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The Effects of Paternal Absence on Male Children

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THE EFFECTS OF PATERNAL ABSENCE ON MALE CHILDREN

by

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in

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The society in which our children are living and growing today is complicated by strife and conflict both internally and externally. It is a time when statisticians are telling us that 481 out of 1,000 marriages, or nearly one out of every four, will end in divorce; many others will end in separations not legally terminated (Bureau of Census, 1966). Many families are also separated because of the military action which at present is keeping 500,000 men at war in a country many thousands of miles from their families. During the year 1967 over nine thousand of this number did not live to return to their families (U.S. News, 1968).

If many of our children are living in fatherless homes, it is, therefore, important that we understand, as much as possible, the effects of this separation upon the child. By understanding and appreciating more fully the situations a fatherless child must face, the school counselor can become more fully prepared to assist the child.

It is one of those generally accepted facts that for the best development of the child he should live in a home where both the mother and the father are present and supportive. Two studies verify this generalization by showing the effects of paternal deprivation. Suedfeld (1967) reported that paternal absence during childhood differentiated significantly between successful and unsuccessful Peace Corps volunteers. In two independent studies, the proportion of individuals from fatherless homes was significantly greater among
unsuccessful volunteers. Pasley (1955) published a book containing brief biographies of the 21 Americans and one Briton who elected to stay in Communist China after the Korean War. As Pasley pointed out, of the 21 Americans, eleven had "lost their fathers at an early age, through divorce or death." Of the 21, nineteen "felt unloved or unwanted by fathers or step-fathers (p. 424)."

"That children are best reared in a home with two loving and understanding parents is so obvious as to need no statement," Dorothy Barclay (1959, p. 69) has commented, typifying current opinion. This viewpoint is so prevalent that it comes close to heresy to question it. Although William Goode (1956), in his comprehensive study of divorce, points to the almost total lack of research on the effects of divorce on children, he concludes:

At every developmental phase of childhood the child needs the father (who is usually the absent parent) as an object of love, security, or identification, or even as a figure against whom to rebel safely. . . . It would be surprising if the absence of the father had no effect on the child (p. 309).

Purpose

From the above it appears that there are many implications for the need of the school counselor to know and understand the fatherless child. It is, therefore, the purpose of this paper to examine the effects of paternal absence on male children. The specific objectives are to review the literature, summarize the material, draw conclusions, and make recommendations which will be helpful to the school counselor.
Method

The situations, implications, and effects of father-absence are multidimensional. Therefore, it is necessary to present the review of the literature in sections which will facilitate its use by the counselor in relating it to a particular student. The review is divided into the following sections: (a) father's role in the home, (b) the mother's attitude, (c) age of child at which father leaves the household and length of his absence, (d) scholastic aptitude, (e) developmental characteristics, and (f) military families. Each section will contain its own summary statement.

Limitations

The research of the effects of father-absence on male children is limited to reviewing studies reported in the literature. There are several areas of probable research that are not covered here which will be included in the section of recommendations for further study.

Father-absence is designated as either death, divorce, separation, desertion, or any other factor which makes him unavailable to his family. The study does not delinate its effects according to the type of absence since this information is not available in the literature.

The male children referred to in the review are predominately American children from a cross-cultural representation. The literature that is reported is geographically primarily from the United States with a few studies representing Norway and Scotland.
Introductory summary

In this chapter the statement of introduction, purpose for the review, the method to be followed, and the limitations of this paper have been given. In Chapter II will be the review of the literature, and in Chapter III the summary and recommendations will be stated.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The father's role in the home

It is important to examine the role played by the father when he is in the home to contrast it to the effect that this role will have on the family when he is no longer present to fulfill it. However, as Nash (1961) has pointed out, "the preoccupation with mothers on the part of psychologists has resulted in a dearth of information about fathers (p. 271)."

For this reason the study by Tasch (1961) is particularly valuable in that it is one of the few which has investigated the father directly. She interviewed 85 fathers who had a total of 160 children. They were drawn from the greater New York area, covered a diverse range as regards to nationality origin, education, and occupation. She investigated such matters as the father's participation in routine daily care, recreational activities, and discipline. Her article contains data on many aspects of the parental role, but one of her most interesting conclusions is drawn from the reports of the fathers themselves. They did not see themselves as merely secondary to the mother. They saw themselves instead as active participants in routine daily care, and they also saw child-rearing as an integral part of their role as a father; they did not see support as their only major function.

Tasch found that companionship was highly valued by fathers, and where this companionship was good it was one of the major satisfactions. The comparatively few fathers who found their role unsatisfying often quoted lack of companionship from their children as one of the reasons
for their discontent. Many of the fathers expressed enjoyment at spending time with their children and regret that their economic activities limited the time they could spend. It is interesting to note that few of the fathers mentioned providing a masculine model for their sons as an important function.

"In the child the father represents the natural protector, a person who will give him a feeling of security," stresses Lerner (1954, p. 4). He also states that a child needs a father not only as someone to love but as someone to serve as a pattern for his own life. This is especially true for the boy, but the father also sets the pattern of masculinity for the girl as a model for her future love object. In many ways, the father is the controlling force in the life of both the boy and the girl.

A study made by Emmerich (1961) discussed the family role concepts of children ages six to ten. He concluded that both sexes perceive the father's sex role as more powerful than the mother's, but girls perceive the mother as positive, whereas boys perceive the father as more positive.

Hoffman (1967) found that a mother's love and attention make a boy feel warm and cozy, but a father's equips him to face the world. For example, both lead to a feeling of being loved and accepted; but a positive father relationship is associated with a high degree of self-confidence with respect to abilities, while a positive relationship with the mother is associated with a low degree of self-confidence. It is also associated with athletic and intellectual ability and with a tendency
to respond realistically and adaptively to frustrating situations. The relationship with the mother is not related to any of these variables.

While it is not the purpose of this paper to examine extensively the role the father plays in the total development of the child, it does seem profitable to designate from a few of the studies available the positive aspects of the father's place in the home. Therefore, it is concluded that the father represents security; someone to serve as a pattern, sexually, intellectually, and athletically; and someone who may help develop in the child a feeling of self-confidence.

The following material will be presented in the context of the negative aspects—in that it will review the possibilities of the deleterious effects of the absence of the father from the home.

**Age of child when the father leaves and length of his absence**

A natural assumption in considering the effects of father-absence would be to suppose that the age of the child when he is left without a father would be indicative of the type or severity of emotional deprivation. The evidence presented by several researchers is not conclusive. Most studies have concerned younger children and tend to support the idea that they are the most effected—though the extent of the consequence is not always apparent.

In his study of father-absence and cross-sex identity, D'Andrade (1962) found a definite division between children whose fathers had left during the first two years and those who were absent from the home after the child had reached his second year. He has reported that if the father was absent during the first 2 years the child will be
more likely to form a primary feminine identification and if father was absent after the first two years the child will be more likely to show a masculine primary identification.

Neubauer (1960) concluded that those children whose fathers left the household after the child's first years learn to fear acting out any part of the masculine component of their parental identification. Perhaps this fear of being like father is based on the punishment the child receives, or fantasies he will receive, from Mother if he acts like Father.

For the children who did not have a father during their first years, a different set of conditions may have affected the child's role. It would seem likely that along with maternal identification these children form an intensive dependent and sexual attachment to their mothers, and that these children, boys and girls, are motivated to attempt to play the role of a little husband (Neubauer, 1960). When the attempt to play such a role is permitted and abetted by the mother, the child would be more likely to form a masculine identity (D'Andrade, 1962).

Carlsmith (1964) has studied the effect of early father absence on scholastic aptitude and found that early and long separation from the father results in relatively greater ability in verbal areas than in mathematics and that late, brief separation may produce an extreme elevation in mathematical ability (relative to verbal ability). This relative superiority of verbal to mathematical aptitude increases steadily the longer the father is absent and the younger the child is when the father
left. The effect is strongest for students whose fathers were absent at birth and/or were away for over 30 months.

Sears, Pintler, and Sears (1946) in their oft-quoted study of the effect of father-separation on preschool children's doll play aggression maintain that there is a decreasing effect of father-absence as the children get out into more social contacts, i.e. the older they get.

Nash studied a group of 41 boys in a Scottish orphanage, all of whom had entered in the first six months of life and who had been brought up entirely by women in a baby home until their fifth year. After the age of five years, 21 had gone to cottages run by a married couple and hence had a father-figure present. Though significantly less masculine than the normal control group, these boys consistently made more masculine scores than the other 20 who continued after five years of age in a cottage run only by women. The most feminine reports were found in this latter group. These results were interpreted as suggesting that boys reared for the first five years in the absence of a father-figure fail to acquire the masculine attitudes of boys reared under more normal conditions.

There is evidence in these studies that the process of identification with the father may be seriously impaired if the father is not present in the preschool period, that permanent deficiencies in identification may result. Nash (1965) therefore concludes that this early period is critical. Furthermore, he suggests that this critical period may be quite early and that both acceptance of the child by the father and of the father by the child may be increasingly more difficult as the months pass. The phenomenon of imprinting, described by ethologists, may be of relevance here.
Nash states:

Admittedly, the evidence is meager as yet, but the hypothesis is suggested that human infants have sign-stimulus properties to human adults and that fathers have their acceptance of an infant facilitated by imprinting. A culture which discourages close contacts between father and infant may hinder this imprinting (p. 285).

Lerner (1954) has stated that it is often heard that if desertion occurs very early in the child's life, the trauma will not be great because the child does not understand. However, he believes that this is contrary to the evidence he has collected which would indicate that the younger the child when this loss occurs, the more serious will be its influence. Even before he is a year old the effects of such a loss are evident. The child may be too young to understand the meaning of what happened, but this only makes his suffering more acute.

Seplin (1952) investigated the effects of the father's absence during military service on child behavior. She studied children from 43 families and a methodological point in her research was that she used one child from the family as the subject and another as control. The experimental group had had the father absent during the formative years, whereas the control group (which was, of course, younger since it involved siblings born after the father's return) had an average age of four years. She noted that the children in the experimental group tended to have a closer relationship with the mother and also to show more signs of emotional disturbances than the controls. She noted that the experimental group was retarded in its emotional development and also that twice as many children in the experimental group showed behavioral disturbances, and that these problems were more apparent
among boys than among girls. She concluded that the differences observed were directly attributable to the father's absence over these formative years.

In contrast to these studies Wylie and Delgado (1959) reviewed mother-son relationships involving the absence of the father and failed to find any common pattern in such areas as age of onset of symptoms of pathology and the boy's age when the father departed.

Similarly, Pederson (1966) asserts that the data in his study of the relationships between father-absence and emotional disturbance in male military dependents do not support an effect specific to a particular age period.

Crain (1965) analyzed intermittent absence and its effect on the child's perception of parents. With a limited group of children from only one locale, of one narrowly delimited age group, and with fathers in one particular age group, he found that the previous evidence of the intermittent father-absence affecting the child negatively was not upheld. "Whether father is present or absent as the terms are here defined, seems to have little effect on the child's perception of his parents (p. 346)."

Various explanations can be advanced to account for these findings. It may be that the fathers examined are not away from home for a sufficient length of time at any one period to cause changes in the relationship they have with their children. The varying lengths of presence and absence in the father-absent families may obscure any otherwise noticeable differences. The parents themselves may have been aware of the possibility of deleterious effects arising from the father's
absence and may have made definite and successful attempts to counteract these effects.

It is observable, at this point, that the studies describing the effects of father-absence attributable to the age of the child when the father left the home, are conflicting. The greater number of researchers have proportioned the thesis that the younger child is more disadvantaged by the loss of his father. Those who sustain this view cite evidence of faulty masculine identification and development and retarded emotional growth as the consequences most noticeable. The other researchers have ascribed various impediments to the development of father-absent boys, but they do not maintain that the age of the child at the onset of separation is significant.

**Effect of father-absence on scholastic aptitude**

The effect of father-absence on scholastic aptitude has not been widely examined, but the few studies available have brought to light some interesting data. Carlsmith (1964) has indicated that (a) early and long separation from the father results in relatively greater ability in verbal areas than in mathematics; (b) no separation produces relatively greater ability in mathematics; and (c) late, brief separation may produce an extreme mathematical ability—relative to verbal ability.

As part of his investigation of the school behavior of boys from father-absent homes, Clarke (1964) found that although there was no statistical difference between achievement scores of father-absent and father-present boys, the individual scores indicate that father-absent boys tend to achieve higher than father-present boys. Clarke infers
from these findings that father-absent boys tend to compensate for the lack of a stabilizing father influence by achieving at a high academic level in order to attain adequate self-confidence and peer acceptance.

Rouman (1956) studied school children's problems as related to parental factors. He examined 400 children who were divided into four groups; one of the sections was composed of children whose adult male was absent. It was found in this group that the reason for teachers referring the child for guidance services was academic failure in 50 percent of the cases. The other reasons for referral were aggressive behavior, 20 percent; withdrawing behavior, nervous tendencies, and stealing, 30 percent. This group was most often referred for academic failure. Their case studies revealed that they were not lacking the capacity any more than other groups but did lack the motivation and standards often set by an adequate adult male in their growing stages.

Russell (1957) analyzed behavior problems of children from broken and intact homes. He concluded that there is a tendency for academic retardation to be found more often in children whose homes have been broken by the death of one of the parents.

In summarizing these findings it is noted that conflicting evidence has been presented as to the effect that father-absence has on the scholastic aptitude of children. While some research indicates that scholastic achievement is a goal strived for in compensation for the lack of a father, other indications reveal that many children who are deprived of this relationship develop difficulties directly related to their academic endeavors. The conclusion would then seem to be that since the child spends so much of his time in school-associated activities,
it is a natural outlet for his frustrations. Either he devotes a great
effort toward achieving or suffers from the reverse. Therefore,
scholastic aptitude is effected by father-absence but may not always
be in the same direction for each child.

**Aggression and cross-sex identity**

Of the numerous facets investigated in relation to the effects of
father-absence, no two are discussed more than aggression and cross-sex
identity. It appears that the greatest concern to psychologists is
whether the male child will develop toward heterosexual adjustment
without the aid and influence of a father. Because aggression is often
discussed in relation to the representation of masculinity and is, there­
fore, closely related to cross-sex identity, the two will be discussed
in the same section of this paper.

Hoffman (1967) reports that boys from mother dominant families
show aggressiveness which is more often expressed toward peers than
toward teachers and toward girls rather than boys. Her data further
indicated that when both the affectional and disciplining functions
resided in the same person, mother or father, aggression was turned
inward, and the child's behavior was non-assertive; but when they
resided in a different person, aggression was turned outward, and the
child's behavior was assertive. Thus, her tentative conclusion was
that father discipline is related to child aggressiveness and mother
discipline to repression and intropunitiveness because expressing
hostility is too threatening when the discipline is also the main source
of love.
In studying father-fantasies and father-typing in father-separated children, Bach (1946) found very significant differences in fantasy aggression. The proportion of the father's aggressive behavior toward both the family as a whole and the children in particular is less in the fantasies of the father-separated children. The father is also less often the recipient of the mother's hostility, and no child in the experimental group represented the father as being in a depressed or angry mood at any time. In general the father-separated children had relatively fewer aggressive fantasies that involved the father than did the control children.

Sears, Pintler, and Sears (1946) reported that it seemed evident that during the preschool years the father contributes heavily toward the sex typing of boys in respect to their expression of aggression. Probably he serves as a model, a more aggressive model than the mother. Possibly, too, he provides a more permissive environment for aggression. In any case, his absence leads to a reduction in the frequency of such actions in doll play, and there is no evidence that this results from any special suppression by the mother.

In a later study Sears (1951) stated that "boys whose fathers are absent from the home show reliably less doll play aggression than boys whose fathers are present. Absence of the father has no appreciable effect on the aggression of girls (p. 27)."

Wylie and Delgado (1959) found a pattern of aggressive, antagonistic, antisocial behavior was present in all cases they examined at the Worcester Youth Guidance Center when they studied the mother-son relationships involving the absence of the father.
In her study of the effects of paternal absence in small children, McCord (1962) asserts that one of the most widely held beliefs about the effects of paternal absence is that male children will develop unusually strong feminine components in their personalities. Three sets of ratings on 205 boys in her study were used to test feminization in the father-absent group: Homosexual tendencies, dependency, and lack of aggressiveness.

Since aggressive behavior may be considered as an exhibition of "masculinity," it seemed probable that those who were both aggressive and showed signs of feminine identification were expressing an instability in sex role identification or were defending against feminine identification. This combination of feminine-aggressive behavior (as compared to feminine non-aggressive behavior) was found significantly more frequently among boys in broken homes than among boys in tranquil homes.

Burton and Whiting (1961) report that the draft at the beginning of World War II made possible several studies comparing middle-class children from father-absent homes with those from father-present homes. These studies indicated that boys from father-absent households behaved like girls both in fantasy behavior and in overt behavior, especially with respect to producing very little aggression. Stolz (1954) found that boys whose fathers had been absent but were then returned continued to be effeminate in overt behavior, but there was a marked change in their fantasy behavior. This group now produced the maximum amount of aggression in fantasy. These conditions of father-absence for the initial years and then control by an adult man are the conditions which Burton and Whiting indicated should produce conflict over sexual identification.
D'Andrade (1962) predicts that if the father is not present during the developmental sequence, the early envy of the parental status is almost entirely based on envy of a female, so that a bi-sex schema and set of behaviors is not learned. As a result, later identification with males will be in opposition to the primary identification, he reports.

Also, the absence of a father gives an entirely different character to the Oedipal period, with the mother as the only object of attachment for both the boy and the girl, and no successful rival to aid the boy to make a masculine identification (p. 21).

D'Andrade concluded, therefore, that children without fathers have less chance to learn some of the overlapping attributes of masculine versus feminine roles, and are, then more likely to conceive of these roles as greatly different.

An interesting observation which appears to be singular with this investigation is the effect on identification and identity of conditions other than parental absence. One condition within the household which seems likely to affect identification is the presence of an older brother or sister. It is expected that an older brother would increase the likelihood of the child's forming a masculine identification, since an older brother would be likely to be able to do and have things which the younger child could not, resulting in envy motivated imitation. By the same reasoning, an older sister should make more likely a feminine identification. "It would seem as if siblings act as a 'cushion' against the effect of paternal absence (p. 118)."

The influence of the father has been widely studied in Norway (Lynn and Sawrey, 1959; Tiller, 1958). The families of sailors were
compared with families of the same social class in which fathers were present. The absence of these fathers often extended for two or more years. The boys of the sailor families tended to be infantile and dependent or display overly masculine behavior as compared with father-present boys.

In an investigation of the school behavior of boys from father-absent homes, Clarke (1964) concluded that the male sex-role preference is less clearly established in boys whose fathers are absent. Partial separation from the father due to divorce or separation does not seem to have as great an effect in relation to sex role preference on the father-absent boy as does this complete separation from the father due to death.

McCord, McCord, and Thurber (1962) state that intense sexual anxiety was found among almost half of the boys in their study who had lost their father, yet this anxiety seemed to be a response to a generally unstable environment rather than to parent-absence per se.

Mussen and Distler (1959) investigated masculinity, identification, and father-son relations; their study indicates that for boys, sex-typing of interests is more directly related to their perceptions of their fathers than to perceptions of their mothers. They determined that the acquisition of masculine interests, attitudes, and patterns of behavior is primarily determined by the boy's interactions with his father.

A high level of masculine identification does not appear to depend on any one specific type of father-son relationship. From the child's point of view, the significant factor seems to be the father's importance
in the child's life rather than the particular techniques he uses in dealing with his child.

In review of these findings it would appear that a definition of lack of masculinity would be a lack of aggressiveness as displayed by boys from father-absent homes. The presence of the father provides an aggressive model and a more permissive environment for the child to express his aggression. Where there is less aggression, more feminine identification appears. In a father-absent home, the child has less chance to learn the masculine role and his sex-role is then less clearly established.

Mother's attitude

Among the analyses of the consequences of father-absence, no one topic has received more general agreement from the psychologists than the effects of the mother's attitude. This is perhaps the one factor which may negatively or positively influence all the other variables in the child's reaction to his situation.

Tiller (1958) compared Norwegian sailor families with appropriate control families in which the father was present. According to his findings, mothers whose husbands were absent tended to have the following characteristics as compared with control mothers: (a) a smaller proportion led active social lives, (b) a smaller proportion worked outside the homes, (c) a larger proportion tended to be over-protective, (d) a larger proportion tended to stress obedience and politeness as contrasted to happiness and self-realization for their children. Tiller's view is that the mother's reaction to husband-absence is reflected in her treatment of the child; and this treatment, in turn, affects the child.
Pedersen (1966) investigated the relationships between father-absence and emotional disturbance in male military dependents. His findings concluded that mothers of the disturbed children were themselves significantly more disturbed than the mothers of the normals. No difference was found for fathers. Considering the significant differences for mothers and the failure to find a difference between fathers, Pedersen interpreted this as suggesting that the fathers act as a buffer between the child and the more disturbed mothers when they are home. The absence from the family of this apparently more stable figure, however, would place the child under the full impact of a disturbed mother. "In this manner it is plausible that father-absence would have a cumulative deleterious effect independently of any particular developmental period in the child's life (p. 328)."

Other studies are consistent by implication with this view and provide further suggestive evidence. Bach (1946) reported that mothers may mediate the father's absence to the child through "father typing." By this it is meant the personality characterizations of the father that the mother represents to the child. For example she may say, "Your father is a terrible old man," or "Your father is kind and generous."

Bach also believes that beyond influencing the child through father typing, the mother may actually modify the child's personality development in the direction of femininity during the period of father-absence. The father is not available for imitation or for identification with masculine social behavior, so he now has more opportunity to imitate the feminine attitudes, manners, and values of the mother.
This feminization of the child's fantasy may then be a reflection of the increased potency of the mother as a social stimulus. The idealistic father-fantasies may, therefore, not only be an expression of the child's wish for an affectionate father but may actually also be symptomatic of a personality reorganization produced by exclusive maternal domination (p. 77).

In a study at the Worcester Youth Guidance Center, Wylie and Delegado (1959) noted a pattern of mother-son relationships involving the mother. In nearly all cases, the women described their husbands in derogatory terms. The exact pattern of badness varied considerably, but a common idea was that they had been dangerously aggressive. Most of the mothers also drew attention to the fact that they looked upon their sons in much the same way as they had viewed their ex-mates. In addition to directly equating father and son, the mother would use identical words to describe them, allude to common characteristics, invoke heredity, or express concern that the boy would grow up to repeat his father's pattern.

In almost half the cases, mother and son slept together.

It seems to us that a good part of the overt behavior difficulties of these boys were directly related to this aspect of their lives. It was occasionally possible to induce the mothers to force their sons to sleep alone, and to witness a rather marked decrease in the intensity of some of the boy's symptoms (p. 465).

This investigation also revealed that in most cases the relationship between mother and son was intense, highly sexualized and full of hostility. And in the cases where the father was not considered bad, they differed from the usual pattern in other respects as well.

A general conclusion could then be that the son's development will be a reflection of the mother's attitude. Specifically, the mother's
attitude will vary extensively depending on her emotional health and on the conditions under which the father left the home as well. It is possible that an extensive number of factors can be influencing the environment of the home. From the literature it appears that how the mother views the total situation and relates it to the child will be the most significant element in his adjustment to a fatherless home.

Developmental effects

How is the child reared in a fatherless home adjusting to situations outside the home? Specifically, what type of person is he and what behavior problems and attitudes does he exhibit? These queries can be answered to some extent by reviewing several studies which have been concerned with the developmental effects resulting from living in a home where both parents are not present and supportive.

Russell (1957) reviewed behavior problems of children from broken and intact homes. He concluded that (a) children from broken homes exhibit significantly more behavior problems than children from intact homes; (b) lying and stealing are more frequently observed in children from broken homes; (c) there is a tendency for certain kinds of behavior to be associated with the kind of home in which the child resides after the break occurs; (d) enuresis, extreme anger, and disobedience seem to be found more frequently in homes broken by death; (e) there is a tendency for academic retardation to be found more often in children whose homes have been broken by death of one of the parents.
Fourteen studies summarized by Louttit (1947) indicate that approximately 50 percent of the delinquents come from broken homes and the incidence of broken homes in the general population is approximately 25 percent. These reports point out that homes of delinquent children have been broken by death about twice as frequently as divorce or separation.

Lynn and Sawrey (1959) have studied the effects of father-absence on Norwegian boys and girls. In this study Norwegian families were compared with otherwise similar families in which the father was present. The following hypothesis were made and generally supported by the findings: (a) more father-absent boys than father-present boys would show immaturity; (b) being insecure in their identification with the father, father-absent boys would show stronger strivings toward father-identification than father-present boys; (c) the father-absent boys would react to their insecure masculine identification with compensatory masculinity; (d) the father-absent boys would demonstrate poorer peer adjustment than father-present boys and than father-absent girls; and (e) father-absence appeared to be the determining variable in producing the significant results; however, the interpretation was advanced with caution since other possible relevant independent variables could not be excluded.

In a report of school children's problems as related to parental factors, Rouman (1956) has concluded that children missing the companionship of an adult male indicated that their greatest problem was in the sense of personal worth. The child lacks belief that he is well regarded by others and that they have faith in his future success. He also stated that in social standards a problem existed although it was
not large enough to be alarming; however, it did indicate an area of serious weakness. Children lacking the adult male are also lacking much of the guidance needed in understanding what is regarded as being socially right or wrong in one's society.

Mitchell and Wilson (1967) investigated the relationship of father-absence to masculinity and popularity of delinquent boys. They found that the absence of the true father from the home showed a significant relationship to peer rejection in a group of 34 delinquent boys. Neither the total group nor the father-absent sub-sample showed the excessive masculinity sometimes reported to accompany both delinquency and father-absence.

Some effects of paternal absence on children were explored by McCord, McCord, and Thurber (1958). They directly observed 205 boys and their families during a period of approximately five years of their early adolescence. Court records for convictions of felonies were used to assess the effects of paternal absence upon boys. The sample came from a lower-class, relatively deprived environment. The results of the study suggested that gang delinquency was found to be unrelated to paternal absence, although it did occur more frequently in broken homes in which the father or mother had been replaced by substitutes. In fact, they reported that the proportion of gang delinquents among boys whose parents quarreled but remained together was significantly higher than among those whose fathers were absent. The relationship between criminality and paternal absence appears to be largely a result of general instability of broken homes rather than of paternal absence itself.
The evidence drawn from this sample indicates that many of the effects often presumed to result from paternal absence can, largely, be attributed to certain parental characteristics—intense conflicts, rejection, and deviance—which occur commonly in broken homes (p. 368).

From the material reviewed in this section it is assumed that the child reared in a father-deprived home is characteristically different from a child not having this deprivation. He is seen as having more behavior problems (by all researchers but one); he is more immature and has a poorer peer group adjustment. His greatest problem has been stated as having a lack of personal worth, and he is without the guidance needed to understand what is socially right or wrong. More delinquency is found in the broken home, and the kind of behavior exhibited seems to be associated most directly with the kind of home the child resides in after the break. Yet it is also significant to note that though many problems arise, some of the effects attributed to paternal absence may be the result of other conflicts in the home.

The military family

Father-absence is a predictable and characteristic experience for the family of the career military man. For this reason it is expected that the effects of the father-absence on the child of a military man will be different than those of other father-separated children. Therefore, this situation will be reviewed separately.

Lyon and Oldaker (1967) have studied the child, the school, and the military family. Their findings have disclosed some thoughts contrary to popular belief. Two obvious characteristics of the military family have been noted in other studies: Frequent father-absence and frequent
family moves. These obvious factors have given rise to stereotypes concerning the military family with little real evidence. There are clearly certain situations, such as wartime, when frequent father-absence carries an overlay of anxiety not seen in the non-military family. But according to Lyon and Oldaker the authoritarian-style household with clear lines of authority toward the father tends to compensate partially for frequent father-absence.

In studying the relationships between father-absence and emotional disturbance in male military dependents, Pedersen (1966) found that the extent of the father-absence in the child's history as highly predictive of an independent index of emotional disturbance. However, in comparing the extent of father-absence in the histories of 27 emotionally disturbed 11 to 15 year old male military dependents and 30 comparable normal military children, no significant difference was found.

In examining these emotionally disturbed children Pedersen found no support for the prediction that this sample of disturbed military children experience any greater amount of father-absence overall or any father-absence during a particular age interval when contrasted with normal military dependents who are comparable on other background factors.

Pedersen concluded:

One may say with considerable confidence that the historical event of father-absence does not have a unitary meaning across these groups of subjects. The interesting possibility is suggested that some amount of father absence facilitates emotional adjustment among certain male military dependents, but the overall statistical evidence for this interpretation is in fact not very compelling. An appropriately conservative conclusion is that within
the normal range, the extent of father-absence in the child's history bears no relationship to the adequacy of the child's emotional adjustment (p. 524).

Crain (1965) studied children of fathers who are in the submarine service and absent for three months at a time. Two groups of second grade children in a public school were used to test the hypothesis that regular, prolonged absence of the father affects the child's perceptions of both father and mother. The results do not support the hypothesis. Generally, non-significant differences were found between father-present and father-absent children in the child's perception of father and mother as a source of authority and love. The results, seemingly at variance with certain previous studies, may be due to various factors, perhaps the most important being that the child's perceptions of his parents rather than any actual measures of his performance were used as the dependent variable.

Crain states that how the parents feel about the father's absence might be what cancels out the effect.

The submarine service is a highly specialized branch of the armed forces admitting only hand-picked men, which may be one cause of the findings. Such families may contain certain strengths not otherwise present in the general population (p. 347).

A most extensive study is now being conducted through the department of psychiatry and neurology at Walter Reed General Hospital. This investigation (now in its fourth phase) is exploring the impact of father-absence on personality factors of boys (Baker, et al., 1967). The first three phases have concerned the military family's adjustment to a father-absent situation when the father is in a non-combat
position. Phase four now under investigation will study the family whose father is sent to the combat area--at the present time Vietnam.

The findings reported thus far reveal that the military family may respond somewhat differently to father-absence than families previously studied. In this situation, though the father is absent he is thought of as part of the family. Fifty-two percent of the mothers reported that they were making deliberate, frequent efforts to keep the father in the center of the family life (by using pictures, letters, tapes, etc.). Also, 64 percent of the mothers reported that the boy reflects much interest in his father's activities and makes frequent reference to the absent father, indicating that physical absence of the father does not render him psychologically unavailable to the child.

The findings of this study agree with previous studies of father-absent boys which describe increased masculine striving and poorer peer adjustment. However, their findings disagree with previous studies in that they found no significant difference in dependency behavior, oedipal fantasies or alterations in sex-role orientation when compared with the father-present group of boys. Earlier reports that father-absent boys become more feminine and less aggressive were not supported.

Baker, et al. (1967) found that measurable reactions to the father-absence are experienced by both mother and son. Though the majority of the mothers reported that they and their sons both experienced unhappiness and some deterioration of behavior, some stated reactions in the direction of personal growth. Fathers, relative to their wives, showed greater concern and perhaps unrealistic over-concern about the anticipated
negative impact of father-absence. Wives, it was found, could more accurately and realistically predict the actual level of difficulty they would experience during the father-absence.

However, it was also concluded that the mother's upsetness and increased tension may be expressed through decreased tolerance of the child's behavior. The experimental boys showed an increase in conduct problems, hostility, and rivalry towards siblings. It appeared that the stress of father-absence on mothers was associated with increased sensitivity to rejection on the part of the boys. Since this mother-son relationship contains many dynamics not analyzed in this study, they recommended further investigation to define it more clearly.

In analyzing the data concerning the military family, it can be concluded that father-separation will have some deleterious effects on the child of the career military man; however, the extent of the father-absence seems to have no relationship to the adequacy of the child's emotional adjustment. So while there may be increased discipline problems, poorer peer adjustment, and increased masculine strivings, the dependency behavior or alternations in sex-role identity are not as prevalent as in other father-separated boys. It is again evident here that the mother plays a significant role in the adjustment of the child. Where she is able to reconcile herself to the situation, the child will perform similarly.
CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

In this concluding section a brief summary of the findings, suggestions for further study, and recommendations to aid the school counselor in assisting the father deprived child will be presented.

Thus far the role of the father in the home has been discussed with its positive aspects of how his position there facilitates better family development. The detrimental effects of father-absence were then presented in which the consequences at various age levels and the effect on scholastic aptitude were examined. Then followed consideration of the results of father-absence on aggression and cross-sex identity, along with the decisive factor of the mother's attitude as it affects the total home situation. How all these consequences effectuate various developmental situations was then presented. Since it was felt that the father-absence existing often in the military family should be examined separately, this item was parted from the previous discussions. Specifically, the following findings became evident through the review of the research.

While it was not the purpose of the paper to examine extensively the role the father plays in the total development of the child, it seemed profitable to designate from a few of the studies available the positive aspects of the father's place in the home. Therefore, it was concluded that the father represents security; someone to serve as a pattern, sexually, intellectually, and athletically; and someone who may help develop in the child a feeling of self-confidence.
It was also observable that the studies describing the effects of father-absence attributable to the age of the child when the father left the home are conflicting. The greater number of researchers have proppered the thesis that the younger child is more disadvantaged by the loss of his father. Those who sustain this view cite evidence of faulty masculine identification and development and retarded emotional growth as the consequences most noticeable. The other researchers have ascribed various impediments to the development of father-absent boys, but they do not maintain that the age of the child at the onset of separation is significant.

Conflicting evidence has also been presented as to the effect that father-absence has on the scholastic aptitude of children. While some research indicates that scholastic achievement is a goal strived for in compensation for the lack of a father, other indications reveal that many children who are deprived of this relationship develop difficulties directly related to their academic endeavors. The conclusion would then seem to be that since the child spends so much of his time in school-associated activities, it is a natural outlet for his frustrations. Either he devotes a great effort toward achieving or suffers from the reverse. Therefore, scholastic aptitude is effected by father-absence but may not always be in the same direction for each child.

It appears from the literature that a definition of lack of masculinity would be a lack of aggressiveness as displayed by boys from father-absent homes. The presence of the father provides an aggressive model and a more permissive environment for the child to express his aggression. Where there is less aggression, more feminine identification
appears. In a father-absent home the child has less chance to learn the masculine role and his sex role is then less clearly established.

A general conclusion could be that the son's development will be a reflection of the mother's attitude. Specifically, the mother's attitude will vary extensively depending on her emotional health and on the conditions under which the father left the home as well. It is possible that an extensive number of factors can be influencing the environment of the home. How the mother views the total situation and relates it to the child will be the most significant element in his adjustment to a fatherless home.

In considering developmental effects, it is assumed that the child reared in a father-absent home is characteristically different from a child not having this deprivation. He is seen as having more behavior problems (by all researchers but one); he is more immature and has a poorer peer group adjustment. His greatest problem has been stated as having a lack of personal worth, and he is without the guidance needed to understand what is socially right or wrong. More delinquency is found in the broken home, and the kind of behavior exhibited seems to be associated most directly with the kind of home the child resides in after the break. Yet it is also significant to note that though many problems arise, some of the effects attributed to paternal absence may be the result of other conflicts in the home.

In analyzing the data concerning the military family, it can be concluded that father-separation will have some deleterious effects on the child of the career military man; however, the extent of the father-absence seems to have no relationship to the adequacy of the child's emotional adjustment. So while there may be increased discipline problems,
poorer peer adjustment, and increased masculine strivings, the dependency behavior or alternations in sex-role identity are not as prevalent as in other father-separated boys. It is again evident here that the mother plays a significant role in the adjustment of the child. Where she is able to reconcile herself to the situation, the child will perform similarly.

Suggestions for further study

"... generalizations about father effects must be made very cautiously. Clearly father-absence is more complex than previously indicated (Pedersen, p. 326)." It is evident that the factors influencing the effect of the presence or absence of the father in the home are multidimensional. After reviewing the literature previously cited, this author has determined that there are numerous areas through which the channels of research could be directed. Those items which would appear to be more beneficial for further enlightenment on the effects of father-absence are as follows:

1. More research is needed on the father's influence in the family. At present there are approximately four studies on the mother for every one on the father, and half of those studies available are theoretical essays or contain speculation and theories on supposition rather than fact. It is, of course, easier to develop studies centered around the mother since she is more readily available for psychological research; however, the importance the father plays in the development of the child needs further consideration.

2. It is also important that further investigations on the father deal with him directly. At present most of the studies available rely on
the perceptions of the father's role in the home by the mother or by the children.

3. Though one study in this review alluded to the thought that siblings may play an important role in helping a child to achieve masculine identification, no research was found which dealt with the influence of a father surrogate. Since faulty identification seems to be a major factor in the negative effects of the father's absence, it would appear to be most important to investigate how a surrogate could have a positive influence.

4. It would also be beneficial to have longitudinal studies of children whose fathers were absent at varying ages of the children. This would aid in determining effects of father-absence at different ages and also help to delineate the type and severity of the consequences.

5. Little research is available on a discussion of the results of different kinds of paternal absence. Though the mother's attitude has been discussed as either mitigating or intensifying the situation in respect to the reason for father-absence, no research has been completed which deals directly with the consequences stemming from separate causes (divorce, separation, death, desertion) or situations under which the separation occurred.

6. The research which has considered the mother's attitude has stressed the crucial, deleterious effects it can cause. It would seem, then, if this is such a consequential constituent it should be explored as thoroughly as possible to reveal its various facets.

7. Generally, investigations have dealt with the causes of detrimental effects of father-absence. It seems necessary to also review
conditions which would provide optimal development of the fatherless child.

8. Fatherless children seemed to experience some difficulty in peer relations. Even in those children who did not reveal severe emotional conflicts as a result of paternal absence (as in studies of military children), peer relations were a pressing problem in their adjustment to a situation. Further exploration is, therefore, suggested which would provide assistance to help these fatherless boys have better relations with their peers.

Recommendations for the counselor

1. Just as in the success of any other treatment model, early case findings are a major determinant to working successfully with the father-absent student. Identify the family on the way to having a major problem.

2. Be aware of the traumatic consequences of the loss of the father as elicited in the review of literature in order to increase empathic understanding for the child when this happens. The counselor who is attentive to the potential crisis may prevent a maladaptive reversion and feeling of hopelessness in the child.

3. The counselor may be able to help father-separated children by forming therapy groups with the remaining parents. A technique similar to the one proposed by Rapaport (1962) would be (a) keeping explicit focus on the crisis and managing the effect; (b) offering basic information of assistance; (c) bridging the gap between the child, the remaining parent, and the community.
4. Work closely between the parents and the teachers so that problems can be acknowledged and perhaps alleviated. It is possible that the child could be experiencing emotional difficulties in one situation (the home or the school) but not in the other. It would, therefore, be helpful if the counselor could help the parents and the teachers to understand each child's peculiar situation.

5. Help to provide a broader program for the father-absent child. The counselor should become aware of his particular needs and situation so that recommendations can be made to the school, community, or parents. Would a male teacher prove an effective surrogate? Does the mother need the assistance of a mental health clinic? Would a summer camp program benefit the child in establishing better peer relations?

6. Consideration should also be given to the child whose father is not physically absent from the home. Many of the same factors may be applicable to him if his father has detached himself from association with the child.

This writer would caution the counselor to employ the above recommendations on an individual basis. The evidence presented in this review of the literature is far from conclusive and should be used as a tentative tool to work with the father-absent child according to the child's individual characteristics.
LITERATURE CITED


