AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH NONRESIDENT FATHERS

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by
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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2022

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to identify influences that replace the presence of Black fathers with children living in non-paternal homes. For my research investigation, influence was defined as people and/or experiences and/or activities engaged in positively or negatively. When fathers are not present on a consistent basis, identifying what contributes to student's social, emotional, and academic development was indispensable. Data were collected and analyzed from five research participants and consisted of grade cards, attendance and discipline records, in-depth interviews, and observations. Although all five case study participants shared distinctive qualities such as personality, academic achievement, and, experiences, four principal themes were present across all cases: achievement, development, experiences, and school support. Findings from the data sets were corroborated and confirmed by the population studied and it was determined that the greatest influence that replaced nonresident fathers were resident guardians. In addition, church organizations, counselors, and coaches were identified as instrumental champions whose influence was irreplaceable as it involved meeting the paternal needs of students.

Collectively, evidence suggest, the absent presence of fathers was replaced by a combination of resources to support academic and social development.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education. Social Work, and Psychological Sciences, have examined a dissertation proposal titled, "An Ethnographic Case Study Examining the Experiences of African American Students with Nonresident Fathers," presented by Zackary Shelby, candidate for the Doctor of Education degree and certify that in their opinion is worth of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

learned what it means to be a champion for students who share similar experiences. I am a better educator because of you.

PREFACE

MY LIVED EXPERIENCE

As an adolescent, there were two individuals that I looked up to the most, my brother and my father. My brother Gary was the epitome of an athlete who could do it all on the football field. Every chance I got, we would play catch in the yard or hang out in the neighborhood. We spent a lot of free time during the summer at the Boys and Girls Club where we perfected our craft of playing sports along with bumper pool. In the mid 90s, the "club" was our safe haven despite the proliferation of gang activity and violence in our community. Gary would go on to play college football, and I could not wait to follow in his footsteps.

My dad, Gary Sr. was also a man whom I looked up to during my childhood. Anytime we were together, someone always mentioned how much I looked like my dad. I always embraced that comment as a compliment and wanted nothing more but to be like my dad. He was my first coach growing up from t-ball to football. My dad spent most of his free time volunteering as a coach at the Boys and Girls Club after working his construction job. Throughout my playing career, my dad has never missed a game no matter the distance or time. Theresa, my mother was an elementary teacher in the local school district for most, if not all my life. As a primary student, I can recall going up to my mother's class during the summer before school started to help hang up bulletin boards, laminate posters, and make packets of work. My mother taught me what compassion and accountability looked like every time I visited her classroom. Altogether, my childhood appeared normal. Both of my parents consistently worked and on paydays, we would go to McDonalds or the drive-in theater.

My childhood would remain this way until my parents separated when I was in the third grade. I never talked to my brother about their separation and my sister was too young to remember. I just know how I felt and what followed was internally challenging. Not only did my grades suffer, but I began to act out in school and at church. I did not know it at the time but acting out was my way of expressing the pain caused by my parent's divorce. After the divorce, I still saw my father regularly. He would pick me and my brother up for football practice and take us to the games. I do not remember spending the night at my dad's house until around age of 16. Even though he did not live with me, he was very active in my life.

Unfortunately, the financial and emotional responsibility of raising three kids weighed heavy on my mother. She would often come home exhausted from working extended morning and after school programs, all while attending graduate school. This routine continued throughout all of my high school experience. There were days where my father's presence was financially supportive, yet his absence created emotional hardships that impacted my development. These frequent struggles and experiences were my inspiration for research.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Despite family trends shifting for many Americans, an increasing number of studies have been conducted to investigate the state of Black households through a nuclear prism (Chetty et al., 2020) to explain behavioral development (Boller et al., 2006), generational poverty (Cabrera et al., 2008) and social growth (Wilson et al., 2016). Within these households, extended families and kin networks serve as an important buffer that influence the natural growth of children over an extended period of time (Isaacs, 2012; Johnson-Staub, 2017; Sandstorm & Huerta, 2013). However, the practice of attaching a child's success or failure with their parents is commonly used to validate child-related outcomes (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; McNeal, 2016). In many cases involving Black families, single mothers are unjustly liable for negative consequences that impact children with minimum attention on the causes which lead to a father's absence (Elliot & Reid, 2016; Elliot & Reid, 2019). As a result, investigating findings that help Black children flourish irrespective of their family environment was an aim of my study. I explored Black families to examine the academic and social influences that replace the presence of nonresidential fathers.

The term Black or African American was used interchangeably in this dissertation to refer to individuals of African origin. Described by the United States Census Bureau, the Black racial category is defined as Black, African American, or Negro (Rastogi et al., 2011). Similarly, the ancestral lineage shared among African Americans and Blacks is inclusive as it relates to racial identity (Tamir, 2021). My affinity for investigating the influences that replace nonresident fathers stem from personal experiences of living in a home without my father's daily presence. Similar to other Black children growing up in the urban core (Pearce

et a., 2018), I did not see my father every day; however, I was blessed by his love, advice, and wisdom. My father never missed any of my football games or track meets regardless of the distance; yet I can vividly recall the financial and emotional burden my mother consumed on a regular basis as the sole provider. Extending this discussion on Black families along with providing an analysis of multiple scholarly sources was highlighted below.

Previous research has confirmed more than half (51%) of all Black children are raised in homes lead by single mothers with limited access to financial resources and social supports that reinforce positive academic and social development at an early head start stage (Chetty et al., 2020; Jackson et al., 2015; Parolin, 2021; Wildeman, 2009). Hemez and Washington added that the living arrangement of Black children 18 years old and younger living with two parents is 42% compared to 75% of white children of commensurate age (2021). Quantifying the impact of the phenomenon, Black children living in homes without the presence of fathers has prompted researchers to investigate the comprehensive impact of single parent households. For example, a longitudinal study conducted by Lee et al. (2020) examined the relationship between low-income residential and nonresidential fathers regarding child engagement. Over a 15-month period, a sample of 1,908 families were observed to identify their direct involvement in caregiving and socially stimulating play. Of the 1,499 residential fathers who participated, 702 or 47.7% identified as Black, while 78% or 312 of the 409 nonresident fathers identified as Black. Data were collected within the first 3 years after the birth of a new child using a program, Building Strong Families. Both mothers and fathers contributed directly by way of initial surveys and follow up phone interviews to compare the relationship quality and level of engagement between fathers. Implications revealed residential and nonresidential Black fathers reported higher scores in

caregiving (i.e., feeding, bathing, and dressing) and engagement for their children than any other measured group. On average, father involvement increased from 2.5 hours per week to 8 hours, refuting the stigma surrounding Black fathers (El, 2019; Hymowitz, 2004). These findings corroborate subsequent qualitative research that highlight the positive impact of Black fathers.

Dispelling myths of absent Black fathers was underscored in Coles et al.'s (2010) work The Myth of the Missing Black Father. In this text, Coles et al. (2010) disassembled stereotypes that portray Black fathers as absent from their families while emphasizing systemic trends that affect fatherhood similar to their contemporaries (i.e., Cooper, 2015; Grantham & Henfield, 2011). Coles' writing counters an often-used deficit mindset to define Black fathers based partly on their living arrangement (p. 122). Conversely, these impressions juxtapose differing research suggesting, although more Black fathers are active, more are absent from home (Livingston & Parker, 2011; Mattis et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2016). According to Cabrera et al. (2004), children living in father-absent homes are more likely to be characterized by crime and high levels of unemployment.

Additional implications revealed that 72% of Black children are born in nonmarital unions (Akerlof et al., 1996; Armstrong, 2020), contributing to the inheritance of Black poverty and the lack of social mobility (Winship et al., 2018). Socioeconomic status (SES) and poverty have previously been correlated to father's living arrangements (Hairston, 2012; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2014) as sections of the Black economic community is crippled by the lack of wealth compared to white neighborhoods (Reeves & Rodrique, 2017). Evidence outlined in this section examined the literature and findings indicate that Black children are more likely to live in nonresident father homes compared to white children

(VerBruggen, 2018); however, additional data suggest Black fathers are involved in their child's life regardless of their resident location (Ransaw, 2014).

Investigating Black families is not an indictment on single mothers or guardians whose selflessness is often underappreciated, nor is the description of nonresidential fathers synonymous with absent fathers. Fittingly, my study examined individual experiences of students whose fathers do not reside inside the home while avoiding harmful misconceptions associated with Black fathers. Preceding studies have made contributions relating to Black children's educational attainment (de Brey, et al., 2019), social outcomes (Manduca, & Sampson, 2019; Nam et al., 2015), and family demographics (Collins et al., 2019); but have generally failed to pinpoint influences that support children with nonresident fathers. Therefore, the aim of my study was to identify factors that fulfill any potential voids created by nonresident fathers and improve the quality of life and education for Black children, along with adding to the instructional expertise for principal leaders, teachers, and community stakeholders.

In the subsequent section, I will introduce the problem of my study and provide evidence that reports the impact of students who reside in homes absent their biological fathers. Fatherless Black homes has drawn attention from a variety of experts who have commonly studied negative consequences (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2015; Wagstaff & McLuckey, 2017); however, my platform focused on addressing the problem through an expository lens to not only explore individual causes of the phenomenon but to identify supports to help students thrive.

The Problem

Historically, the depiction of Black families has often been characterized through a deficit lens attributing social hardships to single Black mothers and the number of children being raised in fatherless homes (Frazier, 1948; Malone-Colon, 2007; Jarosz, et al., 2020; Williams, 2017). Daniel Moynihan's landmark work, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (1965) argued economic and structural deficiencies involving Black Americans were a direct result of single mothers and the inexistence of the nuclear family despite indicators that pointed to racism and systemic oppression (Acs et al., 2013; Coonz, 2015). In Moynihan's estimation, Black female-headed households promoted the regression of mobility and an inescapable cycle of poverty for Black children (Lenhardt, 2015). Conversely, Cohen et al. (2015) examined the validity of these assumptions in detail to compare economic and social success for Black families based on living arrangements. Their investigation suggested family structure is not the sole driving force behind the fluctuations in poverty rates given that women have historically earned less than men and the poverty rate for single Black fathers 32.6% exceeded their white 15.9% and Latinx 30.1% counterparts (Cohen et at., 2015). Instead, the authors reported reducing America's high incarceration rates and increasing employment opportunities for Black parents has more potential to abate poverty (Cohen et at., 2015).

The presence of fathers does not guarantee financial stability (Boller et al., 2006), or prevent negative experiences from occurring (Martinez, et al., 2013; Raley et al., 2015). Companionship patterns (Wikle & Hoagland, 2020) reveal fathers have an important impact on adolescent's development and their overall health through social interactions (Rogers et al., 2018). Cabrera et al. (2007) examined father's influence on child development through

positive interactions and quality of father engagement for children 2 and 3 years old. At the conclusion of the study, findings determined the father's presence was significantly related to children's cognitive development and a closer inspection correlated children's emotional development with the presence of fathers. Father's supportiveness was also positively associated emotional regulation, while mother's produced neutral results Cabrera et al. (2007). These outcomes align with scholars who have contributed to understanding the developmental relationship between fathers and their children (King et al., 2004; King & Sobolwski, 2006; Stewart & Menning, 2009), in the areas of health development (Ball et al., 2007), parent-child interactions, (Trivette et al., 2010), and social behaviors (Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006). Each outcome underscored my position that fathers are essential to the growth and development of children, and when removed, a void may potentially be created.

When examining the problem of my study, Black children living in homes without their fathers, a challenge exists relating to its impact. Over the past half-century, more than 16 million parents in the United States are unmarried (Livingston, 2018) and of those reported, 54% are Black children who are being raised in homes lead by mothers only (Kreider, 2008; Livingston, 2018b; Pew Research Center, 2015). Nonresident Black fathers have drawn public attention regarding their role in shaping the outcomes for their children (Anderson et al., 2002; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007; Shannon et al., 2009) along with the establishment of father-centered social programs that provide families with support (Morley et al., 2008; Sandstrom et al., 2015). In addition, what we know about students with nonresidential fathers is largely based on empirical studies that revealed between 1960 and 2016, the percentage of Black children living with mothers only rose from 30% to 52% (US Census Data, 2019b) compared to 20% of white children during the same time span. Father

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absent homes contribute to multiple outcomes such as limited financial income within the Black family unit compared to white children (Hofferth et al., 2010), decreased academic performance (Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014) and negative behavioral outcomes (Alvare, 2011). Each component was explained fully in the ensuing section beginning with the presence of the problem.

Exploring the context of the phenomenon, Black students living in homes with nonresident fathers required a preliminary examination of the setting. Investigative data revealed a high concentration of children living in single parent homes reside in communities plagued by poverty and systematic inequalities (Chaudry & Wimer, 2016; Macartney et al., 2016; McCarty, 2016; Meyer & Wallace, 2009;) such as high incarceration rates of Black males (Geller et al., 2012; Gramlich, 2020; Martin, 2017). Essentially, the prison system is designed to remove the criminal from society and between 2000 and 2016, Black males represented approximately 504,000 of the prison population in the United States (Sabol et al., 2019). Creating a vacancy within the family structure, reducing the earning potential for the family unit, and contributing to the reduction of marriageable men (Moore & Elkavich, 2008; Wildeman & Western, 2010).

Addressing the impact of nonresidential fathers was better understood by examining the social and economic disadvantages that may manifest in their absence beginning with cognitive development. Preceding studies have stressed a positive association between father involvement and children's cognitive skills (Dunn et al., 2004; Rolle et al., 2019), while others highlight the contributions that fathers make on student's literacy and academic skills (Jeynes, 2015; Saracho, 2007). However, the influence of nonresidential fathers can marginally be associated with children's academic performance on a daily basis (King &

Sobolewski, 2006), and according to Allen and Daly (2007), children living without their fathers are more likely to experience problems in school and perform lower on academic assessments. Whitney et al. (2017) asserted the lowest achievement level and the greatest risk for school failure is experienced by students who do not have a resident father.

Supplemental studies investigating nonresidential fathers suggest negative outcomes are based on inadequate involvement with their children (Baker, 2018; Hofferth & Pinzon, 2011; Julion et al., 2007). Unlike uncovering the social impact of nonresidential fathers, paternal involvement is multifaceted and can include eating meals or feeding children, bathing, reading with children, and helping children with their homework (Jones & Mosher, 2013). Yogman and Garfield (2016) suggested African American fathers are more involved in supporting their children compared to white and Hispanic, (Jackson et al., 2015); however, differing authors imply more than two thirds of Black children are born to unmarried mothers, and the level of involvement declines throughout their adolescent years (Lu et al., 2010; Tollestrup, 2018). This impression underscores an area of research I investigated in attempt to identify what replaces a father's involvement during specific stages of their child's life if a void is created. Cheadle et al. (2010) added many nonresident fathers initially attempt to be involved and maintain close relationships with their children, while some drift apart and others have no contact at all.

In a study measuring nonresident father's involvement after birth, a sample group of 2,447 unmarried families (63% non-Hispanic Black, 31% Hispanic, 6% White) were observed to measure their consistency and participation during the developmental years 1, 3, 5, and 9 (Ellerbe et al., 2018). Indicators of fathers' involvement were anticipated based on employment and economic stability along with cultural factors based on attitudes, social

norms, and family values. During this process, researchers evaluated four aspects of fathers' involvement including time with children, engagement, shared responsibilities, and coparenting. Over time, each theme enlarged a robust representation of father's relationship with their children and recorded their mean frequency levels. Although father involvement declined for all ethnic groups, Black fathers experienced the least decline compared to Hispanic and white fathers. Specifically, data revealed a father's participation is consistent for children between the ages 1 and 3, but a significant drop off ensues around age 9 where Black fathers spent 6 days out of the month with their children. The total days spent with children were greater than white and Hispanic fathers, the remaining days out of the month were not spent with their children, creating potential opportunities for supplemental influences to support development. Addressing the problem, a father's time apart from their children as it pertained to involvement was an area of research I pursued to better understand explicit influences that support children's growth and development.

An additional impact of children living in homes with nonresident fathers can be correlated with poverty (Drake & Rank, 2009; Joiner, 2017; Livingston, 2018). Research examining the disproportionality of poverty within the Black community acknowledges unmarried women are most vulnerable (Astone et al., 2016; Damaske et al., 2017) and poverty is closely tied to education and employment (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Meyer & Wallace, 2009). Threlfall et al. (2013) uncovered perceptions of nonresidential African American fathers' parenting roles within the context of an urban community. This mixed-methods project collected data to aid in (a) understanding the role of father's parenting, and (b) programs that enhanced their child's behavior development from a selected group of 29 participants. Interviews were conducted and data were coded until six themes emerged.

Findings suggested that fathers meet their children's essential needs (i.e., providing a roof over their heads, food, and clothing was fundamental); however, poverty limited their resources and created a psychological burden. Implications further revealed fathers genuinely wanted to provide a better lifestyle for their children and took responsibility for their well-being. An additional theme that emerged was the need to provide children with emotional support along with policies that promoted academic stability. Despite the evolution of family roles and the contribution of mothers, father's economic wellbeing remains essential (Avellar et al., 2018; Carlson, & Magnuson, 2011; Goldberg, 2015). Together, these findings provide important insight of the perceptions of fathers, and highlight negative environmental experiences their children are exposed to in their absence.

Meanwhile, exploring causes that contribute to the phenomenon, nonresidential fathers created an essential opportunity within my study to investigate paternal patterns during children's developmental years. Prior studies have contributed to understanding Black families through a narrow lens, focusing primarily on absent fathers and a lack of responsibility (Hitchens & Payne, 2017; Manduca, & Sampson, 2019); while disregarding specific causes that induce father absence. My research filled this gap in the literature by examining the incarceration statistics of Black men (see DeFina & Hannon, 2013). At the conclusion of 2015, Black men between the ages 20 and 34 were 9.1% of the prison population compared to 1.6% of white men (Pettit & Sykes, 2017). Disaggregated data further reported the greatest demographic of incarcerated inmates with dependent children were Black males (Leeds et al., 2020). In a 2004 interview with state inmates, Glaze and Maruschak (2008) discussed 63% of Black fathers reported they shared in the daily care of their children, and 54% indicated they provided financial support for their children prior to

being incarcerated. Additional findings implied losing a parent to incarceration can be traumatic and can have an adverse impact on children's mental, emotional, and physical health (Craigie et al., 2018; Peterson et al., 2015). Information discussed in this research underscored a facet of my research that identified what replaces the financial and social contributions of Black fathers.

In addition to the high imprisonment rates of Black males, gun violence has contributed to children living in nonresident father homes (Beck, 2021; Kochanek et al., 2019). The consequences of gun violence among Black men creates a void within the community (Bryant, 2013), weakens the promotion of family success (Black & Hausman, 2008), and contributes to trauma and depression (Armstrong & Carlson, 2019; Mitchell & Bromfield, 2019) for the surviving family members. Between the ages 15 to 24, not only are 90% Black deaths caused by guns (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Levine et al., 2012), but 70% of those deaths were instigated by Black individuals (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019), impacting the families of the victim and perpetrator. Despite this evidence, there remains a gap in the literature that inclusively disaggregates the number of Black fathers murdered in the United States; therefore, an aim of my research was to provide an in depth analysis of homicidal data to better understand the mortality rate among Black fathers and their survived children.

One final cause that contributes to children living in homes void of their fathers can be attributed to babies born outside of marriage. Throughout the 20th century, single-parent families have increased across United States redefining characteristics that represent contemporary households (Crawford et al., 2013; Smock & Schwartz, 2020). In general, this experience is not limited to any specific race, but findings suggest that Black parents have higher probability of living apart (Fagan & Hadford, 2015; Lloyd et al., 2021). Although

marital status does not consider the number of children living in cohabitating homes, nonmarital households may create inconsistent involvement throughout children's development years (Horowitz et al., 2019; Sassler & Lichter, 2020). In this case, determining how children and families fared was essential to my study as marriage within the Black community continues to decrease (see Caucutt et al., 2018; Johnson & Loscocco, 2014).

Literature discussed in the previous section introduced the problem of my research, Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers. Overtime, family trends have been examined from a variety of scholars who acknowledge the absent presence of fathers in Black homes, and the implications that follow. Yet, a gap in the literature exists as it relates to connecting the causes that lead to father's absence and the influences that replace their presence. It was my goal to investigate Black households through a prism that provided a robust understanding, and not solely rely on social conditions to describe student outcomes. In the following section, I will provide a detailed explanation of the purpose for research, beginning with an overview of the phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this empirical study was to identify influences that replace the presence of Black fathers with children living in non-paternal homes. As fathering research has progressed, several studies have explored the relationship between Black fathers and their children (Coates, & Phares, 2014; Harper & Fine, 2006; Thompson, 2014); however, few have pinpointed influences that supplement nonresident father's social and overall development on their children. For my research investigation, influence was defined as people and/or experiences and/or activities engaged in positively or negatively. When fathers are not present on a consistent basis, identifying what contributes to children's social,

emotional, and academic development was essential to my study. Exploring this facet of Black household's isolated father's involvement and impact on their children, while magnifying contributions that promote student success. Finally, my research examined the voice of students and included their perspective in better understanding their experiences.

Selecting my participants was based on extending the understanding of the phenomenon in relation to the research questions (Sargeant, 2012). Participants in this study met the following requirements: (a) Black female and/or male high school student age 18 or 19 and (b) live in a household without the presence of their biological father. This population was purposeful in better understanding the lived experiences of living in nonresident father homes through qualitative inquiry. Each participant was administered open-ended research questions designed to maximize authentic responses (Patton, 2015).

The setting for this ethnographic study took take place in a Midwestern urban high school where the majority of student's social economic status qualifies them for free or reduced lunch. Using household financial data as part of the selection of my setting was critical as practitioners suggest a correlation between single-parent households and poverty (Eichner & Gallagher Robbins, 2015; Lu et al., 2020; Semega et al., 2019). I observed students within their contextual environment (i.e., home, work setting, and extracurricular events) to make meaning from their experiences. Observing students in their natural setting created reliable data, which ultimately aligned with the qualifications of an ethnographic research analysis (see van Hulst et al., 2015).

Additionally, I incorporated the theoretical tradition case study to provide a balanced understanding of the phenomenon. Case studies are anchored in the idea of entrenching participants within the research to explore an in-depth issue in its natural context (Crowe et

al., 2011; Ridder, 2017). The goal was to learn about students' experiences and identify support systems that assist them with achieving academic and social success. Data were collected using interviews, observations of the phenomenon, and through the analysis of documents to collect a thick description (Ponterotto, 2006) of the relationship between nonresident fathers and their children. Each source increased the reliability of the findings by generating common themes throughout the duration of this study.

Data included in this section introduced the purpose of my study and provided an overview of the setting, participant selection, and data analysis. Developing a concise purpose statement established direction of the study and provided a robust foundation that supported the execution of my research (Creswell, 2013). In the ensuing section, I will present my research questions in a manner that outlines the problem of my study. Each question was designed to increase the knowledge surrounding the phenomenon, students living with nonresident fathers while addressing the gap in existing literature (Farrugia et al., 2010).

Research Questions

Research questions were designed to provide structure throughout the investigation of my case study participants. Each question isolated a critical element that underscored the relationship among children and their nonresidential father within urban communities. Qualitative research questions ask how or why events occur, or what are the perceptions and experiences of the participants (Simon, 2011). Questions for my research study stemmed from one primary inquiry followed by four sub questions.

Central Question: What replaces the presence of African American fathers for students living in non-paternal homes?

Sub-questions:

(1) How do students describe their relationship with their resident guardian?

(2) What contributes to the social, emotional, and academic development for students with nonresident fathers?

(3) What are the lived school experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers?

(4) How should urban schools support the academic and behavior needs for students with nonresident fathers?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is primarily an outline of what researchers plan to study along with a reinforcement of the goals, design, and research questions (Crawford, 2019; Jabareen, 2009; Maxwell, 2013; Regoniel, 2015). Within the conceptual framework is the researcher's understanding of how the problem will be explored and the relationship between the variables that support the execution of the research goals (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The problem of my study, students living in homes with nonresident fathers served as a conduit that connected my research questions with philosophies embedded in the literature. This research approach captured findings that chronicled the progression of Black families while interlocking theories with empirical research (Adom et al., 2018; Collins & Stockton, 2018).

There were four themes that functioned as pillars within my literature review beginning with the evolution of the family structure. My rationale for selecting the history of Black families as my initial topic was to provide a chronological overview of the problem, along with factors that have contributed to Black fathers not being present in their children's home. Specifically, examining the progression of Black families assisted in identifying

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patterns and other findings that captured children's residency status overtime (Monte & Knop, 2019). These patterns involving Black households played an integral role in framing a timeline of the problem while addressing my research questions.

In addition, exploring children's overall well-being encouraged me to investigate the developmental impact fathers have on their children. Shell (2008) indicated that fatherlessness is a leading cause that effects child well-being in our society. Examining the literature to ascertain how identity, emotional, and cognitive development were influenced when fathers are not present daily in the home was essential. Bronfenbrenner's (1970) seminal work on ecological theory suggests human development is a process involving reciprocal interactions between individuals and the environment (Karger, 2016; Tudge et al., 2009). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner recognized that parents with unstable relationships with their children have a negative effect (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). When applying this understanding to my study, I was encouraged to investigate how development is fashioned for children with nonresident fathers.

Similarly, investigating the school experience of children with nonresidential fathers was fundamental in discovering their academic and behavioral patterns. My rationale for selecting this topic was two-fold. First, my intention was to explore how student's academic characteristics are shaped by their environment and how schools assimilate that knowledge within the classroom. Second, I felt it was imperative to highlight the academic and behavior successes and failures of students with nonresidential fathers. According to Ward (2008), children with nonresidential fathers were found to have lower rates of academic achievement. Specifically, the author determined that African American children with fathers who do not reside in their homes had a lower grade point average (GPA) than white children (Ward,

2008). Amato et al. (2015) stated "Research consistently demonstrate that children living with single parents score lower on measures of academic ability and achievement that do children with two continuously married parents" (p. 14).

Examining literature bolstered the role and responsibility involving educational leadership or principal pedagogy see (Sappington et al., 2010). For my study, principal pedagogy was defined as effective leadership practices and methods that influence high academic and social outcomes for students and teachers. MacNeill et al. (2003) outlined multi-dimensions of leadership for the purpose of creating a learning space that produced academic excellence and stability. As a result, my rationale for selecting this topic was to identify ways leaders can improve the quality of instruction for students with nonresident fathers. Moreover, nonresident fathers are the problem of my study, therefore, I determined what role if any, the school's personnel plays in influencing student growth and development.

In summary, exploring a variety of literature that contributes to examining the experiences of students with nonresidential fathers was essential. Each topic brought a unique element in identifying the current state of students while providing a better understanding of the role schools play in meeting their needs. I brought a few assumptions to this ethnographic case study concerning students with nonresidential fathers. It was my belief that the absent presence of fathers reduces families' potential earnings and impacts children's growth and development. In 2018, males in the United States earned on average $55,291 compared to $45,097 for women (Semega, et al., 2019), therefore, I believed that a father's financial support is a critical contributor to family's poverty or prosperity. Moreover, it was my belief that children in low-income families are more likely experience health related

issues such as stress and poor mental health (Low-Income Working Families: Facts and Figures, 2005). It was my assumption that the consequences of students not living with their fathers creates opportunities for ancillary influences, both positive and negative to fill their void. For these reasons, the meticulous exploration of literature provided a transparent understanding of the influences impacting children with nonresidential fathers beginning with the evolution of the Black family. Overall, my research project was classified as a qualitative study because it relied primarily on human perspective and an understanding within a variety of contexts to discover how things work (Stake, 2010). In the succeeding section, I will establish a framework investigating a diverse selection of literature that supports the problem of my study. Information will be used to strengthen my understanding of the phenomenon and provide context that informs my methodology (Maggio et al., 2016).

Evolution of the Family Structure

Understanding the plight of African American fathers began with recognizing events that have contributed to the current state of Black families such as slavery. The practice of enslavement was an institutionalized system that balked at the idea of creating strong nuclear Black families through marriage (Bloome & Muller, 2015; Lenhardt, 2015). Connecting to the problem of my study, enslaved children, men, and women could be sold and separated from one another at any point of their lives, attenuating the family unit (DeGruy, 2017). During this period, the fate of Black families laid in the balance of slave owners whose economic gains were more profitable than creating strong Black family units (Hunter, 2017).

Slavery was not the only system impacting the progression of Black families as housing practices following the emancipation period contributed to an unequitable distribution of wealth. For many Americans, homeownership is the principal vehicle that

leads to the accumulation of wealth (Goodman & Mayer, 2018; Herbert et al., 2013; Rappaport, 2010) and intergenerational capital (Choi et al., 2018). Consequently, discriminatory lending practices such as redlining (Aaronson et al., 2017; Goldstein & Urevick-Ackelsberg, 2008; Hernandez, 2014) forced African Americans into racially segregation communities with limited resources and access to wealth (Matthew et al., 2017). The practice of redlining aligned with the problem of my study by weakening the stability of the community through reduced homeownership and centralizing poverty. When property values are minimal, school funds and other resources to support families within the community are reduced (Washington State Department of Revenue, 2016).

An additional component concerning the evolution of Black families deals with mass incarceration. Mass incarceration has systematically shaped the Black community through questionable practices that have led to the removal of Black men (Nellis, 2016; Roberts, 2004; Tucker, 2016a). In 2017, the rate of Black males in prison (2,336 per 100,000) was almost six times (397 per 100,000) that of white males (Bronson & Carson, 2017). In addition, drug offenses play a key role in the number of African American children living in homes with nonresident fathers. Under the war on drugs policy, Black drug offenders are three times as likely to get arrested for possession narcotics than whites (Knafo, 2013). This phenomenon directly correlated to the problem of my study, students living in homes with nonresident fathers as Black males dominate the prison industry (Carson, 2020; Tucker, 2016b).

Finally, violence in urban communities contributes to the reduction of Black fathers as a byproduct of the homicide rate and the number of men incarcerated following the crime. According to Warnken and Lauritsen (2019), African American males are more likely to be

victims of homicide than their white counterparts. The US Department of Justice reported that Black males represented 77% of homicide victims, and of those, 54% were between the ages 18–34 (Carson & Sabol, 2012). Violence directly impacts Black households as families of the victims and perpetrators learn to cope with the loss of a family member (Frazer et al., 2018).

Developmental Effect of Nonresident Fathers

Exploring the evolution of Black families established a framework around the problem of my study, however, investigating the developmental impact of nonresident fathers was equally vital. Throughout history, behavior experts specialized in constructing a holistic framework that outlined phases of development such as Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (Green et al., 2016; McLeod, 2017; Wallace, 2017). In its primitive state *trust v. mistrust*, an infant's expressive cry can signify attention to one of their basic needs such as a fresh diaper, food, or a consolable cuddle (Cherry, 2018; Faris & McCarroll, 2010) from primary caregivers who are responsible for developing trust and maintaining stability (Poole & Snarey, 2011). When these needs are met, a healthy transition throughout development is more likely to occur (Barr, 2006; Boseley, 2010; Leadsom, 2012). In relation to growth and development, it was essential to my study to explore how guardians compensate for the absence of fathers. To accomplish this task, I studied both the positive and negative influences that contributed to shaping the characteristics for students with nonresident fathers. This process was directed by my research questions and detailed in the methodology section of this study.

School Experience

Examining the school experience of students with a nonresidential father required an analysis of their academic and social knowledge. Ward (2008) suggested educational outcomes of children with absent fathers and the influence of paternal parents are critical. Specifically, Ward's case study examined the absent presence of fathers in three waves or data collection periods. In each wave, 70 students participated with the primary ethnic breakdown being white and Black. Findings from the study indicated that there is substantial data that correlates a father's presence and their impact on student achievement. Ward advanced this understanding by implying, "Children in single-mother homes as a collective group and regardless of reason for father absence had a significantly lower level of educational attainment by almost one whole year" (p. 40); while McLanahan et al. (2013) emphasized significant evidence and suggested the effect of father presence greatly influences student achievement. Conversely, when fathers are not present throughout their child's school experience, an academic gap is more likely to be created (Caughy et al., 2020; Engin, 2020; Lipscomb, 2011). This impression reinforced the significance of my study and the desire to not only identify influences that support learning, but also highlight the school personnel's responsibility in fulfilling any potential gaps in knowledge (see Ppduah, 2020). Investigating the academic impact for students with nonresident fathers added valuable knowledge to the current literature through an investigative lens to address the problem of my study.

Educational Leadership

Exploring the school experiences of Black students with nonresident fathers was fundamental in understanding the phenomenon; however, investigating the literature from an

educational leadership perspective was equally important. Effective leaders promote achievement by collecting data, monitoring, and utilizing teacher's individual strengths to maximize learning (Scott, 2018; Yonge 2014); along with supporting the individual needs of students (Josephson et al. 2018). For example, preliminary data often suggests Black students are more likely to be academically and social disadvantaged (Barton & Coley, 2010; Bireda & Moses, 2010; Vanneman et al., 2009) with minimal attention on delineating causes that contribute to their struggles. For this reason, the intent of my research was to move beyond statistical data and examine students with nonresident fathers from an educational leadership perspective that informs decisions for this population. To achieve this goal, I identified strategies that promoted achievement through individualized pedagogical practices.

In conclusion, evidence included in the introduction of my research provided a summary of literature used to investigate and strengthen the understanding of the phenomenon, students living with nonresident fathers. The goal of each theme was to anchor the phenomenon within the literature to minimize any existing gaps that impact the academic and social outcomes of this specific group. Additionally, investing in this research area was significant as the number of Black students living in homes without the consistent presence of their fathers exist (Madyun & Lee, 2010). Subsequently, the following section will connect the problem of my research with methods detailing how my study was performed. My goal was to use each research question as an outline that details the design and instrumentation of my study.

Overview of the Design and Methodology

Embedded in this section is a brief overview of the methodology that was used to assist me in making meaning of the phenomenon. A more thorough discussion is included in

Chapter 3. This ethnographic case study focused on the influences that replaced the presence of nonresidential fathers. By conducting research on this population of students, my goal was to better understand their experiences and provide stakeholders with information that support healthy growth and development.

In order to better understand students living in home with nonresident fathers, it was necessary to utilize case studies as the research design. Qualitative research was appropriate for this study because it provided a better understanding of the phenomenon by enlarging the richness nestled in their experiences. The methods used in this study supplied a thick description of the phenomenon and provided meaning related to the findings. Yin (2014) identified case studies as "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context" (p. 16). Allen & Daly, 2007 and Dyer et al. (2018) explored the phenomenon, nonresidential fathers through an informative lens and provided a framework for exploration. However, as the chief investigator, I used the experiences and observable behaviors of students to document influences that impacted their growth and development across multiple environments.

The setting for this study commenced in a Midwestern metropolitan high school, where the context supplied an abundant population pool to yield a rich sample. Specifically, data were collected in an urban school, where approximately 90% of students receive free or reduced lunch. I purposefully selected this setting based on previous studies that have correlated single families lead by mothers with social economic status (Gradín, 2012; Patrick, 2017). Other researchers suggested that Black family poverty is concentrated in urban areas where fathers are not present (Hardy et al., 2018; Sharkey, 2009). It was my aim that both viewpoints support the selection and location for my research.

Study participants included only Black male and female students between the ages 18–19 years old who do not live with their fathers. Using a purposeful and criterion sample, five students were identified and selected with the assistance of school personnel and a data base that stores demographic information such as age and race. Purposeful sampling concentrates on selecting information rich cases that illuminate the questions within the study (Patton, 2015). I applied purposeful sampling procedures to create a sample from the entire population to assist me in making an informed conclusion relating to the phenomenon. Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of important (Patton, 2002). My goal was to intentionally use a series of choices in relation to meeting the specific requisites for my study (Palys, 2008, p. 697). The sample survey was administered after providing an overview of research. Since I focused on students with nonresident fathers, only those experiences were included in the research.

Data were collected using documents, interviews, and observations by the investigator to develop a robust understanding and meaning involving students with nonresidential fathers. Each data source supported the collection process by adding a unique and different contribution of information. Documents were a primary source of evidence collected, including printed and electronic information (Bowen, 2009). For example, school reports, disciplinary records, and attendance provided an in-depth scope of the problem. These documents supplied background information that recorded their school experience.

An additional data source included was semi-structured interviews, which are less rigid and provided me with flexibility to adjust throughout the interview process (Patton, 2015). These interviews created a platform and an opportunity to hear participant's feelings, thoughts, and beliefs towards their nonresident fathers. After building initial trust, interviews

were conducted on a one-on-one basis to allow students to open up about their feelings. Conducting research in direct settings was better suited within the semi-structured process to capture the richness of the experience by going deeper if needed and building on student's responses (Adams, 2015).

The final data analysis tool that was incorporated within my study was observations. Observations were incorporated as a means to corroborate previous findings (Jamshed, 2014). I observed students in a variety of settings such as in the classroom, cafeteria, and within the community to gather information that served as field notes for my journal. The importance of observing subjects as they interact and react to various stimuli within their environments was to capture an authentic perspective (see Patton, 2015). Student observations provided insight as to what replaces the void left by fathers as they navigate on a daily basis.

Data from my study were sifted and analyzed to search and interpret meaning of the results through coding and memoing (Wong, 2008). To accomplish this goal, I structured each case individually. First, I began by coding the documents, interviews, and observations. Coding was beneficial to my research because it allowed data to be collated into descriptive and interpretive themes. Descriptive coding assigns labels that summarize data into short phrases or a word (Miles et al., 2014). Interpretive coding extends beyond the sole description and made meaning of the human experience within the real-life context (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Each code contributed to sculpting the experiences of students with nonresident fathers in multiple settings. Creswell (2018) detailed how to execute memos by, "Writing in the margins of field notes or transcripts" (p. 183). For my study, it was important

to capture the fullness of experiences as they emerge. This information will then be transformed into themes to establish a procedure for interpreting the data.

Significance

Investigating the phenomenon continues to be significant as African Americans children living in homes without their fathers are more likely to be exposed to factors that plague urban communities (Caldwell et al., 2014; Jackson et al., 2019). As of 2012, approximately 57.6% of African American homes functioned without the presence of a father (US Census Bureau, 2018), creating opportunities that not only weakens the economic and social infrastructure, but it gives way for other influences to fill the void left. Although the benefits from a father's daily presence in the home can offset a myriad of obstacles that prevent Black children from succeeding, secondary options need to be explored in their absence. This study has the potential to equip community stakeholders and parents to better serve this group. Furthermore, knowledge from this study can support educators across the academic spectrum who instruct Black students including social and case workers. Finally, it was my intention that this study provides a transparent understanding of influences that replace the presence of nonresidential fathers as the literature remains fragmented. Subsequently, Chapter 2 will provide a detailed overview of the literature relating to my study, Black children living with nonresident fathers.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to gain a better understanding of the influences that replace the presence of nonresidential fathers. Influence is defined as the people, experiences, or activities engaged in positively or negatively. This phenomenon is reported to exist in Black communities (Caldwell et al., 2011; Perry et al., 2011; Zhang & Fuller, 2012) where economic and social challenges are magnified due to the absent presence of fathers (Tanskanen & Erola, 2017). The absence of fathers may contribute to student's emotional well-being, academic and social development, and self-esteem (Bradshaw et al., 2020; Cartwright, & Henriksen, 2012; Gross, 2014; Maurya 2015). Rosenberg and Wilcox (2006) extended this notion further and suggested, "the way fathers play with their children also has an important impact on a child's emotional and social development" (p.12). Exploring relationships uncovered an aspect involving the problem within my study, students with nonresident fathers may experience academic and behavior difficulties within their environment (Goodrum et al., 2012).

Literature was examined to make meaning of student's experiences in a variety of authentic settings. Several authors have explored this matter in parts (Choi, 2010; Dyer et al., 2018; Gonzales et al., 2014); however, I used specific terms such as: *family history, father-child relationship, father's role in shaping children's development, child development, and parenting to define the phenomenon in totality through trusted research sources*, including ProQuest, Education Full Text, JSTOR, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and dissertations. These inquiries produced a substantial amount of evidence that served as a foundation for my investigation.

The evolution of the family structure, developmental effect of absent fathers, school experience, and educational leadership are four themes that were discussed within my theoretical framework. Each focus area provided an opportunity to examine the depth and breadth of multiple components that contribute to student's academic and social maturity. Early literature has explored the role slavery played in influencing the African American family unit (Candido & Oliveira, 2021; Gaskin et al., 2005; Tolman, 2011) along with mass incarceration of Black men (McDaniel et al., 2013). My rationale for selecting the evolution of the family structure was to fashion a historical overview of events that have influenced the current African American family such as causes and patterns that lead to father's absence (Pruett et al., 2014; Wood & Brownhill, 2017). Next, examining children's overall well-being guided me to investigate the developmental influence absent fathers have on their children. This perspective inspired me to explore the literature to ascertain how identity, emotional, and cognitive development is influenced by fathers (Cheadle et al., 2010; King & Sobolewski, 2006; Panter-Brick et al., 2014). Both areas served as a literary structure that supported my role as an ethnographic researcher and serves as a compass within the field.

The final two components, school experience and education leadership are equivalently important in providing a collection of literature that explores the phenomenon from an educational perspective. Investigating the school experience of children with absent fathers is fundamental in discovering academic and behavioral patterns (Bell, 2014; Henry et al., 2020). The purpose for selecting this topic was two-fold. First, my intentions were to explore how student's dispositions are shaped by their environment and how schools assimilate that knowledge within the classroom. From an education leadership perspective, I wanted to identify how schools support this specific population. The objective behind

selection of this topic was to identify ways leaders can improve the quality of instruction by providing teachers with a detailed blueprint of educational strategies. Each segment played a unique role in developing an exhaustive framework that clarifies, explains, and describes the phenomenon with anticipation of abating obstacles that have marginalized their experiences such as lack of support (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). The following sections are constructed to provide a crystallized understanding of the phenomenon from champions and researchers who have contributed to a diverse collection literature (Gaskin-Butler et al., 2012; Minniear & Soliz, 2019). Specifically, I examined current and historical literature to provide a detailed outline of factors that have reported on the purpose of my study, examining the influences that replace the presence of fathers.

The Evolution of the Family Structure

Prior to exploring the current state of African American families, it was critical to unveil factors that have influenced their evolution, beginning with slavery. While the African American or Black experience does not begin with slavery as described, the 14th century West African empire of Mali was larger than Western Europe and reputed to be one of the richest and most powerful states in the world (Klein, 1978). I examined the suppression of rights for enslaved Africans (Hunter, 2017; Jackson, 2015; Lenhardt, 2015). Evidence supports the contribution of slavery to American society from an economic and commodity production perspective (Pierre, 2020); however, reaching a consensus in terms of the effect slavery had on the Black family varies (Gutman & Sims, 1978). At the conclusion of the Civil War in 1863, African Americans for the first time since their arrival experienced freedom, but harsh realities soon followed as a result of systematic oppression (Shuster, 2018). According to Du Bois (1908), the essential features of the Negro union during slavery

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were no legal marriage, no legal family, and no legal control over children. Slaves were not

entitled to the benefits of matrimony; thus, a direct consequence of slavery is the absence of

the marriage relation. With regard to the Black family, Du Bois writes,

> There was the absence of the father-that is, the lack of authority in the slave father to govern and protect his family. His wife could be made his master's concubine, his daughter could be outraged, his son whipped, or he himself sold away without his being able to protest or lift a preventing finger. Naturally, his authority in his own house was simply such as could rest upon brute force alone, and he easily sank to a position of a male guest in the house, without respect or responsibility... The slave mother could spend little or no time at home. She was either a field-hand or a house-servant, and her children had little care or attention. She was often the concubine of the master or his sons, or if unmolested in this quarter, was married to a husband who could not protect her, and from whom she could be at any time be parted by her master's command or by his death or debts. Such a family was not an organism at best; and, in its worst aspect, it was a fortuitous agglomeration of atoms. (p. 49)

Du Bois' understanding of the Negro American family pre and post-emancipation was used

as a reference for other 20th century scholars (Gutman, 1978); however, Frazier introduced

the institution of slavery and the impact it had on families from a perspective that has been

the subject of criticism and admiration (Semmes, 2021 & Hunter, 2006).

Frazier (1948) introduced the institution of slavery as a culprit that resulted in the

Black family being matriarch dominant. Through his lens, Frazier argued, the absence of the

masculine authority of Black males was displaced by the authority of the slave-master,

creating a self-sufficient African American woman. When emancipation began, mothers

depended on themselves to support their children as 15 to 25% of Black families were

without male heads (Frazier, 1948). To advance this ideology, Moynihan (1997) assembled a

comprehensive report under the Johnson administration to chronicle the fundamental

problems of Black families. Moynihan (1997) reported that at the core of the deterioration of

Black members of Negro society is the despair of the Negro family. This premise was further

expounded using a phrased Moynihan coined, "tangle of pathology," which charged the

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struggles of the Black community on a "Black sub-culture" (Aja et at., 2014; Krech III,

1982), or Black mothers who spearheaded their homes (Moynihan, 1997).

Reviewing the validity of Moynihan's conclusion was recorded in a seminal study

that examined the effects of race, social class, and family organization (Berger & Simon,

1974). Data were collected from a sample of 14–18 year old's in the Midwest. To identify

participants, a 45-minute questionnaire was distributed to more than 3,100 students. Berger

and Simon (1974) indicated that Moynihan's theory concerning the tangle of pathology and

the illegitimacy among single Black female families was not supported. In fact, there was

minimal differences in ways Black families treated their children compared to whites

regardless of socioeconomic status. Additional conclusions suggested even if Black children

could not enroll in college, the aspirations were to attend, and finally, behavior problems

regarding Black children cannot be causative related to single mothers only. In relation to my

research, pathological conditions such as poverty and violence generated within families and

transmitted to children may not be the sole responsibility of Black mothers as prescribed by

Moynihan. Contrarily, among the historical records concerning the conditions of Black

families includes the Kerner Report (1967). In response to the violence across urban

communities in the United States, President Johnson commissioned a committee to address

many defaulted policies plaguing Black Americans such as discrimination, segregation in

employment, education, and housing (The National Advisory Commission on Civil

Disorders, 1967). Black neighborhoods were segregated and poverty, crime, and drug

addiction converged on the young, crippling the family structure (The National Advisory

Commission on Civil Disorders, 1967). According to the report, "employment is a key

instigator of marginalized families as Black men are three times more likely than white men

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to be in low paying, unskilled jobs" (p. 23). The culture of poverty resulting from unemployment contributes to children growing up in financially handicapped families, squelching their pursuit of the American dream. Finally, Berger and Simon (1974) delivered an additional contradiction to the notion that often blames single Black mothers, suggesting the totality of parent's and environmental interactions are influential in shaping the behaviors of children.

Providing a tangible overview of the influences that have shaped Black families was essential to my study, particularly, as consequences of nonresident fathers have dominated the literature (Fagan et al., 2016; Jackson at al., 2012; Lee & Rispoli, 2018). Family outcomes such as poverty, adolescent delinquency, and violence have been associated with single Black mothers (Berryhill & Durtschi, 2016; Broussard et al., 2012) without including the causes that influence the historical and contemporary structure of Black households. Therefore, the aim of following section is to examine the economic inequities that have contributed to the disproportionate number of Black families living in poverty. Existing literature suggests homes without the presence of father's have a greater probability of experiencing financial and social hardships (Cancian & Haskins, 2014; Gradín 2012; Jocson & McLoyd, 2015); however, I inspected how social discrepancies such as the housing crisis and mass incarceration influenced Black families.

Economic Inequity

Following slavery, the Reconstruction Act of 1867 served as recipe for living in the south as Blacks began reaping the wrath of economic injustice in America. Under reconstruction, Blacks began sharecropping, or "renting" farmland, animals, tools, and houses through a landlord in order to meet their basic needs (Du Bois, 1910). African

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Americans at this moment were physically free; however, economic reliance perpetuated a continuous cycle of debt. In addition, this systemic scheme allowed the landowner to continue to profit off the land while waging a wider gap in the financial disproportion between Blacks and whites (Bolton, 2004; King et al., 2018). Ladenburg (2007) stated:

> Under slavery in 1860, almost all African-Americans worked either as farm laborers or as house servants. Thirty years later, in 1890, 21% were servants and 56% were farmers. By 1930, only one in ten remaining in the South owned the land they worked. Emancipation did mean freedom, but freedom for African-Americans often meant continuing to work the white man's land or to work in his house.

During the succeeding years, the way of life for African Americans became increasingly difficult as the rise of the Jim Crow or Black Code laws continued to muzzle their financial freedom (Logan, & Temin, 2020). By restricting access in public spaces, segregated classrooms affected the economic opportunities for the Black family structure (Hanks et el., 2018). Irons enlarges the effect of "Jim Crow Schools" by implying the obstacles facing Black students in the 1930's was financially driven (2004). He states, "In Jim Crow states that stretched from Delaware to Texas, local school boards spent almost three times as much on each white student as they did on Blacks" (p. 4). This funding disparity created fewer schools and produced fewer teachers for Black students (Perry et al., 2018). As a result, Lin and Harris (2009) stated Black and white children enter kindergarten with different levels of preparedness caused by disparities in household resources, parenting time, and other stressors, which influence a substantial racial gap before children enter school.

In contradiction to Moynihan's (1997) outlook where the limitations of Black households are commonly credited to single mothers, economic inequity stemming from systematic practices may be a perspective that has contributed to negative family outcomes.

Nevertheless, while the causes of poverty for the Black family can be debated, scholars agreed that the issue existed and set in motion key legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Bailey & Duquette, 2014). Declaring a war on poverty, President Johnson enacted policies that would attempt to mitigate the catastrophic plague that ravaged the landscape during that period (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Although economic equity did not exist for men and women of color, governmental assistance programs such as food stamps were an attempt to supplement their difficulties (Hoynes & Whitmore Schanzenbach, 2012; Meyer, & Wallace, 2009); however, the impact of poverty on Black families remains detrimental (Carlson, & Magnuson, 2011; Damaske et al., 2017).

Poverty in the United States has often been attributed to household demographics such as two parent-families and education level (Chaudry et al., 2016; Damaske et al., 2017). Comparing the poverty rate among adult women supports a facet of my study relating to the influences that replace the presence of fathers. Eichner and Gallagher Robbins (2015) reported that Black women 25% were among the highest demographic living in poverty. In fact, 45% of single Black mothers lived in poverty compared to 32% of white single mothers. This understanding aligned with my study's purpose and the financial gap that may exist when fathers are not present (Burton, et al., 2017; Lu, et al., 2020; Threlfall et al., 2013). Winship et al., (2018) supported this claim, suggesting the inheritance of Black poverty is associated with men.

Drawing on the conclusion from previous investigators inspired me to introduce economic inequity in this section of the literature review. As an outcome, poverty can be classified using household income data (Assari, 2018; Semega et al., 2019); however, the

acquisition of economic disparity may not be singularly attained for many families (Dettlaff & Boyd, 2020). I highlighted the experiences that contributed to the wealth disparity following slavery to better understand the lack of economic affluence for Black families in America. The succeeding section will broach housing practices that have restricted the mobility of Blacks living in the United States. Topics in this selection will be designated to better understand how housing covenants influenced wealth.

Segregated Housing

Another factor that systemically attenuated the Black family was triggered by the housing industry with the practice known as redlining. Redlining was the discriminatory practice that mortgage companies introduced in the 1930s to restrict the approval of home loans for African Americans in certain areas (McClure et al., 2019; Werner et al., 1976). McCammon (2017) wrote:

> As in many other cities, Black families suffered from racists practice such as redlining, which barred them from living in certain areas. One of the city's most famous developer, J.C. Nichols, was known for building subdivisions for several decades in the early 20th century that explicitly banned African Americans. (p. 8)

Racial zoning not only made it difficult for Black families to buy homes in white areas as surveyors color-coded neighborhoods according to their desirability (Goodman & Mayer, 2018; Hughes, 2019; Rappaport, 2010); but it contributed to the wealth gap between white and Black families (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2004). Oliver and Shapiro wrote, "locked out the greatest mass-based opportunity for wealth accumulation in American history, African Americans who desired and were able to afford home ownership found themselves...cut off" (p. 34). For a lot of African Americans in cities such as St. Louis, Chicago, and Atlanta, this restriction of home ownership led to residing in public housing units with deplorable living conditions (Eggleston & Munk 2019). Additionally, the lack of

homeownership not only financially hampered the existing African American family, but also reduced their future descendants through the transferal of property. Jones (2017) reinforced this understanding by writing:

> Wealth allows families to transfer income earned in the past to meet spending demands in the future, such as by building up savings to finance a child's college education. Wealth also provides a buffer against economic security against periods of unemployment. (p. 1).

From this perspective, the gap in wealth is much larger than the disparities between generated incomes, as Gould (2017) stated, "Housing discrimination and housing segregation play an important role in the ability of Black households to gain wealth" (p. 2). As a result of covenant restrictions and redlining, Black families were financially limited in terms of where they could live and how much home they could afford, leading to another federal mandate, the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968. Under this policy, equity principles were established to end discrimination against mortgage lending; however, urban dwellings that were once occupied by white Americans were now being populated by resourced maligned Blacks (Hardy et al., 2018).

Known as "white flight," the 1960's saw a mass migration of Black neighbors moving in white communities, resulting in their departure to the suburbs (Frey, 1979; Galster, 1990). The impact white flight had on the community was observed through the withdrawal of resources, causing property values to deteriorate (Blatto, 2018). Although declining housing values may make housing more affordable, social problems such as violence and drug abuse that may accompany urban decay often outweigh access to homes (Harshbarger, & Perry, 2019; Hernandez, 2014; Manduca & Sampson, 2019). Declining home values reduce the tax-base and financial resources that benefit and support the community (George et al., 2019; Herbert et al., 2013). Leachman, Masterson, and Figueroa,

(2017) maintained property tax is collected and allocated to supply public service budgets such as school districts, police departments, and streets. As property tax funds increase due to the home values, schools benefit (Bowling et al., 2019; Leachman et al., 2017). Conversely, when property values decrease, school budgets are affected, limiting the resources for instruction (Leachman & Mai, 2014).

Two other factors that play an impactful role on Black families, and to a larger degree, wealth produced from property are gentrification and eminent domain (Izenberg, et al., 2018; Richardson et al., 2020). Ruth Glass (1964) defined gentrification as the displacement of poorer residents followed by the infiltration of affluent and wealthier businesses and residents (Freeman, 2016). Gentrification played an important role on the Black family structure as white residents migrated into urban cities (Hwang, & Sampson, 2014; Maciag, 2015; Sutton, 2018). Communities and neighborhoods that were once affordable for African Americans were now unobtainable, causing families to vacate (Pineda, 2017). Pineda (2017) conducted a study of two cities in Harlem, New York and London, England for the purpose of measuring the effect of gentrification on lower-income families as middle-class residents moved in. Glass (1964) posited the primary effect of gentrification rested in the quality of education for students and even after middle class families moved in and strengthened the school system, low-income families were left with no option but to attend poor-performing schools.

Similarly, families experienced the effect of eminent domain as governmental agencies identified land suitable for roads, schools, and other businesses. Eminent domain is the power of the government to take private property such as homes for the purpose of public use (Gold & Sagalyn, 2010). This practice is responsible for uprooting families and small

"mom and pop" businesses (Saginor & McDonald, 2009) and replacing them with franchise properties. Furthermore, homes that were owned by Black families were compensated at an alarming or below market value rate (Early et al., 2018). In other words, if a family wanted to bequeath owned property as an inheritance to their children, they could not. Procuring wealth through homeownership financially supports future generations and models economic principles (Kadi et al, 2020).

Choi et al. (2018) examined intergenerational homeownership to determine the impact of parents' wealth on home buying for their children in 1999 to 2015. Parental homeownership can assist young children in gaining access to building future wealth while positively influencing healthy outcomes Choi et al. (2018). Data were collected using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), linking parent's and young adult's homeownership. Implications reported that not only are Black parents (31%) less likely to be homeowners compared to white parents (71%), but Black families do not remain homeowners. Finally, research conclusively suggested young adults are more likely to own a home if their parents are homeowners, and the intergenerational transfer of homes generates wealth (p. 16).

In summary, housing practices were investigated in this section to emphasize its impact on Black families. Redlining and housing covenants played an influential role in the acquisition of wealth for African Americans parents and their children (Bowly, 2012; Neal & Walsh, 2020). Additionally, homeownership can play instrumental role in stabilizing the community by generating a tax base for schools and other city services (Hardy et al., 2018). Evidence shows housing practices are not the only influences that limited the advancement of Black families. In the following section, literature will be included to support the reader's

understanding of the damage caused by drugs on the African American community. The war on drugs contributed to the separation of Black fathers and sons from their community and will be examined in detail.

War On Drugs

Economic inequity and segregated housing were not the only influences that affected the evolution of the Black family as the number of drug abuser sprouted (Cooper, 2015). At the conclusion of the great depression, America was faced with new challenges as the drug epidemic infiltrated communities and ravished the cultural landscape (McWhorter, 2011). In an effort to curtail the pandemic, President Richard Nixon earmarked millions of federal funds and established the Drug Enforcement Agency in 1973 (Coyne & Hall, 2017). Under this framework, Nixon asserted drug abuse was public enemy number one, and users should be punished (Vulliamy, 2011). Cited by Sherman (2016), former domestic policy chief John Ehrlichman expressed,

> The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that had two enemies: the antiwar left and Black people...We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or Black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and Blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did. (p. 1)

Conversely, not everyone shared the sentiment of Ehrlichman as Lopez (2016) posited, "Nixon's drug policies did not focus on the kind of criminalization that Ehrlichman described. Instead, Nixon's drug war was largely a public health crusade" (p. 2). Decoding the intention of the Nixon's policy may be ambiguous, however, many scholars concurred that public perception surrounding illicit drug abuse was exacerbated in conjunction to the policy's establishment (Johnson et al., 1996).

For example, inspecting the consequences of the media's coverage of white prescription opioid users compared to Black and brown heroin users from 2001 to 2011 was accomplished by Netherland and Hansen (2016). To support the contrasting perception and rhetoric relating to drug users, an analysis of 100 contemporary articles was reviewed. Netherland and Hansen stated:

> Arising in tandem with, rather than in tension with, the official "War on Drug" and its mass incarceration of blacks and Latinos, white opioid images have helped to carve out a separate space for white opioid use in the popular American imagination, one that leads to racially stratified therapeutic intervention and works to further insulate white communities from black and brown drug threats, leaving intact law enforcement crackdowns on black and brown residents in the name of public safety. (p. 666)

Race was introduced as a method of distinguishing users according to urban and suburban geography. During the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980's–1990's, policies demonized Black crack users, while white cocaine abusers were relatively unscathed. An additional factor that contributed to the perception of drug users emerged from the belief that opioid painkillers involved the white social class and abusers were portrayed as innocent victims, deserving of empathy (p. 669). Findings from this study reported drug use in the Black community received minimal news coverage compared to prescription users from 2001–2011 (p. 671). In fact, the media's omission pertaining to drug sales, crime, and violence in the Black community was marginal compared to the reported dangers of drug use in suburban white communities.

In general, the Netherland and Hansen's (2016) findings were not consistent with the media's representation of urban Black communities during the war on drugs era. For example, Ronald Reagan extended his presidential reach to discourage recreational drug use during the 1980's. Under the campaign "Just Say No," media outlets were used to spread fear

and criminalization of African American users throughout many communities, opposed to providing access to treatment (Bagley, 2018). Additionally, stricter consequences for drug offenses such as mandatory minimum sentences were dispensed for illicit drug use, leading to the mass incarceration of Blacks (Bowen & Redmond, 2016).

Including the war on drugs in my literature review provides a historical overview of policies that contributed to the disruption of Black families. Additionally, the role media played in reporting and representing the images of Black users aligned with my subsequent topic, mass incarceration. Removing African American men and fathers from homes creates a harmful effect on children and will be explained in detail (Western, & Pettit, 2010).

Mass Incarceration

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1in 3 Black men can expect to go prison while 1 in 9 are fathers (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010; Peterson et al., 2015; Tucker, 2016). Additional trends report, from 2008 to 2018, the imprisonment rate for Black residents was lower than any time since 1990 (Zeng, 2020); however, the incarceration rate for African American male population was 5.8 times that of white males (Carson, 2020). Particularly, at the end of 2017, Black males (2,336 per 100,000) represented almost six times the jailed population compared to white male (397 per 100,000) residents (Bronson, & Carson, 2019). Drug policies assisted in the arrest of African American men and women at disturbing rates compared to any other ethnic group in the United States between 1985-1997 (Fornili-Smith, 2018). Williams (2016) added the war on drugs was essentially a war on people and the destruction caused by imprisoned African American males created financial and developmental hardships on the family unit. Essentially, removing Black men from homes

creates an absence that impacts behavior and academic develop for children (Coates, 2015; Martin, 2017; Nepomnyaschy et al., 2021).

Geller et al. (2012) used data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study to investigate the relationship between incarcerated fathers and the development of urban children. In total, 2,043 fathers reported being incarcerated prior to their child's fifth birthday (Geller et al. 2012). Using the Child Behavior Checklist, behavioral problems were measured for children at 5-years-old. Researchers anticipated children of incarcerated fathers would score higher in displaying aggressive behaviors (Geller et al. 2012). Likewise, the relationship between fathers and their families was projected to influence developmental outcomes for children. Findings determined children with incarcerated parents produced the highest level of aggression compared to their counterparts (p. 11). Other outcomes suggest children with incarcerated fathers achieved lower in attention ability than their peers. The purpose of my study, examining the influences that replace the presence of fathers, aligned with conclusions presented by Geller et al. as incarcerated Black fathers create a social and developmental void (Gifford, 2019; Julion et al., 2012; Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2017).

Additionally, the intersection between the prison system and Black men has left a distasteful imprint within the community by deepening the economic disadvantages that contribute to poverty (Enns et al., 2019; Hinton et al., 2018). Childhood outcomes such as living in poverty can be influenced by the absence of incarcerated fathers (DeFina & Hannon, 2013; Morsy & Rothstein 2016; Roberts, 2004). Equally, men who were arrested are less likely to experience upward economic mobility and are at the bottom of the earning distribution (Western & Pettit, 2010a).

In conclusion, the evolution of the Black family structure was crafted to address systemic factors that influence children with nonresident fathers. Economic inequalities, segregated housing, the war on drugs, and mass incarceration have played a unique role in shaping experiences relating to Black families. In the following section, I will present an overview of the developmental impact of fathers. My aim was to examine the literature and formulate a foundation of knowledge as it associated with my research participants.

Developmental Effect of Nonresident Fathers

Longstanding research has acknowledged fathers as an important influence on their children in multiple phases of society (Carlson et al., 2016; Gray & Anderson, 2015). Over time, there have been shifts in the literature changing from depicting specific fathers as "deadbeat dads" and what they do not do for their families, to highlighting aspects of involvement and developmental influence (Yogman et al. 2016). Altering the perception of fathers has led to an investment in fatherhood initiatives that focus on strengthening father's parenting skillset (Tollestrup, 2018) along with exploring techniques that improve the father-child relationship (Cabrera et al., 2014). Exploring relationships provides an opportunity to examine the connection between fathers and their children. For example, fathers are often associated with engaging in "rough-and-tumble" play with their children, especially with their sons; helping them to not only attach to their fathers, but to learn self-control by regulating aggression (Panksepp et al., 2003). This type of play is a normal activity during preschool and early childhood. In addition to play, fathers provide children with a sense of security by establishing trust throughout development (Brown et al., 2012; Opondo et al., 2016). The effect of having a father establish a base of comfort for children is essential during development (Newland & Coyl, 2009).

Unfortunately, fathers who are not present as children grow and develop have an adverse impact on their children (Cabrera et al., 2018; Simmons et al., 2018). This understanding supported the purpose of my study, examining the influences that replace the presence of nonresident fathers; thus, the following components of child development will be investigated: (a) identity, (b) social, (3) emotional, and (d) academic. Exploring literature in each section will provide a better understanding of how children develop when fathers are not present in the home.

Identity Development

The ability to shape the identity of children is a process that involves parenting and environmental influences. According to many experts, babies are dependent on the physical and emotional relationship that caregivers provide during their developmental stages (McLanahan et al., 2013; Trivette et al., 2010; Waller & Swisher, 2006). Vygotsky (1973) who believed children value input from others along with their environment strengthens this understanding (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev & Miller, 2003). Described as the zone of proximal development, children are given opportunities to demonstrate specific skills under adult guidance (Goldstein & Urevick-Ackelsberg, 2008). For example, early childhood tasks such as tying shoes, brushing teeth, or riding a bike are skills that may be initially introduced by parents. Following the introduction, children are given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of basic tasks in each skill before moving on to the more complex (Landry & Smith, 2010). Establishing boundaries during each phase allows parents to make adjustments that guide children towards mastery.

In addition to shaping identity within the physical environment, personality, described as the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that distinguish one individual from another, is

impacted by caregivers who interact with children (Bhoite & Shinde, 2019). Personality development is an ongoing system of organized patterns of behavior that have been attributed to heredity and environment during the child-development stage (Hopwood et al., 2011). During this phase, how parents respond to children in certain situations help shape their personality. These parent-child interactions are essential to understanding the phenomenon of my study, examining the experiences of students with nonresident fathers. In other words, determining how personality and identity are developed and supported for children without the presence of fathers is my chief objective. Linking the father's attachment to children's identity development, Ball et al. (2007) advanced this knowledge by underpinning, resiliency, self-acceptance/self-esteem, and higher academic functioning as essential pillars that are associated with involved fathers.

Additional literature concentrating on African American fatherhood has added credible information to better understand the influence Black fathers have on their children's development (Aratani et al., 2011; Boller et al., 2006; Radl et al., 2017). In a study that investigated the living arrangement and involvement of Black fathers, Livingston and Parker (2011) reported that approximate 62% of Black co-resident fathers read to their young children several times a week, while 49% implied they talked to their child compared to 22% of Hispanics and 30% of whites fathers. Ransaw (2014) added that 77% of married Black fathers played with their children and 68% provided discipline.

In a qualitative research investigation that measured the perceived role of married African American fathers, examining the lived experiences was key. Murray and Hwang (2015) outlined two fundamental questions that provided direction for data collection: (a) What does it mean to be a good or responsible father, and (b) What is the role of fathers in

families? Purposeful, criterion, and snowball sampling was used to generate eight married African American male participants with an average age of 36 years old. In total, the average number of years married was 6 years, and all participants were married to Black women. The researchers used emails and telephone communication, semi-structured interviews, and field notes to collect data for this phenomenological study. This process permitted participants to provide a greater understanding of their experiences and perceptions. Data for this study were analyzed through triangulation and manual coding data with the software program, NVivo10.

Two themes emerged from the data and were reported in the findings (Murray & Hwang, 2015). Good fathers provide for their children, and they are physically and emotionally present (Murray & Hwang, 2015). Each participant identified financial responsibility and the significance of providing for their family. Describing their role as fathers, seven themes materialized from the participants' responses including: (a) provider, (b) role model/sex-role model, (c) disciplinarian, (d) leader, (e) supporter, (f) teacher/spiritual teacher, and (g) guide. These implications underscore the effect Black resident fathers play in supporting character development; however, emerging literature has scrutinized the contributions nonresident fathers have on the well-being of their children (Coates & Phares, 2019; Jones & Mosher, 2013; King & Sobolewski, 2006).

Previous data reported single mothers represent 50% of all Black households (Hamilton et al., 2012); therefore, examining child development outcomes will be vital to my study. The relationship between nonresident fathers and their impact on children has generated a variety of results over time. According to East et al. (2007), adolescents who experience father absence are more susceptible to having lower self-esteem and engage in sexual activities at an earlier age. In addition, the absence of fathers can reduce the time

single mothers have to discipline and supervise academic activities for children (p. 289),

creating a void that effects development. East et al. stated:

> Clearly, father absence has an impact on the health and well-being of children and
> may have an impact that reaches much further than adolescence. Father absence
> appears to contribute significantly to life adversity factors, including maladaptive
> behavior, poor academic achievement, low self-identity and risk behavior, including
> early sexual relations and drug use. (p. 292)

Extending this understanding, Coates and Phares (2019) added that nonresident father's

involvement has direct impact on single mother's mental health and feelings of stress

associated with parenting. In other words, indirect parenting practices and influences can

impact child outcomes (p. 1689). Bronfenbrenner's (1994) perspective to child development

underpinned this idea by implying learning occurs within the immediate environment and

with interactions from adults. Seemingly, the context and the environment that surrounds

children is essential to their development.

To conclude this section, fathers play an important role in shaping identify

development in their children (Lamb et al., 1985). Examining a diverse collection of

literature contributed to better understanding how identify is shaped for children with

nonresident fathers and the adverse behaviors associated to their mental health.

Subsequently, the following theme is incorporated in my literature review to identify how

children develop emotionally. Emotional development was equally important for my study as

children's emotions are often influenced by their environment (Leerkes & Bailes, 2019).

Emotional Development

Existing research on children's emotional development has contributed to better

understanding the influences that impact growth (Jagers et al., 2018). Emotional development

involves understanding what feelings and emotions are and how they occur in each

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individual. In early stages of adolescent development, emotions help children regulate meaning from the world around them with the support of caregivers (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016). Companionship patterns report children regulate their affect, thought, and actions through social interactions with the support of individuals who promote development (Rodgers et al. 2018). Therefore, the role family members play in creating a structure for adolescents to regulate emotions remains a crucial dimension in development (Elliot et al., 2016; Wikle et al., 2019). When applying this principle to my study, I sought to identify the influences that support emotional development for students with nonresident fathers by merging the literature that describes how emotions are formed and stabilized, with interview surveys that assess how emotions were formed in each participant.

The role resident fathers play in supporting their children's emotional development can be described as positively connected with father-child interactions. Cabrera et al. (2007) reported, "In terms of parent engagement, maternal supportiveness was unrelated to children's outcome at all ages, however, father supportiveness, was positively associated with children's emotional regulation at 2 years" (p. 2). Furthermore, children who grow up with fathers in the home are less like to exhibit behavior disorders, while enhancing self-esteem (Martinez et al., 2013). Allen and Daly (2007) supported this understanding and recommend fathers are essential to creating a tolerance for stress and frustration in children. Household data advances knowledge on emotional development by suggesting children who live in homes characterized by low levels of conflict fare better on socioemotional indicators than any other household (Rolle et al., 2019; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2004).

Wikle and Hoagland (2020) performed an empirical study that investigated the family structure and the relationship interactions have on emotional development. Exploring the

construction of different households and the parent-child interactions are essential as family relationships influence development. The purpose of this study was to disaggregate nuclear, step, and single families to understand how adolescents responded to family members (i.e., parents, siblings, nonresident parents, and extended family) during social interactions. Participants in this qualitative analysis were initially sampled from a group of 1,824 adolescents between ages 15–18 (Wikle and Hoagland, 2020). Each candidate responded to survey questions that reported their happiness, sadness, and stress, producing a final sample of 1,735. Results indicated 84% of children in nuclear family homes spent time with a parent, while 72% of children in stepparent homes spent time interacting with adults (Wikle and Hoagland, 2020). For adolescents in single parent homes, 69% reported interacting daily with their resident parent, 4% of children in single parent homes spent time with their nonresident parent (Wikle and Hoagland, 2020).

Findings from this research aligned with the aim of my study by focusing on how emotional development is shaped for students who do not reside in the same home as the fathers. Specifically, better understanding how mothers and fathers provide a balance in developing the ability to regulate feelings and emotions for preschool aged children (Denham et al., 2003; Morrison et al., 2019). Failure to regulate emotions can cause young preschoolers to experience outbursts, tantrums, and other displays of defiant behaviors (Graziano et al., 2007). Also, the inability to control one's emotions can continue throughout the adolescent stages and lead to adverse behaviors (Kotila & Dush, 2013). As a remedy, caregivers' behavior is thought to contribute substantially in the area of development of self-regulation and emotional control as children rely parents to harness certain behaviors during infancy (Perry et al., 2018). According to Tominey et al. (2015):

Adults who adjust their caregiving style to meet the temperament and personality of their infant develop a strong goodness of fit, sending a message to children that they can be trusted and relied on. By two to three years, children develop expectations for the important people in their lives. If children learn that the adults in their lives will consistently respond with warmth and support, they are more likely to seek comfort from them and to look to them as role models of behavior. The shift of emotion regulation from a primary external process to a primary internal process relies on the foundation laid by the early attachment relationship. (p. 24)

Understanding how behaviors are supported and developed in children by adults can foster healthy relationships throughout development (Thomas et al., 2017). For example, spending time with children and engaging in face-to-face activities (i.e., talking, cuddling, and playing) strengthen the parent-child relationship. Also, spending time with children provide parents with opportunities to interpret the emotional expressions of their children by paying attention to facial cues and gestures (Tominey et al., 2015). Consequently, the removal of parents, particularly fathers can impact children's ability to develop skills that support their ability to process their emotional behaviors.

Racial gaps in socio-emotional development of early childhood students provide information comparing educational outcomes for Black children. According to Aratani et al. (2011), not only are African American children two-to-three times more likely to be suspended from school, but boys perform lower in the area of socio-emotional development. Aratani et al. stated, "African-American boys have significantly lower scores on socio-emotional development starting from 9 months to pre-school age and this gap remains significant even after controlling for SES and demographic characteristics (p. 7)." Compared to white children, the gaps in cognitive development emerge at 24 months for African American boys and continue to remain up to preschool.

Collectively, evidence reviewed in this section highlighted methods that promote emotional development. Cognitive stimulation for children plays and important role in

character development (Dyer et al., 2018). As a result, investigating influences that support emotional growth for children with nonresidential father is critical. Analyzing literature to improve my understanding of how children develop academically will be reviewed in the following section as kindergarten readiness and elementary achievement scores are often used to project student's postsecondary outcomes (Mann et al., 2016). Determining how environmental influences impact learning was paramount to address my research questions.

Academic Development

The acquisition of academic knowledge can be attributed to a variety of factors that impact children. For this section of my dissertation, exploring the literature to measure the influence resident and nonresident fathers have on academic progress was necessary as child rearing plays an essential role in children's growth and skill development throughout school. Multiple studies have pinpointed and acknowledged the role fathers play in supporting the academic development of Black children prior to entering the classroom (Coates, & Phares, 2014; Grantham, & Henfield, 2011). For example, parental involvement has not only been linked to children's academic performance but parent's education level can be used predictor educational success (Jaiswal, 2018). Measuring the influence of fathers and the academic achievement of urban children was recorded in a meta-analysis study. Drawing on the concept of involved fathers, implications from a variety of studies was reviewed to determine if father participation was associated with stronger academic and behavior outcomes (Jeynes, 2015). Sampling methods produced 66 studies with a minimal size of 1,611 participants. Overall, 63 out of the 66 studies indicated that father's overall involvement had a significant influence on achievement.

In addition, Jeynes (2015) maintained that fathers had a greater impact on elementary age children as development is more impressionable. When measuring the influence of parent's expectations on education for Black families, it was concluded that the correlation between parental expectations and reading was positively related to the time parents spent modeling and reading at an early age (Davis-Kean, 2005). This association was documented during the preschool stage where achievement among involved resident and nonresident fathers was measured to determine that children who lived with their father were more prepared for school (Whitney et al., 2017a). Jones and Mosher (2013) extended this understanding and report that among fathers who lived with their children, 30% helped their children with homework compared to 6.0% of fathers who did not reside in the same home as their children. Having a nonresident father negatively impacts children's academic achievement as students scored on average lower in math and reading (Radl et al., 2017; Somers et al., 2011).

The cognitive void created by nonresident fathers can gradually affect academic development as children advance throughout their educational experience (Posey-Maddox, 2017; Ward, 2008). According to Whitney et al. (2017b), students living with nonresident fathers experienced greater school failure as it relates to their cumulative GPA and academic performance, adding, "Fathers matter in the lives of adolescents. Within families, fathers add unique contributions depending upon their involvement behaviors, role types, and residency, to adolescents' school performance" (p. 116). When fathers are not present to support the academic needs of their children, that responsibility often transitions to mothers, grandparents, or guardians. In many cases, African American grandparents who assume the responsibility of raising children are older caregivers (Samuel et al., 2017) who require

information to help mitigate poor academic performance along with resources that address behavior related needs (Bertera, & Edmonds Crewe, 2013). Typically, grandparents assume this role in the absence of children's biological parents.

Student achievement and the economic status associated with parents has been used as an indicator that associates the educational success of children (Dubow et al., 2010). When examining the education status of students in the Kansas City region, it was reported that Black students in this urban area were not only two to three times more likely than white children to live in poverty, but adults who obtained a bachelor's degree was 20% Black compared to 42% of white residents (Boschma & Brownstein, 2016). The correlation between poverty and student achievement can have an impact on standardized assessments such as the American College Testing (ACT). The state average ACT score for Missouri was 21.6, with 21% representing families in poverty; compared to an average ACT score of 16.2 and a poverty rating of 38% for families represented in the urban area. This correspondence was significant to my study as the educational success of Black children who live in a home with limited financial resources are impacted by nonresident fathers. However, according to Astone et al., (2016), a difference in parenting practices among men involves residence, not income as nonresident fathers are less likely to read to their children and help with homework.

Evidence reviewed in this section supported my hypothesis and assumption that fathers play a meaningful role in supporting their children's academic development. More importantly, students residing in homes with nonresident fathers may encounter academic challenges as a result of environmental conditions (Cabrera et al., 2000). Conversely, fatherlessness inside the home does not unconsciously ensure children will have a negative

school experience. I sought to identify the influences that support academic achievement for this population. Discerning the influences that support children's social development will be reviewed in the succeeding section. Ultimately, the ensuing section will include an investigation of how children progress socially, along with personality development.

Social Development

Developing social competence enhances the ability to succeed across multiple settings including the school, community, and home (Domitrovich et al., 2017). Social skills involve regulating one's thoughts, feelings, and actions when engaging in relationships with peers or adults (Knox et al., 2011). Development for children can be supported by parents who decrease stress and other problematic behaviors inside the home (Yoon et al., 2018). McBride et al. (2002) suggested that fathers are essential stakeholders in promoting positive behavior in their children. Complementary findings described the relationship between fathers and their daughters as, "less sociable female children consistently had less involved fathers" (p. 23). Positive time fathers spend with children promotes social character in children in manner that compliments mothers. Conversely, the simple presence of fathers does not always benefit social development in children as antisocial and violent behaviors displayed by fathers can have a negative impact (McGinnis et al., 2018). Therefore, how children function inside the home reflects the interpersonal interactions that exists between parents and the environment. Fathers who are dedicated to promoting social stability for children can be described as emotionally warmth or the process of making children feel safe and secure (Iruka et al., 2015). Exploring this phenomenon was essential to my study as I identified the influences that support social growth for students with nonresident fathers, along with understanding ways that ensure children are secure.

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An additional factor that influences social development in students is centered on the stress caused from violence in the urban community. The leading cause of death for Black youth between the ages 15–24 (Bryant, 2013; Cooper, & Smith, 2011) are guns (Harrell, 2007). Despite not being the target of violence, children exposed to domestic violence have a greater probability of experiencing psychosocial behavior problems (Levine et al., 2019). Exposure to violence can trigger aggressive behaviors (Wamser-Nanney et al., 2019) and cause anger, delinquency, and lead to violent crimes that mimic the behaviors that are present in the environment (Violence Policy Center, 2017). In addition, levels of post-traumatic stress and the impact it has on Black students has been recorded by investigators who aligned violence with academic achievement (Morsy, & Rothstein, 2019; Thompson, & Massat, 2005). According to Delaney-Black et at. (2002), violence contributes to deficits in reading and was related to a lower IQ (2002). Similarly, Torrats-Espinosa (2008) extended the impact of violent crimes on student achievement and reported that a decline in violent crimes was positively associated with an increase in student achievement in the area of mathematics and reading. Creating a safer neighborhood free from violent crimes is paramount as evidence suggests children living communities plagued by violence are academically disadvantaged and have lower attendance (Schwartz et al., 2022); however, children who do not have means to leave may benefit from social support services (Gutowski et al., 2017).

Understanding how children cope with stress caused by violence in their communities is an important aim for my study. Examining the process of trauma sensitivity aligned with the problem of my study, students living in homes with nonresident fathers as Bartlett et al. (2017) stated, "All children benefit from stable, safe, and nurturing relationships and environments. However, these relationships and environments are particularly important for

young children who experience trauma" (p.7). The positive presence of fathers can stabilize and help children cope with past traumatic experiences which call for support (Parson et al., 2018). However, when fathers are not present, determining what steadying influence increases children's ability to cope with the stress is essential.

In this section, I examined a wide-range of literature to provide a holistic overview of the impact nonresident fathers have on the identity, emotional, academic, and social development of their children. The interaction between fathers and their children is reported to have an influence on children's overall growth and development (Allgood et al., 2012; Cabrera et al., 2008; Mandara et al., 2005). Advancing my understanding among fathers and their children does not diminish the role Black mothers play in providing structure and support for children, nor can the positive impact of single mothers be overlooked. However, my research focuses on providing Black families with supports that maximize potential success in place of fathers who do not reside in the home with their children. The following section in this literature review will focus on the school experience for students with nonresident fathers. Investigating these experiences is necessary in determining the influence fathers have on prekindergarten to 12th grade students in urban school settings.

School Experience

Examining the lived school experience of students was accomplished by uncovering meaning within the literature to better understand the factors that affect learning. For individual students, there can be multiple influences that promote a successful experience such as the school climate (Atiles et al., 2017) or the relationships between teachers and students (Gutierrez, & Buckley, 2019). Thus, previous studies have contributed to better understanding these experiences and this framework will be used a guide for my research

(see Gewertz et al., 2020). Specifically, my exploration concentrated on the K-12 school experience of Black children, residing in the urban core. Students spend a significant amount of time at school; therefore, I also investigated studies that include an inside view of their thoughts, feelings, trials and triumphs to determine if participants in my study share similar experiences.

What is known about how Black children learn has been documented from varying perspectives that inform stakeholders of the educational outcomes of students (Anderson, 2015). For example, the label school to prison pipeline has been applied to project the outlook of elementary school age Black boys based off suspension information and test scores (Wilson, 2015). Despite its popularity, the term has proven to cause more harm for students of color such as defiance or loss of self-esteem (Raufu, 2017) while contributing to negative stereotypes that affect how white teachers view Black students (Battle, 2017). Another issue that has been presented concerning Black children's educational success attribute students' struggles with social conditions such as poverty and household demographic (Rothstein, 2014) while neglecting the potential implicit and explicit bias that may exist in educators. Mitigating biases and other barriers that deter instruction can lead to a successful school experience that embodies the vision of everyone involved in the learning process.

To advance my understanding of the phenomenon, Black children living in homes without the presence of their fathers and their school experience, I evaluated four components within the literature: (a) school culture (b) social relationships (c) student achievement (d) student perception. The purpose of this section was to examine each theme comprehensively to report on the experiences of children in their school setting and to

determine if students with nonresident fathers share a different school experience. Including

the school experience as part of my research contextualizes immediate and long-term

elements that influence learning throughout student's K-12 experience; particularly as the

time spent in school is responsible for contributing to postsecondary success. Poverty and

SES status are often used to associate with a student's educational outcome; thus, exploring

these influences may identify successful and ineffective practices that impact Black students.

School Culture

Establishing a healthy school culture is instrumental in promoting successful

achievement for students irrespective of their setting (Dinsdale, 2017; Hierck & Peterson,

2017; Madden, 2017). Described as the shared values, behaviors, and relationships among

individuals in the school, culture encompasses the written and unwritten expectations that

influence teaching and learning (Kane et al., 2016). In this study, I included a range of

influences that impacted school culture, beginning with school climate. Gauging the climate

of the school is an active process that involves assessing the collective attitudes and beliefs of

students, school personnel, and parents on a consistent basis (National School Climate

Council 2007). According to the National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning

Environments (2019), school climate can be described as a tenet that contributes to the

school culture:

> School climate reflects how members of the school community experience the school,
> including interpersonal relationships, teacher and other staff practices and organized
> arrangements. School climate includes factors that serve as conditions for learning
> and that support physical and emotional safety, connection and support, and
> engagement. (p. 2)

The benefits of creating a positive school climate includes increased student achievement and

fewer discipline problems (Payne, 2018; Smith et al., 2014). Conversely, a negative school

climate can also decrease student achievement, learning, and morale (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Perkins, 2005).

Many urban schools are characterized by poor academic performance, violence, and subpar resources such as textbooks and technology (McKinney et al., 2004; Schaffer, White, & Brown, 2018). Hudley (2013) added, "the education that poor, urban students in public schools receive is demonstrably insufficient to make them competitive with their more advantaged, middle-and-upper income peers" (p. 1). Receiving academic instruction in a less affluent school does not guarantee unfavorable outcomes for individual students in urban school; however, it may assert negative perceptions that potentially impact learning (Ahmed et al., 2018; Johnson, 2016). For example, two themes often applied to describe school culture are student achievement and discipline referrals (Gregory et al., 2010; Ma, & Williams, 2004; Rutledge et al., 2012). Research using datasets that control for discipline referrals reported that Black students are suspended or expelled more than any other student demographic (Nishioka, Shigeoka, & Lolich, 2017; Riddle, & Sinclair, 2019; Rudd, 2014). Nationally, despite comprising of approximately 15% of all students K-12, Black boys and girls received disproportionately 39% of all suspensions (Losen, & Martinez, 2020; Smith, & Harper, 2015). Examining previous disaggregated data highlighted infractions that have influenced suspensions. Overwhelmingly, defiant behavior along with inappropriate language were two infractions that prompted disciplinary action for Black students (McIntosh et al., 2017; Osher et al., 2015). School discipline is an integral part of the culture that reflects the actions of students, teachers, and building leaders. Subjective referrals such as defiance of authority can be considered an issue involving interpretation and perception than disrespect (Eden, 2019; Girvan et al., 2017).

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For instance, Black girls have been mislabeled as angry, aggressive, or promiscuous, leading to being overly punished for their behaviors (National Women's Law Center, 2017; Rosenthal, & Lobel, 2016). These stereotypes have inappropriately escalated how adults respond to the behavior of Black girls (Epstein et al., 2017). Woods (2016) wrote:

> As children or adults, Black girls are treated as if they are supposed to "know better," or at least "act like" they know. The assignment of more adultlike characteristics to the expression of young Black girls is a form of age compression. Along this truncated age continuum, Black girls are likened more to adults than children and are treated as if they are willfully engaging in behaviors typically expected of Black women – sexual involvement, parenting, or primary caregiving...This compression is both a reflection of deeply entrenched biases that have stripped Black girls of their childhood freedoms. (p. 13)

Accelerating the perception of Black children's youth can enable school officials to render harsher punishment for similar behaviors as white students (Annamma et al., 2016; Ferguson, 2020; Wun, 2014). Additionally, hearing what you cannot do, or that your behavior is not appropriate for school can affect the esteem of young and old students (Bratter et al., 2016). For this reason, parents and guardians can disassemble negative stereotypes by reinforcing affirmations. Regularly expressed positive affirmations can offset the misperceptions that society places on Black children (Goodwill, 2021; Successful Black Parenting, 2018; Williams et al., 2017). Positive affirmations relate to the purpose of my study, examining the influences that replace the presence of fathers to determine who or what affirms the innocence, beauty, and brilliance in Black girls. Likewise, recognizing who advocates for Black boys when their behaviors are deemed defiant or inappropriate was also a focal point of my study. In both cases, adults' inaccurate perceptions of Black students can be harmful and detrimental to the school culture (Essien & Wood, 2020; Kunjufu, 2000).

The previous section illustrated the health of the school serves as a trajectory for social growth and achievement as many experiences of students are influenced by human

relationships (Garver, & Noguera, 2012). According to studies involving school culture, the correlation between environmental behaviors and student outcomes are essential (Fluke et al., 2015; Noltemeyer, & Ward, 2015); therefore, the quality of the physical school building along with student's attitude, behaviors, disciplinary actions, and violence all impact the overall climate (Darling-Hammond, & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). In urban schools where data were collected for my study, threats to property and persons may contribute to a negative school climate that can impact learning (see Christensen, 2007; Lacoe, 2016). The subsequent section will isolate influences that have impacted and support academic achievement for Black students.

Academic Achievement

Historically, the educational journey for Black scholars in America has produced exceptional teachers, engineers, doctors, and entrepreneurs despite obstacles that have obstructed learning. From anti-literacy laws such as the 1740 Negro Act in South Carolina that prohibited Blacks from legally reading to school segregation, the success of African Americans through education could be described as challenging, and a test of resolve (Robson et al., 2019; Rothstein, 2013). As a result, many African Americans "pre and post" Civil War recognized the indispensable power of literacy (Downs, & Masur, 2017). Washington (1901) wrote:

> From the time that I can remember having any thoughts about anything, I recall that I had an intense longing to learn to read. I determined, when quite a small child that, if I accomplished nothing else in life, I would in some way get enough education to enable me to read common books and newspapers... At that time there was not a single member of my race anywhere near us who could read (p. 3).

In pursuit of educational equality, the power of literacy can cultivate skills and abilities that strengthen self-sufficiency (Lacour, & Tissington, 2011; Lawton, & Warren, 2015; Williams,

2009). Principles relating to the significance of literacy remain valuable today as readiness and reading scores are frequently used as a barometer that projects the education outcomes of Black students. Given this association, the relationship between kindergarten readiness and achievement has been examined (Hatcher et al., 2012; Goldstein, McCoach, & HuiHui, 2017) and determined that early academic and behavior issues are readily discernable and reliable indicators for future academic and social failures (Stormont et al., 2014).

In a recent study comprised of 198 African American kindergarteners, Blankston, et al. (2019) used cognitive predictors to measure achievement. Using a variable-centered perspective, the investigators hypothesized fluid intelligence, executive functioning, and crystallized intelligence can be distinguished prior to children entering kindergarten (p. 1276). Improving this understanding can play an important role in how African American children acquire early academic knowledge. To complete this study, participants were recruited from pre-K programs across southeast United States. Measuring fluid intelligence was assessed using the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities and Raven's Coloured Progressive Matrices, while executive functioning was measured using hearts and diamonds and fish flanker tasks. For this procedure, children were shown a picture of a heart or flower on either the left or right side of the laptop. When the picture of the heart appeared, they were to press the button on the corresponding side. Conversely, with flower appeared, they were to press the button on the opposite side. The flanker task instructed children to focus on three fish on a computer screen. They were to press a button in the direction that the middle fish was pointing. Finally, crystallized intelligence was measured also using Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities.

Findings were consistent with other studies that suggests children with higher executive functioning and crystallized intelligence are predictors of academic achievement (Sabol, & Pianta, 2012). Children with enriching early language experiences, have objects labeled for them at a young age, and are exposed to a wide vocabulary perform better in vocabulary development. Blankston et al. (2019) reported that the ability to access verbal and general information through language is important for children's early math and reading abilities. On the other hand, fluid intelligence was not related to early math and reading achievement in this research project. Conclusions correlate with my research by focusing on improving the quality of education for African American. Other studies have examined academic readiness of Black children in that it only included Black students (Welsh et al., 2010). Also, implications from this study relate to my investigation and the need to identify the influences that replace the presence of Black fathers as early language and vocabulary development are associated with achievement (Smith et al., 2017). Determining how these skills are developed in the absence of fathers may be paramount to my study.

Disaggregating reading and math data adds a better understanding of the academic achievement for Black students. According to the Condition of Education (2020), Black fourth grade students scored (204) below their white counterparts (230) in reading proficiency. This trend continued at eight grade as the average reading score for Black students was 244 compared to 272 for white students (p. 7). Exploring the gap in achievement has been documented from multiple investigators who seek to better understand student outcomes and influences that contribute to school success (Blagg, & Luetmer, 2020; Gardner et al., 2014).

Hung et al. (2019) explored the achievement gap across school districts in the United States over a 5–year period. To complete this study, 2,868 Black and white school districts were compared to determine the influences that contribute to the achievement gap. Factors such as the number of students enrolled special education programs, total per pupil expenditure, and household unemployment status were all included to identify achievement for students. The authors reported that the household adult education attainment was the most significant contributor to the gap in achievement between Black and white students (Hung Smith, et al., 2015). The association between poverty and academic achievement revealed that 32% of Black students attended schools that met the poverty threshold scored lower on academic assessments (de Brey et al., 2019). This premise correlated with my study as two-parent families were less likely to live in poverty compared to single mother families (Dalaker, 2019).

One final topic explored to determine its impact on school culture and academic achievement involved postsecondary transition. Generally, schools plagued by poor academic performance are more susceptible to obstacles that reduce student graduates (Ohlson et al., 2016; Tus, 2020). According to Cheeseman Day (2020), the gap between Black graduates is 88% and the national average of 92% continues to narrow. Narrowing the graduation gap is essential as it signifies that students have demonstrated a baseline of skills that can prepare them for postsecondary living (Clark, & Martorell, 2014; Jimenez, & Sargrad, 2018); however, Black students on average scored 17.9 on the ACT in 2018 compared to 23.4 for white students and the national average of 22.2 (ACT Profile Report, 2018). Disaggregating this data further reveals that 15% of Black students met the College

Readiness Benchmarks compared to 57% of white students and 47% for students across the country (ACT Profile Report, 2018).

Research reviewed in this section provides support relating to the acquisition and significances of academic achievement. Overall, these data were included to represent achievement for Black students, while highlighting the complexities associated with successful academic outcomes. The following section will examine the importance of social relationships among children. Relationships are essential and play a valuable role on students' success inside school setting (Aldridge & McCheney, 2018; Aldridge et al., 2018; Dou, Devos, Valcke, 2016).

Social Relationships

The relationships that influence behaviors within the school system will be explored in this section beginning with student to student or peer interactions. Johnson (1981) suggested that peer relationships are essential for academic achievement, socialization, and healthy development. Johnson continued his assertion by suggesting the relationships between students has a greater influence on their attitudes toward school compared to their relationship with teachers due to the frequency and direct interactions with peers. Under this structure, education can be regarded as a social process where children assimilate their norms based on the attitudes, views, and values of their peers. In a more recent study, Busching and Krahe (2020) examined the influence of peers on development. They suggested that during adolescents, primary caregivers become less important in the classrooms as peer interactions promote prosocial behaviors. Literature further proposes that during preschool years through adolescence, social-emotional capabilities are developed and positive peer relationships predict better health (Pepler, & Bierman, 2018; Telzer et al., 2019).

These conclusions are consistent with Maunder and Monks' (2019) work on friendships during middle childhood. Participants in this study were selected via opportunity sampling through personal contacts, yielding a total of 314 7–11-year-olds. Students were given an approximate 20-minute questionnaire that measured self-worth, self-concept, and social identity across 29 items. It was anticipated that the quality of a child's best friend may influence the relationship between self-worth and levels of friendship. Outcomes from this research indicate that peer relationships were positively correlated with self-worth. Also, children with poorer quality friendships tended to score worse on the self-worth assessment if they had less reciprocated friendships. Although the researchers exclusively examined the relationships between white children, I applied similar procedures such as questionnaires to measure the quality of relationships among Black students. Peer information can aid in identifying how parents assist Black children in regulating adverse friendships; hence, one aspect of my study was to determine how parents assist their children in processing negative peer interactions. For example, when measuring the influence of peers in the development of social anxiety, Pickering et al. (2019) indicated that peer acceptance was associated with self-perception (p. 352). Determining how children cope with self-perception in connection friendships was paramount.

Additionally, the relationship between students and teachers is important to students' success due to the frequency of interactions (Dennie et al., 2019; Goetz et al., 2021; Prewett et al., 2018). Classroom relationships can be influenced by teacher characteristics, student characteristics, and factors within the environment (Halladay et al., 2020; Newberry, 2010; Vincent et al., 2017). Positive student-teacher relationships are not only instrumental for student engagement (Martin, & Collie, 2019), but these interactions contribute to reducing

teacher attrition that is a result of stress and burnout (Split et al., 2019). Conversely, negative relationships can impact teacher's perception of students and lead to disciplinary consequences such as referrals or suspensions (Corbin et al., 2019; Longobardi et al., 2018; McGrath, & Bergen, 2015). For example, based on previous studies, teachers may be more inclined to label the behaviors of Black children as "troublemakers," implying that students will repeat this behavior throughout their school experience (Okonofua et al., 2016).

Examining the relationship between classroom climate and student-teacher relationships among at-risk students was measured in a recent study (Moen et al., 2019). Moen et al. (2019) determined that children in classrooms where emotional support was present experienced overall greater improvement. Participants for this study included 93 early childhood educators and 267 children from low backgrounds (Moen et al., 2019). Of the 267 students, 70.5% were white and 4.1% were Black (Moen et al., 2019. The quality of student-teacher was assessed using Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS). Collected data from surveys and 20-30 minute observations produced three themes including: (a) student-teacher conflict, (b) student-teacher closeness, and (c) overall student-teacher relationship (Moen et al., 2019. Findings from this study indicated that the student-teacher relationship among preschool students was impacted by high levels of emotional support. In addition, positive relationships were built through warm interactions and support within the classroom. These social behaviors allowed students to forge closer and less conflicted relationships with teachers and other students.

Despite the difference in the ethnic background and age of participants, Moen et al.'s study outlined an important framework that was used to investigate the relationship among high school students with nonresident fathers and their teachers. In my study, I explored how

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urban school teachers influenced learning in their classroom as student-teacher relationships are essential to fostering a positive school culture where students can be socially connected to learning environment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Rubie-Davies, 2010). Also, similar to this study, I focused on how environmental influences such as poverty impact cognitive development and the relationship between students and teachers. I focused on the role teachers play in promoting or suppressing adverse behaviors that may be present in students as a result of their environment.

In summary, relationships between students and adults influence achievement and social growth. Relationships motivate students to perform their best, or they can adversely impact learning (Back & Lee, 2015). The following section will examine student's perception of their academic experiences. Including the voice of students played an instrumental role in my research study.

Student Perception

Incorporating the perceptions of students can added an authentic voice to my research that detailed their school experience. In this study, student perception was described as the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings, relating to the relationships and building climate that make up their school experience. Several investigations of African American students have reported on the conditions and outcomes that are often quantified by statistics and data sets (Bjorklund-Young, & Stratte Plasman, 2020; Cowan Pitre, 2014; Nishioka et al., 2017). However, despite these contributions, there remains a disconnection that includes the voice of Black students (Barnes & Eadens, 2014). As part of my research investigation, understanding the lived academic experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers utilized the voice of students to determine if the literature aligned with the perceptions of my

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research participants. For example, in an analysis examining the impact of zero-tolerance

policies on Black male students, Canton (2012) included narratives to suggests that punitive

measures such as suspensions and reprimands contributed to their school failure. This

understanding was also assessed by Billy-Mohamed (2014) who proposed that the attitudes

of African American students in grades four through six would impact their achievement.

Although implications from Billy-Mohamed's study represented no significant relationship

between Black student's school perceptions and achievement, results indicated a positive

correlation between self-perception and academic success.

Other findings reported on African American student's perception and the

contributions of teachers who help shape their experiences (Gutierrez, & Buckley, 2019;

Pringle et al., 2010). For example, in a study that examined the perception of teachers on

Black middle class students, Allen (2010) shared one participant's response,

> She doesn't know my name, like, just the other day we were having a test review
> game and like she was throwing popsicle sticks out of the [cup], and I'm like, you
> know I'm the only Black kid in your class, uh, next to three other Black kids in there,
> and I'm like one of the goofiest ones in there and so she pulls my name out and she
> goes 'D-D-Darrell?' And it's her own handwriting and everything and I'm like,
> 'Come on now, lady. I've been in your class now about four months now and you
> don't know my name.' She doesn't know me or anything like that. (p. 12)

This student's experience is one example that highlights the relationship between students

and teachers and how the unconscious mind can shape teacher's expectations for students

(Staats, 2015). Additionally, this study was unique because the researcher examined the

perception of Black children in middle class schools, opposed to other studies that regularly

focus on children with low SES (Gregory et al., 2011; Nelson, 2016). For my study, I

explored similar relationships such as how students' physical appearance is perceived

including how they dress and their mannerism.

Additional factors impacting student's perception of their teacher and school have been identified by many writers as racial macroaggression (Allen et al., 2013; Hotchkins, 2016; Morales, 2020). Implicit bias has been documented from scholars who reported on the punitive consequences in response to behaviors of Black students (Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2016; Marcucci, 2019). Racial disparities between white and Black students were measured in a qualitative study that examined the support students receive from their teachers (Bottiani et al., 2016). Data for this study were composed from white (12,662) and Black (7,062) students attending 58 high schools in northeastern United States. Students were given an anonymous online survey to complete that reported their perception of the support they received at school. Data were collected using sample questions such as my teacher's care about me, my teacher's listen when I have something to say, and my teachers believe that I can do well. Results for this study indicated that Black male students were significantly positively associated with perceived caring, but negatively associated with high expectations. Other findings indicate that both Black and white students benefit from supportive adults, however, the equitable treatment among teacher was not equally distributed. Finally, Bottiani et al.'s (2016) study reported that negative interactions with adults can lead to increased disciplinary issues. As it relates to my work, I will also measure elements that involve caring when asking participants to describe their school experience.

One final purpose for including the voice of Black students when examining their experiences is to determine the validity surrounding the notion that Black children do not care about their education. Certain perspectives relating to Black students have been inaccurately reported based on culture indifferences and misinterpretations of behavior and past academic performances (Anderson, 2016; Douglas, et al., 2008). For example, it may be

convenient to characterize urban schools as underperforming and overlook the lack of resources such as high-level math and science courses (Same et al., 2018). This relationship may contribute to teachers' negative perception of Black students. To offset this claim, one could examine the increase in the number of Black students graduating across the United States can serve as an indicator that Black children are in fact cognizant of their educational outcomes (Grunewald & Nath, 2019). According to Anderson (2018), many African American students felt prepared for college despite not knowing how they would pay for it. Despite the opinions surrounding Black children's academic and social goals, my study includes a firsthand account of their school experiences.

In this portion of my literature review, I introduced the experiences that influence the social and academic achievement for Black students. Establishing a positive school culture along with developing positive relationships were essential to students in my study. In the subsequent section, I will examine multiple aspects of education leadership and the responsibility schools play in promoting student success, beginning with the school environment.

Education Leadership

Building leaders share a responsibility in ensuring the safety and academic success for every student under their supervision (Allen et al., 2015; Richard & Rodger, 1987; Sanchez et al., 2020; Sebastian, & Allensworth, 2019; Youngs, & King, 2002). For many outside observers, advancement towards this goal has produced marginal gains for Black children in urban schools that may be plagued by poverty and poor performance (Boschma, & Brownstein, 2016; Fahle et al.., 2020; Lewis, & Hunt, 2019; Marchand et al., 2019). Still, bridging this multifaceted divide is attainable and may implore leaders to apply various

techniques for achievement such as creating a space for parental collaboration, adopting a

student-centered approach, or improving the school culture (Adkins-Sharif, 2020; Blagg,

2016; El-Mekki, 2020). Each element can play a distinct role in bolstering achievement for

Black students; however, this section of my research proposal will focus on four topics: (a)

school environment, (b) instructional leadership, (c) culturally responsive pedagogy, and (d)

teacher evaluation.

Historical and current data regarding Black students have delivered a comprehensive

representation of the challenges and accomplishments for urban school leaders (Generett, &

Olson, 2020; Gehrke, 2005; Hampton, 2014; Rist, 1973). During different periods of this

process, stakeholders have focused on accountability and instructional methodologies for

principals and teachers alike (Lavigen, 2020). One aspect of this development has placed an

emphasis on teacher evaluation and the effective ways of creating a nurturing learning

environment (Basileo, & Toth, 2019; Rigby, 2015). Evaluating effective and subpar teaching

strategies is instrumental in creating a process of accountability that encourages self-

reflection, data assessment, and provides feedback to help differentiate teacher's performance

(Aragon, 2018). When applied to the purpose of my study, examining the experiences that

replace the presence of Black fathers, it is hypothesized that these strategies will support

positive outcomes for students in urban schools.

School Environment

Inside the toolkit of an effective leader are accessible skills that can be used to

navigate a variety of academic conditions (Beteille et al., 2009; Farah, 2013; Grissom et al.,

2015; Stronge et al., 2008). At the heart of this phenomenon is the necessity to establish a

healthy school culture (Dinsdale, 2017; Doll, 2010; Habegger, 2008) through positive

relationship with students, teachers, parents, and staff (Konishhi & Park, 2016; Thapa, &

Cohen, 2013). Relationships are indispensable building blocks for principal leaders who seek

to improve the success of students through collaboration from teachers and other adults

(Fournier et al., 2019). Additionally, there is a clear consensus that creating a nourishing

environment advances the vision of the school in varied settings (Baker, & Bloom, 2017;

Tschannen-Moran, & Gareis, 2015). Berkowitz et al. (2016) upheld this understanding and

reported that positive school culture can mitigate negative contributions of lower

socioeconomic schools. In a study that measured the effectiveness of urban principals in

turnaround schools, Meyers and Hambrick Hitt (2017) reviewed 18 empirical studies for the

purpose of classifying themes. According to Meyers and Hambrick Hitt, the term

"turnaround principal" is described as an individual who possess rare talent for leading

declining schools to educational progress (p. 39). Collecting literature relating to principal

turnaround was achieved using keyword searchers through multiple search engines, yielding

2,883 results. After reading the abstracts, 20 articles were identified as empirical, and based

on turnaround schools. Of the 20 articles originally selected, a total of 18 were reviewed

throughout this study. Procedurally, sorting the literature prompted investigators to code

articles into themes that classified data into small units Meyers and Hambrick Hitt (2017).

Results from this project suggest that the goal of turnaround principals is to establish, shape,

and implement a vision that is focused on high academic expectations. To accomplish this

goal, it was reported that turnaround principals cannot sacrifice cohesiveness among the staff,

but demonstrate trust by leveraging stakeholders in pursuit of the "common good." One final

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implication that was gleaned from this study was the need to pinpoint the causes of school

failure and methods to improve a safe climate that is focused on teaching and learning. The

purpose of this goal was to analyze the current situation and determine how leaders can

strategically respond to the needs of the school while progressing towards the school's goals.

Similar to this project, my study took place in an urban setting where principal

leadership is essential to improving the overall culture within the building. Consistent

relationships within the school can support social-emotional development that may or may

not be present inside the home (Alzahrani et al., 2019; Mitgang, 2013). Additionally, I found

the importance of reestablishing the vision of the school through relationships that enhance

achievement. Under the supervision of building leaders, establishing strong relationships for

students is valuable (Will, 2019; Wilson, 1999).

An additional element that is important for principal leaders who seek to maintain a

positive school culture is trustworthiness. Creating a safe space can support educator's ability

to express their voice in order to meet the goals of the school is critical. Researchers

suggested trust across the school affects much of the daily functioning (Balyer, 2017;

Lasater, 2016). For urban schools, this principle is critical as leaders are under pressure to

increase student achievement and prepare scholars for their postsecondary transition

(Whiteman et al., 2015). Harris et al. (2013) extended this understanding and suggest that

effective school leaders are who are able to build and foster trust inspire and motivate others

to improve the educational outcomes by aligning strategies that move toward their goals with

trust.

In an investigation that measured relationships among principal leadership, school

climate, and student achievement, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) reported that the

principal's trust was an essential ingredient in high-performing schools. Data were collected from 3,215 teachers across 64 urban and suburban elementary, middle, and high schools to assess the strength of relationships. It was hypothesized that faculty trust in principals will significantly and positively be related to instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement. Electronic and paper surveys were distributed anonymously to garner authentic results. The measure of student achievement was mildly associated with principals who established trust among faculty. However, data further revealed that school climate was strongly associated with academic success. Data were collected from a diverse sample of teachers in urban and suburban schools. I applied aspects of this project by assessing the role school leaders, teachers, and the school culture played on academic achievement for participants in my study. Specifically, one of my goals was to determine how urban schools support the behavior and academic needs for students with nonresident fathers. Investing resources in this area can potentially assist families throughout the academic experience.

To conclude, I focused on two elements that are beneficial to urban school development, school culture and trust. Creating a culture where learning can take place was the goal, and for my study, it was accomplished by examining the relationships within the building including trustworthiness. Trust in school leaders and teachers is an interpersonal component that may provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to excel academically despite circumstances such as poverty (Adams, 2014; Adams, & Forsyth, 2013; Romero, & Gonzales, 2016). Instructional leadership will be explored in the ensuing section of my literature review. Methodology that supports quality instruction for Black children will be included for review.

Instructional Leadership

A well-rounded principal leader is one who not only manages the physical school setting, but also is an instructional leader (Gurley et al., 2016; Searby et al., 2016; Shaked et al., 2017; Vogel, 2018). According to Kafele (2019), principals should consistently grow professionally in the area of instructional leadership and model the expectation of being a continual learner to their staff. Payzant (2011) supported this understanding by writing, "prior to the 1990's, most principals were trained to be good managers who knew how to deal with many operational tasks...With the advent of standards-based reform, the role of the principal expanded" (p.39). The advancement of school accountability has created a greater need for leaders to be familiar instructional skills such as disaggregating data, teacher evaluation, and assessments (Jenkins, 2009). Furthermore, Jenkins contended:

> Effective instructional leaders need to be *resource providers*. It is not enough principals to know the strengths and weaknesses of their faculties; they must also recognize teachers' desire to be acknowledged and appreciated for a job well done. Also, effective instructional leaders need to be *instructional resources*. Teachers count on their principal as resources of information on current trends and effective instructional practices. Instructional leaders are tuned into issues relating to curriculum, effective pedagogical strategies, and assessment. (p. 36)

From this understanding, school leaders have the responsibility of being familiar with contemporary practices and competencies that promote student achievement as it relates to the curriculum (Rigby, 2016; Searby et al., 2016). More importantly however, urban principal leaders have the responsibility of being abreast of state standards and policies, along with methodologies that enrich learning for marginalized students (Acton, 2018; Green, 2015). Individualized learning can be accomplished through the prism of a student-centered learning approach that focuses on individual student needs. Unlike, standards-based learning under No Child Left Behind model (NCLB), a democratic education creates

opportunities for authentic learning through collaborative communication (Bennis, 2017;

Graves, 2011). Creating an intimate learning environment where students are active

participants, problem solvers, and planners, opposed to passive absorbers of information is

critical to the learning process (Bates, 2018; Gray & Lewis, 2013). Student-centered

instruction may require collaborative planning among teachers and leaders, but the impact

can potentially abate the gaps in achievement between students of color and their white

counterparts (Brolund, 2016; Jenkins, 2009). Principal leadership is instrumental to my study

as students with nonresident fathers may benefit from academic instruction that is tailored to

their learning styles, interests, and strengths (Akers et al., 2014; Jaleel, & Thomas, 2019;

Willingham, 2018).

Assessment is an additional component of school instruction that is a vital attribute

for principal leaders. DiPaola and Hoy underscore the importance of using student data to

make informed decisions that lead to performance goals (2014, p. 196-199). For this reason,

it is important that leaders understand how to interpret data, as well as collate data in a

manner that is digestible for stakeholders (Cai et al., 2018; Hamilton et al., 2009; Quint et al.,

2008). Data assessment assists leaders in providing feedback to parents, students, and

teachers as it relates to improving the quality of instruction (Conley, 2015; Datnow &

Hubbard, 2015; Nation et al., 2020). William (2013) supported this claim by underscoring

the importance of using assessments to bridge the gap between teaching and learning.

Evidenced-based practice enables leaders to make instructional decisions that are relevant for

the students they serve. According to Lekwa et al. (2019), evidence-based instructional

practices have a great impact on students in high poverty school communities.

Professional development is the final area of emphasis that will be included in this subsection of instructional leadership. According to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (2008) standard 2, effective principal leaders promote the success of students through professional growth. Successful teacher preparation can be supported through the use of formal and informal evaluations and the implementation of curriculum (Cook, 2015; Lazenby et al., 2020; Rowland, 2017). Curriculum execution is essential to the learning process; therefore, it is critical that principal leaders provide consistent support to teachers. Likewise, leaders are encouraged to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum through the use of walk-throughs, feedback, and developing realistic timeline (Donaldson & Mavrogordato, 2018; Wieczorek et al., 2018). Darling-Hammond et al., (2017) suggested that the principal should be flexible and visible while implementing new policies. Leaders are also encouraged to frequently engage with staff members regarding the execution of academic and social goals, thus, underlining the importance of providing feedback. As in the case with students, providing feedback to teachers creates a dialogue that supports reflection and guides future practice (Jacobs, 2016). Feedback and communication resonated with my study and the need to continually refine the instruction process to provide students in urban schools with adequate information to achieve their goals.

Principal leadership was explored to highlight their academic impact on student achievement. In this study, I focused on principal leader's position in maximizing learning for students with nonresident fathers. Essentially, I aimed to understand the role urban schools and leaders play in supporting students individual learning needs. The subsequent topic that will be examined is teacher evaluation. Evaluating effective instructional methodologies can supported participants in my research.

Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation is designed to provide principal leaders information concerning student achievement (Bergin et al., 2017; Derrington, & Campbell, 2015; Steinberg, & Sartain, 2015). Phillips et al., (2014) described this practice as, "effective teacher evaluation is essential for verifying and maintaining high quality of instruction and student learning, and ensuring that goals and objectives are achieved" (p. 2). Understandably, leaders are required to measure teacher success, in addition to the ability to model creative lessons and instructional methodologies that enhance academic achievement (Looney, 2011). Teacher evaluations creates opportunities for principals to identify strengths and weakness of staff (Derrington, & Campbell, 2017; Donaldson, &Woulfin, 2018; Kersten & Israel, 2005). Assessing the effectiveness of teachers can equally be important as student assessment and is an ongoing process that continues to solicit the attention of leaders (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018; Neumerski et al., 2018).

Inside the framework of NCLB, teacher accountability was dictated by high-stakes demands, directly associated to student's performance on the standardized state exams (Grissom et al., 2014). As a result, the impact created learning environments that were stressful, and pressure-filled. Hanushek et al. (2010) extended this understanding by focusing on the impact NCLB had on teachers by stating:

> The main effects of No Child Left Behind on the quality of teaching are likely to come through two provisions of the act. First, NCLB establishes benchmarks based on test score pass rates that the schools must meet in order to remain in good standing and avoid sanctions. Second, NCLB explicitly requires districts to have highly qualified teachers. (p. 134)

Through this lens, teachers were not only responsible for providing students with academic instructions that aligned with standards; teachers also had to be highly qualified in that area.

In addition, schools were impacted by student's success or failure on the test, and often received a corresponding label as a result. Conversely, teachers under the current policy Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are held to academic standards, but according to state and local district policies (Long 2019; Ujifusa, 2020; Zinskie & Rea, 2016). It is further reported that the difference amongst NLBC and ESSA as it related to teacher assessment within two main ideas. First, when a student falls behind under this policy, states have the autonomy to redirect sources as they see fit to improve instruction (Brown et al., 2016; Mcguinn, 2016). Second, the process of assessment has evolved to individualize learning (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2015; US Department of Education, 2015).

Both themes play an instrumental role in relieving external pressure within the classroom, creating an authentic assessment opportunity (Heise, 2017). Measuring the effectiveness of teachers plays an impactful role on the success or failure of the school (Hallinger et al., 201); Morgan et al., 2014). For this reason, it may behoove principal leaders to not rely on one snapshot to frame teacher's entire body of work for the year (Dynarski, 2016). Effective evaluation can be accomplished by conducting both informal and formal observations and most importantly providing a detailed explanation of feedback to ensure instructional expectations are clear.

In summary, teacher evaluations are ongoing and an instrumental process involving observation, feedback and communication (Flores & Derrington, 2015). Principal leaders have the responsibility of providing teachers with instructional support to maximize learning. As it relates to my study, creating opportunities to individualized learning for students with nonresident fathers without reprimanding teachers for academic outcomes was instrumental.

The following topic, culturally responsive pedagogy addresses the practices school leaders and teachers implement to maximize learning. Evidence reported in this section will be used as a reference in my research.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Effective teaching can be influenced by a variety of independent variables such as resources, school climate, and instructional efficiency that influence student achievement. Particularly, as American classrooms become more diverse, creating successful opportunities for students to demonstrate learning can be challenging if instruction is delivered in the same manner (Rucinski et al., 2019; Wells et al., 2016). As a result, culturally responsive pedagogy has been embedded in teaching practices to maximize learning (Morrison et al., 2019; Samuels, 2018). Culturally responsive pedagogy can be defined as a pedagogy that crosses disciplines and cultures to engage learners while respecting their cultural integrity (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Wlodkowski, & Ginsberg, 1995). Culturally responsive pedagogy is a student-centered practice that is utilizes that background, learning styles, and prior knowledge to support achievement (Gist et al., 2019; Muñiz, 2019). Culturally responsiveness is the ability to not only recognize the uniqueness of students as it relates to their culture, but to also augment the curriculum in a manner that students can relate to for the purpose of maximizing learning (Aronson, & Laughter, 2016; Milner, 2014).

Validating the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy was performed in a qualitative study by Whitaker and Valtierra (2018). In many cases, ethnic minority children are likely to have white teachers whose cultural background differ from students. This project involved a six-step process including: "(a) item development, (b) expert review of items, (c) exploratory factor analysis, (d) factor interpretation, (e) confirmatory factor analysis, and (f)

analyses for convergent and discriminant validity" (p. 12). Each theme was used to support the objective, to develop and validate teachers' dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy using a holistic instrument. Findings from this study suggest that teachers with strong cultural identities are less likely to embrace colorblind ideologies and practices that downplay cultural differences to justify teaching everyone the same. Additionally, it was reported that teachers who embraced a color-conscious mindset utilized student's lived experiences in the classroom. Complementary findings advanced my understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy by assessing teacher's willingness to engage and embrace racial differences in their instructional practices. Also, participants in my study may enter the classroom with dissimilar interests and experiences than their teachers. Hence, adopting principles through cultural relevant teaching practices can potentially enhance learning (Kafele, 2019).

Relevant teaching practices are essential to both 21st century teachers and principal leaders in part to students varying sum of knowledge when entering the classroom. As a result, Ryan (2020) suggested that stakeholders reframe their historical consciousness by acknowledging that all students do not experience school in the same manner. This process enables educational leaders to bracket their preconceived knowledge associated with students and focus on individual needs (Murff, 2020; Steinke, & Fitch, 2017; Teaching Tolerance, 2014).

Summary

Findings included in this portion of my literature review highlighted the influence of urban school as it relates to environment, instructional leadership, teacher evaluation, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Previous studies have contributed to better understanding the

problem concerning the living arrangement for Black children growing up in homes without

fathers, (Goodrum et al., 2012; Lofquist et al., 2012); and other studies have highlighted their

lived experiences (Langa, 2012; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). Despite many

contributions, a gap in the literature exists pertaining to the influences that replace the

presence of fathers. My study is noteworthy because I focused on identifying both positive

and negative influences that impact children by examining the literature and including the

voice of my participants to report on their school experiences. The succeeding section will

outline the methods I used to collect, analyze, and report on the findings for my research. It is

my aim that each section will provide a concise understanding of the procedures used to

measure the influences that replace the presence of nonresident fathers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The American family structure has garnered attention from multiple investigators who have contributed to a better understanding of father's influence on children's cognitive and social development (Fleck et al., 2013; Mandara et al., 2005; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Reynolds, 2009). Empirical research has enlarged the problem introduced in Chapter 1, Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers and regularly associated marital status among African Americans with economic achievement (Ozawa et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2017). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), 12% of children in married families live in poverty, compared to 44% of single parent households. Additionally, an unresolved issue that requires further investigation involves providing families with resources that support the social and academic development of children with nonresident fathers. Investing resources in this research area extends beyond acknowledging social conditions often associated with single mother Black families and focuses on bridging any gap that may be present due to fathers' absence. As a result, the purpose of this ethnographic case study was to identify the influences that replace the presence of nonresidential Black fathers.

One plausible reason for the overwhelming number of Black children living in homes without the presence of their fathers can be attributed to mass incarceration and the disproportionate number of Black men removed from the home for an extended period of time (Cox, 2020; Lopez, 2017; Schnittker et al., 2012). Despite comprising approximately 13% of the total male population in the United States, Black men represent approximately 35% of those incarcerated (Hinton et al., 2018; Morris, 2014). This total does not delineate

between men who are fathers and those without children; however, the overrepresentation of Black men has a significant impact on their families and communities (Becker & Alexander, 2016; Gifford, 2019). Experts suggested when a father goes to prison, the care of his children is abdicated to other relatives such as women, in addition to the potential economic disadvantages created as a result of their absence (Hatter & Smith, 2014; King, 1993; Mauer & King, 2007; Perry & Bright, 2012; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2018).

Performing a comprehensive qualitative study will include the voices of African American children to uncover their experiences living in a home with a nonresident father. Enabling participants to tell their own story can provide a rich description of the phenomenon (Ridder, 2017; Stake, 2006). Moreover, I utilized the theoretical traditions of a case study and ethnography. Case studies can be a valuable tool for answering real-world questions within the context of the phenomenon (Gammelgaard, 2017; Tetnowski, 2015), whereas ethnography is often referred as interpretive and naturalistic (Angrosino, 2016; Ejimabo, 2015). Research questions for my study stemmed from one primary inquiry: What replaces the presence of fathers for African American students living in non-paternal homes? Likewise, four sub questions I answered included: (a) How do students describe their relationship with their resident guardian? (b) What contributes to the social, emotional, and academic development for students with nonresident fathers? (c) What are the lived school experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers? (d) How do urban schools support the academic and behavior needs for students with nonresident fathers? Each inquiry guided my pursuit of making meaning of student's experiences and supported better understanding the problem, Black children living in homes without the presence of their father.

The subsequent content embedded in this chapter are elements that broaden the phenomenon Black children living in homes without the presence of fathers beginning with the rationale for qualitative research, followed by the design of the study. In addition, I will provide a description of the data sources and methods used for analyzing and interpreting data. Finally, I will highlight potential limitations and ethical considerations that promote best practices when engaging student participants. Each theme serves as requisite for qualitative research and contributes to better understanding the lived experience for students with nonresident fathers.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Nestled in the experiences of participants, qualitative research is characterized by its aim to ripen understanding through the development of meaning, rather than statistics (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Packer, 2017; Patton & Cochran, 2002; Taylor et al., 2015). Throughout this research investigation, my aim was to provide a thick description of the experiences on behalf of African American students living in homes with nonresident fathers. The term "thick description" was pioneered by Ryle in 1971 and extended by Geertz in 1973 (Ponterotto, 2006). Denzin (1989) added:

> A thick description ... does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p. 83)

Qualitative researchers seek to manufacture findings within a scientific process that is not determined in advance, but through the continuous collection of evidence to better understand the phenomenon (Billups, 2019; Flick, 2017; Ospina, 2004; Maxwell, 2013;

Weller & Romney, 1988). In this respect, my rationale for selecting qualitative research as the exclusive method for making meaning of participants with nonresident father's lived experiences empowered me as researcher to become submerged in the context where I collected data (Pezalla et at., 2012; Stake, 2010; Xu, & Storr, 2012). Human interactions permit researchers to take advantage of access to occurrences as they are happening and become available in a natural setting (Haradhan, 2018; Lichtman, 2014; Morgan, & Smircich, 1980).

Moreover, qualitative research methodologies can be interpretative, and incorporate multiple voices to make meaning of individual perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Thorne, 2016). Researchers may interact with participants through direct observation, unstructured interviews, and observation to strengthen the validity of findings (Hayashi et al., 2019; Leung, 2015; Rahman, 2016). Essentially, the experiences of participants are unique and personal, therefore; generalization of the results is not a goal, but individualized meaning-making (Mack et al., 2005). The practice of meaning making is guided by open-ended responses given by participants that allow the researcher and audience to better understand the experiences, beliefs, and feelings of the members (LaDonna et al., 2018; Patton, 2002).

In this section, I present my rationale for selecting qualitative research as the method for yielding factual and reliable data. Overall, I sought to broaden my understanding of the problem, Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers by being immersed in the natural context of participants. Qualitative research is also interpretive and was administered in this study to include me as an instrument of supplying a thick description of the phenomenon. In the emerging section, the theoretical traditions ethnography and case study will be described to aid in making meaning of the experiences of Black children living in

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homes with nonresident fathers. Ethnography is grounded in the belief that behaviors and social interactions of individuals can produce data that capture aspects of their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) by encouraging the researcher to be submerged in the culture of the participant over an extended period of time (Naidoo, 2012). Equally, case study research is distinctive in that it relies on multiple sources of evidence to support triangulation of the findings (Yin, 2018). Each tradition and its significance to my study will be detailed in the following section.

Ethnography

The birth of ethnography originates from a complex discipline known as anthropology, and is the study of social interactions (Altamira, 1999; Angrosino, 2007; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Reeves et al., 2013; Ugwu, 2016). Characteristics of ethnographic inquiry were outlined by LeCompte and Schensul (2010), expanding the scope within qualitative research: (a) it is carried out in a natural setting, not in a laboratory, (b) involves intimate, face-to-face interaction with participants, (c) it presents an accurate reflection of participant perspectives and behaviors, (d) it uses inductive, interactive, and recursive data collection and analytic strategies to build local cultural theories, (e) it uses multiple data sources, including both quantitative and qualitative data, (f) it frames all human behavior and belief within a sociopolitical and historic context, (g) it uses the concept of culture as a lens through which to interpret results. Each principle contributes to collecting authentic data to make meaning of human behavior.

Additionally, deriving from the Greek ethos (people) and graphei (to write), ethnography is a multi-faceted methodology that describes culture through observations, interviews, discussions, and audio-visuals (Hammersley, 2016; Malinowski 1922;

Sangasubana, 2011a; Shagrir, 2017; Zaharlick, & Green, 1991). One purpose of ethnographic

research is to accurately represent reality through the prism of the researcher and participant.

This undertaking is regularly executed by ethnographers who become immersed with

participants in their natural setting (Baskerville & Myers, 2014; Lewis & Russell, 2011;

Schatz, 2013). Researchers consider their position as an insider (emic) or outsider (etic) when

collecting data (Jones & Smith, 2017). Emic researchers examine culture from the inside,

becoming a part of the norms and customs of their participants (Bergman & Lindgren, 2017;

Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; van Oudenhoven, 2017); while etic researchers view culture

theoretically (King, & McInerney, 2019; Li, 2008). Both processes create opportunities for

researchers to better understand meaning by comprehensively examining participants

(Reeves, Peller, Goldman & Kitto, 2013) when entering the natural context of the

phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). Genzuk (2003) provided a working description of

ethnography that I integrated in my study by stating:

> Ethnography is a social science research method. It relies heavily on up-close,
> personal experience and possible participation, not just observation, by researchers
> trained in the art of ethnography... The ethnographic focal point may include
> intensive language and culture learning, intensive study of a single field or domain,
> and a blend of historical, observation, and interview methods. (p. 1)

Applying ethnographic principles will isolated themes within the findings section of my

study that avoided minimizing the experiences of participants to merely numbers on a page.

In essence, ethnography will bolsters the reader's understanding of the influences that may

replace the presence of fathers by making meaning of their academic and social experiences

(Jethwani et al., 2014; Tallinn, 2002).

Additionally, ethnography is regarded as a tradition that enables researchers to tell a

credible, rigorous, and authentic story by giving voice to individuals in their natural setting

(Fetterman, 2020; Simmons & Smith, 2017). Effective implementation involves preparing prior to entering the setting and initiating data collection (Schensul et al., 2013). Recent evidence has focused on researchers who suspend their beliefs and understandings to ensure they do not inadvertently impose their views on research members (Dodgson, 2019; Mason-Bish, 2018; Palaganas et al., 2017). Being a neutral observer does not change the behavior of the participants but preserves the reliability of the findings (Denzin et al., 2017; Murchison, 2010).

As a firsthand researcher, being immersed in the lives of participant members is essential in fulfilling the ethnographic process (Anderson-Levitt, 2012; Green et al., 2007; Kimball & Turner, 2018; Schatz, 2013). Immersion will be sustained by gaining trust at the onset of my study to provide a detailed representation of students living with nonresident fathers. Likewise, upholding the accuracy and validity of findings within ethnographic research is maintained through triangulating observations, interviews, and documentation data (Farmer et al., 2006; Heale & Forbes, 2013; Thurmond, 2001).

Case Study

Case study research is an empirical investigation of a phenomenon within its natural context across multiple disciplines (Crowe et al., 2011; Dasgupta, 2015; Gerring, 2016; Harrison et al., 2017; Tight, 2017; Yin, 2013). Case studies commence by identifying an instrumental case, issue, or problem that researchers seek to better understand using data analyses such as interviews, documents, archival records, or participant observations (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2006). Each unit of analysis assists in providing meaning of behaviors that represent an individual or multiple cases over an extended period of time. Gillham (2000) added:

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A case can be an individual; it can be a group – such as a family, or a class, or an office, or a hospital ward; it can be an institution such as a school or a children's home, or a factory; it can be a large-scale community – a town, an industry, a profession. All of these are single cases; but you can also study multiple cases: a number of single parents; several schools; two different professions. (p. 1)

Yin posited (2018), a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) the behavior of those involved in the study cannot be manipulated; (c) one wants to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. For my research, I investigated multiple cases to better understand the phenomenon of Black children being raised in homes with nonresident fathers. The discovery and understanding of students' experiences with nonresident fathers can aid in gaining a deeper awareness of the influences that impact their social growth and development (Arditti et al., 2018; Hofferth et al., 2010; Hofferth & Pinzon, 2011).

Furthermore, case study research can be characterized by the ability to conform to the purpose of the researcher. Intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple case studies are unique instruments that are used to produce specific data (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016; Baxter & Jack, 2008). As a method of qualitative inquiry, multiple case study researchers examine the parts of an existing subject by moving beyond the boundaries of the phenomenon and its context to tell a distinct story (Yin, 2009). Stake (2006a) summarized the framework of a multiple case study as:

 The multiple case study is a special effort to examine something having lots of cases, parts, or members. We study these parts, perhaps its students, its committees, its projects, or manifestations in diverse settings. One small collection of people, activities, policies, strengths, problems, or relationships is studied in detail. Each case to be studied has its own problems and relationships. The cases have their stories to tell... We seek to understand how this whole operates in different situations. (p. 23)

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Generally, multiple case studies begin with recognizing what concept or idea connects the

cases together (Stake, 2006b). The case studied regarding my research centered on Black

children living in homes without the presences of their fathers. Previous researchers have

explored Black families (Hammer, 1997; Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020; Rodney & Mupier,

1999; Zulu, 2018); however, there remains little empirical data that report on the

developmental and academic influences that replace the presence of fathers.

Accordingly, observation and interviews are essential tools researchers use to collect

data in each case. Patton (2002b) provided a comprehensive analysis of becoming a skilled

observer, which included: (a) learning to pay attention: seeing what there is to see, and

hearing what there is to hear; (b) writing descriptively; (c) acquiring expertise and discipline

in recording field notes; (d) knowing to separate detail from trivia; (e) using systematic

methods to validate and triangulate observations; (f) reporting strengths and limitations of

one's own perspective, which requires both self-knowledge and self-discourse. The value of

direct observation creates firsthand insight of the impact environmental influences have on

the phenomenon (Fisher et al., 2011; Kawulich, 2005; Morgan et al., 2017). Gathering

information from observations enables researchers to identify what must be observed in order

to provide probable answers to the research questions (Fusch et al., 2018; Hancock, &

Algozzine, 2017). Throughout my study, I implemented an observational guide of key

features (i.eg., time, date, location, persons being observed, activities) to assist in organizing

data (Phillippi, & Lauderdale, 2017; Moser, & Korstjens, 2017). Likewise, interviews are

common in form of data collection in case study research and are frequently complemented

with an interview guide. Interviews allow researchers to listen to case study participants to

gain insight of their perspective (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019; McGrath et al., 2018).

In summary, ethnography and case study are two theoretical traditions that play a dominant role in answering my research questions. I used ethnography to examine culture and experiences of each participant over an extended period of time (Sangasubana, 2011b); while I implemented case studies to explore a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context (see Yin, 2014). Investigating the lives of Black students using qualitative methodologies will included their voice to represent their experiences. In the following section, I will describe my role as the chief investigator during the data collection process.

Role of the Researcher

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) designated the researcher as an instrument that collects data through human experiences. Building relationships by becoming immersed in the lives of participants aids researchers in collecting qualitative data (Goodell et al., 2016; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Yin, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research recognizes a connection between the researcher and what is being researched (Roger et al., 2018); therefore, I embraced my role as an emic researcher, or one who serves as an insider to gain the trust of my case study participants. My eyes and ears were tools used to make meaning and better understand the experiences of Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers.

Finally, my role as researcher was to broaden the problem of my study, Black children with nonresident fathers through the cross-examination of themes from multiple cases. Embodying the voice of students is purposeful in determining the influences that support their growth and development. Additionally, I acted as a neutral researcher and preserve the integrity and reliability of the findings (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Holloway, &

Biley, 2011; Ormston et al., 2013). Maintaining neutrality requires isolating assumptions and biases to collect data through an unbiased lens (Busetto et al., 2020).

The succeeding section will include an outline of the design of my study, beginning with a description of the setting and research participants. Qualitative research design is applicable for my study because it personalizes the relationship between myself and my participants. Using the research questions as a guide, I embraced the researcher-participant relationship to better understand the experiences of each member.

Design of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the influences that replace the presence of nonresident Black fathers. Furthermore, the research design included investigating multiple case study participants to collect meaning of their experiences using documents, observations, and interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018a). Each unit of analysis assisted in addressing my research questions. Performing an ethnographic case study involved communicating with stakeholders to seek their approval for engaging participants (Saldana, 2011; Taylor et al., 2015). In the following section, I will provide an overview of the setting, and outline the criteria to participate in my qualitative analysis.

Setting and Participants

Participants were African American students living in homes with nonresident fathers. Students who met the qualifications for participation resided in one public school districts within the urban core. In order to negotiate an unfamiliar environment, I crafted a letter requesting access to enter schools from superintendents who serve students across the defined demographic (Appendix, Letter to Superintendents). The letter explained my intentions as chief researcher and goals following the completion of the study. I mailed a

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letter of consent to the superintendent and enclose a self-addressed return envelope. Additionally, I followed up with a phone call thanking the superintendent for extending access to complete my research investigation.

In continuance, I composed a letter to principals, requesting permission to enter their school building and administer student surveys (Appendix, Letter to Principals). This letter described my intent as researcher, role of the participants, and request a meeting with each principal to preselect students based on the criteria outlined. Once approval was granted, I requested the counselor to serve as the gatekeeper, an individual at the research site to assist in navigating the contextual setting (Clark, 2011; Creswell & Poth, 2018b; Reeves, 2010; Wanat, 2008). Consulting with district and building leaders prior to engaging environment was essential in gaining trust and acceptance of the participants (Johl & Renganathan, 2010; Wasserman & Clair, 2007).

Students who met the criteria to participate resided in an urban metropolitan city, located in the American Midwest. Urban settings are appropriate and provide convenient access to students in their natural setting (Stake, 2010). Data from previous investigators suggest students living in homes with nonresident fathers are more likely to reside in communities within urban areas (Aerts, 2018; Logan & Burdick-Wil, 2017; Parker, 2013). Exploring the experiences of students with nonresident fathers enabled me to take an in depth look at the influences within the environment that shape their academic and social development. Finally, establishing relationships with case study participants aids in gaining access to their everyday lives (i.e., their home, work, or church).

Identifying a setting that yielded a substantial number of students who meet the criteria for participation was essential; however, sampling techniques were instrumental and

are discussed in the ensuing section. I used sampling strategies to recruit participants who could provide and in-depth and detailed perspective of the phenomenon, Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers.

Sampling Procedures

Participants for this study were selected using criterion and snowball samples. Purposeful sampling requires investigators to consider three primary tenets: (a) participants the in sample, (b) type of sample, and (c) sample size (Creswell, 2013, p. 156; Emmel, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2015; Sandelowski, 1995; Tuckett, 2004). Each element provides supports in delivering a concise understanding of the research problem and phenomenon. In addition, purposeful sampling is an effective methodology researchers use to isolate specific knowledge of an experience or phenomenon (Bernard, 2002; Etikan et al., 2016; Tongco, 2007). Sampling information was instrumental in verifying qualifications for each participant in my research study.

Criterion Sampling. Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet predetermined conditions (Ames et al., 2019; Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002). The purpose of criterion sampling will be to establish a complete understanding of all members who meet the participation criteria (Suri, 2011). Patton (2002) helped to establish an explanatory model for criterion sampling by sharing:

> Criterion sampling can an important qualitative component to a management information system or an ongoing program monitoring system. All cases in the data system that exhibit certain predetermine criterion characteristics are routinely identified for in-depth, qualitative analysis. Criterion sampling also can be used to identify cases from standardized questionnaires for in-depth follow-up, for example. (p. 281)

The rationale behind selecting criterion sampling is to eliminate candidates who do not meet the criteria (Maxwell, 2013). Effective sampling bracketed prospective members, while

maximizing my time as the researcher. My final reason for utilizing criterion sampling was to produce a large enough sample to analyze the experiences of students with nonresident fathers.

Administering my survey only included questions related to identifying Black students living in homes with nonresident fathers. Each participant will meet the following criteria: (a) must be 18-years-old at the start of the research study, (b) identify as an African American male or female; and (c) live in a home with a nonresident father. It was my intention that these criteria provide access to candidates whose experiences can be documented and added to the existing body of literature concerning Black families.

Snowball Sampling. Snowball sampling is described as a procedure that refers qualifying and potential participants through the candidate's social network (Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Etikan et al., 2015; Goodman, 1961; Heckathorn, 2011). Snowball procedures are primarily dependent on interviews to identify prospective participants through informants (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Informants are people who recommend potential research members (Marcus et al., 2016; Palys, 2008). One of the benefits of snowball sampling is it does not rely on a random sample to identify participants, particularly in difficult to reach places (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Populations who are hard to reach are accessed when participants who share similar characteristics are involved in the recruiting process (Valerio et al., 2016). Unlike other sampling techniques, snowball samples are not intended to generalize a population, nor ensure diversity among the sample (Etikan et al., 2015b). Instead, snowball sampling specializes in using referrals to build relationships during interviews.

My rationale for selecting snowballing as a method for gaining access to participants hinged on the understanding that informants may have direct contact to the hidden population that may have met the criteria to participate in my study. Additionally, snowball sampling is respondent driven, and permits the researcher to work towards building a relationship at the onset of the study. Together, criterion and snowball sampling play an important role in selecting participants for my study. Choosing candidates who represent the target population described in my problem statement was completed using either sampling technique. In the following section, I will describe the unit of analyses that will be used to collect data.

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection methods provide an overview of how information were collected and analyzed (Clark & Veale, 2018; Gill, Stewart & Chadwick, 2008; Maxwell, 2013; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). Methods used to collect data strengthen the research hypothesis by relying on interactive interviews, triangulation, and methodological protocols to support meaning of the phenomenon and authenticity of the results (Paradis et al., 2016). There were three main types of data sources I used in my research study (a) official documents, (b) interviews (c) individual observations. Subsequently, each data tool will be reviewed and detailed in the following section.

Open-ended Surveys

In this study, open-ended surveys were administered to establish initial contact with students. Harlacher (2016) established a five step framework for developing effective questionnaires: (a) determine the goal or goals of the questionnaire, (b) define the information needed to address each goal, (c) write the questions, (d) review the questionnaire for alignment with goals and adherence to research-based guidelines for writing questions, (f)

organize and format the questionnaire. Administering effective survey questions enabled

participants to respond in their own words (Popping, 2015). Additionally, open-ended

surveys focus on distinguishing candidates who meet the criteria for participation in my

study from those who did not. One disadvantage of open-ended surveys is the time it takes to

complete the survey. According to Hyman and Sierra (2016), data cannot be quickly coded

and analyzed due to the individualized responses from each question. Conversely, an

advantage is the opportunity to conduct person-to-person interviews with respondents

(Hyman & Sierra, 2016).

Official Documents

Official documents are materials collected by researchers to access culture, persuade,

or enlighten the public (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Farber, 2006; Flick et al., 2004; Grant,

2018). Patton (2002) offered a reliable understanding, adding, "documents prove valuable not

only because of what can be learned directly from them, but also as stimulus for paths of

inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing" (p.294). The

use of documentary sources can be implemented as a method to investigate, interpret, and

identify pertinent information about the phenomenon (Bowen, 2009; Frey, 2018;

Mogalakwe, 2006; Owen, 2014). With documents serving as a vital instrument, my goal was

to select at least three records from each student to supply an adequate amount of data. I

examined educational records such as grade cards, suspension letters, honor roll and

academic certificates, and attendance reports to illuminate student's school experience.

The purpose of collecting these specific documents was two-fold. First, documents

provided a baseline of students' academic history to categorize their accomplishments and

struggles. Next, previous studies have highlighted the academic failures of Black children

living in homes with nonresident fathers (Barajas, 2011; Clark, 2015; Orr, 2003; Paschall, et al., 2018). Therefore, I used documents to pinpoint validity and consistency among previous literature and my participants. Following my initial visit, I requested student's educational records (i.e., grade cards, attendance records, and any discipline related documents). After receiving these documents, data were used to construct a questionnaire, isolating the environmental influences that provide academic support. For example, survey questions were established according to individual participants to identify who contributed to their success during their formative years, as well any hindrances. Also, the development of surveys will be informed by the frequency of discipline documents, to distinguish causes of behaviors.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The art of interviews uncovered intimate knowledge of a phenomenon in qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Majid et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2016). I used semi-structured interview questions to assist in initiating the conversation between me and each participant. Edwards and Holland (2013) provided a comprehensive review of semi-structured interviews and suggested interviews create an opportunity for dialogue and interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Interviewers conducting semi-structured interviews have a set of predetermined questions used to prompt dialog, while the rest of the questions are not planned in advanced (Galleta, 2013; Rabionet, 2011). Similarly, Roulston (2010) added qualitative research interviews seek to describe central themes, with the main task being to understand meaning. Interviewing participants enables researchers to intentionally uncover meaning by finding out what is in and on someone else's mind (Patton, 2015). Essentially, direct and unobtrusive observations do not always uncover thoughts, or metacognitive practices that answer why. Therefore, my intention was to interview and

interact with students until my research questions were satisfied in intervals of 20 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the direction and structure of each interview response. I used the following interview prompts to collect qualitative data:

1. Describe a typical day at school?
2. What kind of tasks or activities are difficult, rewarding, and enjoyable for you?
3. Describe a typical day at home?
4. Tell me about your experiences growing up?

Aligning the interview with the research question is essential as facilitators collect and interpret data. In order to capture the interview data accurately, I recorded each interview. Finally, neutral and unbiased interviewers are trained to display no opinion about survey questions to minimize interview related errors that occur when responses are influenced by respondent's perception of what the interviewer indicates as an appropriate answer (Given, 2008).

Observation

Observing subjects within their authentic educational context to uncover meaning according to my research questions is a central component of qualitative research (Baker, 2006; Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Mack & Woodsong, 2006; Walshe et al., 2011). Angrosino (2007) described the process of observation as, "the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with an instrument, and recording it for scientific purposes" (p. 2). As an ethnographic observer, my intention is to observe students by being immersed in their culture to develop a "thick description" of behaviors within their natural setting (Gray, 2014; Sharma & Sarkar, 2019). Ethnographers look at individuals' way of life as a participant who is both descriptive and interpretive (Conroy, 2017; Fetterman, 2010). The aim of these descriptions is to assist in better understanding attitudes and perspectives by serving as an insider who provides meaning to why.

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Lincoln (2002) provided a reliable overview of observations and illuminates the observation method as, "useful data, and can be collected in virtually any public or quasi-public setting without fear of violation of individuals rights to either privacy or informed consent" (p. 6). As a result, the role of the researcher is to gain access to insider views and subjective data (Creswell, 2013). My role was to make observations in participant's natural environment without distorting the results. According to Patton (2015), "regardless of how sensitively observations are made, the possibility always exists that people will behave differently under conditions where an observation or evaluation is taking place" (p. 375). During data collection, observations were deployed 3 days per week for 20 minutes using journaling, field notes, and recordings.

The previous section reported how I composed data within a multistep collection process of surveys, interviews, documents, and observation. Each unit of analysis was connected to my research questions to better understand the experiences of Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers. In the ensuing section, I will describe how I analyzed data for each unit of analysis. Data analysis will inform conclusions relating to the phenomenon and provided a more accurate understanding of the themes associated with the findings.

Data Analysis

In this qualitative study, stages of data analysis will included reducing findings into manageable units to tell a story and provide meaning. Aligned to the research questions, data analysis requires converting field notes, interviews, and documents into trustworthy themes that accurately describe and represent the account of the participants (Babchuk, 2019; Natow, 2019; Owen, 2014; Taylor-Powell, & Renner, 2003). Creswell and Poth (2018) outlined a

step-by-step procedure called The Data Analysis Spiral that I used during the analysis stage. Data generated from qualitative methods were synthesized by (a) managing and organizing the data, (b) reading and memoing emergent ideas, (c) describing and classifying codes into themes, (d) developing and assessing interpretations, (e) representing and visualizing the data" (p. 186). Each principle contributed to processing and representing findings related to the problem of my study.

Managing and Organizing the Data

Initiating data analysis encourages researchers to review the proposal as part of the tidying up process (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993); in addition to organizing and making copies of all materials such as field notes, surveys, transcripts, interviews, and documents. Researchers will revisit each research question. Reviewing the research questions helps investigators reestablish purpose while organizing each dataset (Holm-Hansen, 2008). Miles et al. (2014) defined this simplifying procedure as data condensation:

> Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. By condensing, we're making data stronger... Data condensation is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that "final" conclusions can be drawn and verified. (p.12)

Overall, data management includes organizing findings into digital files and creating a file naming system to sort research information. For my study, I utilized a computer program to store participant information, data forms, date of collection, and description of files (Creswell & Poth, 2013). Also, I assigned a unique identifier to each participant, ensuring every sample of data will remain specific and confidential to the individual.

Reading and Memoing Emerging Ideas

Memoing procedures are used to compose data into chunks, or manageable units that

help researchers process information. Data interpretation involves writing notes in the margins of field notes, transcripts, or next to images (Birks et al., 2008; Ganapathy, 2016; McGrath, 2021; Stuckey, 2015). Memos are short phrases or key concepts that researchers use to not only process data, but to synthesize themes into analytical meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Maxwell (2018) suggested "Memos are one of the most important techniques you have for developing your ideas. You should, therefore, think of memos as a way to help you understand your topic, setting, or study" (p. 20). The rationale behind performing memoing as part of the analysis process is to rapidly capture thoughts throughout data collection and condensation (Saldaña, 2016); creating opportunities for qualitative researchers to provide a rich analysis of the phenomenon. Miles et a., (2014) reported memoing should be prioritized when emerging idea develop, and researchers should stop what they are doing to record the memo.

Describing and Classifying Codes into Themes

Coding involves organizing data into categories that support the research design. As an ethnographic researcher, creating a quality method for coding data is paramount. LeCompte and Schensul (2010) wrote:

> To begin analysis, rather large categories or conceptual "bins" deriving from the formative model or theoretical framework are created, into which to chunk various elements of the database. The process of clarifying and identifying components within each of the bins leads to a revised and more specific set of items and units and a rough outline of their relationships to one another. (p. 33)

Data coding techniques are implemented to produce a controllable display of data and provide answers to research questions (Grbich, 2013; Linneberg, & Korsgaard, 2019; Mackey, & Gass, 2012; St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Raw field notes, transcripts, and documents were be simplified into themes that minimize the complexity of the findings

(Patton, 2002). Coding qualitative data began by reading through all research documents and transforming comments into initial grouping outcomes that conceptualized analytical patterns (Blair, 2015; Elliot, 2018). Next, organizing data into topics or a labeling system for filing is essential. For my study, coding was initially performed in the margins of my field notes and transferred to the coding report. Patton (2002) stated:

> The first reading through the data is aimed at developing the coding categories or classification system. Then a new reading is done to actually start the formal coding in a systematic way. Several readings of the data may be necessary before field notes or interviews can be completely indexed and coded. (p. 553)

In summary, understanding the experiences of Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers was achieved by isolating their experiences, along with implementing cross analyzation. According to Stake (2010), triangulation in multiple case studies focus on ensuring meanings are clear. Triangulation also creates opportunities to compare cases after the data have been processed and analyzed to determine patterns, or if the findings are specific to one case.

Developing and Assessing Interpretations

Interpreting data encompasses providing an explanation and meaning of the results. LeCompte and Schensul (2010, p. 17) suggested that ethnographic researchers ask the following questions to aid in interpretation of the data:

1. What is going on?
2. What does the data tell me about these people and this site or process?
3. What makes sense to me, given my own principles, knowledge, and past experiences?
4. How is this related to my research questions?
5. How do the local participants explain what is happening?

Interpretive practices begin with the development of codes, but extends beyond labeling themes to expand the meaning (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Overall, interpretations of my

research findings were validated through comparison of existing data and member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). In addition, I compared my findings and interpretations to existing literature and theories to determine if consistencies exist.

Representing and Visualizing the Data

The final phase of the data analysis process I discussed involves visually representing the data. Visual displays represent connectedness between multiple units of organized data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013). Descriptive data can be in the form of comparison among cases, or individual themes. For my study, graphic organizers served as a tool to potentially move data beyond words on page. It was my intention that each graph will represent key findings such as demographic, income, and other pertinent information that can advance the reader's understanding of the influences that replace the presence of Black fathers.

Evidence presented in the preceding section establishes protocols for analyzing qualitative data. I used my research questions as an outline to ensure accurate and reliable data would be examined. Also, memoing, classifying codes, and theme interpretation are essential in reporting and analyzing precise data. In the following section, I will present ethical considerations, limitations, and validity. Addressing each component is essential in qualitative investigation as researchers embrace the responsibility of serving as human instruments to collect data.

Ethical Considerations, Limitations, and Validity

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Interaction between researchers and participants can be challenging at various stages of the research investigation (Eide & Kahn, 2008; Munhall, 1988; Raheim et al., 2016;

Walsh, 2014). In ethnographic studies, researchers function as essential instruments who collect and analyze data, while being immersed in the culture of the participants (Sanjar et al., 2014; Schensul et al., 2013); therefore, upholding ethical integrity regarding the researcher, participants, and confidentiality was vital (Jelsma, 2005; Miller et al., 2012; Orb et al., 2004). For my study, I observed the principles outlined by the Institution Review Board at the University of Missouri-Kansas City to guide my actions as investigator, beginning with understanding informed consent. Furthermore, I completed training and compliance modules through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative to bolster my understanding of ethical methodologies. The purpose of upholding ethical tenets was to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects (Grady, 2015). An early example of ethical malpractice was initiated in 1932 by the U.S. Public Health Service, an experiment to extend the natural course of untreated Black males with syphilis following the availability of penicillin (Alsan & Wanamaker, 2018; Brandt, 1978; Thomas & Quinn, 1991; Wurtzburg et al., 2016). Consequently, the lack of all informed consent contributed to the death of more than 100 Black males (Brandt, 1978).

Succeeding the Tuskegee experiment, one of the most influential overviews of ethical practice was established, the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavior Research, 1974). According to the Belmont Report, there are three principles that should be upheld throughout the collection of data, including: (a) boundaries between practice and research, (b) basic ethical principles, (c) applications. Distinguishing concise boundaries to test and support hypotheses requires formal protocols that protect and ensure the safety of human subjects. Furthermore, ethical practice was maintained by treating individuals autonomously and protecting members at all

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times. Finally, considered the bedrock of ethical research by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), I made sure participants were fully informed of what was asked of them. Each participant and parent gave signed consent. Other aspects of informed consent I ensured were:

1. Overview of the researcher

2. What the intent of the researcher is

3. Ensuring research candidates that their participation is completely voluntary

4. What data will be collected from participants

5. How data will be collected from the participants

6. The level of commitment required for each participant

7. How data will be used and reported

8. Identify the potential risks of taking part in the research

These safeguards were necessary in ensuring each participant understood their role in how data would be collected and reported. In addition, I preserved the identity and personal information of my members using pseudonyms to guarantee and ensure students cannot be tracked. Ultimately, consent forms, data, and other research materials were stored in a secure data base or locked cabinet. Confidentiality included removing identifying details from datasets and securing field notes and journals. In order to maintain security, I consulted with my committee to designate a secure location on campus.

Any limitation that may influence the results of my study was addressed in detail. The first limitation that can present a possible challenge for my research involved the researcher-participate relationship. The site where research was collected is the school where I am employed as an administrator. This posed as a limitation because two students did not feel comfortable in divulging personal information relating to their experiences right away. To

overcome this issue, building trust was an essential instrument that offset this limitation. As an ethnographic researcher, immersion is described as being an insider to tell the story within the culture (Jones & Smith, 2017). Becoming immersed within the natural context can establish relationships that allow participants to authentically respond throughout this study.

A second limitation involved selecting a large enough sample size to participant in this study. Samples in qualitative research tend to be case-oriented and selected because they provide a rich texture of data as it relates to the phenomenon being studied (Vasileiou et al., 2018). As it involved my research investigation, identifying enough students who meet the criteria, Black children living in homes without the presence of their fathers was key. To overcome this limitation, I utilized surveys and snowball sampling as a tool for recognizing candidates.

Researcher bias is the final limitation that could have impacted my study. This limitation could be in the form of how I selected participants and collected data. According to Smith and Noble (2014), bias exists in all study designs through their own experiences, ideas, and prejudices; however, researchers who outline these biases have greater potential to overcome them. To offset the limitation researcher bias, I concentrated on the design of my study and ways to analyze data objectively.

Validity

The concept of validity in qualitative research is a process for assessing the accuracy of the findings as represented by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the validation process, the appropriateness of research tools such as research questions, design of the study, and data collection are analyzed according to the desired outcome (Leung, 2015). In other words, validity determines whether the researcher measures the findings objectively

(Golafshani, 2003; Maxwell, 2013). For my study, a valid instrument was used to capture the experiences of Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers. This process was evaluated based on my ability as the human instrument to articulate data collection and analysis methodologies (Cypress, 2017). Additionally, the following strategies will be detailed to ensure the credibility of my study including: (a) triangulations, (b) member checking, (c) researcher bias, (d) reliability, and (e) crystallization.

Triangulation. Triangulation involved applying multiple data collection methods to strengthen the validity of the findings during the research process. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), triangulation can be described as researcher's "use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of their study" (p. 34). Triangulation aids in mitigating bias that may surface as part of the researcher's personal observation and interactions with participants (Fusch et al., 2018). Stake (2010) added:

> Triangulation for a multicase study serves the same purpose as in a single case study: to assure that we have the picture as clear and suitably meaningful as we can get it, relatively free of our won biases, and not likely to mislead the reader greatly. Triangulation occurs along the way... As a form of validation, triangulation follows a classical strategy – seeing whether the new views are consistent with what is already well know about the case. (p. 12)

Understanding triangulation was essential to the qualitative process as researchers seek to build confidence in their findings (Heale & Fobes, 2013). Data produced from the unit of analyses documents, interviews, and observations combine to increase validity through verification. Therefore, my goal was to confirm findings among the data sets that lead to related conclusions.

Member Checking

Member checking was a validation technique used to confirm the trustworthiness of qualitative data (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking ensures researchers accurately represent the voice of participants by providing an opportunity to confirm or deny the accuracy and interpretation of data (Candela, 2019). Largely, member checking was an opportunity for me to determine whether data analysis was compatible with participant's experiences (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Questions such as, "am I on the right track and did I understand this the way you meant it?" are sample inquiries that ensure member checking (Carlson, 2010, p. 41). For my study, I presented findings to my participants to clarify and confirm the accuracy of data. The method of ensuring validity of my data was indispensable when collating implications.

Researcher Bias

Avoiding researcher bias was vital in representing meaningful and accurate data. My passion for examining the experiences of students living in homes with nonresident fathers was a result of household trends of Black families and my first-hand experience (Creamer, 2020). During my adolescent years, I lived with my two siblings and mother who at the time was an elementary school teacher in an urban district with a master's degree. For several years, she taught extended mornings and afternoons to compensate for the financial loss left by my father. Throughout middle school, I experienced social and academic hardships due to my father's absence. While my father took my brother and me to football games and attended our practices, a gap was created. Economically, our household was reduced to one income that was responsible for basic necessities such as food, clothes, and shelter. Ancillary funds for vacations were not available. Also, behaviorally, I often acted out in school due to the lack of consequence given at home as my mother worked two jobs.

Despite the circumstances surrounding my upbringing, I am on the precipice of completing my fourth college degree along with being a husband, father, and educator for 16 years. I leaned on my mother's unyielding influence and sports as a means for supporting my growth and development. My coaches and teammates contributed to the installation of core values such as discipline and perseverance that I rely on today. Still, there remained a void left by my father that I did not know existed until my latter school years. In order to not generalize and distort the design of my study for students living in a home with a nonresident father, I suspended my personal experiences to determine the unique influences that support development of each participant. For example, even though my mother-lead family struggled, every student whose household resembled mines may not. Through a neutral lens, strategies used to collect, analyze, and report the findings of my study were essential in offsetting this potential bias. To assist in this process, I incorporated the practice of reflexivity or self-searching. Reflexivity is meant to ignite reflection and being attentive to one's perspective and personal voice, (Patton, 2002). I implemented the practice of reflecting throughout the duration of the research process. Recording my thoughts and observations in a journal sustained the integrity of my findings by bracketing my experiences. Finally, I ensured the suppression of biases as researcher through member checking.

Reliability

Establishing consistency in my study was performed within the framework of reliability. Methods such as interviews, surveys, and observation protocols were the same for each case study participant to maximize reliability. Yin (2018) suggested:

> The objective is to be sure that, if a later researcher follows the same procedures as described by an earlier researcher end conducts the same study over again, the later investigator will arrive at the same findings and conclusions. To follow this procedure in a case study research means studying the same case over again, not just replicating

the results of the original case study... The goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study. (p. 46)

This principle informed my role as researcher by applying identical techniques throughout my study. While the findings may vary, it was critical that the procedures used to collect and analyze data did not.

Crystallization

Crystallization in qualitative research offers a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and represents knowledge across multiple points on the qualitative continuum. In addition, researchers must make sense of their data through more than one way of knowing. Finally, crystallization included a significant degree of reflexivity relating to the roles, research design, data collection, and representation (Ellingson, 2008).

Information presented in Chapter 3 introduced methodologies that I used to explore the contextual space of students with nonresidential fathers. As an ethnographic researcher, I investigated social interactions and behaviors of participants in their natural setting (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). To perform this research inquiry, I collected data from multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018) such as documents, interviews, and observations to create opportunities to better understand how father's absence impacts children on a day-to-day basis. Participants for my study identified as Black male or females 18 years old who living in a home without the presence of their father. Finally, the aim in this section was to thoroughly describe the methodologies used to capture each participants' point of view. Accurately portraying their experiences is critical to the verification process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). I carefully analyzed data and meticulously described the behaviors, actions, that emerged from data. I was not able to generalize behavior/actions/activities as replacement behaviors/actions/activities. However, drawing inferences from the data about

behaviors that research generally attributes to behaviors that typically develop or develop best when or with the presence of fathers in the home was essential. Conclusions were specific to the small sample set of my study and not to the overall population of those fitting my study criteria.

In the forthcoming section, I report the findings from the procedures used to collect data. The discussion of Chapter 4 is centered around themes that emerged as a result of analyzing each document, interview transcripts, and observation. Reporting data accurately is the aim of this section.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Overview

Examining the lived K-12 experiences of African American students with nonresident fathers generated helpful data to more effectively assist educators by incorporating student's voice. Black students living in homes without their fathers was the overarching problem investigated in this dissertation. Shook et al. (2010) suggested Black children from single mother homes, particularly those living in poor communities are at a higher risk of experiencing developmental hardships. Noel et al. (2019) extend this claim and described the uneven access of wealth single Black families possess as a detriment to their social growth in comparison to white families. In either case, Black households investigated have been impacted by the absence of fathers. Consequently, the purpose of this ethnographic case study was to identify influences that fill the gap of nonresident Black fathers. Influence for this dissertation was defined as people and/or experiences and/or activities engaged in positively or negatively. Throughout the research process, I utilized principles embedded in qualitative research and relied on participants' views and perspectives to report on their lived experiences (Hancock et al., 2009). Specifically, ethnography and case study were the two theoretical traditions deployed to better understand meaning of the phenomenon studied and will be detailed in the following paragraph.

Ethnography was fitting for my study as an aspect of culturally based fieldwork, enabling me to be immersed in everyday activities (McGranahan, 2018). I was able to describe the social context, relationships, and other relevant processes by assimilating inside the environment of my participants. Additionally, pattern matching and cross-case synthesis

are principles of case study that were instrumental in uncovering meaning of documents, interviews, and observations in this qualitative study (Shareia, 2016; Yin, 2018). Collected data provided direct access in making meaning of my participant's lived academic and social experiences in comparison to generalized literature that align family outcomes with social conditions and marital status (Akerlof et al., 1996; Hemez & Washington, 2021; Washington, 2010). Implementing principles of ethnography and case study supported the investigation of the phenomenon, Black students living with nonresident fathers and were also aligned with the research questions as described in the subsequent section.

Each research question was interrogated to better understand the experiences of the research participants and the influences that impacted their development. The central research question investigated: What replaces the presence of African American fathers for children living in non-paternal homes? The four sub-questions explored: (a) How do students describe their relationship with their resident guardian? (b) What contributes to the social emotional, and academic development for students with nonresident fathers? (c) What are the lived school experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers? and (d) How do urban schools support the academic and behavior needs for students with nonresident fathers? Correspondingly, qualitative inquiries were executed to produce evidence specific to participants lived experiences (Agee, 2009). These investigative research questions served as a guide for collecting data from multiple sets to fortify the experiences of Black students with nonresident fathers.

Overall, a strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide a multifaceted textual description of how people navigate and experience a given research issue (Mack et al., 2005). During the collection process, I was enlightened by the experiences and issues

facing Black children living in homes without their father's presence. Empirical data were collected by means of official documents, structured and semi-structured interviews, and participant observations. Furthermore, the analysis of data produced critical findings that supplied an overview of participant's perceptions, and the interpretation of these findings yielded conclusions and recommendations based on the population studied.

In addition, the study was conducted in a metropolitan Midwestern urban high school where 83% of the students were reported as Black. An indicator trusted to report the level of concentrated poverty is the number of students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, (Greenberg, 2018; The Condition of Education, 2021). Demographic statistics reported 92% of students in the school setting where data were collected qualify for free or reduced lunch based on their family's income status. Accessing and identifying participants in one central location was helpful in maximizing time apportioned for collecting data. Additionally, sampling methods outlined in Chapter 3 identified five African American 12th grade students who provided a robust description of their experiences. Patton (2002) reported information-rich cases can provide an accurate representation of the issues studied. Participants were identified based on the following criterion sample: (a) 18 years old or older, (b) Black/African American, and (c) live in a home without the presence of their father. Originally, snowball sampling procedures were designated to bolster research participants; however, criterion surveys produced a sufficient pool of candidates.

Examining the experience of Black students with nonresident fathers commenced by presenting an overview of the research study to every 12th grade student in the auditorium, followed by the school counselor disseminating participant surveys. Every Black student at the site was not a candidate based on the inclusion criterion; therefore, eligible students were

vetted with permission from the district superintendent and the school's database system. After initiating the research study, participants were asked structured interview questions before pivoting with follow up questions. Using semi-structured interview questions created greater access to the ideas and thoughts of my participants (Blee & Taylor, 2002). As an ethnographic researcher, full immersion in the day-to-day lives of those studied was essential (Pratt & Kim, 2011; Sangasubana, 2011); however, the urban school setting where data were collected and the weekly rate of collections were negatively impacted by the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. At the onset of collection, recommendations for engagement by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) restricted the mobility and assembly of non-household members to reduce the transmission of the virus within the community. The plan was to observe, interview, and communicate with participants inside of their home; however, I was not permitted access to research participants outside of school. As a solution, the familiarity within the school setting and knowledge of participants prior to collecting data was valuable. Prior relationships assisted me in navigating the school environment and connecting with participants to establish a mutual rapport throughout the research process.

During the initial meetings with participants, I asked informal questions such as their favorite subject and what type of activities they engage in outside of school. This process formed a relationship between the me and the participants that did not exist prior to collection. There were many points during data collection and analysis that resonated with my personal experience of growing up with in a home without my father's daily presence; thus, alleviating biases through bracketing assumptions and personal beliefs was paramount (Fischer, 2008; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Recognizing and understanding researcher bias

and the influences that distort the results of a study can be neutralized through reflexivity (Galdas, 2017). Throughout data collection, I suspended my perspective and preconceptions associated with the population studied and relied on memos to accurately record behaviors during observations and interviews. Research findings were confirmed throughout the duration of the study by participants and the subsequent section provides an overview of the data collected.

Over a 4-month period, data were collected through observing, gathering and examining official documents, and interviewing participants. Beginning with examining official documents, high school transcripts, attendance records, grade cards, and discipline records were collated for all participants over four school days. These documents are official records from each participant's elementary, middle, and high school years. Moreover, Otter, a transcription software program recoded the dialogue between the researcher and each participant. Research participants were interviewed three times per week for approximately 12 weeks unless school was cancelled or the participant was absent. Cancelled sessions or postponements were rescheduled until all participants were presented with consistent questions. The duration of each interview lasted approximately 50 minutes or one class period. Observational data gathering commenced during the second week of data collection. Participants were observed twice per week across multiple settings including the classroom, hallways, and cafeteria. Classroom observations lasted the entire 50-minute class period, while hallway observations lasted 2 to 3 minutes. Students at this site ate lunch in their classroom, therefore cafeteria observations lasted approximately 4 minutes and the remainder of the lunch period observation was spent in the classroom. Finally, three out of five participants attended an off-site vocational program where 30 to 45 minutes were spent

recording participant's interactions and behaviors in each setting. Overall, observations were performed over 12 weeks and at different times of the school day to record students interacting with multiple teachers and classmates. Interactions among school administrators and participants was captured between the high school building principal and one participant, Ricky. The purpose of this one-on-one interaction was to review Ricky's academic transcript to ensure he remained on track to graduate. Each of the other four participants were not required to meet directly with the high school principal.

In the preceding section, I provide a detailed overview explaining how data were collected, recorded, and evaluated. Altogether, documents, interviews, and observation memos were examined to bolster my understanding of the educational experiences regarding the phenomenon, Black students living in homes with nonresident fathers. Each unit of analysis was instrumental in uncovering themes that advance the academic and social pedagogy for urban educators who serve this precise population. The following section provides an in-depth summary of the methods used to analyze data. Each step in the procedure was valuable in documenting the academic and social experiences of the population studied.

Data Analysis

At the conclusion of examining documents, interview transcripts, and observation memos, four themes emerged from the data gathered from my participants. In this section, I provide definitions of themes to assist in amplifying the stories and voices of African American students living in nonresident father homes. Educational archives such as transcripts, grade cards, and attendance and discipline records were analyzed and instrumental in framing student's scholastic experience. These documents were the first data

sets I constructed into themes, followed by developing individual codes. Coding is the

process of labeling and organizing qualitative data to identity and distinguish themes,

patterns, and relationships between them (Williams & Moser, 2019). Data coding was

performed by reading and adding labels to each document, interview transcription, and

observation memo. This process was repeated until all data were identified and sorted into

specific codes. As data were condensed, four principal themes emerged, (a) achievement, (b)

development, (c) experiences, and (d) school support. The emergence of these themes

crystallized, meaning multiple forms of data analysis were implemented to create a coherent

and detailed understanding of the phenomenon (Borkan, 2021; Ellingson, 2009).

In this section, I explain four themes that emerged following data analysis. In total,

achievement, development, experiences, and school support materialized after data were

collected. Understanding the lived experiences of Black students living in homes with

nonresident fathers following the analysis of documents produced the overarching theme,

Achievement. Achievement was supported by the interpretive codes (a) cumulative GPA, (b)

class rank, (c) standardized assessment, and (d) senior readiness. Grade cards, disciplinary

records, and attendance reports contributed a distinct foundation of information that

highlighted participants K-12 academic experience. For example, elementary grade cards

were examined and compared to middle and high school grade reports to frame participant's

academic performance. In addition, behavior infractions existed for two out of five

participants, and I examined their disciplinary records to establish a timeline for misconduct

and document the nature of each incident. Finally, attendance records were investigated for

all participants, with two case study members having excessive absences. Attendance data

and its impact on achievement were corroborated by each case study member during the

interview process. Throughout this process, educational patterns began to emerge and I obtained participant's perspective to construct their perception, attitudes, and beliefs. For instance, after all documents were initially coded, I created interview questions for students to discuss their thoughts, opinions, and beliefs regarding their educational experiences during those years. At the conclusion of data collection and analysis, I triangulated the different data sources to build a robust and comprehensive profile. This form of member checking strengthened the reliability of research methodology. In qualitative research, reliability refers to the replicability of the collection and analysis procedures, along with the consistency of yielded data (Leung, 2015). A margin of variability of the results is tolerated provided the methodology process is consistent (Noble & Smith, 2013).

The next step employed to magnify each participant's voice was to analyze the second dataset, participant interviews. The dominant themes established during the interviews were development and experiences. Development included the following interpretive codes: (a) core values, (b) kindergarten readiness, (c) father presence, (d) father absence, and (e) student perception. Experiences was the next theme and it included (a) parenting style, (b) play & exercise, (c) father separation, (d) family vacation, and (3) financial situation as emergent interpretive codes. With each interview, participants appeared more comfortable sharing previously hidden and disclosed details about their past experiences. As participants began to share, I intentionally did not interrupt, but I listened intently for indicators to insert follow up questions or move to the next question. Additionally, prior to each interview session, I instructed student participants that at any point if they felt uncomfortable, we could skip the question or table it for later. After each interview, data were vetted by coding data and presenting findings to each participant.

Students were asked if interview memos accurately embodied their thoughts and perspective. This process was repeated until I verified every theme and code. I conducted analysis in this manner in part due to the coding software. Every conversation between participants and me did not record verbatim, therefore; I transcribed my notes and relied on participants to confirm their statements.

The final dataset utilized in my study to support the evaluation of participants were observations. The principal theme emerging from observations was school support. School support encompassed the interpretive codes: (a) teacher's attitude, (b) informed teacher training, (c) teacher influence, (d) leader influence, (e) school climate, and (f) school environment. Participants were observed across multiple settings including the cafeteria, hallway, classroom, and vocational training. Observational data created opportunities to be an external bystander and not interfere with participants daily interactions. On many occasions, my presence was not detected to purposely record authentic exchanges. I collated data using a journal to document student-behavior, teacher-behavior, and the overall environment. After chronicling each observation, I sorted behaviors by themes. These themes were presented to students during a segment of the interview. Students were sought to include their perception, thoughts, and feelings involving the behaviors that occurred during each observation.

I spent weeks examining documents, interview transcripts, and observations prior to member checking data with participants. Understanding my position as an ethnographer prompted daily self-reflection to ensure data were accurately collected and recorded (Morrison, 2015). I utilized a journal to assist in organization and making meaning of data following every observation and interview. Each journal entry included a description of the

environment and participant's overall behaviors, followed by a narrative summarizing data. These transcriptions were often organized into future interview questions or coded for observation and interview codebooks. An additional procedure applied to maintain the accuracy of qualitative research was reflexivity. Reflexivity is described as a set of continuous, collaborative practices through which researchers self-consciously critique and appraise their influence on the research process (Morrison, 2015; Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). Isolating my assumptions and experiences was instrumental in gaining an accurate understanding of my research participants' lived experience. I examined my role as researcher and navigated different layers of self-awareness to ensure my beliefs did not interfere or distort data. After all official documents were assembled and organized, I read them and made notes in the margins. These notes were beneficial in ensuring participant's experiences were at the center of research opposed to literature that generalize the outcomes of students with similar backgrounds (Radel et al., 2016; Sandstrom & Huerta, 2013). Participant's lived educational experiences supplied direct knowledge of their academic history, and the interpretation of findings yielded conclusions based on the population studied. Additionally, their experiences delivered an alternative perspective to the literature that suggest Black students with nonresident fathers will encounter the criminal justice system (Lloyd et al., 2021). Three out of 5 participants lived with their father during childhood and corroborated existing literature that suggest Black fathers are active in development (Jackson et al., 2015; Julion et al., 2021). Each of the three participants shared their father contributed to nurturing them and social development.

Trustworthiness of data is vital in ensuring credibility or confidence of the qualitative researcher's data (Stahl & King, 2020). Determining how congruent the findings were with

participant's reality was also confirmed through member checking and the examination of interview responses. Birt et al. (2016) characterized member checking as the bedrock of high quality qualitative research and is a technique to substantiate credibility. During each interview, the software program recorded and transcribed the dialogue between myself and each participant. The recorded conversations were consistent; however, some words and phrases were omitted, or not transcribed verbatim. In these instances, I read through the transcriptions following each interview to rectify any omissions as soon as they were discovered. I read the interview transcripts twice before verifying the participant's responses during the next interview session. I asked follow up questions to extend the dialogue and activated an initial phase of analysis used to disaggregate data for the codebooks. Specifically, conclusions were derived with each participant after member checking and sorted into preliminary themes and coded accordingly.

Each analysis procedure described in the previous section utilized documents, interviews, and observations to enlarge the stories and voices of African American students living in homes with nonresident fathers. Attendance records, grade and discipline reports characterized student's academic experiences, while interviews amplified participant's voices. Finally, observational data added meaning of the behaviors and interactions between participants and individuals across multiple environments. These findings were confirmed through member-checking and in the next section, I provide an in depth analysis of each theme and the interpretive codes that transpired from the data.

Data Coding

Data coding is an analysis procedure used in qualitative research to process and prepare field notes, recordings, and documents (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Saldaña (2013) defined a code as:

> Most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data... In qualitative data analysis, a code is a research-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytical processes. (pp. 3–4)

Principles of data coding characterized as descriptive and interpretive were instrumental in identifying emergent themes and patterns. Descriptive coding assigns labels to data using a word or short phrase (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) while interpretive codes require more elaborate definitions to maximize understanding of the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2016). Documents, interviews, and observation guides were three codebooks implemented to categorize and sort data in preparation for analysis. All codes together strengthen data and aids researchers in constructing a thick description of the phenomenon (LeCompte & Schensul, 2013).

The following four themes emerged from the synthesized and condensed codes in data collection: (a) development, (b) experiences, (c) achievement, and (d) school support. Identifying emergent themes and principal code patterns were supported and created from the data sources. The process of constructing themes is a powerful method in maximizing trustworthiness of data, as well as mitigating assumptions and misinterpretations (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Following data collection, documents, interviews, and observation memos were verified to record frequency and establish themes. Documents were first coded to categorize participant's educational experiences while interview data were substantiated

between the participants and myself. Finally, observational data were confirmed after categorizing behaviors into codes and presenting findings to participants. Collectively, these data were applied to better understand meaning of the phenomenon studied, specifically Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers. The ensuing section highlights themes that emerged from the datasets beginning with development, followed by experiences, achievement, and school support. Each theme includes interpretive codes that advance the understanding and knowledge of the population studied.

Development

Development was the first theme identified in my study and was defined as the process of learning new and appropriate behaviors through relationships, including acquiring core values, problem solving skills, and how to get along with others throughout children's developmental years (Sanders, 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Five interpretive codes comprise this theme including: (a) core values, (b) kindergarten readiness (c) father presence, (d) father absence, and (e) student perception. Havighurst et al. (2019) reported children's overall development is impacted immensely by father's emotional socialization skills and methodologies. Participants provided a detailed overview of the influences that contributed to their collective development throughout their adolescent years beginning with core values.

Core values are defined as the principles and character qualities instilled in students during development. Identifying how students acquired fundamental qualities that shaped their personality traits were essential to my study, particularly as Mary et al. (2012) wrote:

> Parents are a child's first teachers and role models. They are responsible for shaping up the child's behavior and implementing positive values in them. Children listen, observe, and imitate their parents. So, it is important that they should be good role models the kid would want to follow. (p. 2)

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Core values emerged from the data and played a significant role in identifying the influences that shaped the character of participant members.

Kindergarten Readiness is described as the academic skills and social support students receive prior to their first day of kindergarten (Hatcher et al., 2012). This construct was significant in multiple studies involving Black children as kindergarten teachers perceived Black children as lagging behind white children academically, along with self-regulatory aspects of school readiness (Iruka et al., 2019; Rouse et al., 2005). Each student investigated in this study felt academically and socially prepared for kindergarten as a result of their resident guardians(s). *Father Presence* is defined as the daily presence of a student's biological father over an extended period (Krampe, & Fairweather, 1993; Thomas et al., 2007). The presence of fathers was documented by each research member in this study. The findings suggest fathers played an important role in academic and social development when living with students. *Father Absence* is defined as the absent presence of a student's biological father over an extended period (Shinn, 1978). Findings suggest, father's social and financial influence decreased when not living with students. *Student Perception* was defined as the image students hold relating to their physical appearance, intelligence, and overall self-esteem (Dumas, 2018; Jena, 2015). Student perception in this includes how one views certain abilities and character traits that distinguishes one person from another.

In this section, I described the theme development and the supporting codes that emerged from the data. The ensuing section introduces the theme experiences, along with interpretive codes that advance the meaning of the findings.

Experiences

Experiences are described as the positive and negative relationships and childhood events that affect the overall emotional, mental, and physical health and well-being of children (Bethell et al., 2019; Hays-Grudo, & Morris, 2020; Sacks et al., 2014). Student's experiences for my study were better understood following the examination of six descriptive codes including: (a) parenting style, (b) play & exercise (c) father separation, (d) family vacation, (e) financial situation. Recording the experiences of participants provided a better understanding of the events that contributed to their academic development, social growth, and overall health. The initial code that emerged from the data collected was parenting style.

Parenting Style is defined as the parental strategies and discipline techniques executed to support social development (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019). Students investigated provided a first-hand account of their guardian's parenting style and the influence their parents had on development. ***Play & exercise*** is defined as the structured and unstructured supervised play among parents and their children. Playful interactions occur within the context established by parents who may offer an abundance of nurturance and active development to young children (Roopnarine & Davidson, 2015). Play-like activities can include laughing, rough-and-tumble play, or mental stimulation. In this study, play & exercise represented the relationship participants displayed with their resident guardians during their developmental years. ***Father Separation*** is defined as the time participants spent with fathers following their parent's separation (Xerxa et al., 2020). Outlining the impact of a father's separation on the social, emotional, and academic development of participants materialized from the data. Generally, the impact of parent-child separation are consistently negative children's social-emotional development, mental health, and academic growth

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(Waddoups et al., 2019). Bonds of attachment are developed in children during infancy and further tethered throughout early childhood and adolescence (Garriga & Pennoni, 2020). *Family Vacation* is defined as the events and experiences coordinated by families, exposing children to various cities and recreational activities (Durko & Petrick, 2013). The opportunity to engage in family vacations emerged from the yielded data and represented the social experiences of participants. *Financial Situation* is defined as the monetary flexibility individual households allocate for their bills and disposable income (Kim et al., 2017). Examining how families maneuvered their financial capital to provide for the participants investigated played an impactful role in understanding the types of resources that were available to them.

In the previous section, I described the theme experiences and the supporting codes that emerged from the data. The subsequent section introduces the theme achievement, along with the interpretive codes that add meaning to each of the findings.

Achievement

Investigating student's academic development contributed to better understanding the influences that impacted learning. Achievement was the overarching theme highlighted in this subsection and is defined as the educational outcomes that identify student's performance level on summative and formative assessments throughout their K-12 educational experience (Winne & Nesbit, 2009). The following four themes emerged from the data: (a) student cumulative GPA, (b) class rank, (c) standardized assessment and (d) senior readiness. Measuring the achievement of Black students with nonresident fathers was significant as literature reports African American parents are often perceived as being less

engaged with their children's education compared to parents of other races (Bartz et al., 2017; Bridges et al., 2012).

Student Cumulative GPA is defined as the student's semester grade point average on a 4.0 scale from their freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior year (Steward et al., 2008). I examined Student's GPAs and included them in this study to provide an overview of their academic performance. *Class Rank* is defined as student's academic ranking based on their semester GPA in comparison to every senior (Lang, 2007). Class rank was used as a benchmark in this study to compare student's overall academic performance with their peers. *Standardized Assessment* is described as the student's scale performance on the statewide standardized Math and English language arts/reading tests (Fazzaro, 2006). I investigated participant's performance on multiple state assessments to assist in framing their academic experience. *Senior Readiness* is described as the academic, social, and behavioral support students received from their home environment to prepare them for a postsecondary career or educational program (Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2018). Gaining access to high-skill employment, soft skills, and academic training is introduced at school and reinforced by parents who are engaged in the learning process. Throughout this process, research participants summarized the influences that contributed to their anticipated graduation date. This included family support, academic tutoring, and social development.

In the previous section, I described the theme achievement and the supporting codes that emerged from the data. The following section introduces the theme, school support along with interpretive codes that enhance meaning of the findings.

School Support is described as the programs, strategies, and educational support used by teachers and building leaders to bolster the academic and social achievement of

students in urban classroom settings (Lam et al., 2009; Rice et al., 2012). The codes that contribute to this theme are: (a) teacher's attitude, (b) informed teacher training (c) teacher influence (d) leader influence (e) school climate, and (f) school environment. School support was influential in not only identifying the academic and social resources participants received in their learning environment, but also how their ability to learn was impacted by the human capital within the school. Across multiple educational systems, leaders have envisioned high-leverage ways to acquire effective teachers who maximize resources that improve learning (Myung et al., 2013).

Teacher's Attitude is defined as the teacher's perspective, energy, and outlook towards teaching, students, and the school environment (Lou & Murray, 2018). Attitude can influence a student's performance positively or negatively. If a teacher appears detached or uninterested, they can create learning barriers that impede students from reaching their academic potential (Omolara & Adebukola, 2015; Sivakumar, 2018; Ulug et al., 2011). Teacher's attitude emerged during data analysis and represented the positive and negative influence teachers had on students.

Informed Teacher Training is defined as the strategies students would implement and endorse if they were the teacher, including how they would motivate, instruct, and keep students engaged (Awla, 2014; Wilson, 2012). This code developed during this study and it exemplified the thoughts and ideas of participants as it related to how to meet their academic needs. Findings from the investigation suggest that as students learn and experience instruction in diverse ways, it is helpful to include their perspective of which instructional strategies are more effective.

Teacher's Influence is the teacher's response to academic and social decisions that impact the classroom environment (Dannetta, 2010; Holden & Rada, 2014). Teacher influence was summarized by participants in my study as a critical element that influenced their academic performance. ***Leader's Influence*** is the building leader's response to academic and social decisions that impact the classroom environment (Dhuey & Smith, 2014; Goldy, 2016). According to the research participants, leader's influence was not as influential as teacher's influence, however; findings suggest building leaders are significant to student's social and academic development. ***School Climate*** is defined as the attitudes, mood, and perceptions within the working and learning atmosphere among students, teachers, and building leaders (Thapa et al., 2013). Observation data were confirmed by research participants, suggesting the school climate has a positive and/or negative impact on learning. ***School Environment*** is defined as the actions, behaviors, and relationships that procedurally impact safety and learning (Lawrence & Vimala, 2012). Students investigated suggested the learning environment played an important role in shaping their educational potential and academic achievement. Byers et al. (2018) implied there is a positive correlation between learning environments and student-achievement.

In this division of my dissertation study, I introduced the emergent themes and codes that support my research phenomenon, Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers. Overall, participants contributed a robust and personalized snapshot of the academic and social supports they received throughout their childhood and adolescent years. Each pillar was essential in framing their experiences, along with cross-case analysis among other members in this investigation who share similar characteristics. Thus, the succeeding section

is a culmination of the first-hand reflections, stories, and experiences through the lens and voice of my participants.

Participants

Ricky

Ricky is an 18-year-old African American senior who resides in a home with his mother. He described himself as having a passion for cooking and enjoying spending time with his friends. Developmentally, his household experiences have impacted his maturation and will be detailed in this section. The first significant theme that emerged throughout data collection was development. The interpretive codes that supported this theme within the interview datasets were: (a) core values, (b) kindergarten readiness, (c) father absence, and (d) father presence. Core values was the first interpretive code that developed during the interview process. Ricky explained,

> Growing up, both of my parents taught me right from wrong. I was not really a kid that got into trouble too much, but when I did, I knew better. I would say my mom and dad made sure I worked hard in school, but mainly my mother focused on the academics. But I would definitely say my mom made sure I treated people the right way.

Throughout the interview procedure, Ricky frequently credited both parents for establishing a foundation of right from wrong. He mentioned that as he has gotten older, the trouble he got into was by his own doing and the decisions he has made.

> My parents gave me what I needed in life. Sometimes I don't always do the right thing. I'm working on it. Also, they told me when I was little what it takes to not give up when things don't go my way, and to keep trying. My dad would tell me when I was a kid to be honest, even if it means I would get into trouble. He made sure I would tell the truth.

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Kindergarten readiness was the next interpretive code that resonated during data analysis. Ricky explained during his developmental years, he lived with both parents; however, it was his mother who stressed academics the most.

> My dad is really into the arts and is real creative. He would watch me while my mom went to work when I was younger. But my mom is the one who made sure I knew my ABC's and stuff like that. Both my parents read to me when I was little. My mother would make sure I knew how to write my numbers and my name. I would say my mother really made sure I was ready for kindergarten. That was the age when my parents split up so, I had to learn things pretty quick.

Ricky also emphasized he felt as smart as the other kids in his kindergarten classroom and he did not have any problems keeping up academically. School did not become difficult for him until his third or fourth grade years. Ricky reported,

> School was not really hard for me. I did my work and I played with the other kids in my class. I did not go to preschool or anything like that since my dad stayed home with me. I would say school became hard in like 3rd or 4th grade. So yeah, I felt pretty ready for school when I was little (kindergarten).

The third code under the development theme was *Father Absence*. Father absence played a role in influencing the development of Ricky following his parent's separation. During multiple interview sessions, he mentioned how he had to grow up faster because his father was no longer there. Additionally, he stated, "I had to be the man of the house with my father gone." Ricky also described how his mother would leave a key under the doormat and he would let himself in after school. Ricky's social development was impacted by his father's absence as he no longer visited the art museums,

> When my parents separated, me and my dad did not go to the museums as much. Really we stopped going all together. My dad had an art background and that's something we used to do together. I liked going to art shows and things like that because we used to talk about different pieces of artwork and how creating art was up to your imagination. He would say, "when artist draw, they unlock different parts of the brain."

The final interpretive code that materialized during my research investigation was *Father*

Presence. Despite Ricky's parents separating at the age of 6, he still maintained a close

relationship with his father. He revealed,

> I would go over my dad's house on the weekends and stuff. My parents had joint
> custody so that was pretty cool. My dad was not on child support or anything like that
> so I pretty kept a good relationship with him and saw him a lot. Me and my dad don't
> really talk about personal stuff too much, but I feel like if I had to open up to him I
> could.

Currently, Ricky explained that he does not spend as much time with his father because he

works on the weekends and after school, but explained they still communicate through text

messaging. He summarized this conversation by clarifying, "Just because my father was not

there, doesn't mean he was there." I asked him to elaborate on this statement, and he stated,

"Even though I did not grow up in the house with my dad, doesn't mean he was not a part of

my life." Ricky explained the relationship with both his mother and father has played a big

role in his development.

The second significant theme that emerged following data collection was school

support. School support was highlighted by three interpretive codes including: (a) teacher's

attitude (b) student as teachers, and (c) school environment. Ricky first mentions the

relationship between teacher's attitude and motivating students.

> Teachers play a big role in how much students learn. I think their attitude good or bad
> can help students want to learn, or it can turn students off from learning. For me, not a
> lot of my teachers acted like they believed in me. I got in trouble, but not more than
> the next kid. I wish I had teachers who would try to motivate me more. They pretty
> much just let me be. Sometimes my teachers in elementary school would act like they
> didn't care if I got the answer right. They act like they just wanted me to be quite. I
> honestly think I could have done better in school if they would have taken time to
> know what was going on with my parents or if they would have talked to me about
> why I was misbehaving.

Following our initial conversation, Ricky explained that his teacher's perception of him played a role in how they treated him in the classroom. He expressed how often he got in trouble in elementary school in comparison to other students in the class.

Student as teachers was the ensuing interpretive code that materialized following data analysis. Ricky was asked to describe what he would do as a teacher of Black children who share similar experiences as his. Emphatically, he suggested schools should establish programing for Black students with nonresident fathers,

> If I was the teacher, I would show kids that I care about more than just their education and whether they learn or not. I care about them as people. I want to make sure kids know they can count on me to go the extra mile when it comes to them learning. Also, kids like me who grow up with a single parent should have a support group after school or something. This would be good to help kids talk about different situations outside of school. Also, kids need role models. A big brother or a big sister. Just a father figure. I would make sure kids have someone to talk to for support. If it was up to me, kids would know that just because they don't live with a father, doesn't mean they don't have someone who cares about them. I would make sure they know I care about them.

Student as teachers as described by Ricky provided transparent insight into his perception of what Black students need to be successful in the event they grow up in a comparable situation as his. When dialoguing with him, he became somewhat emotional about the topic. I asked Ricky if he would like to skip this set of questions and he said no. In fact, he made a point to clarify his responses in greater detail.

> I think some schools give up on kids too easy without trying to find out how they can help. Do schools try to go the extra mile to make sure kids, Black kids learn as much as possible? I would definitely put after school programs in place where kids could hang out and talk, or get their homework done. Sometimes kids don't have anybody at home to help them with their homework, especially if they live with just their mother. So I would create a place for kids to get tutoring or something.

The final interpretive code was school environment. He described the school environment a place where students can learn if there are no fights or bullying. Ricky further explained,

I believe teachers and principals are in charge of making sure kids feel safe at school. It's kid's responsibility to make sure we are safe, but I think if teachers keep students safe, they can be more engaged in their school work.

Raleigh

Raleigh is an 18-year-old African American senior who currently resides in a home with her older sister. She described herself as quiet and enjoys creative arts and writing in her journal. Overall, various household experiences have impacted her development and will be detailed in this section. *Experiences* was first significant theme that emerged throughout data collection. Raleigh summarized her experiences as,

> My experience growing up was nice until my parent's relationship was messing up. I was raised by my parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles and older cousins. At that point I had an older sister and two younger brothers. My childhood was nice, I experienced a lot, but it helped me make better decisions and helped me shape how I want to live now. When I was little I always went on family cruises every year, or I was going out of town to another state for a family reunion. So my childhood was filled with traveling and being family oriented.

> My relationship with my mom is amazing. She was always there for all her children especially when she had to provide and raise us by herself. She's very protective over us and spoils us, but also lets us know when we're wrong and other life lessons. I don't live with my dad, but I talk to him every now and then. He's very supportive in what I want to do with my life. I know I should talk to him more, but sometimes I just don't know how to. My older sister is technically my guardian now because I live with her. Our bond has grown stronger over the years, but she's always been there for me, so it's nothing new.

The interpretive codes that supported this theme within the datasets were: (a) parenting style, (b) family vacation, (c) father separation, and (d) financial situation. Parenting style was the first interpretive code that appeared following the examination of data. Raleigh described her parent's parenting style as,

> My parents' parenting styles are pretty different, but they want the same outcome for us. My mom she's strict, but she also knows that we are eventually going to grow up, so she teaches us ways of life while letting us know it's okay to make mistakes, but learn from them and change. I can say my dad is a bit more chill, but he's strict at the

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same time. I'm grateful for having to deal with their parenting styles because I know other people's parenting styles aren't the best.

The next interpretive code highlighted by Raleigh was *Family Vacation*. Raleigh spoke joyfully of her traveling experiences with her family when asked what she liked most about her childhood. She stated, "I liked being able to go on cruises, and go to different states and countries with my family and have fun. I enjoyed being around my siblings."

Additionally, Raleigh shared,

> I love going to the library. I wish I could go to the museum more. Growing up I went on 14 cruises with my family. Mostly on my dad's side of the family, but we went on a cruise pretty regularly. My granny like she was in charge of like the whole thing (the planning). So yeah, so my grandma and my mom, my brothers would all come with us. After I got older and my parents split up, we stopped going. Then again, the last cruise I went on was in 2017. It was before COVID. We went to the Bahamas.

Raleigh's face glowed when reflecting on her childhood experiences. She made a point during the interview process to recount her many of vacation adventures. Conversely, she also recalled the relationship between her parents. She reported, "I lived with my dad until I was 6 years old and that was around the time my parents got divorced." *Father separation* is the next interpretive code outlined in this section. According to Raleigh, life became more difficult, and her mother was impacted the most,

> It was more difficult for my mom because there were four of us and she had to raise a house by herself. I didn't really know what was going on as a child, so I didn't know how to feel about it. But getting older I started understanding and learning how to cope with it.

The relationship between Raleigh's parents and the impact it had on her family was brought up several times throughout data collection. She shared, "What I least liked about my childhood was that my parents couldn't coexist. I didn't like their toxic relationship." She maintained that despite her parent's relationship, other members of the family, particularly

her grandmother helped provide support. Additional support was provided to Raleigh and her siblings by a counselor. Raleigh disclosed,

> Most of the time, I held my emotions and feelings in. I really just try to ignore them or I will write in my journal. That's why my mom put me in counseling after my parents got a divorce. My mom put me and my sisters in counseling when I was in elementary school. I stopped going in middle school. I don't remember why. But I go see the counselor once a week now. He's pretty nice. He likes to talk about stuff outside of school. It's pretty helpful.

> Financial situation was the final interpretive code under the theme, experiences.

Financially, Raleigh described her family's economic status flourishing prior to her parent's separation and challenging afterwards.

> Finances were good, but then dad left. My mom was in school and basically had to quit and get a job. My grandparents helped pick up the slack. They supported us a lot. The breakup caused my family to split. We went to live with my grandparents. To be honest, we were never broke. Even if we couldn't get everything, we never complained about money.

> When my dad was there, things were a lot better. My dad worked a General Motors. He was pretty much our provider when I was growing up. After he left, things became more difficult, but my mother and grandparents did a good job of keeping food on our table. I'm not a complainer anyway, so things really didn't bother me too much.

Raleigh talked in detail about the how her family used their family and other resources to make sure everyone had what they needed. She complimented her mother's determination and perseverance, but also mentioned how things were a lot easier financially when her dad was around. Ultimately, although his salary was not replaced inside the home, everyone was still taken care of.

School support was the next dominant theme that transpired as part of the analysis process. Three interpretive codes were emphasized to better understand meaning (a) teacher's attitude, (b) informed teacher training, and (c) leader Influence. Teacher's Attitude was

distinguished by Raleigh as a critical influence that helped determined whether students

learned or not. Raleigh suggested,

> It absolutely matters if your teachers like you. I have seen students get away with a
> lot of stuff like misbehavior or being able to receive extra time on their homework.
> All because the teacher likes them. Then I have seen students who the teacher does
> not like get in trouble for the smallest thing. It's like once you get a bad reputation at
> school, you cannot change it. I like teachers who treat kids fair, especially because we
> are still learning. A lot kids have to grow up and mature. So yes, the teacher's attitude
> impacts what students learn and how many opportunities they get for learning new
> skills.

According to Raleigh, a teacher's attitude is not limited to how students are treated in the

classroom, but also the type of attention they receive. After engaging in a dialogue involving

students and teachers, Raleigh began outlining how classroom teachers overlook specific

students.

> The biggest thing for me to measure a teacher's attitude is seeing who they believe in.
> Who do they go the extra mile for? Who do they give extra help to? Who did they tell
> they can do it, or you got this? These signs say teachers are willing to support certain
> kids, but not everyone gets this type of positive attention. I believe a teacher's attitude
> motivates students in a way that they want to do well because the teacher believes in
> them. But, other students are impacted negatively by teacher's attitude by not
> believing in them. They may feel like the teacher does not care about me so why
> should I try.

> Informed teacher Training was the next interpretive code that supported the domain,

school support. Under this theme includes a detailed overview of the procedures she would

implement if she was the teacher of Black students with nonresident fathers. Raleigh stated,

> The first thing black kids need are male role models. If students like me don't have a
> father in the home, they need someone they can look up to. It's not just that they need
> a role model though, they need a positive role model. Students need to see someone
> who looks like them is doing well and believes in them. When adults believe in kids,
> that can motivate them to keep trying or do better. Kids who grow up in the urban
> area don't always have a positive role model, so if I were the teacher, I would make
> sure students have one. The next thing I would do is have programs that make kids
> more comfortable in school. Sometimes it's hard enough not having a parent their
> everyday to talk to, so I would want to create a space were kids feel safe to talk in the
> classroom or to a counselor. Sometimes teachers are so worried about teaching and

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they don't stop to see how we're doing or did we have a good night. I wouldn't do this. I would let kids know every day that I care about them. One more thing I would do is let kids express themselves. I don't talk a lot, that's just my personality. But I think a lot of kids don't feel they can talk to their teachers, so they hold whatever their dealing with inside. The last thing I would try to do is be more positive around students. Many teachers are always yelling and fussing. Kids don't always need that. I would be happy and positive around them especially if they did not see their mother because she had to work nights.

Raleigh spoke passionately about her position and the steps she would take to ensure students had a champion. Students who share similar experiences as her can be successful in the right environment. This brings me to the final interpretive code, leader influence. Building leaders play an instrumental role in shaping the classroom space as well as what is taught in school. Raleigh added, "Leaders control the behaviors of everyone in the school. Teachers, students, and other adults are impacted by the principal." Raleigh described one of the characteristics of quality leadership as:

> A leader is someone who does not give up kids and let them tear up the school. Public schools around here have a reputation of not being well-behaved. A good leader can take control over any school and make sure learning takes place. Another example of leadership is someone who you see in the halls and classroom. I had a principal who sat in the office all day. You never saw them.

Raleigh extended this point by making sure to explain the difference between good leaders and bad ones. Specifically, she explained that good leaders have a presence about them that brings everyone together, while poor leaders are often responding to situations after they happened. Additionally, Raleigh was intentional about pinpointing resources leaders could provide families who grow up in comparable households as her. She stated,

> School leaders need to communicate better with families about different programs to help Black kids. Sometimes families don't know the type of resources that exist for them. Also, it is important to me that teachers look like the kids they teach. Kids need to see that their role model looks like them and believes in them. Also, kids need to feel wanted. If they don't feel wanted at home, they should be loved by someone at school. Principals should make sure kids know they have someone who cares enough about them to check on them when they're not in trouble. Last thing. Black kids don't

need to be treated at school like society treats us. We need a place where we can make mistakes but learn from them without getting in too much trouble.

Reggie

Reggie is a 19-year-old African American senior who currently resides in a home with his mother. He described himself as extremely athletic and enjoys playing sports outside of school. Overall, the first significant theme that emerged from analysis and confirmed from the voice of Reggie was achievement. Achievement was accompanied by two interpretive codes (a) class rank, and (b) Standardized Assessments. Academically, Reggie described his school experiences as stressful and he struggled to make academic gains commensurate with his peers. Reggie shared,

> I haven't always been the best student. Sometimes I try, other times I don't. My favorite class is English because I like the teacher. The class that I hate the most is math, because me and the teacher don't get along well. The biggest reason I feel like I struggled in school is because I always got in trouble. My teachers made it stressful for me. Also, my teachers in preschool and kindergarten thought I was slow because I didn't talk. We would have circle time and I would sit back and never say anything.

Reggie immediately associated his academic performance and effort with his relationship between his teachers. He further discusses that he was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in middle school and began seeing a therapist for his behavior. Reggie described the therapy sessions as unpleasant, "I hated going to therapy, I would cry and tell my mother not to send me back." To mitigate his academic struggles, his mother would reach out to his teachers, but could not afford to provide him a tutor.

> I believe my mother wanted to send me to a tutor to help me with my grades, but we really didn't have money like that. I would try to stay after school and work with my teachers, but that didn't last very long. I just felt like school wasn't really for me.

Reggie's academic performance was further magnified by the interpretive code *Class Rank*. Out of 36 seniors, Reggie rank 34. He was in the 75th quartile. He expressed in his grades

were a lot better in elementary school. After examining his fourth and fifth grade report card, his statement was supported. During both years, his average GPA was between 2.8 and 3.2. By the time he got to eighth grade, his grade point average fell below 2.3. Similarly, Reggie's high school transcript captured his performance on state assessments.

Standardized assessments is the subsequent interpretive code in under the category achievement. Reggie's achievement on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) math and reading assessments reveal Reggie performed in the below basic category in sixth and eighth grade. In high school, the trend continued on the End of Course (EOC) state exam where he scored in the below basic category in Biology, English II, and Government. When asked about his performance on standardized exams, Reggie responded,

> I can't say I always tried my best on those tests. Sometimes I would just guess and mark any answer just so I could put my head down and go to sleep. I wasn't really motivated to do well. I mean what was the point?

The next theme that developed from collecting data was experiences. There are two interpretive codes that support this category, (a) play & exercise, and (b) financial situation. Reggie described his childhood as:

> Growing up most of the time was fun. I spent most of my time with family and friends or playing sports. I spent a lot of time around people from all different types of backgrounds, some judges, some Congressman, some who are just trying to get by day by day. Being around all of these different people molded me into the person I am today. My relationship with my mother I think can be very difficult at times. I say this because we tend to often bud heads but we get over it and are right back talking to each other.

> What I liked most about my childhood is that I got to experience a lot of different things and was able to play almost any sports that I wanted to. I say this because looking back at my childhood I really hold on to the memories that I will hold onto the most. As far as my dad, I never spent the night at his house but growing up I would spend many days with him going to work with him or just sitting around the house with him.

Play & exercise was the interpretive code that manifested in connection with the theme experiences. Reggie described himself as extremely athletic and that he really enjoys playing sports. In fact, he would like to be a professional baseball player following high school. He is working to get accepted into a community college to play baseball. Reggie shared,

> Growing up playing football I was taught to be a quarterback so that was the first time that I remember being taught how to really throw a ball. My Uncle taught me how to ride a bike. I learned how to ride on a bike that was way too big for me and I was on a hill. When I was a kid well I spent a lot of time with teammates and family so I would always be with them. My coaches pretty much took me in and made sure I had what I needed.

Reggie's source of development came from organized sports and he credited his coaches for providing opportunities to play. During his developmental years, Reggie's uncle showed him how to ride a bike and would often play catch with the football or baseball with him. One final topic Reggie explained was what his father didn't teach him, he picked up on. Financial situation was the final interpretive code under the experience theme. Reggie summarized his financial capital in his household by stating,

> My mom struggled to make ends meet. I guess you can say it was difficult growing up without my father because it felt like we never had enough money when I was younger. Sometimes we would go to the store on a budget and get a couple of things for the week. This would last us for a few days. As I got older, it got a better. At one time, my father owned about 14 rental properties. Today, I would say he has about 5 or 6. He made some bad choices a lost a few. My father's income would have definitely helped my mom when I was younger.

He further explained his mother leaned on the church to help them financially if necessary.

School support was the finally critical domain that was highlighted during the analysis process of Reggie's datasets. This theme was supported by two interpretive codes (a) teacher's attitude, and (b) student as teachers. Reggie described his teacher's attitude by stating,

Sometimes I believe that my teachers care about me, but then again, only one or two. I can't really say I had teachers go the extra mile for me. Most of the time they have a bad attitude when I walk in class. I don't really do anything for them to be mad at me. I can read their body language and I know how they feel about me. I just put my head down and I can't wait till the bell rings. My teachers make me just want to get the day over.

Reggie's position on his teacher's attitude was cemented by the idea that he believes if his teachers showed that they cared more about him, maybe he would try harder in the classroom.

The final interpretive code that emerged from the data was *Student as Teachers*. Included in this code is Reggie's outline for supporting Black children with nonresident fathers. He shared,

Schools should take the responsibility of reaching out to mothers and grandparents for kids who grow up without their father. I mean really, they should be more vocal and let parents know what type of help is out there for them. If I were the teacher, I would make sure kids know how to access certain programs within the community to help with their homework if they can't afford a tutor. Another thing I would do is just check in on students. Not every kid is going to look like they have a problem or something is wrong. Teachers should really stop and just talk to kids and make sure they are okay. In my classroom, I would be so cool, I would teach kids about life outside of school.

Reggie maintained this perspective at several points during the investigation. He made it a point to document the struggles kids with both parents go through and how much more kids who don't live with both parents have to find other ways to persevere by using the resources within the school.

Ronnie

Ronnie is an 18-year-old African American senior who currently resides in a home with his grandmother, grandfather, and mother. He works weekends and enjoys spending his free time with his friends. Ronnie has been accepted to multiple colleges and has a passion for working in the construction field. Overall, the first significant theme that emerged and

was confirmed by Ronnie was achievement. This theme included three interpretive codes (a) class rank, (b) standardized assessment, and (c) senior readiness. Academically, Ronnie is a student who was placed on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) when he was in elementary school for having a learning disability in reading. Since that time, he was dismissed from the program and attributes his academic foundation to his mother and grandparents.

> Growing up I was always pushed by my mother and grandparents to do well in school because I live in a fatherless home, I believe that it was less of a strict household. I was just required to do a few chores around the house and finish any school work before I did anything else, like going outside and playing with my neighbor's kids or watching a little t.v. Then it was off to bed. Growing up, education was the most important thing to my mother and grandparents, so living in a three parent household I had multiple educational resources available to me, which is why I focus so much on education now. Although I enjoyed school it got a little stressful knowing that once you leave school you had to come home and basically go back to school. Even though I know that education is very important and I know that I feel like it was shoved down my throat for so long that I only try enough to be considered a good student.

> My grandparents really helped me with my homework after school, since my mother worked pretty late into the night. She would help when she could but it was mainly my grandparents.

Ronnie's academic achievement was further supported by his class rank. He is ranked eighth out of 36, placing him in the 25th percentile for his class. His high school transcript revealed that he did not enroll in any credit recovery classes, bolstering his high school GPA.

Standardized assessments was the next interpretive code, and Ronnie's assessment data reports from fifth grade throughout high school, he earned proficient or advanced in math and English language arts/reading. This timeline coincides with his dismissal from special education. Ronnie credits his mother and grandparents for not allowing him to dismiss his academics.

Senior readiness is the final code under achievement. Ronnie mentioned his academic performance during his early high school years gave him the flexibility to participant in a vocational learning program that he attends daily during the school day. He is earning his certification in auto body collision. Ronnie's teacher wrote,

> Ronnie is an excellent student who does things the right way. He absolutely is a pleasure to have in class. I wish I could keep him for one more year. Ronnie picks up on things well and does a great job of following directions.

Ronnie explained he always worked hard in school to get out of special education and this set the foundation for him being prepared for life after high school.

> I had an IEP so reading was one of the biggest challenges for me throughout elementary school but once I hit my fifth grade year, I soon worked my way off of it and was more aware of the benefits of school. I made sure that I pushed myself to ask questions and ask the right questions to the right people who were already there to help me succeed. I did not want to be looked at for being in that program, but for how smart I was. I always knew I could do something positive with my life if I tried hard enough. Now I am able to attend the vocational program and learn a trade that will help me to make money. In addition, I'm in English 110, which is a college level class.

> Development was the subsequent theme harvested following rigorous analysis and confirmed by Reggie. This theme was supported by three codes, (a) father presence, (b) father absence, and (c) student perception. Father presence manifested as part of Ronnie's expressed that he would spend summers visiting his father. He shared,

> Since I can remember I would go and visit my dad during the summers in Louisiana. My mom and grandmother would send be down there and I pretty much hung out at his house. Things were different because my dad had a different set of rules than I had up here. When I got to middle school, I pretty much stopped going. I would talk to him every now and then on the phone, but I pretty much be too busy working or in school. I can't really say we have a super close relationship, but if I needed something I sure he would try to get it. Then I again, I wouldn't ask him, I would talk to my mom or grandparents.

Despite not living with his father, Ronnie mentioned how well taken care of he is by his grandparents. Father absence is the next interpretive code that supported data analysis. Ronnie explained,

> I didn't have a rough life at all without my dad. We always had food on the table and basically it was like three incomes in the house. My grandparents always made sure me and my sister finished our homework and we chores around the house. Most of the time, my parents did everything for us financially. I don't remember going without things I need growing up.

Student perception was the final code that emerged from the data. In this section, Ronnie described his overall mental health and his perception of personality. He reported that multiple people have influence his personality, however, he believed he acts like his grandmother mostly. Ronnie elaborated,

> I've always been a pretty outgoing kid. I never had a hard time making friends or being liked in school. The biggest challenge for me was staying out of trouble and not talking too much. I can remember participating in school performances and stuff like that. Also, I've always been pretty active in the church. I have been able to make some good connections from there. When it comes to my personality, I would say I'm like a couple of people, sometimes like my mom or grandpa, but mostly my grandmother. She's pretty laid back and chill. I would say I handle things like her.

> For the most part I try to not overreact about things. I got this from my grandmother as well. If I have a problem, I try to talk things out the person or I just talk to my boys. We have a good relationship. I've been knowing them for a long time. Rarely do I just hold how I'm feeling in. If there was something I would like to do better is being a better putting forth better effort during my last year of school. I kind of got lazy.

Overall, Ronnie was able to explain how he handles specific situations and the area he would like to improve in.

Experiences is the final theme that developed from the data. This theme is sustained by the following interpretive codes, (a) parenting style and (b) family vacation. Ronnie summarized his relationship with his parents as,

> We are a close family but we are never all in the same place at the same time. They say I can tell them anything or ask for anything but I like to keep to myself which is pretty common in my house. I would rather just go out with my friend. Everyone gets along well and we all know we can talk to anyone in the house without being judged, and we can ask each other for anything at any time and we will do it to the best of our ability.
>
> For the most part, their parenting style is relaxed or semi strict as long as you get stuff done, and follow the very few rules they have set for us, because they don't want me to make similar mistakes as theirs. My mother isn't really a disciplinarian; she looks at the mistakes she has made, and she tries to help us avoid them. If we do break a rule she doesn't overreact, she just expects me not to do it again.

It was interesting that when talking about his parents, Ronnie included his mother, grandmother, and grandfather. Each person played significant role in nurturing and providing academic and social support.

Family vacation was the final code under this theme. Ronnie talked at length about his experiences of traveling with his family to different amusement parks or camping sites with his church.

> When it comes to going to trips, other than visiting my dad, I would go to Missouri. It seemed like we would go there once a year to hang out as a family. Sometimes we would go to the theme park and ride the rides. I really enjoyed those road trips. Another trip I remember taking a lot was with the church. We would drive a couple of hours to this camping ground and stay overnight. That was the only time I've been camping. It was fun. We stayed up all night telling jokes and eating. A lot of kids like me don't get exposed to camping so that was pretty cool. My last vacation memory was with the chess team. We traveled to the state tournament and I did pretty well. I've been playing chess since elementary school.

Ronnie commended his family for exposing him to a variety of activities during his childhood. He believes, without those experiences, he would not have the financial resources to go until after he finishes college.

Rian

Rian is an 18-year-old African American senior who currently resides in a home with her mother. She has been accepted into college and has been an honor roll student every year

of high school. Rian's household influence has played an important role in her development

and the first significant theme that emerged was experiences. This theme included two

interpretive codes (a) parenting style, and (b) father separation. Better understanding both

codes required an examination of the events that impacted her childhood.

> Growing up it was me, my two twin sisters, and my mom and dad. I have other siblings on my dad's side of the family, but due to the fact that they live out of state I never really got to have a relationship with them like I have with my two sisters. My mom and dad tried to make the whole family thing work for a while, but once I turned three, they split and it's just been me and my sisters and my mom ever since. But at the same time, I spent most of my time with my mom. It was always me and her and my sisters. So, once they split it didn't really change much. I still see my dad every other weekend. They co-parent really well. But as I got older, he stopped coming around and stopped calling so I grew up not really talking to him or having a conversation as much with him. And it just kind of felt like I didn't have a father but I had one if that makes sense.
>
> Once my mom started noticing my dad coming around less, she began to bring me and my sisters to church a lot. We first started going a couple months after I was born and that is where I met my grandparents that are like my parents. I love those two to death. My mom knew from her own personal experience how important it is to have a father figure in your child's life. And she made sure I had one, my grandpa. He and my nana are my adoptive grandparents since my biological ones don't live in town. But they have given me a second home, they have taught me what love should look like. What a marriage should look like. What a relationship with God can be if you want one etc. They have shown me what old school love is like and more. My grandpa has shown me how a man should treat me and respect, everything that a young girl should learn and know about life and boys and self-respect he has taught me. Ever since then life has been full of memories and life lessons.

Rian described her mother's parenting style as "old school" in terms of promoting discipline

and respect. Rian stated,

> My relationship with my mom is good when it wants to be and other times not good. In my opinion my mom has a lot of toxic traits like her mom which is my grandma and I don't have a good relationship with my grandma on my mom's side due to the simple fact I wasn't raised in Arkansas like my sisters were. So, my grandma shows favoritism and that's why me and her don't get along. But anyways me and my mom have issues because she can be very hypocritical and controlling like her mother. And I feel like I can't express myself or my feelings without her finding it disrespectful. Because I was raised around the saying that "if you speak back to your parents that's disrespectful "that you're just supposed to say "yes ma'am or yes sir" no matter what.

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Don't get me wrong I think everyone should be raised to use their manners but as I got older, I realized that some of the things parents say or do is hypocritical. And that if I just agree to everything and say yes ma'am and no sir that I'm allowing you to say whatever or be disrespectful to me. And then I grow up and let other people do it or a grown man do it. I'm just letting people walk all over me which isn't okay. So as I got older, I began to speak up for myself and express my feelings in a respectful manner but yet she still finds it

Father separation was the next code that manifested from the data. Rian expressed

relationship between her parents played a key role on her development.

I lived with my mother, father, and sisters until around 5. After my parents separated, it was just my mom and my sisters. I still remember going to visit my dad regularly on the weekends. When I got older, not so much. Sometimes I wouldn't speak to him or take his calls. For the most part I got used to him not being around. He still is a great dad. I'm 18 now and I know he tries to make an effort. He brings me gifts for my birthday. I try to have a good relationship with him.

At this stage in development, Rian expressed how her mother worked harder to make sure

she had what she needed. Growing up witnessing the relationship between her parents was

challenging, but she is grateful for both parents. Rian added,

My mother is extremely independent so not have my dad around did impact her, but she did not give up. My mom did everything on her own and she always found a way to provide when I needed money or something. Overall, it was very difficult without my father because we had a lot of support. My mom made it look easy. We didn't know we didn't have what everyone else had.

The next theme that emerged was development. Development included two interpretive

codes (a) core values, and (b) kindergarten readiness. Core values played an essential role

throughout Rian's development and were an expectation growing up with her mother.

My mom is a disciplinarian. She is big on discipline. I would honestly say it depends because growing up we would get whooping if we disobeyed my mom or things like that. But as we got older she didn't whoop us as much she talked to us instead. She made sure I showed respect and did the right thing.

In addition, Rian described her church family as an extended family, making sure she

understood principles that pertained to her decision-making and relationships. She is a

student who did not have any disciplinary issues at according to the school's information system. Disciplinary findings were verified by the documents and confirmed via member-checking. Additionally, I observed her as interactions with her teachers and peers, and I gleaned similar conclusions.

Kindergarten readiness was the final interpretive code detected during data analysis. Rian described her process for acquiring skills that propelled her for kindergarten. She highlighted the time spent with her mother and sisters writing name, numbers, and shapes. Rian shared,

> When I was younger, my mother used to read to me. I remember sitting on her lap and we would scribble and stuff like that. She would buy me crayons and markers and I would have fun. Even though my dad was with us, my mother was my primary teacher at home. As a I got older, probably 3 years old, I went to preschool. At preschool, I continued to develop just like my classmates. When I finally did reach kindergarten, there wasn't a lot of things that I couldn't do. I don't think I struggled in school until I got to 2nd or 3rd grade. That's when school became a little harder.

Rian spent her developmental years with both parents, but her academic foundation was established with her mother. My initial thoughts after examining her academic records was that Rian excelled in school. She maintained a GPA of 3.5 in high school.

School support was the concluding theme that emerged from the data. There were two themes that supported meaning-making as it related to school support, which included: (a) students as teachers, and (b) school climate. Both codes delivered a comprehensive overview of Rian's school experiences.

Informed teacher training magnified ideas and concepts Rian would implement to better serve Black students with nonresident fathers. She explained,

> If I was a teacher, I would do a better job at being more patient with students. Especially Black students who may need extra support. I would show them that I care about them by allowing them to have a voice in the classroom. A lot times, teachers don't include students in the decision making. Another thing I would do is establish

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support groups after school. A lot of times kids don't know that there is someone who has the same situation as them. I would create this space so kids could have someone to connect with.

Rian emphasized the importance of creating a space where students could get to know each other and listen. Also, she identified the need to encourage students to stay after school to get tutoring or simply hangout, opposed to going home by themselves.

Lastly, *School Climate* was the final interpretive code that emerged from the data. According to Rian, the climate of the school plays a big role in student disruptions or learning. Rian explained,

> I think our school is safe overall. Teachers and principals do a good job of controlling the mood of the school. For the most part, we don't have fights, bullying, or stuff like that. I believe the school climate creates opportunities for students to be themselves and not afraid to make a mistake. This helps get kids out of their comfort zone when they know they can mess up and no one will make fun of them.
>
> Another reason school climate is important is because a lot of kids are learning who they are. When students feel comfortable, they can learn better and may be more willing to accept people who do not look like them or share the same experiences.

Rian conclude the dialogue by explaining what should be done to encourage identify differences in the school. She believed that teachers and principals should have honest conversations with parents and community organizations to educate students on gender, racial, and other biases that may exist.

Evidence presented in this section confirm findings following an intense examination of multiple data sources and member-checking. This process involved examining academic test scores, and attendance and discipline records to create a robust overview of each participant's school experience. Additionally, interviews, and observations were condensed and confirmed by the population studied. Subsequently, the ensuing section will detail how

findings from my study were synthesized along with the identification of commonalities among participants. Data will be represented in a table to connect themes visually.

Synthesis of Findings

At the conclusion of all data collection methods and the analysis portion of my research study, the cross case analysis revealed several commonalities among the participants and the following themes: (a) development, (b) experiences, (c) achievement, and (d) school support. In total, 44 descriptive codes and 15 interpretive codes were present in each case study. Table 1 represents the frequency of themes that emerged from documents, interviews, and observations and were confirmed by the participants. Precisely, development and school support were two dominant themes present in all case studies. Additionally, the leading interpretive codes were teacher's attitude and student as teacher. Each code was verified by the population studied and is included to visually represent their voice pertaining to their academic and social experiences.

Table 1

Frequency Count

Theme	Interpretive Code	Total Frequency Across Cases
Development	Core Values	39
Development	Kindergarten Readiness	38
Development	Father Presence	31
Development	Father Absence	32
Experiences	Parenting Style	23
Experiences	Play & Exercise	17
Experiences	Financial Situation	32
Achievement	Cumulative GPA	19
Achievement	Class Rank	20
Achievement	Standardized Assessment	24
Achievement	Senior Readiness	18
School Support	Teacher's Attitude	86
School Support	Informed Teacher Training	73
School Support	School Climate	43
School Support	School Environment	49
	Total	**544**

Source: Cases Studies

Each theme contributed to better understanding participant's academic and social experiences. In the following section, I will content will connect my research questions with data collection procedures.

The principal inquiry investigated was: What replaces the presence of African American fathers for students living in non-paternal homes? The sub questions were: (a) How do students describe their relationship with their resident guardian? (b) What contributes to the academic and social development for students with nonresident fathers? (c) What are the lived academic experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers? (d) How do urban schools support the academic and behavior needs for students with nonresident fathers? Collectively, each sub-question was confirmed in the literature and encapsulates better understanding household and educational experience of the population studied.

The first sub-question investigated was "How do students describe their relationship with their resident guardian?" Findings from the interviews were tethered with other data sets to provide a transparent understanding of this inquiry. Despite slight variations in their personal experiences, five conclusions emerged throughout the examination of attendance reports, academic and discipline records, interviews, and observations, which included: (a) strong bond that developed over the years, (b) guardian worked hard to provide, (c) parenting style is strict, but fair (d) house rules are straight forward, and (e) comfortable to share most things with guardian.

Findings from the data collection and analysis process suggested that the bond between resident guardians and research participants can be summarized as an attachment that influences social and academic development. For example, Ricky summarized this

relationship as, "The relationship between me and my mother is very good, I feel like there's a strong bond. We really only have each other in life." Interview data further corroborated his statement and indicated his mother was the primary educator, provider, and disciplinarian throughout his elementary and high school years. Extending the meaning of the bond between resident guardians and research participants can be better understood through the lens of Rian. Rian reported,

> Growing up in a house with my mother had its moments. Sometimes everything was good, sometimes, not so good. But in the end, I love my mother for doing everything she could to keep our family together. She could have gave up, but she didn't. Seeing her sacrifice and determination helped us grow closer to each other.

The findings further suggested, the bond among guardians and student participants was instrumental in helping students achieve their academic goals. Raleigh described, "Without my mother pushing me to do my best in school, I don't know how I would be graduating." She added, "This bond was established over the years and partly based out of necessity because all I had was my mother." In total, each participant described their relationship with their resident guardian as mutually respectful despite any disagreements or disputes along the way. Ronnie described his relationship with his guardian as, "My grandmother is the backbone of our family and she scarified personal gains to make sure our family functioned successfully."

Additional interview findings revealed students guardian's worked hard to provide for their family. The resilience of resident guardians resonated during data analysis and is described in this study as parent's determination to ensure student's social and financial needs are met. For example, Raleigh reported, "My mother did not show any signs of not providing what other families had. Even though we only one income in the house, our basic needs such as were always met." This theme was common among the other participants who

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described their parent's work ethic as unwavering. According to participants in the study, resident guardians high expectations for behavior and academic were maintained regardless of their financial status. Reggie detailed, "When I was younger, we struggled not having a lot of money, but my mother didn't make any excuses. She made sure I acted like I had sense wherever I went and that I was clean." Other similarities among participants emerged from the findings as they described their guardian's efforts to provide. Ronnie confirmed, "My grandmother, and really my grandfather and mother are the best. They did everything they could to make sure my sister and I had clothes, food, and a roof over our head." Supplementary findings addressing the research sub-question: How do students describe their relationship with their resident guardian will be explained in the next section. Participant members reported that resident guardians established behavior expectations at an early age and disrespectful behavior was not tolerated.

Establishing household expectations is explained in this study as resident guardians governing practices that held participant members accountable. When house rules such as misbehavior or curfew were broken, it was not uncommon for their mother or grandmother to respond with a disciplinary action. This was a significant finding that emerged from the yielded data following the analysis process. Reggie stated, "My mom is big on discipline, she would whoop me as a child for getting in trouble at school or church." As students got older, they were given more freedom because of the expectations established at an early age. Rian added,

> My mother didn't play. I hated getting in trouble because I knew she would lecture me and I would be on punishment. As I got older, I pretty much knew how to act and really didn't get in trouble because she was hard on me as a kid.

Student accountability and meeting the household expectations was also summarized by

Ricky. He detailed, "In a way you can say she was my mother and father when it came to

discipline. She did not cut me any slack when I was a kid. As I got older, I didn't get in

trouble much." Examining the household expectations for students investigated in this study

identified the parental influences who held students accountable as it related to their

behavior. Additional findings indicated that resident guardians were instrumental in creating

and enforcing expectations. Raleigh explained,

> Before my parents separated, both of my parents made sure my siblings and I did the
> right thing and stayed out of trouble. After they separated when I was about 6 years
> old, my mother was the main person who made sure we did our chores and that rules
> were followed. Anytime we needed to be disciplined, she was the one who did.

Household expectations were not the only theme involving the relationship between student-

participants and their guardians. The communication between guardians and children

emerged from the findings and played an essential role in social development. Students

reported that the communication with their guardians was open, but there were conversations

and topics they withheld from them. For example, all five participants reported having a

conversation about drugs and alcohol with their guardian, but only two out of 5 spoke about

sexual relationships. Ricky summarized his communication with his mother. He shared,

> Me and my mother can talk about anything, it really does not matter. We had the talk
> about the not giving into peer pressure or doing dumb stuff like drugs or alcohol. The
> main thing I can say about my mom is that she never just told me what I shouldn't or
> can't do, but she explained why I. This helped me understand how my choices can
> cause me to have negative consequences.

Raleigh defined the communication between her mother as also candid and honest. She

reported "Growing up, I could always talk to my mother about anything. My mother is a

really good listener. I wasn't a kid that got into a lot of trouble, so the things we talked about

like boys and stuff were cool." Including the communication between students and their

resident guardians emerged following the data analysis and was instrumental in identifying who students communicated with. Rian described her communication with her mother as honest, but states there are conversations that she does not discuss. Rian stated, "I know my mother would be tripping if I told her about my boyfriends, so I just don't say anything. Other things like school and work we talk about all the time."

Ronnie explained his communication with his grandmother as authentic; however, he stated that he does not talk much. He reported, "I only talk to my friends, but I know if I needed to talk about something personal, my grandmother would be there. I haven't talked to her about girls or anything like that. I'm not sure why." Reggie's conversation with his mother was recorded as, "I never really talked about my feelings much, but if I did, I would talk to her."

In summary, the relationship between students was investigated among the data sets and confirmed by research members in this section. Overall findings suggest students had a healthy relationship with their resident guardians and they were instrumental in supporting them financially and socially. Data presented in the following section will examine the influences that contributed to the social, emotional, and academic development for the research participants.

The second sub-question investigated in my study was: "What contributes to the social, emotional, and academic development for students with nonresident fathers?" There were three consistent opinions shared among my research participants that clarified their academic and social development including: (a) initial academic and social development, (b) secondary academic development (c) father figures. The initial interview process revealed that Ricky, Raleigh, and Rian lived with their father from birth to 6 years old. During this

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time, participants indicated that both parents took responsibility in developing them socially and/or academically. According to participants, family time was spent reading or playing outside. Ricky reported, "My father would take me to the museum regularly and we would have discussions around different art exhibits, but my mother was the main one big on getting good grades in school." Raleigh added, "When my dad lived with me, my mother helped me with my schoolwork, but my dad made sure we traveled. I went on a lot of cruises with my dad." Research members also indicated that their guardians created impactful academic experiences. Rian disclosed,

> I lived with both of my parents up until around six or so. Both of my parents would take me and my sisters to the library. It was fun checking out new books and hanging out. After they separated, my mother continued to make sure I had good grades. She was big on school.

The other two participants, Reggie and Ronnie did not live with their father; however, they reported their resident guardian made sure they were academically stimulated by reviewing letters, shapes, and numbers weekly. Reggie stated, "Since it was just me and my mother, she made sure I spent time working on my homework. She did her part; I just didn't like school." Ronnie's childhood experience was described as, "Living with my grandparents seemed like normal, they worked and made sure I did well in school. Academically, I had everything I needed to do well in school." In total, interview findings revealed each student was prepared for kindergarten when comparing their academic performance to their grade level peers. However, by age 7, every case study participant lived in their home without their father, and 4 out 5 students reported as having academic difficulties following the transition of not living with their father. Ricky, Raleigh, Reggie, and Rian each implied their grades were subpar during their latter elementary years, but improved significantly in middle school. Ricky discussed, "At some point, I stopped caring about my grades after my parents split up. I don't

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think it was on purpose, I just didn't do good in school." Raleigh reported that she attended counseling at her elementary school to assist dealing with her parent's separation. She expressed, "When my parents separated, my mother signed my up to see the school counselor to help me since my grades began to drop." Rian's perspective of her academic development added richness to this discussion. She described, "When I lived with my mother and father, I was on the right track, after my dad moved out, school became more challenging. I wasn't focused." Reggie did not live with his father at any point in his life, however, interview data documenting his academic performance recommend he could have benefited from additional academic support from his father. Reggie explained, "Honestly, if I lived with my dad, I think I would have done better in elementary school. I think he would have made sure I studied a little bit more and did my homework." Only Ronnie reported not having any academic struggles as a result of not having the presence of his father. He attributed his struggles to effort and a lack of focus, not his household living arrangement. Ronnie explained,

> My grandparents were supportive parents who always made sure me and my sister did good in school. I've always liked school when I was younger, but I did not try very hard. My teachers said I had a learning disability, but to me, I was lazy. I did not give my best effort until I got to middle school and eventually, I got dismissed from my IEP.

> Investigating the influences that contributed to each case study participant's academic development in middle school also emerged from the findings. Rian credited her mother and church family for being instrumental her academic improvement. She explained,

> Getting over my parent's separation was hard, but I turned to my church and my mother helped me in school. She checked my homework and made sure I didn't rush my work. On Wednesdays at church, we had tutoring before Bible study. I liked going because a lot of kids did their homework during church and I could ask questions if I needed it. This helped me a lot.

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Raleigh asserted, "Working with the counselor in fifth grade helped me adjust to my parents separation. It still hurt, but my grades began to improve. My mother also helped me with school by going over my math facts and flash cards." Reggie did not live with his father at any point of his life; therefore, he did not experience academic improvement stemming from his parent's separation but he stated, "In middle school, my grades improved a little. My football coaches said I couldn't play ball unless I had good grades. From there, I worked harder to complete my assignments. My coaches motivated me to do well in school. Findings from interview data also documented Ricky's academic experiences and he reported, "I give my mother credit for not giving up on me. In elementary, my grades struggled, but in middle school I can say they got better. It was my mother who talked to my teachers and stayed on me."

Data included in this section identified the influences that contributed to participant's academic development. Four out of five case study members conveyed that their resident guardian checked their homework and made sure their grades were good. Ronnie was the only participated who reported having no academic impact as a result of his father's absence. The social influences that contributed to student's development are documented below in the following sections.

Examining participant's household status revealed 3 out of 5 research members described the initial result of their family's separation as emotionally turbulent. Life as they knew no longer included their father's daily presence, and to compensate their new family structure, supplementary influences emerged. Ricky emphasized, "After my father and mother split up, I had to grow up faster with my mother working nights. At first, I was scared of staying home by myself, but I had to get over it." Raleigh stated, "My parents both played

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a role in helping me and my siblings, but after my father left, it was emotionally stressful in the house. My mom did the best she could." Rian shared, "Growing up with my father and mother was good. We did a lot together, but after my parents split up, my mother became moody and I started to act like her."

When asked to describe the development of their personality and specific character traits, study participants named their resident guardians and household influences as the primary factors. Ronnie described his personality as, "My demeanor is passive and non-confrontational. I really think I act like my grandparents. You can say that I'm old school, and it takes a lot for me to get upset." Raleigh described her personality as, "My personality is stable, I'm in a good place. I'm not too down on myself when I make a mistake. I get that from my mother. She tells me to move on and do better next time." Rian added, "I'm happy person who likes to be around other people. My mother is outgoing, and I'm like her. Every time we go out, she's always speaking to people. I make friends easy as well." The final two students reported their personality was like their mother and father, depending on the issue at the time. Ricky expressed, "My dad is chill and so is my mom. I act like both of my parents." Reggie adds, "When things don't go my way, I handle it like my mother. We work hard and try to get through it. We have always been determined to get things done." In all, students identified their personality was shaped by household and environmental experiences.

Father figures emerged from the data, and that theme was equally vital in bolstering the academic and social development for participant members. To varying degrees, each participant continues to have an amicable relationship with their biological father, however, 3 out of 5 participants indicated that they received paternal support from individuals outside of the home. According to Reggie, "My athletic coaches provided social and financial resources

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when I was growing up. For real, my mom made it work, but we got extra help from my coaches who were like family."

Raleigh referenced the school guidance counselor was beneficial in helping her to socially process her thoughts and emotions, "Going to counseling helped me deal with my emotions better. I wouldn't call my counselor a father figure, but he was there for me to talk. I would say my mother was like my mother and father." Rian's experience was similar, "Without question, my church family was my father figure. My pastor, I call him grandpa even though we are not related. He should and taught me things a father would." Ronnie credited his grandparents for being great role models. Ronnie stated, "My grandparents are like my mom and dad even though I have both my parents. They showed me what hard work looks like."

Identifying the influences that contributed to the emotional, social, and academic development was document in this section. Overall, resident guardians were overwhelmingly instrumental in social and academic development for each case study. Three out of five students also recognized the influence of social factors outside of the home. Rian described the impact the church played in contributing to her social development, while Ronnie highlighted the influence of his coach and playing sports. Raleigh referenced writing and meeting with the school counselor to help overcome the social difficulties of her parent's divorce. The following section examines the lived academic experiences and provides a detailed overview of the findings associated with the third sub-question: What are the lived school experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers?

There were three dominant themes reported by participants: (a) teacher's attitude, (b) school environment, and (c) achievement. Participants were asked to describe their school

experience, and overwhelmingly they pinpointed the impact teachers had on learning and

academic success inside the classroom. Students reported that teachers play an instrumental

role in not only how learning is implemented, but also who becomes motivated to learn.

Reggie stated,

> My teachers never took time to do anything other than correct my behavior in class.
> Even though I can be mischievous, I felt that little attention would have helped me do
> better in school. Really, only a handful of students received positive feedback from
> the classroom teacher.

Raleigh described the impact a teacher's attitude has on the classroom as contagious. She

stated, "When teachers are excited about learning and teacher, so are students. I believe that

student's mood is easily shaped by teachers good or bad… Also, teacher's attitude can also

negatively affect students by their comments, body language, and actions." Ricky's

perspective added meaning in better understanding the sub-question. He explained, "Kids

know when teachers have bad attitudes and don't care if we learn. I've been around those

teachers. I can say though, when they do care, we all try a little harder." Rian summarized

her experience by stating,

> Teachers can have a positive influence on learning. Sometimes we come to school
> unmotivated and all it takes is for that teacher to brighten our day. Other times,
> teachers can tear us down by being negative and not thinking we amount to anything.
> That's how I've been treated before. I hate that feeling.

In addition to teacher's attitude, the school environment emerged from the data when

describing participant's learning experiences. Participants defined the learning environment

as a safety net and an extension of their home according to the interview data set. Case study

members reported that the time spent at school equaled or extended beyond the time at home.

Ricky detailed, "I'm at school so much, it's like my home away from home." Reggie added,

"Since I spend most of my time at school, it's important that school is a place where I feel safe and respected. If I didn't feel safe, I would stop coming."

Data from the interviews characterized issues inside the school such as bullying and fighting as threats to creating a safe environment. Ronnie mentioned, "My current school does a good job of making sure bullying is not tolerated and that students are safe. When students don't feel safe, they either stop coming or they are not learning because they can be distracted." During the interview, I asked participants to describe the benefit of a having a safe learning environment, and consistently they referenced safe spaces creates opportunities for students to be themselves and to be free to make mistakes without being judged. Raleigh described her perspective as, "Having a safe learning environment is important because kids don't have to worry about fights. When that happens, teachers can teach without a lot of distractions." Ricky added, "I love my school for being safe. If I went to another school that had a lot of fights or bullying, I would probably not do as well and maybe I wouldn't be about to graduate."

Students were also asked their opinion on how to create a positive learning environment. Ronnie referenced leadership and teachers' promoting diversity in the classroom. He stated, "Principals should make sure teachers know how to teach kids that look like me. In elementary school, I didn't have many Black teachers and I felt the school didn't teach me about successful Black people." Reggie also explained, "If principals and teachers talk to students more to see what is important to them when it comes to learning, I think that would help students like me."

Achievement was the third theme to manifest as an outcome of students when describing their school experiences. This theme presented the most variation in terms of the

impact on students. According to the findings, three students were self-motivated or had a desire to learn, while two were not. Rian summarized her academic experience as, "I was very motivated to learn at an early age. I did everything the teacher asked me to do." Ronnie added, "My grandparents made sure I did good in school, but sometimes I was lazy. Still, I felt as smart as the other kids in my class. Raleigh's experience was slightly different as she reports, "I always enjoyed reading and writing in my journal. I remember when mother would put my spelling test on the refrigerator." Conversely, Ricky stated, "I never really liked school. I just made sure I did basics to get by." Reggie explained, "School was hard for me, I'm not gone lie. I can't say I was motivated; I just didn't like getting in trouble with my mother."

Combining participants' lived school experience with the separation of parents reduced the academic achievement for 2 students. Raleigh and Rian expressed how their grades struggled in elementary school following the separation of their parents. Raleigh explained,

> When I was in elementary school and I lived with my mom and dad, I felt my grades were good and I was just as smart as other kids in school. After the divorce, my grades began to struggle and my mom signed me up to see the guidance counselor at school.

Rian added, "I like school, I always have. But when my parents separated, I had a hard time adjusting. It took me a couple of years to get back on track. Now my grades are good." It was reported during the interview that parents played distinct roles in supporting learning prior to their separation. Ricky stated, "Even though my mother was the main person to help me read, my dad would look over my homework with me." Raleigh revealed, "My mother helped me the most during school, but I can remember my father reading to me every now and then."

Ronnie mentioned he did not experience any academic effects of not living with his father because his support system was in place. According to Ronnie,

> I was a student with an IEP in elementary school and I had to work hard to get out of that program. I hated getting pulled out of class because of my IEP, so I made sure I asked more questions and worked harder. I knew if I performed well in school, I would not need to get pulled out of my regular classes anymore.

This portion of my study addressed the research sub-question: What are the lived school experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers? Findings from the data identified Teacher's Attitude, School Environment, and Achievement as essential themes. In the following section, I identify how schools can support Black students with nonresident fathers.

The final research question that was investigated in my study was: "How could urban schools support the academic and behavior needs for students with nonresident fathers? There were two dominate themes reported by participants included: (a) academic and social programming, (b) informed teacher training. Black students with nonresident fathers used their voice to identify procedures for improving academic and social instruction. Similar to other findings, there was a consensus among each participant in terms of improvement. In this area, students highlighted programming as an essential function that would not only support students in similar circumstances, but also create opportunities to thrive regardless of their household status. For example, Ronnie discussed, "There's a lot of ideas that could be enforced to help others with similar backgrounds as mine, but the biggest is creating academic and social supports like mentors program such as big brothers inside the school to help students."

Reggie suggested, "I think schools should designate a common space where students could connect with other students who share similar household experiences like growing up

with just your mother." According to Rian, "A support group could provide students with before or after school tutoring in the event students cannot receive the help they need at home because their mother or guardian works." An additional type of programming suggested by participants recommended providing resources to single mothers. Ronnie cited, "I think schools have connections and resources that could help single mother families if they knew they existed." Ricky also added, "Schools should work with families in helping them outside of school. Life outside school is important for students who go to environments that lack resources and funding. When it's just your mother working two jobs, it's hard getting by."

An academic program that emerged from the data as a scholastic support for students was informed teacher training. Students suggested teachers are instrumental in the academic process for Black children and should learn specific strategies for instruction. Rian explained, "Teachers have to understand that not every Black student is going to come to class and look excited to learn. But that doesn't mean we're not trying. Sometimes we have a lot on our mind." Reggie reported, "Principals should do a better job of training teachers to be more sensitive to student's needs. With everything that is going on in the world, sometimes kids don't have a clear mind. Teachers should be more sensitive."

Raleigh mentioned, "I don't think many teachers care about us outside of school, but just their classroom. The ones that do care about me mentally and outside of school, I try my best for." Ronnie highlighted, "Principals should make sure teachers are trained to work specifically with Black students like me who do not have a father. They should be trained on how to read different body languages." Ricky suggested, "Teacher training means leaders should invest in social development throughout high school. Core values that may or may not

have been taught at home should be taught at school along with teaching strategies that teach Black kids."

Findings substantiated in this portion of my qualitative study were directly aligned to my research questions and magnified through the voice of my students. Research participant's voices were sought to better understand their individual experiences and to confirm commonalities among the data. Data were analyzed first by coding each dataset and developed into themes. Throughout the coding process, participants' voices described emergent themes and illustrate the accuracy of the findings. This process lasted over three weeks until I condensed the data down to four themes. Additionally, worked to ensure the research questions were interrogated throughout the data analysis process. I relied on my research questions to confirm all research inquiries were sufficiently addressed. In concluding this chapter, I summarize Chapter 4 and provide an outline for my research implications.

Conclusion

Examining the experiences of Black students with nonresident fathers was the overarching theme discussed in this chapter. Data were collected and analyzed from documents, interviews, and observations to represent the voice and perceptions of participants. Although each case study was uniquely different, there were consistencies among research members that informed my conclusions as a qualitative researcher. According to findings from the datasets and confirmed by the population studied, the primary influences that replaced the presence of fathers were resident guardians. Each participant described the responsibility their resident guardian took in ensuring that basic needs were met. Participants attributed their parents for not only instilling core values such as hard work,

but also for providing for them financially. Overall, students reported participating in various activities with their fathers in addition to the financial stability they provided; however, mothers/grandparents were the primary individual who established academic expectations regardless of father residency. One student described how she and her mother do not always agree, but she knows the sacrifices her mother made to support her. In addition, church organizations, counselors, and coaches were identified as key figures whose influence was irreplaceable in meeting their paternal needs. In total, the findings suggest, the absent presence of fathers was replaced by a combination of resources such as resident guardians, community organization such as churches, and athletics that supported development.

The final chapter of my qualitative study introduces implications and recommendations, which will culminate my research process and present next steps for future investigation.

Chapter 5

Implications and Recommendations

Overview

Qualitative research functioned as a conduit to examine the phenomenon of Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers. The journey of exploring Black students with nonresident fathers was near and dear to my heart as I share similar, but not equal experiences. Various experts have examined the problem of Black students living in nonresident homes and associated their household status with negative social conditions (Ritter, 2015; National School Boards Association, 2020; National Student Clearinghouse, 2017). With this study, I sought to investigate student's opinions, feelings, and beliefs about the experiences that occurred throughout their formative and high school years. Ultimately, the purpose of this ethnographic case study was to pinpoint the influences that replaced the presence of Black fathers by the confirmation of students' voice and the triangulation of multiple data sources to build a robust and comprehensive profile. Additionally, an emerging theme that resonated from the findings addressed the research sub-question: "How could urban schools support the academic and behavior needs for students with nonresident fathers?" Providing educators with a transparent and detailed overview of instructional methodologies specific to their learning modalities and needs of students who share similar household characteristics as the population studied will be expounded below.

Literature reports Black students are more susceptible to external influences that impact their ability to flourish academically based on social economic status (Hanks et al., 2018; Noël, 2018; Simms et al., 2007). Factors such as poverty have been linked to the academic gaps between white and Black students (Vannemand et al., 2009). In fact, Barton

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and Coley (2007) suggested student achievement correlates with the following home factors: (a) the presence of two parents in the home, (b) the total hours parents spend reading to children, and (c) frequency of absence from school. Compared to the economic state of white children, Black children were less likely to come from two-parent families, minimizing literacy development for children at the start of kindergarten. Kindergarteners of high socioeconomic status (SES) are read to more frequent (66%) compared to 36% of kindergarteners in the lowest SES group (Barton and Coley, 2007). Dixon-Román, et al. (2013) added, state standardized assessments and discipline records have been used as a benchmark to forecast the probability that Black children will enter the penal system (Same, Guarino, Pardo, Benson, Fagan, & Lindsay, 2018). The school-to-prison-pipeline can be described as an antiquated philosophy that predicts the potential of students, neglecting influences such as teachers, building leaders, and student-efficacy (Heitzeg, 2009; Mallet, 2017; Morgan, 2021; Wilson, 2014).

These ideas were tested in my study and findings suggest students and their families should be commended for overcoming what society would deem as social hardships. For example, Carnoy and García (2017) measured the academic achievement of the lowest SES and reported Black eighth graders scored 0.71 standard deviations lower than white counterparts in mathematics and 0.55 SDs lower in reading. Data further reported the test score gap between poor students (i.e., eligible for free or reduced lunch) and nonpoor students (i.e., those who are ineligible and do not qualify for free and reduced lunch) remained consistent. High achieving students with superior economic capital outperformed poorer students on standardized assessments. Conversely, students investigated in my research performed adequately on various state assessments with 3 out 5 achieving proficient

or advanced. Examining the lived experiences of Black children created opportunities to identify commonalities and differences among the literature, and as an ethnographer, I was fortunate to detail a fraction of the daily interactions and exchanges through immersion and relying on participants' voice to enlarge their story.

Making meaning of students' experiences began with the reexamination of the research questions followed by a discussion of major findings outlined in the literature involving Black students with nonresident fathers and their educational and social experiences. Pinpointing the purpose of my study, what replaces the presence of Black fathers for students in nonresident homes was corroborated within the literature and will be summarized below. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, implications, and recommendations.

Research Questions

What replaces the presence of African American fathers for students living in non-paternal homes was the inspiration and overarching research question investigated. In addition, the following sub-questions contributed to supplying a thick description of the phenomenon:

(1) How do students describe their relationship with their resident guardian?

(2) What contributes to the social, emotional, and academic development for students with nonresident fathers?

(3) What are the lived school experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers?

 (4) How could urban schools support the academic and behavioral needs for students with nonresident fathers?

Exploring each sub-question provided a diverse perspective of the problem studied, Black students living in nonresident father homes. A review of the literature isolated how students advance academically and socially irrespective of their household status (2013; Jackson et al., 2015; Julion et al., 2021; Sams-Abiodun, & Rattler). Overall, an aim of the study was to identify what replaces Black fathers and findings were comprised of four themes including: (a) development, (b) experiences, (c) achievement, and (d) school support and multiple codes. An analysis of which influences replaced the presence of fathers related primarily to the individual case members, while other codes such as how schools can support Black students with nonresident fathers and senior readiness connected across all cases and will be explained in the following section. Altogether, aggregate findings including kindergarten readiness, parenting style, and teacher's attitude contributed to better understanding student's experiences by pinpointing the influences that shaped development.

Interpretation of the Findings

Students with nonresident fathers were explored to better understand their developmental and k-12 academic experiences. Although all five case study participants shared distinctive qualities: personality, academic achievement, and experiences, descriptive and interpretive codes were present across all cases. Descriptive codes assign labels to data using a word or short phrase while interpretive codes require intricate definitions to enlarge and maximize meaning (Miles et al., 2014). All participant members felt prepared for kindergarten and attributed their academic readiness to parental support inside the home. School support was an additional theme that resonated among all cases following data analysis. Participants indicated the school environment, teachers, and building leaders play an instrumental role in promoting academic achievement along with supporting students

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emotionally. Each theme enlarged personal experiences of participants and provided insight of what contributed to their development and will be described in detail in the following section.

Development

Development was the first theme that emerged from the data and played an important role in understanding the experiences of the phenomenon, Black students living in homes with nonresident fathers. There were three major themes that will be highlighted throughout this section: (a) social development, (b) academic development, and (c) financial situation. Empirical evidence in this study reports students with nonresident fathers develop similarly to their peers despite differing experts reporting students with nonresident fathers are susceptible to academic and social developmental barriers as a byproduct of their family's economic status (Barbarin, 1993; Barton, & Coley, 2010; Nam et al., 2015). Contrary to contemporary and historical literature (Nichols-Casebolt, 1988; Mandara et al., 2005; Rambert, 2021), participants investigated developed academically and socially at a rate commensurate with other students. Additionally, although financial and academic hardships may have existed for two out of the five participant members, each student implied their upbringing prepared them for future success and how to overcome possible obstacles. Enlarging the theme financial situation will be detailed in ensuing section.

All five case study members recognized the financial contribution of their resident guardian as instrumental in economically providing resources for their family. Parental income is a criterion frequently used to determine which students qualify for free and reduced lunch (Gupta et al., 2020). Black students participating in the National School Lunch Program (1946) regularly associate economics with lower academic achievement,

disciplinary infractions, and reduced financial capital (Karnaze, 2018; Leos-Urbel et al., 2014). Despite these findings, students investigated in this study consistently did not align with the narrative. In fact, all five participating students have been accepted to college and three out five are National Honor Society members. Overcoming any potential financial challenge to prepare students for graduation was instrumental and will be discussed in detailed in the subsequent section.

Educationally, three out of five participants identified two stages during their academic development including (a) time spent living with their mother and father, birth to approximately 6-years-old, and (b) time spent without their father, approximately 7 years old to the present. During both phases, participants attributed their scholastic development to their resident guardian. Fathers who lived with participants supported learning by assisting with homework and attending parent teacher conferences, confirming recent data that suggests Black fathers are involved in their children's lives academically (Jones, & Mosher, 2013; Perry et al., 2011; Wilson, & Thompson, 2020). Father involvement was confirmed by three out of five participants who reported receiving academic and social support from their father prior to their parent's separation. Following the separation, all case study members established that their resident guardian was the primary champion who read to them as a child and helped with homework.

Parental involvement was a reoccurring theme that bolstered various literary ideas that advocate the importance of parents as teachers (Ceka & Murati, 2016; Pirchio et al., 2013). Each student credited the accumulation of their academic knowledge during their formative years was a product of instruction instilled by their guardian resident. Overall, academic development described in this section acknowledged the importance parents played

in scholastic intelligence. The following paragraph outlines social development related to this research investigation.

Socially, experts propose identity development is shaped by parents, community, and social influences that are routinely present in their daily lives (Rodgers et al., 2020; Stanford et al., 2021). In particular, social and emotional learning (SEL) research refers to life skills that foster interpersonal relationships (Simmons et al., 2018) and parental interactions that not only provide support, but positive parent-child relationships foster emotional expressiveness (Humphries et al., 2014). Children first learn social and emotional competence through socialization inside the home. In this study, research participants reinforced this philosophy and attributed their social development to their parents. In total, each case member described attributes such as temperament, emotional expressiveness, and problem solving with one or more of their parents.

Developmentally, three out of five students in this study reported their fathers played a key role in their social maturity at an early age, but eventually their personality was molded or most influenced by their resident guardian. Additional literature described behavior development for Black children as resilient despite risk factors such as poverty (Aratani et al., 2011; Johnson-Staub, 2017). Behavioral outcomes revealed guardians of students investigated not only emphasized perseverance, but core values such as integrity and commitment were integral in influencing development. Further, four out of five participants reported a key factor relating to behavior development was influenced by their mother's resolve. The final participant attributed her behavior development to her older sisters because they were close in age. She communicated how much she would immolate their behaviors, both positive and negative.

In summary, this section of my study introduced the theme development, along with the subcategories of social development, achievement development, and financial situation. Additional data compared empirical findings such as family's economic status and social development following the analysis process to document student's experiences. Finally, historical and contemporary literature pertaining to student development was examined to identify commonalities and differences among each participant. In the following section, participants' experiences will be examined and corroborated among the research to strengthen and/or fill the gap in the literature.

Experiences

The next theme that emerged following data collection was experiences. There were three common themes present in each case study that will be documented within this section including: (a) parenting style, (b) play & exercise, and (c) financial status. Parenting style was the first significant focus area that resonated during participants' developmental and adolescent years. The relationship between parenting style and the positive and negative responses students receive influences the emotional climate inside the home (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018; Leung & Man, 2014; Smetana, 2017). Diana Baumrind (1966) pioneered a prototypical description of parenting style and categorized three pillars as: (a) authoritative, (b) authoritarian, and (c) permissive. Each category isolates specific interactions between parents and their children. Students in this study described their relationship with parents as both authoritarian and authoritative. Authoritarian parenting is described as a one-way mode of communication where parents establish strict rules, while authoritative parenting is defined as a nurturing relationship with clear boundaries and guidelines (Estlein, 2016; Idrees et al., 2021). Parent-child relationships were essential to the development of participants and

assisted in shaping meaningful experiences. All five participants described their resident guardian's parenting style during their formative years as authoritarian. As case study members matured, authoritative parenting styles were routinely implemented. Participants were given flexibility to make their own decisions with the understanding of being responsible. The influence of resident guardians was recorded in this section to isolate their social contributions. Next, I will introduce the code play & exercise and its correlation between student development and guardians.

During data analysis, play & exercise emerged as an interpretive code under the theme experiences. Students who resided with their father recalled spending quality time with their dad playing and attending social events. This observation aligns with literature that report Black fathers are active in their child's social development (Cooper et al., 2019; Ransaw, 2014). Active fathers are essential to creating experiences that promote healthy development (Azuine, & Singh, 2019; Livingston, & McAdoo, 2017). Participants who did not live with their father indicated they shared similar active experiences with other family members or athletic coaches. In total, students reported play & exercise was beneficial to participant's social development. One final code under the theme experience involved student's financial status and will be described in the succeeding paragraph.

Previous studies examined economic capital among Black families and align poverty with social status (Damaske et al., 2017; Fins, 2020). Financial flexibility had varying results following data analysis. On one hand, three out of five students indicated that the loss of their father's monetary contribution abated their financial freedom, while the other two participants reported minimal effect of the loss of their father's monetary contribution. Similar to the literature (Berube, 2019; Moss et al., Broady, 2020), families investigated

benefited from father's financial support. Nevertheless, each student indicated their resident guardian or support system provided necessary resources to support development. The wealth gap was also a common theme among the literature and also in my study. Overall, four out of five participant students indicated that despite their resident guardian providing for them financially, there were times when they struggled. Weller and Roberts (2021) reported Black single parent households face obstacles in building wealth despite innovative policies to reduce systemic barriers (Hernández Kent, & Ricketts, 2021). Tax abatements and housing vouchers were introduced to offset housing polices such as redlining (Sard & Rice, 2016); however, the accumulation of wealth for single Black households is significantly less than Black married couples (Raley et al., 2015; Tamir et al., 2021).

Each theme presented in this section contributed to better understand the phenomenon Black students living in homes with nonresident fathers. Together, parenting style, play and exercise, and financial status emerged within the findings as sub-categories of the theme, experiences. Additional findings following this investigation revealed resident guardians adequately provided for their family financially; however, two-parent households provided greater financial flexibility. The following section provides and overview of achievement and examines literature to specific to understanding the experiences of the research participants.

Achievement

In this section, I will highlight two codes that emerged from data collection (a) senior readiness and (b) standardized assessment. Examining official documents such as academic transcripts, discipline, and attendance records revealed the study participants K-12 school experience was similar in many areas. For example, each student met the academic requirement to graduate high school with their diploma. Educational studies indicate Black

students with nonresident fathers are inclined to experience academic hardships (Fantuzzo et al. 2012; Same et al., 2018). However, academic transcripts disclosed four out of five students met adequate academic expectations throughout their high school career. At no point during the study participants' high school experiences were they enrolled in a credit recovery class. The remaining participant was on the cusp of not graduating with his class and was enrolled in multiple credit recovery classes. Additionally, three out of five students participated in a vocational trade program. Meeting all academic criteria prior to the student participants' senior year was the school's requirement for enrolling in a vocational program.

Upon examination, literature reported the graduation rate for Black students was inferior to white students despite the gap diminishing (National School Board Association, 2020). Compared to my study, this theme was not prevalent as each participant had met the academic requirements to graduate. Other findings report, the educational attainment for Black students on standardized tests are generally lower than white students (Bucknor, 2015; Dixon-Román, Everson, & McArdle, 2013; Knoester, & Au, 2015). This theme was present in my findings as one out of five students performed in the top quartile on high school standardized assessments. The remaining four students scored in the below basic or basic category across all standardized assessments. Despite their performance on state assessments, three students are members of National Honor Society and have remained on the honor roll all 4 years. These findings juxtapose literature that correlate academic testing with achievement (Peterson et al., 2016).

Finally, achievement literature measures student's college readiness following high school. According to reports, African American students are enrolled in fewer advance placement high school courses and are least likely to meet benchmarks in math and science

(ACT, 2016; Jeffery, & Jimenez, 2021). Although three out of five case study members did not know specifically know what they wanted to do after high school, their academic transcripts revealed the completion of dual credit coursework. These students earned passing grades in one or more college level courses. The remaining two students did not participate in advanced coursework; however, all students have been accepted into college. Academically, students in the investigation have minimal scholastic traits that correlate with the literature. Overall, the majority of my case study members have exceeded educational expectations and feel academically prepared for life after high school. School support is the final interpretative code outlined in this chapter and will be examined to better understand student's experiences in conjunction to the literature.

School Support

School support was one the most common themes that existed throughout each participant's conclusions and is described as the influences that promote achievement for Black students with nonresident fathers. First, teacher attitude and the impact it has on learning was consistent throughout the investigation. Quinn and Stewart (2019) reported white educators hold more negative racial stereotypes towards African Americans. Teachers' implicit attitudes towards Black students have a significant impact on educational outcomes (Costa et al., 2021). Students investigated in this study reinforced this principle and expressed teachers who show concern not only for their academic success, but care about them individually are most effective. Conversely, teachers whose attitude is dismissive of student's individual academic needs are less effective. Cultural diversity also plays an important role in maximizing achievement for students with nonresident fathers by dismantling negative stereotypes (Glock et al., 2018). Culturally relevant pedagogy compels

teachers to become familiar with students learning style and identify strategies and techniques to better serve and connect with them (Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Students reported that when teachers show they care, students feel inspired to work harder and meet the academic expectations.

An additional theme presented by students was educational and social programming. This outcome was in response to the question, "What should be implemented to support Black students with nonresident fathers?" Overall, students reported social programming would be beneficial in creating opportunities to receive additional support after or during school. Students shared a common belief that if fathers are not inside the home to support students academically, the school has a responsibility to help meet children's learning needs. Schools are encouraged to create opportunities for Black students to access various academic programs that support learning and development (King et al., 2021). Specifically, if students with nonresident fathers lack academic or social support, schools are encouraged to assist in meeting those needs. Further, students indicated that teachers should be trained on how to interpret body language, particularly of those who may not have fathers in homes to teach children different soft skills (Goodspeed, 2016). Participants believed a lot of behaviors are misread, and interpreted wrongly, and taken out of context, causing teachers to overreact and/or escalate a situation. One final theme that contributed to School Support was School climate.

School climate was represented throughout the findings section of this study, and research participants suggested school climate or the overall attitudes and behaviors inside the school play a significant role in learning. Previous studies support this idea and suggest climate not only impacts engagement, but influences learning opportunities (Kane et al.,

2016). Students' feelings about school and their classroom experience have a critical impact on their daily lives. Likewise, in relation to school support, climate involves keeping students safe and connected to principles and ideas that do not distract staff and students from maximizing learning (McGiboney, 2016; Rapheal, 2017). Study participants reported that climate is essential to bridging the gap between their ability and potential. Ultimately students described how safe learning environments enable students engage without fear of being rejected or bullied.

One area that was not prevalent among my participants but existed in the literature was their perception of disciplinary infractions involving Black students. According to previous studies, Black students are more likely to be suspended or face corrective consequences for their actions (Losen & Martinez, 2020; Rudd, 2014; Smith, & Harper, 2015). Based on student's experiences, they believe Black students are not overdisciplined and the disproportionate rate Black students are disciplined was not an issue.

In summary, included in this chapter was a discussion of major findings associated with the literature on Black students with nonresident fathers and their educational and social experiences. Development was the first theme that emerged from the data and played an important role in understanding the experiences of the phenomenon, while (a) parenting style, (c) play and exercise, and (c) financial status supported the second theme, experience. The final two themes outlined in this section were Achievement and School Support. Altogether, each topic added meaning to the experiences of participant. These findings were examined to strengthen connections throughout the literature or to isolate dissimilarities. The following section will summarize of the limitations that resonated during this investigation.

Limitations

Qualitative research requires gathering personal opinions, perspective, and experiences from multiple data sources over an extended period of time (Atieno, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This labor-intensive data collection technique involves fieldwork and connecting with participants to satisfy research questions (Patton, 2015). Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic and researcher-participant relationship were two primary limitations that surfaced during my research investigation. First, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted my schedule for collecting and analyzing data. On multiple occasions, the school was closed as a result of contact tracing, quarantining, or as a result of a school wide outbreak. In instances where school was cancelled, students were rescheduled based on their availability until all data were collected. Additionally, I was unable to enter the home of participants to collect data.

The COVID-19 policies made it difficult to observe and connect with students in their natural environment outside of school. Despite this challenge, I was able to conduct my research investigation during and after the school day. Students were interviewed and observed at school and during their vocational learning program. The second limitation present in my study involved the relationship with participants. The relationship between the researcher and participant requires a deep level of trust (Algeo, 2013; Mack et al., 2011). Prior to collecting data, I was familiar with students as an administrator inside the school. This capacity enabled immediate access to students, however, a different relationship was required to maximize student's comfortability. An example of this, two students were apprehensive in terms of divulging specific information regarding their home-life experiences outside of school. Overcoming this limitation required patience and honesty. To

accomplish this, I engaged participants in casual, unscripted conversation to establish rapport. By the second week into the investigation, case study members began to open up. Finally, I created boundaries within my study and informed participants that communication discussed during data collection would be confidential unless it involved harm to themselves or others.

In the previous discussion of limitations, I highlight threats to my research study. Although my original schedule for collecting data was altered due to COVID-related absences or school closures, I was able to connect with students to fulfill my research questions. Another important factor discussed was the relationship between the researcher and participants predicated on patience and trust. I intentionally did not rush the research process in a deliberate effort to maximize the quality of data. The section that follows will focus on a discussion of important implications and recommendations for future research.

Implications and Recommendations

The phenomenon investigated in this ethnographic case study was Black students living in homes with nonresident fathers. Today, approximately 51% of Black students reside in homes without the presence of their father (Lloyd et al., 2021). However, many statistical calculations involving Black families do not include cohabitating or co-parents (Gonzalez et al., 2014; Shook et al., 2010). This variation to nuclear household status augments the narrative that Black fathers are not present. Similarly, results from this study suggests that fathers who lived with their child for any extended period of time were socially, academically, or financial involved in their development. However, when regularly detached from the home, students described that a parental void existed. For example, three out of five study members identified social hardships of reduced income and fewer vacation experiences

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following the separation of their parents. A second element outlined in the finding suggests the principal influence that replaced the presence of fathers was participant's resident guardian.

Varying studies report Black students with non-nuclear households are more likely to experience harmful social conditions that impede their academic and social success (Haider, 2021; Lin & Harris, 2009; Ratcliffe, 2015). This premise was squelched, and research members confirmed social and emotional influence was promoted within and outside the home. Although resident guardians consumed the majority of responsibility for nurturing students, church members and coaches played a significant role in development. Economically, findings from my study report families did not have the financial capital that existed prior to the separation of parents. According to students, economic flexibility was one of the greatest challenges growing up; however, other family members and organizations assisted in meeting their family's needs. Another important factor that will be discussed in the subsequent section involves the school personnel's role in supporting the phenomenon Black children living in homes with nonresident fathers.

Data yielded from the findings imply schools play a significant role in not only meeting the academic needs of students, but providing social support for students with nonresident fathers is essential. Participants reported schools could better serve students with similar characteristics by creating programs that specialize in identifying resources for students and families. When fathers are not present daily, students could benefit from receiving assistance with homework or talking within a peer group. This outcome resonated throughout the investigation and is important to creating a school climate where students are supported regardless of household status. A final implication that emerged from this

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investigation involves informative teacher training. Students investigated consistently suggested teachers need to learn how to better instruct students who may not have access to resources that promote achievement. This recommendation encapsulated the role school personnel play in supporting learning and served a primary framework for conducting qualitative research.

Overall, qualitative research was the appropriate methodology for this study, however interviews and observations are not necessarily designed to capture hard facts. Additional credibility could be given to my study if coupled with quantitative research. For example, statistical analysis may offer evidence to strengthen and enlighten data discovered using quantitative research tools that measure the frequency and statistical impact of nonresident fathers. Another area where quantitative research could bolster my study is financial representation. Family income data could be charted to specifically measure and chart economic income prior to parent's separation and following father's relocation. Each recommendation could be applied that could future research to broaden the findings of this study.

Nevertheless, results from this study were exclusive to the population and sample study size. Findings from this small qualitative study are not generalized, nor do they represent the entire body of Black students living in homes with nonresident fathers. As a result, I recommend future studies focus on enhancing the reliability across a larger sample size. Increasing the sample size creates a wider participant pool that can aid researchers in better understanding the influences that replace the presence of fathers. Finally, qualitative methods included in this portion of my dissertation summarize implications and recommendations for research. Findings recommend, fathers who lived with their children

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for any extended period of time were socially, academically, or financially involved in their development. However, when regularly detached from the home, students implied that a parental void existed as it related to social development and financial capital. Data presented in the ensuing section will highlight key findings and bring closure to my research investigation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify influences that replace the presence of Black fathers for children living in non-paternal homes. The principal research question investigated was: What replaces the presence of African American fathers for students living in non-paternal homes? In addition, the following sub-questions supported data collection methodologies: (a) How do students describe their relationship with their resident guardian? (b) What contributes to the academic and social development for students with nonresident guardians? (c) What are the lived academic experiences for 12th grade students with nonresident fathers? (d) How do urban schools support the academic and behavior needs for students with nonresident fathers? Overwhelmingly, all five case study participants indicated that their resident guardian made the developmental and academic difference. Students reported that growing up with a single parent or with grandparents did not prevent them from achieving academic success. Likewise, students attributed their academic and social development to their resident guardian along with community organizations such as school counselors, church members, and sports. According to the research participants, outside resources made impactful contributions in supporting their social and educational needs. Ultimately, these influences replaced the void created by father's absence.

Implications from this study further suggest school personnel and social programs are vital in creating a learning environment that intentionally supports this population. Student participants suggested designating a common space where students could connect with other students who share similar household experiences would be beneficial. A second type of programming suggested by members recommended providing resources to single mothers. Students implied that schools may have connections and resources that could aid families with bridging the financial and academic gap when fathers are not present. Finally, identifying who and/or what contributes to a student's social, emotional, and academic development when fathers are not present on a consistent basis was implied in this study. Findings from this qualitative study involving Black families can help students thrive regardless of their household status by relying on community and educational stakeholders to fill the gap of nonresident fathers.

Appendix A

Introductory Recruitment Letter

November 16, 2021

Dear students,

Mr. Shelby is writing to invite you to participate in a research study involving Black children. Below, you will find an overview of the study:

The purpose of the study is to identify influences that replace the presence of Black fathers with children living in non-paternal homes. Influence is defined as people and/or experiences and/or activities engaged in positively or negatively. When fathers are not present on a consistent basis, identifying what contributes to children's social, emotional, and academic development is essential.

To ensure no harm will be done, aliases will be used to protect your identity along with storing confidential information in a secure filing system throughout the study. Confidential records will be secured through the use of password protected files, encryption if sending information over the internet, and any non-digital information will be locked in doors and drawers.

Finally, if you elect to participate, you have the option forgoing your involvement at any point throughout the investigation. Your choice to participate or not is completely voluntary and neither selection will have any educational or behavioral benefit at Allen Village School.

(Counselor will say) I will now distribute a questionnaire for you to complete. Once complete, I will collect the questionnaires and you can return to class.

Appendix B

Consent for Participation in Research Study

Study Title: Examining the Experiences of African American Students with Nonresident Fathers

Principal Investigator: Shirley McCarther, Ed.D. Office: (816) 235-2451

Secondary Investigator: Zackary Shelby, Ed.S.   Office (816) 931-0177

KEY INFORMATION

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a: *[Twelfth grade African American male or female, age 18 or 19 years old, living in a nonresident father home]*. Research studies are voluntary and only include people who choose to take part. **[The purpose of the study is to identify influences that replace the presence of Black fathers with children living in non-paternal homes. Influence is defined as people and/or experiences and/or activities engaged in positively or negatively]**. The total amount of time you would be in this study is *[20-30 minutes intervals for no more than 60 days]*. During your participation you will be involved in *[Responding to interview questions related to your household and family unit; describing your educational and developmental experiences along with factors that have contributed to your maturation throughout school]*. There are no benefits to you for taking part in this study. You have the alternative of not taking part in this study.

Please read this consent form carefully and take your time making your decision. As the researcher(s) discusses this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. Please talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?
The purpose of the study is to identify influences that replace the presence of Black fathers with children living in non-paternal homes. Influence is defined as people and/or experiences and/or activities engaged in positively or negatively. When fathers are not present on a consistent basis, identifying what contributes to children's social, emotional, and academic development is essential.

Explain succinctly and simplistically why the prospective subject is eligible to participate. As appropriate, major eligibility criteria may be included in this section.

You are being asked to be in this study because you are an African American student age 18 or 19 years old, living in a nonresident father home.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
Approximately 4-6 people will take part in this study at Allen Village School.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY?
Describe the procedures and their duration chronologically using simplistic language, short sentences or short paragraphs. The use of subheadings may help organize this section and increase readability for studies with a large number of procedures.

You will be asked to complete 6 surveys using an internet-based questionnaire. Each survey will take 25 minutes to complete, and you may complete the surveys from your home computer, one each week for 6 weeks. In addition to the surveys, you will be asked to complete short writing prompts relating to your educational and household experiences. The writing prompts will also be distributed twice a week for 6 weeks. After the surveys and prompts are collected, you will be presented with the data and asked to verify the accuracy of the findings.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?
This study last 3 months

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?
Identify each procedure with a subheading and then state the associated risk(s) using simplistic language.

Please note: ***<u>For minimal risk studies (such as questionnaires/surveys) where loss of confidentiality or psychological stress is the only risk; these need to be listed.</u>***

> *There are no physical risks associated with this study. However, some of the questions I will ask you as part of this study may make you feel uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and you may take a break at any time during the study. You may stop your participation in this study at any time.*

ARE THERE BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?
There are no benefits from being in this research study.

WILL MY INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 7 years after the study is complete.

For projects that collect electronic records use this standard clause. Describe the security in detail so the participant can understand what protections are in place.

The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 7 years after the study is complete.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued a Certificate of Confidentiality to further protect the confidentiality of the information we will collect from you. With this Certificate, the researcher(s) may not disclose research information that may identify you in any Federal, State, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other proceedings, unless you have consented for this use. Research information protected by this Certificate cannot be disclosed to anyone else who is not connected with the research unless:

1) there is a law that requires disclosure (such as to report child abuse or communicable diseases but not for legal proceedings);
2) you have consented to the disclosure, including for your medical treatment; or
3) the research information is used for other scientific research, as allowed by federal regulations protecting research subjects.

Disclosure is required, however, for audit or program evaluation requested by the agency that is funding this project or for information that is required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

You should understand that a Certificate of Confidentiality does not prevent you or a member of your family from voluntarily releasing information about yourself or your involvement in this research. If you want your research information released to an insurer, medical care provider, or any other person not connected with the research, you must provide consent to allow the researchers to release it.

Finally, you should understand that the investigator is not prevented from taking steps, including reporting to authorities, to prevent serious harm to yourself or others.

Finally, for all protocols, conclude with the following standard clause.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS TO YOU?

This section should state the financial obligations the subject may incur as a result of participating in the study. If there are no financial obligations to the subject, then use the following standard clause.

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

WHAT ABOUT COMPENSATION?

The will be no compensation for participating in this study.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM DURING THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Your estimation of risk determines what additional information you will include in this section. For studies classified as minimal risk, use the following standard clause.

Your well-being is a concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

WHAT ABOUT MY RIGHTS TO DECLINE PARTICIPATION OR WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Use the following standard clause.

You can choose to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are entitled. However, if you decide to stop participating in the study, we encourage you to talk to the researcher first to make sure it is safe to do so.

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw') at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the researcher(s) or with the University of Missouri Kansas City.

WHOM DO I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the researcher(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, or to discuss problems, concerns or suggestions related to your participation in the research, or to obtain information about research participant's rights, contact the UMKC Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office
- Phone: (816) 235-5927

- Email: umkcirb@umkc.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, risks and benefits have been explained to me. I have been allowed to ask questions, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been told whom to contact if I have questions, to discuss problems, concerns, or suggestions related to the research, or to obtain information. I have read or had read to me this consent form and agree to be in this study, with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time. I have been told that I will be given a signed copy of this consent form.

_____
Printed Name of Subject

_____   _____   _____
Signature of Subject   Date   Time

_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

_____   _____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date   Time

Appendix C

Participant Questionnaire

Grade _____   **Age** _____ School _____

Contact Information

Name _____

Email _____

Phone # _____

Ethnicity (Select all that apply)

Black _____ White_____ Latinx _____ Other _____

Describe your home setting

I live with:

Both parents _____ Mother Only _____ Father Only _____Guardian _____

Appendix D

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

December 1, 2021

Dear Parents,

My name is Zackary Shelby. I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and I would like your child to take part in my research investigation. During the second week of December, I will be surveying twelfth grade students at Allen Village School to learn about students with nonresident fathers. If you and your child agree that your child may participate in the study, I will ask them to complete a questionnaire. Completion of the questionnaire should take no more than fifteen minutes to complete.

All of the information I obtain from your child will be kept confidential. Your child's name will not be used on any of the forms they complete, and no information about your child will ever leave school premises with a name attached. The survey that your child completes will be marked with a number I select but no one who works in the school will ever know this number or the responses of your child.

The information collected from this study will be complied into a report that will be available for everyone to see at the Allen Village High School office. The report will not contain any INDIVIDUAL information about children. It will describe what groups of students said. For example, I might describe what "12th graders said" but I will NOT report what an individual student disclosed. I will also use the information from this study to publish articles in professional publications, so that teachers can learn more about youth aggression. Once again, I will never report individual information.

The school principal and the school board have approved the survey. However, your child does not have to participate in the survey and participation or non-participation will not affect your child's grades. If your child does not want to do the survey, or wants to quit after starting, other work will be given to do in the classroom. A school official must be present in the classroom during the survey because of district policy. However, they will not be involved in the student survey process and will not be told who does and does not participate.

There are no direct benefits to you or your child for participating in this study. The information from the survey should help us learn more about the factors that contribute to aggressive behaviors in adolescents. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study, and most students enjoy the opportunity to express their opinions. However, if your child becomes upset, he/she will be able to stop the survey and may choose to talk to one of the school counseling staff.

While every effort will be made to keep confidential all of the information you complete and share, it cannot be absolutely guaranteed. Individuals from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies), Research Protections Program, and Federal regulatory agencies may look at records related to this study for quality improvement and regulatory functions.

The school's superintendent and principal have both approved this study, and below you will find the overview of my research:

The University of Missouri-Kansas City appreciates the participation of people who help it carry out its function of developing knowledge through research. If you have any questions about the study that you are participating in you are encouraged to call **(Zackary Shelby),** the investigator, at **(816-931-0177).**

Although it is not the University's policy to compensate or provide medical treatment for persons who participate in studies, if you think you have been injured as a result of participating in this study, please call the IRB Administrator of UMKC's Social Sciences Institutional Review Board at 816-235-1764.

 If you and your child agree that your child may take part in the research, please return a signed copy of this form to me in the enclosed envelope. You may keep the other copy for future reference.

You have read this permission form and agree to have your child take part in the research.

_____
Name of Student

_____
Printed Name of Parent

_____   _____
Signature of Parent   Date

Interview Guide

Household Related Questions

1. Describe your home environment.

2. What kind of tasks or activities are difficult, rewarding, and enjoyable for you?

3. Describe a typical day at home.

4. Tell me about your experiences growing up.

5. Who taught you how to throw a ball, ride a bike, played with you as a child?

6. Who helped you with your homework as a child?

7. What did you like most about your childhood?

8. What did you least like about your childhood?

School Related Questions

1. Describe a typical day at school.

2. Describe your interactions with your teachers.

3. Describe your interaction with your peers.

4. Do you make friends easily?

5. Does whether your teacher likes you impact your effort in their class?

6. How do your teachers provide feedback in terms of learning?

7. Are you motivated to learn by your teachers?

8. How do you learn best?

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VITA

Zackary Darnell Shelby was born on October 14, 1981, in Kansas City, Missouri. He was educated in the Kansas City and Raytown, Missouri school district. He graduated from Raytown South in 2000 and received a partial football scholarship to Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma, from which he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education in 2005. In May of that year, he accepted his first teaching position middle school Special Education teacher at Northeast Middle School in Kansas City, Missouri. The school was located in the northeastern part of Kansas City. He taught special education for five years in the Kansas City, Missouri School District. Zackary completed his Master's program in administration at William Woods University in 2009. Following the completion of his degree, he transitioned into an assistant principal role at a Kansas City, Missouri charter school and remained in that role for eight years. He would complete his Education Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2016. Zackary started his journey to acquire his doctorate degree in 2016 at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Upon defense of this dissertation, Zackary will complete his Doctorate of Education in 2022. He currently works as the Assistant Superintendent at Allen Village School.

Zackary lives with his wife of sixteen years, Eboni Shelby in Kansas City, Missouri. They have two children, Zackary Shelby Jr. and Kori Shelby.