several studies I discussed in Chapter 2 examined the relationship between father absence and substance abuse. It is likely that negative school behavior could escalate into problem behavior in adulthood. Mandara and Murray (2006) argued that father absence significantly influenced adolescent engagement in substance

abuse that included cigarettes, marijuana, and alcohol. Booth et al. (2010) found that boys with absent fathers had a greater chance of substance abuse. Higher scores from the father-absent group on Rule-Breaking Behavior which includes substance abuse, confirms the research of the influence father absence has on engagement in substance abuse.

Theoretical Framework Analysis and Interpretation

I interpreted the findings of this study within the context of attachment theory. I examined the relationship between father absence and school behavior of African American boys through the lens of Attachment Theory. Specifically, I evaluated the connection between negative externalizing behavior and a dysfunctional father-son relationship. Theorists posited that children received help through the help that typically comes from parents (Bretherton, 1992). Much of what children learn prior to entering school is learned through the modeling of the parent. Using attachment theory, I aimed to assess the behavior displayed by African American boys in the absence of modeling from the father.

As discussed in Chapter 2, several elements of attachment theory were relevant to this study's evaluation of father absence and adolescent behavior. Specifically, proximity maintenance, safe haven, secure base, and protest, despair, or detachment were key elements considered for this study. An individual's need to feel closeness to another person is proximity maintenance (Simpson & Belsky, 2007). In terms of this study, my goal was to determine if school behavior looked different for boys with fathers who were not in proximity compared to boys with father in close proximity. Based on the study

results, it appears that the behavior response of the father absent group was significantly different from the behavior response of the intact family group. Secure haven and secure base refer to the place an individual is able to receive comfort from an attachment figure in times of stress (Simpson & Belsky, 2007). Within the context of this study, it is possible that a boy who is unable to access the comfort typically provided by his father in stressful times to make attachments to another male that influences him to behave inappropriately. For example, a typically developing teenage boy experiencing social stress may use his father as a resource to process his experience. A young man with an absent father experiencing a similar social stress, may seek guidance from another male outside of his home and family who may not guide him to make appropriate choices to deal with his stressful event. Sylvester (2010) argued that adolescent males with absent fathers are likely to seek security and identity in other males, potentially less productive men. It is possible that a boy without a satisfactory attachment to his father to manifest the stress of that void in maladaptive ways, like engaging in substance abuse or spending time with other boys with no male role models who make unwise choices without weighing the consequences of their behavior.

As discussed in Chapter 2, attachment theorists believed that separation was a concrete event that affected the child and the parent-child relationship. Theorists posited that there are three responses to separation: protest, despair, and denial or detachment (Bretherton, 1992). It is possible that an adolescent's response to separation from his father can be evident in his behavior, particularly negative school behavior. As it relates to this study, protest can be demonstrated by defiance, verbal aggression, or other

behaviors that were evaluated in the Aggressive Behavior subscale of the CBCL-TRF. Despair could be demonstrated in poor academic performance if a student is unmotivated or experiencing symptoms of depression, an internalizing behavior, as Carlson (2006) found that lack of father involvement can be associated with greater internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems (Gresham & Kern, 2004). Detachment can be demonstrated by other characteristics examined with the Rule-Breaking Behavior subscale of the CBCL-TRF, like truancy, tardiness, substance use. Boys who fail to get love, affection, and affirmation from their fathers, may detach in the home and school setting. Detachment from either the home or school setting makes an individual susceptible to negative influences. It is plausible that negative influences could be initiated in the school setting. One of the questions on the Rule-Breaking subscale of the CBCL-TRF addresses a student hanging with other students who get into trouble. Adopting negative behavior of peers could be a demonstration of a coping mechanism of a boy with an absent father.

Limitations of the Study

The execution of this study confirmed some limitations discussed in Chapter 1 of this study. In Chapter 1, it was discussed that this study is limited in that the participants were a part of a purposive sampling method rather than a random sample. The use of the purposive sample eliminated the possibility for a population that was not representative of the targeted population identified for this study. The targeted population for this study was African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15 from father absent homes. Therefore, data from this study cannot be generalized to all groups of adolescents. Since

I only evaluated school behavior of African American boys, the findings cannot be generalized to African American girls. Information from this study also cannot be used to generalize girls or boys from other ethnic groups. Additionally, because the focus of this study was adolescent boys between the ages of 13 and 15, the findings of this study cannot be used to generalize boys outside of that age range.

Another limitation discussed in Chapter 1 was that the current study does not consider the possibility that other variables not accessed in the study may affect behavior. For instance, a participant with a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or an emotional behavioral condition where significant behavior is often a characteristic, would have more significant scores on the scales used for this study than a peer without a behavioral condition. Furthermore, participants with a predisposition for externalized behavior, perhaps an undiagnosed behavioral disorder, may also present with more significant behavior than a peer with no behavioral challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the strengths and limitations of this study, it would be beneficial to have further studies that adapt the methods used in the current study. I used the CBCL-TRF, a standardized assessment instrument to gather data about the study participants from teachers with experience with the African American adolescent boys. The assessment instrument needed to be mailed to teachers. More instruments were mailed out than those that were returned. Teachers who provided data for this study were asked to complete the entire CBCL-TRF protocol, consisting of 113 statements to endorse. Perhaps the amount of questions deterred some teachers from completing and returning the instrument. There

are a total of 32 items pertaining to the Overall Externalizing composite that included the Rule-Breaking and Aggressive Behavior subscales. In the age of digital technology, it would be more efficient to gather data electronically. In an effort to make the data collection process more efficient, those items could be used to create an electronic questionnaire. Conducting a study electronically would save time and money, as it would eliminate the postal expenses and wait time of sending and receiving completed protocols. Additionally, an electronic delivery would be more desirable to the teachers providing the data.

Advancing Research

A limitation identified in the previous section was that the current study cannot be generalized beyond the parameters of the targeted study population, African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15. The field of school psychology would benefit from an expansion of this study that examines a variation of populations. The effect of father absence could be evaluated in the school behavior of adolescent girls. A comparison of school behavior of girls and boys can be conducted, both with absent father groups and intact family groups, similar to the structure of this current study.

Another way to possibly advance this research relates to another limitation discussed in Chapter 1. The sample for this study was limited to participants living in a metropolitan city of Texas. This study could possibly be expanded to include participants in other Texas cities in order to gather insight on a broader population from different regions. An additional way to advance this research is by directly gathering data from campuses. Perhaps researchers can spend time on various campuses directly recruiting

teachers to provide data. The researcher could also hold information session prior to teachers providing feedback to further confirm research data criteria and answer teacher questions.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The current study's findings provide information regarding school behavior of African American adolescent boys with absent fathers. Data from this study show that boys from father absent homes display higher levels of overall externalizing behavior in the school setting than that of same aged peers from intact families. This information could be used to promote positive social change by helping educate individuals, families, organizations, and societies about the effects of father absence on African American boys. Sharing this information by casting a wide net would be beneficial for all. As the individual adolescent, parent, organization, or society member is informed, so can the family unit, school culture, and society also be positively affected.

Individual level. Equipped with the information from this study and body of research regarding father absence and adolescent male behavior, a boy may be able to make better choices. An adolescent who is educated about the relationship between father absence and his individual behavior can have the opportunity to develop appropriate coping skills that will decrease the likelihood of engaging in maladaptive behavior. Beaty (1995) argued that father absence influences an adolescent male's self-concept development. King and Sobolewski (2006) found that father involvement, even

if it is from a non-resident father is associated with greater levels of well-being and positive child outcomes. Positive self-concept and better well-being can influence the behavior of an adolescent both in and out of the school setting.

Family level. Mothers and fathers would benefit from knowledge about the relationship between father absence and adolescent behavior. Parents would benefit from education on the benefits of effective parenting. Carlson (2006) found that father involvement positively impacted adolescent behavior, while father absence negatively impacted adolescent behavior. In conducting this study, I acknowledged that two parent homes are not always possible. Evidence has shown that even in cases where a father lives separate from his child but is still involved, outcomes are better than for a child with an absent father. Caldwell et al. (2010) found that monitoring by a non-resident father positively impacted aggressive behaviors in sons.

Organizational level. The school setting is the scope by which this study examined behavior of African American boys. From kindergarten through 12th grade, the school setting is where children spend most of their time. Since access to students in high volumes is possible in the school setting, this setting could also greatly benefit from the findings of this study. Several studies reviewed in Chapter 2 found that active father involvement positively influences school achievement and positive behavior (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Hofferth et al., 2008; King, 2006). Based on the findings of this study as well as the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the school setting would be an appropriate arena to make positive social change regarding the relationship between father absence and adolescent behavior.

Societal level. Sharing the results of this study will allow people within the community to be educated about father absence and how it effects adolescent behavior in and out of school. One goal of the educational system is to help guide students into becoming productive members of the world society. When a community partners with a school, both entities benefit. Equipped with the knowledge provided by the body of research regarding father absence and school behavior, communities can help promote effective parenting and positive school behavior.

Theoretical implications. The findings of this study confirm elements of attachment theory. Influenced by the psychoanalytic perspective, attachment theory is based on idea that early family relationships and experiences have a profound effect on personality development (Bretherton, 1992). Attachment theory examines the emotional bond created between a child and a caregiver and how that bond influences a child's response to emotional distress. The emotional bonds formed between children and caregivers are carried into adulthood (Simpson & Belsky, 2007). In this study, I evaluated how school behavior is affected when that emotional bond between a father and son did not exist. The findings of this study along with the knowledge about attachment theory should help practitioners promote healthy attachment, effective parenting, and the need for strengthened parent-child relationships.

Empirical implications. The empirical contributions of this study's findings have contributed to the limited scientific knowledge regarding school behavior of African American boys with absent fathers. While research existed regarding the topic of father absence, the body of literature lacked specific examinations of the influence father

absence has on school behavior of adolescents, particularly, African American boys.

This study contributed to the body of literature, expanding the knowledge on the topic of father absence and school behavior of African American boys. Students, teachers, counselors, school administrators, parents, and the community as a whole, may find this study's results useful.

Recommendations for practice. This study's findings that overall externalizing behavior of African American boys in the middle school setting is higher for boys from absent father homes than it is for boys from intact families could be used by educational stakeholders in the school, home, and community setting. In the school setting, counselors could develop support groups for boys who fall into the study population criteria. These groups can be designed to help boys understand how father absence influences their behavior and work towards developing better coping skills to deal with having an absent father. In the classroom setting, equipping teachers with the knowledge based on this study's findings can help teachers strengthen the teacher-student relationship, particularly when teachers are aware of student backgrounds and motivation for negative behavior. Prevention and intervention programs can be developed using information gathered using the CBCL-TRF. The Overall Externalizing Behavior scale could be used as a screening tool to identify potential students to target for prevention. Teachers and counselors can use the screening to further investigate areas of need for students who get higher scores on the externalizing scales. Those students can then be referred to the counselor for inclusion in the support groups designed to address externalizing behavior.

In the community, businesses and other community organizations can partner with schools to help promote the importance of the father-son bond and parental involvement. Local business can help sponsor events promoting parental involvement. Children can win prizes for bringing a parent to an event. Businesses can provide space to hold community workshops, seminars or panel discussion on the topic of the importance of parental involvement. Part of that discussion would include providing information on the effects of father absence for African American boys. Research data can be shared regarding how father absence puts adolescents at risk for alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, and behavioral problems (Apel & Kaukinen, 2006; Booth et al., 2010; Carlson, 2006; DeBell, 2008). Organizations can host father-son events, creating a space for the father-son bond to be strengthened.

Conclusion

My purpose for conducting this study was to examine the relationship between father absence and school behavior of African American boys. Empirical data provided by this study confirm that African American adolescent boys from father absent homes exhibit more externalizing school behavior than same aged peers from intact families. A quantitative approach was taken to examine the relationship between school behavior and father absence by comparing behavior of African American boys from father absent homes compared to boys from intact families using the *Child Behavior Checklist Teacher Report Scale* (CBCL-TRF). The framework of attachment theory served as the theoretical foundation. Using MANOVA, Pillai's trace indicated a significant effect of

father absence on school behavior as measured by the CBCL-TRF between the behavior of boys from father absent homes and boys from intact families on all three dependent variables (Overall Externalizing, Rule-Breaking Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior). These findings were consistent with the research presented as part of this study reporting that father absence has a profound effect on adolescent behavior in various ways.

The empirical findings of this study highlighted the need for future studies to examine other groups affected by father absence. Based on a comprehensive literature review, it was evident that there were limitations and gaps related to specific examinations of African American adolescents with absent fathers. The present study contributes to the gap in the literature by offering data about school behavior of African American boys with absent fathers. These findings emphasize the need for awareness in and out of the school setting through prevention, intervention, workshops, and other methods to support the population affected by father absenteeism. Positive social change can take place with education about the effects of father absence on the school behavior of adolescent African American boys. Ultimately, it is important to know that father absence does influence school behavior of African American boys. The knowledge of this influence should be carried into any work being done with this population.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Teachers Needed!

Do you teach 6th, 7th, or 8th grade?

Do you teach any African American boys between the ages of 13 and 15?

If you answered “Yes” to both questions, you are invited to participate in a doctoral research study.

If you are interested in participating in this research study send an email to:

PhDResearchStudy16@gmail.com

Appendix B: Research Study Introduction Letter

Research Study Introduction Letter

Please accept this letter as an invitation to participate in a doctoral research study that will evaluate the behavior of African American boys ages 13-15 in the middle school setting. The study will compare the school behavior of boys from father absent (mother-only) homes with the behavior of boys from intact (both biological parents) families. Data on school behavior of the adolescents will be collected from 6th, 7th, and 8th grade teachers who are currently teaching or has taught in the past school year an African American boy from either one of the above mentioned family structures.

If you are willing to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a study packet containing 2 items necessary for data collection. The first item is a data sheet used only to organize study data. The second item is a student behavior questionnaire. Both items could be completed in approximately 30 minutes. If you indicated that you have experience with more than one young man meeting the study criteria you will receive a study packet for each student you specify.

This study is voluntary. Your decision of whether or not to participate will be respected. If you decide to join the study you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. All information will be kept confidential.

Your time and participation is greatly appreciated!

Respectfully,

Ivy Johnson
School Psychology PhD Student
Walden University

Appendix C: Data Sheet

Teacher's Name: _____

Grade Taught: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Participant Data
(No names please)

Please circle the appropriate information.

Male? **Yes** **No**

African American? **Yes** **No**

Date of Birth: _____

Year you had student in your class: **2015-2016** **2016-2017**

Grade? **6th** **7th** **8th**

Family structure? **Mother-only/Father absent**

Intact Family (both biological parents)