



There has been much research on the crisis of single parent homes and discussion that American families suffer because one or both parents are frequently absent (Lamb, 1990).

The primary reason why families suffer is because fathers are absent and their absent impact the critical development of their sons and daughters. They are as much critical to their daughters as well as their mothers too. Obviously, they provide half the genetic material for personality development. Studies show that fathers are primary and most valuable support persons for the mother during pregnancy and childbirth (Heins, 2007). Also a healthy relationship between children and their fathers are important for good development. But in a situation where as many as 57 percent of all children, and 63 percent of African children specifically have fathers who are “absent” or “deceased”, the importance of looking at other men for the role of a father cannot be underestimated (Richter, et al, 2004).

In American culture, children without fathers in their lives are five times more likely to end up in prison. In African culture, children are more likely to run away from home or live on the street or live with relatives. Mexican children are more likely to be exposed to juvenile delinquency and substance use. Since 1960 till date, the number of African and American children without fathers has quadruped, from 6 million to more than 24 million. Studies show that, achievement level, sense of mastery, and marital happiness of girls correlate with the presence of an involved father. Security regarding females and their fathers is a key element since it greatly shapes their development (Griffin, 1998). A saying goes “Daddies matter to girls as well as boy.” Absent fathers do not interact with children on a regular basis and consequently do not play a significant role in their development (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). The concerns associated with “absent Daddies” tends to focus upon issues of fatherhood on the more legalistic understandings of the duties and responsibilities of fathers, often times expressed in pragmatic terms, “cash values.” Father’s absence takes many forms. Studies on social work literature on fathers, focuses on crisis around the absence of a father due to death (Alexandrovitz, 1969; Grossberg & Crandall, 1978), desertion and nonsupport (Snyder, 1975), and separation (Keshet, 1977); or on irresponsible, problematic fathers who have incestual relations with daughters (Gentry, 1978; Spencer, 1978) are abusive (David, 1974; Hindman, 1977), Single (Fast, 1979, Mendes, 1976; Todres, 1975), or have asked for or taken custody of children (Bartz & Witcher, 1979; Russell, 1969). Other factors that cause men to be absent from their families are: government-run system that tears apart families and separates children from loving parents; confiscation of wealth of families and turning law-abiding citizens into criminals (deadbeat dads)



Absent Father: Its Impact on the Family

in such a way that it becomes difficult for them to avoid. Taking men to jail and confiscation of their properties because of their inability to pay child support explains why the “deadbeat dads” syndrome is not only a myth but a hoax-the creation of government officials and lawyers to plunder parents and families.

Research indicates that tens of millions of American fathers struggle as adult parents because they lacked a model of effective fathering in their own lives. Men who experienced this form of parental neglect from their own families of origin often times becomes emotionally and physically absent to their own families formed through marriage. Gordon Dalbey stresses the importance of preparing fathers for fathering by first helping them overcome detached relationships they had with their own fathers. One would argue that the key to becoming a father isn't merely commitment to wife, children and family, but about prior and primal step of manhood in becoming a son.

Common to every culture, fathers are absent either because they want nothing to do with their child/children. Some are absent because they are in jail, prison or incarcerated. Some are absent because they disappeared for no reason. Some are absent because they are involved in international business, job or assignments. Other are engaged in military assignments, job transfer etc. Other forms of absence include: divorce, death and abandonment. Demographic studies on father's absence and divorce indicate that children (especially boys) growing up without fathers seemed to have problems in the areas of sex-role and gender-identity development, school performance, physical adjustment, and perhaps in the control of anger and aggression. The age at which a daughter loses her father is meaningful since it influences her perception of male, the world as well as her academic advancement. Also the absence of a father reveals the different behavior dimensions of daughters, the ways they view the opposite sexes, the outside world and themselves tainted as a result of missing the key element of a father.

Women without father- figures lack protection and as a result may become discouraged or disinterested in every aspect of life achievements. Examples of such phenomenon are teenage pregnancy, dropping out of high school or, never attempting college and low self-esteem. Studies have shown that children who experience early father absence inevitably have weaker mathematical than verbal skills and usually finds it difficulty to adjust well with others although fatherless ness alone does not cause for poor adjustment (Adam et al, 1984). Stability is another condition affecting the lives of females which inevitably shapes their lives and careers. Griffin



concluded that father absence not only hinders children's ability to make sound decisions, it also triggers negative reactions as opposed to positive ones. Conditions of these nature cause children to live their lives with fear and loss. It is better for children to loss their father to death than experiencing their absence. The reason is because children obtain secure foundations knowing what their fathers believe in and stand for.

A single mom raising her sons alone once expressed to me "My son lives with me and has no contact with his biological father. There is no male in the household, although my son has contact with two close relatives. My son has hostility toward his father based on very limited past contact." She went further to explore emotional and social consequences the absence of a father have on male/female children? The social and environmental consequences of the absence of a father in the family are slightly the same in every culture. Research indicates that in Western societies, children from father-absent households manifest a number of internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors, including sadness and depression, delinquency, aggression, sex role difficulties, early initiation of sexual activities and teen pregnancy, as well as poor social and adaptive functioning and low self-esteem. In developing societies including Africa, children of absent father tend to be stubborn, angry and violent in behavior. They manifest disorders and misconducts usually first diagnosed in infancy, childhood, or adolescence, under the DSM-IV-TR classification of Axes I and II, such as depressive disorder (mood alteration), psychotic disorder, Amnesic and other cognitive disorders, disruptive and attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder. Sometimes they show impulsive-control disorders with mixed disturbance of emotions and conduct or other conditions that may be a focus for clinical attention.

The absent of a fathering in the home results in lots of emotional, psychological and physical deficiency in children. When the father is absent in the family, children have the tendency to develop histrionic personality disorder of cluster B category (dramatic, emotional or erratic). This involves a pervasive pattern of excessive emotionality and attention -seeking of other males as role model. Behavioral problems associated with the absent of a father in the household includes poor school functioning with poorer performance on academic and cognitive tests, school disciplinary problems, higher school absenteeism and drop-out rates and lower occupational attainment. Children with behavioral problems need behavioral therapy- An array of therapy methods based on the principles of behavioral and cognitive science, as well as principles of learning as applied to clinical problems (Durand et al, 2006). Children whose father is in a visiting relationship or in homes with a biological and surrogate parent are more



withdrawn in their interactions with others. The effect of father absence is the absence of male sex role models in the single-parent families. In the absence of a male parental model, it was assumed that boys could not acquire strong masculine identities or sex roles and would not have models or achievement with which to identify (Biller, 1974, 1993). The failure to have role models would cause boys and girls to be withdrawn in school and lack social cohesiveness. Father absence may be harmful not necessarily because of sex-role model is absent but because many parental roles, economic, social, emotional would go unfulfilled or inappropriately filled by secondary party.

Grimm-Wassil among others (1994) believes that fathers are influential in the following areas:

- Fathers encourage independence: They are generally less protective, promoting exploration and risk taking and model aggressive or assertive behaviors.
- Fathers expand the child horizon: they are the link to the “outside world” through their jobs.
- Fathers serve as “alternative parent”; they can improve the quality of the mother’s parenting by reducing her stress and stepping into to give the mother a break during a crises.
- Fathers are strict disciplinarian; they accept fewer “excuses” and demand more of their children at each stage.
- Fathers are men; treating their children respectfully can put the child at ease with other men throughout his or her life

Absent fathers often contribute to angry and indigent children. Unloving, punitive and authoritarian fathers tend to produce dependent, withdrawn, anxious and dejected children. A father’s absence from the family however does not necessarily mean that he is absent form his child’s life. After all, a significant number of non-resident fathers maintain tie with their children. When I was growing up, my Dad would accept his transfer letters to work outside the state and we would be home with Mom. However, on the weekends Dad would visit home to spend time with us. His absence within the week does not necessarily means that he is absent in our lives. While he was absent from home, dad maintained close tie with mom and us. He sends money regularly. He writes letter and call home to inquiry about our well-being. Because Dad maintained active contact with family while he was absent, our relationship and love for him intensified. Amato & Gilbert (1999) believes that when fathers maintain an active



presence in their children's lives and foster close bonds with them, their children appear to benefit.

In the U.S household, fathers spend on an average, less than thirty minutes per day in one-on-one time with their children (Biller, 1994). Mothers with one or more children age 5 or older spend on average 6 hours a week on child-care. Fathers average 2 hours per week (Weiss, 2007).

On the contrary, fathers in African culture spend more time with family and children compared to fathers in Europe and America. The Ibibio fathers of the southern part of Nigeria do housework while their wives earn higher pay check more than they do. Studies have shown that when wives earn higher than their husbands, they really take on more of the traditional "women's work" when they are at home, serving the man in an attempt to ward off men's resentment, and to compensate with more macho attitude (Risman et al, 1998). The difference in experience between American fathers and Africans is typified in cultural reversal witnessed in industrialized societies in which both women and men find their primary fulfillment in outside work, rather than in the home.

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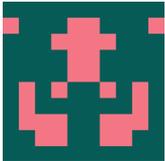


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