Adolescent Girls’ Perspectives on Their Relationships with their Nonresident Fathers
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ABSTRACT

Eleven adolescent girls participated in this multiple case study exploring fathers’ influence on their academic performance, self-efficacy, and personal resilience.

PROBLEM

Divorce and unwed parenting cause over 83% of children in the United States to live away from one biological parent (Amato et al., 2009), has implications for the quality of the father-daughter relationship.

Few studies explored the nonresident biological fathers’ influence on their daughters’ psychosocial development and self-efficacy from the girls’ perspective.

PURPOSE

To examine the father-daughter relationship from the daughter’s perspective.

To assess how fathers’ nonresidential status may affect their daughters’ psychosocial development and self-efficacy at school.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Guiding Theories
• Attachment theory: type of emotional connection children feel towards caregivers (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2009).
• Self-efficacy theory: self-confidence to tackle challenges (Bandura, 2000).
• Psychosocial development theory: psychosocial crises one must face throughout life-span (Erikson, 1953/1963)

Key Research Studies
• When nonresident fathers involved in their children’s lives there was decrease in antisocial and delinquent behaviors in their children (Coley & Medeiros, 2007).
• Girls who had positive relationships with their fathers were academically successful, and exhibited high global and academic self-esteem (Cooper, 2009).
• Mothers are gatekeepers between girls and their nonresident fathers (Lin & McLanahan, 2007).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ: How has growing up without a father in their home influenced the self-efficacy and psychosocial development of adolescent girls?

Subquestions:
• How do girls perceive their experiences of growing up without their fathers at home?
• How do girls with nonresident fathers perform academically?
• How do girls with nonresident fathers interact with and relate to peers and adults in the school setting?

PROCEDURES

• Each girl was interviewed in a private room
• To triangulate the data, teachers completed an evaluation sheet recording their observations of each girl.
• Participants’ confidentiality was protected as all data was stored in a locked box accessible only to researcher.

DATA ANALYSIS

• Common themes were coded using the Affinity Exercise (Winchip, 2001), after each statement was put on a spread sheet
• The data are presented in descriptive form with both common and unusual findings presented (Sklare, 2006).

FINDINGS

Teachers’ Observations All Girls
• Lack academic confidence in Math and Science (specifically)
• Need support for their confidence (generally)

Girls with Uninvolved Fathers
• Feel angry, abandoned
• Yearn for fathers’ attention & care
• Emotionally insecure
• Low self esteem
• Poor social relationships
• Express stress and worry

Girls with Involved Fathers
• Feel close to their fathers
• More emotionally secure
• Good social relationships
• Express academic confidence even when teachers doubted their abilities
• Yearn for more time with father.

CONCLUSIONS

Girls With Nonresident Fathers

NEED consistent emotional support for resiliency

AT RISK for Low academic & personal self-confidence

AT RISK for poor social relations and school dropout

SOCIAL CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

The Findings:
• Direct school counselors, administrators, teachers, and social workers to create programs to foster girls’ self-confidence, support girls’ resiliency and prevent school dropout.

• Guide parents to be mindful of the girls’ deep emotions, and encourage coparenting to nurture girls’ personal self-confidence, while supporting, and encouraging academic success.