

Absent Fathers and Delinquent Sons among the African American Families

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INTRODUCTION:

Father son dyad has been one of the important research areas when it comes to psychology and family relationships. This importance is a result of the overt emphasis being given on a family structure that constitutes of a mother and a father with their children. This is the model that is accepted as being the consensual model of a good family and anything different from it is considered an aberration which in the end is linked to some social problem arising primarily due to the lack of the model family structure, which carries out various important functions like socialization of the new born, with family being the first socialization agent, which in turn helps in development of the young ones into good socialized beings. In 1949 the American anthropologist George Peter Murdock published the results of a major survey of kinship and social organization in a worldwide sample of 250 societies. Murdock's starting point was the family, and on the basis of his survey he argued that the nuclear family is universal, at least

as an idealized form. This and many such researches mark the acceptance of nuclear family as the true model of family and this was conveyed through many mediums and channels which had an effective and quick access to the minds of the people

In this paper the emphasis is laid out on the link between 'absent father and delinquent sons'. With an ideal family structure constituting of a father, who plays an important role of not just as a 'bread winner', 'head of the family' but as the role model for their children especially son who learns by emulating his father and this in turn helps him in realizing what it is to be a male. Butler (2004) discusses how gender is performed without one being conscious of it, but says that it does not mean this performativity is "automatic or mechanical". She argues that we have desires that do not originate from our personhood, but rather, from social norms. What is important to be derived from this is that the gender roles that we develop and practice or perform have to be learnt and the learning first begins from the family

which, as has been mentioned earlier, is the first socializing agent. Various psychological and sociological research has pointed out the importance of father as being the role model for the son, who learns what it is to be a male from him, many other researchers have devoted their attention onto what happens when this role model is absent, with some claiming the result of absent father as being the deviant son.

The absent father and delinquent son dyad is being analysed in a particular cultural setting that of African American families or the black families in USA. The choice of this setting is primarily due to the availability of ample researches being carried out on black families and researches exploring this link between absent father and delinquent sons. One more important reason for this choice is the popular image of black people being that of a deviant and most involved in the unlawful activities or this is the popular image being manufactured about the American society through various techniques one prominent being of the statistics and the quantitative modes of analysis which tries to draw and establish a link between deviant family i.e. the absence of father and a deviant son.

This paper has been divided into four parts. The first part deals with the theories on fatherhood. This part will primarily focus on the shifts that have been taken place in understanding the term 'father' and his role. Also, it deals with developmental psychology theory to chalk out the importance of father in child development. The second part deals with the black families in United States of America, talking about the demographic composition of the black families in US. This part will focus on all the statistics that have been produced and used so far in various government agencies and social policies. Also, we will look into the famous Moynihan report briefly to understand the history of the social policies towards the black people and how the matriliney myth was created. This section will also focus on how there is a propensity, that is proved through statistics produced by federal agencies, among the black young men to be involved in crimes. In the third part we will try to draw linkages between the absent father and delinquent sons, as from the previous section it can be identified that two main things are prominent i.e. a high number of single female headed household which implies absence of male or father from the family and the high rate of involvement of

black young people in crimes. This section will deal with the researches carried out concerning the dyad- absent father and delinquent sons, among the black people. In the last section, we will pull all the argument together to identify whether if this dyad is valid or not.

Theories on fatherhood

A famous anthropologist once said that fathers are a biological necessity but a social accident. Traditionally, fathers have always been depicted as a strong and strict person devoid of emotions and one who is not at all involved in child care. The main role that the father figure plays is that of the bread winner, that's the expectation from them. Also, these 'mythical fathers' provided a strong but distant model for their children and moral and material support for their wives.

A variety of technological, economic and ideological changes in our society are redefining what it to be a father. A new cultural image of fatherhood has emerged that has pushed aside the earlier portrait of the uninvolved father. No longer a social accident, many fathers are active partners in parenting and a direct influence on their children' development.

Fatherhood is a continually evolving ontological state, a site of competing discourses and desires that can never be fully and neatly shaped into a single 'identity' and that involves oscillation back and forth between various modes of subject position. The concept of 'the father' is typically gendered in western societies; it denotes maleness; the possession of s penis and testes in working order, the proven ability to produce viable sperm to impregnate a woman resulting in a child. ROSS D PARKE points out, the contemporary concept of the father is far more complex and less unified than its common-sense definition suggests. The concept of 'the father' or 'fatherhood' is multiple rather than unitary, changing according to the context even for the individual, as do concepts of 'the mother' or 'motherhood'. DE KANTER notes that when speaking of "the father" there is a continual move between at least three different levels of meaning: the person of the father, that is, an individual's embodied presence; the socio cultural position of the father and the more abstract symbol of the father. She further argues, the term 'father' may be used to describe the individual who provided the biological material, even if he is never known to his child (as in the case of sperm donor), to

describe the person who lives in the same household as the child and is the mother's partner but not biologically related to the child, and the man who is legally the father but does not live in the same household because of marital separation or divorce.

There is a general agreement, as has been mentioned above, in the social historical and social science literature that the expectations and norms around 'good' fatherhood have changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century. PLECK identified four 'phases' of American fatherhood typologies: first, the father as 'authoritarian moral and religious pedagogue' (Eighteenth century to early nineteenth century); second, the father as 'distant breadwinner' (early nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries); third, the father as 'sex role model' (1940 to 1965); and fourth, the 'new' father, who is nurturing and interested in his young children as well as engaged in paid work (late 1960s to the present).

However, one thing to note about these understanding on emergence on new fatherhood is that they are located in a certain locale i.e. the western world and that too a specific class. Many scholars refute or disagree with the portrayal of this idea that the fatherhood has undergone a

lot of change. Fathers earlier too were involved with the child care and were liberal enough to display their love and affection for their children. But these scholars also don't deny that in the popular image the understanding of 'fatherhood' as undergone a tremendous change. Traditionally, the concept of the father has been that of provider and head of the family group. However, over the past century we've witnessed a change in the understanding of father and his role in the family wherein he is supposed to be more involved in child care and upbringing and also openly express and display his love and affection for children which was traditionally thought to be the role of a mother. This change in the conceptualization of fatherhood, sharply contrast the traditional concept of being a father. The author points out that the contradiction in two conceptualization of fatherhood poses problem for the one in the role of the father and as well as the family member. This confusion or problem is more prominently visible in the case of men who are 'foreign born, sons of immigrants or members of low socio-economic classes.' The reason postulated for such a problem is the deep seated understanding of role of a father in their mind; which bars them from being

affectionate towards their children. Also, in order to come out over their feelings they tend to be harsher i.e. to not show their love, affection and care they become more harsh and strict.

Psychology has a long history of ignoring fathers. Fathers were not just forgotten by accident, they were ignored because it was assumed that they were less important than mothers in influencing the developing child. Psychologists have, by comparison, undertaken much less research on the nature and development of the paternal-infant relationship. In the 1940s and 1950s, however, there was a growing interest in the effects of 'father absence' stimulated by the disruption in family life occasioned by the Second World War. Children without fathers were portrayed as being 'at risk' of abnormal psychology, sex-role, intellectual and moral development, including lack of independence, passivity, eating and sleeping problem, decreased sociability. There was a particular concern for boys without fathers, who were seen as lacking a 'positive role model' after which they could model their own masculinity. Such boys, it was suggested, were vulnerable to 'abnormal' sexual development and liable to become homosexual or delinquent.

Psychological studies devoted to researching the father-child relationship have grown in America in 1970s in particular. With this the new image of father as more involved in child-care emerges. Developmental psychology research has generally concluded that the quality of early father-infant interaction is linked with later father-child attachments. There was an overt emphasis on the 'sex role' models of behaviour.

Many other prominent psychologists have talked about fatherhood and the role of father in the proper development of child in all aspects be it physical, cognitive or social.

Sigmund Freud has talked about fatherhood a lot. He says that Fatherhood is the cause and fulfillment of the father's creative, protective, and organizing power in his child. As a physical and symbolic bond between generations, fatherhood implies the authority of the father over the child, expressed through the transmission of the name. The sons use this aspect of paternity in the construction of their own individual and social identities, and in their respect for the law. Fatherhood is the basis of all thought. Discovering in his self-analysis, through his dreams, that

fatherhood satisfied both his desire for immortality, through his children, as well as his ambivalence toward his own dead father. Sigmund Freud's work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, established the desire of Oedipus to sleep with his mother and kill his father as universal.

Fatherhood is an organizing system indissociable from this Oedipus complex. It structures and restrains sexuality, through the father, who is simultaneously loved, protective, and feared. It condenses conflicts of ambivalence and the castration anxiety. Fatherhood induces repression and prompts progress: It is an inevitable and indestructible origin and obstacle that unites the scattered ego, while showing how to overcome ambivalence through identification with the father. Its dynamic potential is anchored in the father-mother-child triangle it structures, not in the person of the father who supports the paternal function.

Having murdered the violent and jealous primal father, the sons discover the symbolic paternity of the father in the work of mourning, made up of ambivalence, guilt, and idealization. Retrospective obedience and the renunciation of the father's omnipotence

are at the origin of the social contract and the law. For Freud fatherhood also occupies a central place in the subject's genital organization through the father complex. Linked to death and sexuality, which it transcends, and serving as an atemporal and structuring reference point, it channels through its incarnated generating power the diphasic sexual development of the child-become-adolescent, opening him up to the effects of *Nachträglichkeit*, sublimation, and the wish to become a father in his turn. Fatherhood then, logically, enables the subject's separation from the mother and authorizes relations of generation, dramatized as arising from a primal triangle, with differentiated parental images.

Erik Erikson(1950) coined the term *generativity* to refer to an emergent process that accentuates parents' personal growth in relation to their children's well-being. As the primary psychological task of healthy adulthood, generative fathers have a genuine commitment to establishing and guiding the next generation. Erikson believed that in order to become fully human, a father must widen his commitment beyond the self and invest in caring deeply for others.

Generative fathering includes any nurturing activity that contributes to the life of the next generation such as the development of more mature persons, products, ideas or works of art. The essence of generativity is contributing to and renewing the ongoing cycle of generations. Erikson believed that men can and want to become the kinds of fathers their children need them to be.

In this section we reviewed some of the theories on 'father' and 'fatherhood' from the sociological as well as the psychological perspective. We identified that how there is an emergence of new form of fatherhood and its definition. Also, we identified the importance allocated to the role of a father in psychological studies in the development of a child and especially that of a son.

The Black Family in America

The prevailing view of the black family in the United States for most of its history has been based on the dominant paradigm of white superiority and black inferiority. In the post-World War II era there was a strong consensus for the normative family, and Daniel P. Moynihan reflected this view when he labelled the black family "pathological" and "dysfunctional"

because the black families studied did not fit the normative model. Numerous social policies followed the famous 1965 Moynihan Report with the goal of "fixing" and helping the black family, such as Head Start. In the years that followed, not only did statistics change to indicate even greater deterioration of the black family, but statistics on the white family began to match the patterns of the black families of the 1950s. Consequently, recent emphasis of social policy is more on economic factors than racial equality, and affirmative action policies are being challenged with some success. Conflicting views and interpretations abound regarding the structure of the black family, as do the solutions to remedy the ill-defined problems.

THE MOYNIHAN REPORT

The dominant paradigm of black inferiority pervades early myths and even scholarly studies. E. Franklin Frazier, the black historian on whom Moynihan's 1965 report was based, was trained by white scholars at the University of Chicago, such as sociologist Robert Park. Park's studies in the 1940s and 1950s were based on the deficit approach that "assume Blacks are culturally deprived and view differences

found between white mainstream Americans and Black Americans as deficits." They viewed blacks as a people in the process of assimilation into the mainstream of American society, like other immigrant groups, disregarding both their own racism and the institutionalized racial oppression in which blacks exist in America.

Frazier's *The Negro Family in the United States* "supplied a model for the study of Blacks which emphasized family disorganization and dysfunction...", describing the black family's present condition of matriarchy, ineffective black males being marginal to the family, casual sex relations, and general dissolution of the black family to be caused by urbanization and the heritage of slavery. Frazier's work was used for the basis of Moynihan's conclusions that identified "Black "matriarchal" mothers as responsible for the "breakdown" and "pathology" of Black families (who, he claimed, were responsible for high rates of illegitimacy, delinquency, and unemployment)." Consequently, many of the programs and policies formed were focused on "improving the child-rearing practices of black mothers."

In the period following the depression and the hardships of World War II, American policy makers dedicated their efforts to creating a society comprised of strong, happy nuclear families. The normative ideal family was seen as a two-parent nuclear family residing in the suburbs with a breadwinner father and homemaker mother. There was a strong consensus of what comprised the ideal family.

The poor black family did not fit the current ideology; therefore it was labelled "pathological" and "dysfunctional." As a government publication, the Moynihan's report constituted a level of authority that carried significant weight and lent credibility to the abundant social policies to "fix" the dysfunctional, pathological black family structure that threatened the ideal, normative family structure upon which the future success of American society was believed to depend. Experts blamed the victim. The black family structure, rather than social structure of the U.S., was blamed for its deprivation of the American Dream. Therefore, solution was to deal with the black family rather than segregation and discrimination.

Present situation of black people:

Overview (Demographics): In July 2008, 41 million people in the United States, or 13.5 percent of the civilian non-institutionalized population, were Black. They are the second largest minority population, following the Hispanic/Latino population. In 2007, the majority of Blacks lived in the South (56 percent), while 34 percent of white population lived in the South. The ten states with the largest Black population in 2008 were New York, Florida, Texas, Georgia, California, North Carolina, Illinois, Maryland, Virginia, Michigan. Louisiana is no longer in the top 10, as a result of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. Combined, these 10 states represented 59% of the total Black population. Of the ten largest places in the United States with 100,000 or more population, Gary, Indiana has the largest proportion of Blacks, 83%, followed by Detroit (82%).

Educational Attainment: In 2007, as compared to Whites 25 years and over, a lower percentage of Blacks had earned at least a high school diploma (80 percent and 89 percent, respectively). More Black women than Black men had earned at least a bachelor's degree (16 percent compared with 14 percent), while among non-Hispanic Whites, a higher proportion of

men than women had earned at least a bachelor's degree (25 percent and 24 percent, respectively), in 2006.

Economics: According to the 2007 Census Bureau report, the average African-American family median income was \$33,916 in comparison to \$54,920 for non-Hispanic White families. In 2007, the U.S. Census bureau reported that 24.5 percent of African-Americans in comparison to 8.2 percent of non-Hispanic Whites were living at the poverty level. In 2007, the unemployment rate for Blacks was twice that for non-Hispanic Whites (8 percent and 4 percent, respectively). This finding was consistent for both men (9 percent compared with 4 percent) and women (8 percent compared with 4 percent). 2005: employed blacks earned only 65% of the wages of whites, down from 82% in 1975. In 2005, the poverty rate among single-parent black families was 39.5% , while it was 9.9% among married-couple black families. Among white families, the comparable rates were 26.4% and 6%.

Age, Sex and Marital status distribution:

In 2002, 33 percent of all Blacks were under 18. Only 8 percent of Blacks were 65 and older, compared with 14 percent of non-Hispanic Whites

Marriage

Nearly half of black Americans have never married—the highest percentage for all racial groups. Only 30 percent of blacks are now married. Married couples make up nearly three-quarters of all U.S. families. Among black families that number falls to 44 percent.

The Children

Nearly 10 million black families lived in the United States in 2007. Twenty-one percent of these families were married couples with children. This is the lowest for all racial groups. As the U.S. average is 32.4 percent. But nearly one-third of these families were single mothers with children under 18. The U.S. average is 12.1 percent. Slightly less than 20 percent of black families were grandparents raising their grandchildren. The U.S. average is 10 percent.

No surprise then that slightly more than half of black kids live with only one parent and that's overwhelmingly with their mother. A home headed by a single mom often equals an economically poor home.

DIVERSE INTERPRETATIONS OF BLACK FAMILY STRUCTURES

The prevailing views of black families in America experienced a significant shift during the 1960s. Prior to that period most scholars with credentials that had studied the black family limited their studies to lower class families and interpreted the results through the existing paradigm of black inferiority. The 1960s brought many changes to our country in a great many ways. The lives of black Americans did change, and so did the perception of the black family, both in the eyes of mainstream society, as seen in the media, and in the academic community. Many of the recent scholars studying black families are black themselves, though not all, but the present perspective of studying the black family reflects an attempt by most to put it in the context of its unique position in the American experience, including the racial inequalities of discrimination, and acknowledge the differences of black families as normal and functional rather than pathological and dysfunctional, as labelled by the Moynihan Report in 1965.

Recent studies have shown "Black families ...examined from a culture-specific ...perspective ...are providing myth-

destroying information. ...Black families encourage the development of the skills, abilities, and behaviors necessary to survive as competent adults in a racially oppressive society. ...In general, Black families are reported to be strong, functional, and flexible. ...They provide a home environment that is culturally different from that of Euro-American families in a number of ways. ...The environment of Black children is described as including not only the special stress of poverty or of discrimination but the ambiguity and marginality of living simultaneously in two worlds--the world of the Black community and the world of mainstream society, a phenomenon unique to Blacks." (ROBERT STAPLES)

Many studies still view the poor black family and regard that as the definitive black family. These studies show female-headed households, absent black fathers, teen mothers, welfare dependency, and extended kin-networks, all of which have some truth. The most pervasive myth is that that picture holds true for most all black families. The "other" black America, the middle-class blacks who have "made it," have largely been ignored in studies about black families until very recently; their assimilation into mainstream society

has rendered them nearly invisible, both as an entity to be studied or acknowledged.

Contrasting views of the black family abound. Some are based on the presence or absence of racism and the still present assumption of black inferiority. Some are based on the view of the black family by many researchers as a monolithic institution, usually poor and urban, excluding consideration of other types of families. Some are based on the contrast of assimilationist versus Black Nationalist viewpoints. (R STAPLES)

Scholars have disagreed on the basis for cultural differences between black and white families, particularly whether the kinship based family is a product of African heritage, slavery, or poverty. The Moynihan Report labelled the black family as pathological because it differed from the nuclear family perceived so strongly as "normal" in the postwar years, but recent scholars see the black family as functional rather than dysfunctional, that is, not pathological (abnormal) in terms of African heritage and kinship networks. Where Frazier's work said that slavery had destroyed African kinship family relations, Blassingame showed that black families did function in slave quarters and strong

family ties persisted despite slave trade. Gutman's work showed that slavery did not destroy black families, and the kinship model of the black family comes from African origins. Where earlier studies concluded that "matriarchal families were pathological and detrimental to the personality development of black children," Genovese redefined female matriarchy as gender equality, a contrast to the male domination perceived as normal by whites. Yet whether black females were of equal status or dominating, slavery altered the gender status of black families. In Africa "the family was a strong communal institution stressing the dominance of males, the importance of children, and extended kinship networks." But under slavery, "The slaveholders deprived the black man the role of provider... the economic function of slave women was often comparable to that of men. ...always there was an external power greater than the slave husbands."

More recent studies show that the cultural differences between black and white American families is based on their African heritage combined with the reality of racial oppression, past and present. The kinship family deals with poverty by providing "a strategy for meeting the

physical emotional needs of black families [by using] a reciprocal network of sharing to counter the lack of economic resources." Economic level corresponds significantly but not totally to the degree that black families reflect traditional African values and practices, particularly the kinship based family structure, versus the nuclear family viewed by mainstream (white) society as more normal. Whatever the reason for the differences, "the black family is a functional entity," and not dysfunctional, as Moynihan labeled it. Although "...not all...agree on the degree to which African culture influences the culture of black Americans, they do concur that black Americans' cultural orientation encourages family patterns that are instrumental in combating the oppressive racial conditions of American society."

Overall, the reasons for conflicting findings between recent researchers on the black family as compared to earlier accounts include that they: (a) failed to recognize the existence of a black culture and the antecedent African experience and examine social roles in that context; (b) neglected to interview black fathers and observe father-child interactions for demographic differences; (c) observed and investigated black family life using the

very poorest families as subjects and generalized the findings to all black families; and (d) used theoretical models limited to Western cultural life-styles.

Another area of controversy is that of the role of black fathers. The experience of black father both under slavery and in freedom was also different from that of white, middle-class men. Most scholars agree that the conditions of bondage made gender relations among slaves different from those of whites, but they disagree on exactly on how different. Although most slave children lived in stable two- parent households, the roles played by their parents were shaped by the harsh conditions of slavery. Recent scholarships dispel the myth of weak ties between slave fathers and their families and the corresponding stereotype of a prevalent slave 'matriarchy'. As the historian PETER KOLCHIN points out, however, slave families were typically less male-dominated than nineteenth century free families. This was for at least two reasons: First, because slave unions had no legal status, slave fathers had no more property rights than did mothers. Slave fathers consequently lacked the authority over

mothers of their children that the legal system bestowed on free men. Second, slave fathers were more likely than mothers to be separated from their children. Men were hired out, were sold off, and ran away more than women. When parents lived on separate plantations, fathers rather than mothers, typically travelled to visit their families on weekends. Accordingly, mother- headed households, while not the norm, were relatively common.

The impact of slavery on children undermined paternal authority as well. Children who saw their parents verbally or physically abused knew where ultimate power lay and soon learned to conform to the wishes of both their parents and their owners. These and other indignities prevented black men from adhering to white middle class conventions, but the constraint did not prevent them from feeling outraged at their inability to exercise fully the rights and responsibilities of fatherhood. By all accounts, most black men believed that masculinity rested on a foundation of family duty and struggled against the subversion of their paternal authority. Fathers and mothers alike strove to afford their children a basic refuge from the

horrors of slavery, providing them with love and attention, imparting family customs and religious values, and teaching them the caution needed to survive in a hostile white society.

In the years following slavery, the vast majority of black children continued to live in two- parents households. As blacks adapted to the vagaries of urban life, the family remained a vibrant institution, with parents rendering vital assistance to children. Cities, however, were especially hard on black fathers. The proportion of African American families headed by females in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exceeded that of native born and immigrant whites. Persistent discrimination and under- or unemployment in Northern and Southern cities undermined the ability of black fathers to support their children. As a result, black fathers left their families more often than did whites.

Crime

According to the FBI crime reports 1999-2005, the average Black commits murder about 7.1 times more often than the average "White". The average Black commits interracial murder about 13.8 times more often than the average

"White". The average Black kills a "White" 15.9 times more often than the reverse. Weapons violations are committed by Blacks at nearly 5 times the rate for Whites; Blacks are caught receiving or buying stolen property at nearly 5 times the rate for Whites; Blacks are involved in prostitution at almost 4 times the rate for Whites; Blacks are arrested for drug crimes at over 4 times the rate for Whites; Blacks are more than three times as likely as Whites to be caught at forgery, counterfeiting, and fraud, and almost three times as likely to be caught at embezzlement; Blacks are more than 3 times as likely to be thieves as Whites; Blacks are more than 4 times as likely to commit assault as Whites; Blacks are almost 4.5 times as likely to steal a motor vehicle; Blacks are more than 5 times as likely to commit forcible rape as Whites; Blacks are over 8 times as likely to commit murder as Whites; Blacks are more than 10 times as likely to commit robbery as Whites; Nearly 25% of all Black males between the ages of 20 and 29 are in jail or on probation - this does not include those wanted or awaiting trial; For all violent crimes considered together, Blacks are almost 5.5 times more likely to commit violent criminal acts than Whites.

According to the CDC(Centre for Disease Control)'s "The 2004 HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report", Blacks make up the largest group (48%) of "people living with Aids"; followed by Hispanics (17%), American Indian and Asian/Pacific islander (1% each).in 2005, over 68% of the american prison population was non-white .

According to Bureau of Justice around 28 % of black men will be sent to jail or prison in their lifetime and an estimated 12 % of all black males in their 20s are in prison. One in eight Black men in their 20s and 30s are behind bars, compared to 1 in 63 white men.

Research on black families:

There has been a wide range of research being carried out to understand and conceptualize the black family structure in America. In this section, we will review some of the research that pertains to the black fatherhood and how the absence of father is dealt with by the rest of the family member and how it has an impact on the development of children.

In black families, which are marked by absence of biological father from the household, there are two other kinds of fatherhood that appears on the scenario i.e

Social father and Non resident father. Social father is a male relative or family associate who demonstrates parental behaviours and is like father to the child. @1 although research increasingly focuses on no reseedent biological fathers, little attention has been given to the roel of other men in children's lives. While examining the factors associated with social father presence and their influence on preschooler's development. Findings indicate that the majority of children have a social father and that mother, child, and non resident biological father characteristics are all related to social father presence. These associations differ depending on whether the social father is the mother's romantic partner or a male's relative. The social father's influence on children's development also depends on his relation to the child. Male relative social fathers are associated with higher levels of children's school readiness, whereas mother's romantic partner social fathers are associated with lower levels of emotional maturity. Also, importance of social fathers should be examined in the context of non resident biological fathers' s involvement. If the non resident father is not involved in his child's life actively then the social father's role is more prominent.

Another study examined the interrelationship of non resident father visitation, parental conflict over this visitation, and the mother's satisfaction with the father's visitation. This studies shows that many children have a little contact with their Non Resident fathers and contact generally declines over time. It also shows that conflict may arise due to father's contact with children but this also increase satisfaction in mothers.

Another study concludes that the non resident father may visit their children frequently, but the range of activities may be restricted and also the ties of affection may be weak. Research on two- parent families suggests that it is not the presence of father that is critical for children's well being, but the extent to which fathers engage in authoritative parenting. The study concludes that only those non resident fathers who engage in authoritative parenting have the potential to contribute a great deal. This study also points out that to be a competent father, men must've a strong commitment to the role of parent, as well as appropriate parenting skills. Non resident fathers who are not highly motivated to enact the parental role or who lack the skills to be

effective parents are unlikely to benefit their children, even under conditions of regular visitation.

Another study shows that how non resident fathering and stepfathering are becoming two increasingly common types of fathering experiences. Approximately half of all U.S. children will grow up apart from their biological fathers and almost one third of all children will live in a step family at some point in childhood. The study points out that better educated parent may be more likely to conform to social expectations of close ties between parents and children. And also, greater economic resources may allow fathers to incur the costs associated worth active participation with children. Studies of both non resident father and step father reports closer bonds to father for boys than girls. It also points out that black adolescents report being closer to their resident fathers than whites. Adolescents who lack close ties to either father exhibit the most externalizing and internalising problem and are more likely to have received failing grades in school. Good relationship with both fathers are associated with better outcomes but that ties to step fathers are somewhat more influential than ties to non resident fathers

as step father and the child co-reside and share a good amount of time together.

Another study points out that the patterns of fathers influence vary by race and ethnic diversity, which in turn, are linked to socio economic status differences as well as family history characteristics. Children with non resident fathers are more likely to engage in health compromising behaviour such as drug and alcohol use, unprotected sex, and cigarette smoking; are less likely to graduate from high school and college; are more likely to experience teenage and/or non marital fertility; have lower levels of psychological well-being; have lower earnings; and are more likely to be idle and are more likely to experience marital instability in adulthood. Fathers who are not able to stay and spend time with their children, leads to loss of social capital for the children. Social capital comes in two forms, and both are vital to child well-being. One form is inherent in father-child relations as fathers teach, nurture, monitor, and care for their children. In addition to the time that fathers spend with their children, the quality of the father child relationship is fundamental source of social capital that is especially important for children's school attainment and

avoidance of risk behaviours. A second form of social capital is inherent in the relationship between parents and other individuals and institutions in the community. These relationships provide access to information, assistance, opportunities and other resources in the community that foster the healthy development of youth. Thus, when children live apart from their fathers, they have less access to parental resources in the form of social capital; they lose time and attention from the father; and they have reduced access to the father's resources in the community. Although many children experiences a decline in the quantity and quality of contact with their fathers after divorce, and although children born outside of marriage have even less contact with their non resident fathers, a significant number of non resident fathers still maintain contact with their children. The negative effects of divorce and non marital childbearing on children may be partly mitigated to the extent that non resident fathers provide social capital

Conclusion:

The picture that is emerging out of the above discussion and review of researches on the topic of absent fatherhood and its

impact on children, chalks out several important points for our consideration.

It is quite clear from the statistics produced above through government sources that in black families there is high presence of single female headed households. And with that there is indeed high rate of involvement of black people especially men or young boys in criminal activities. What strike me throughout while working for this paper is that how the researchers have used these two statistics and tried to find linkage between them. And in this attempt the kind of researches that have been carried out, the selection of their sample and its size, the mode of analysis primarily being quantitative ;all the research n their strategy somewhere points towards their hidden agenda to co relate these two statistically proven facts. In all these researches related to this area what is also important to note is that the understanding of a normal family, which is a white middle class nuclear family, can be read in between the lines of their conclusions and discussions.

There is considerable controversy concerning the ability of black Americans to maintain 'normal' marital and familial relationships. In this context there are a large number of studies underscoring the

dysfunctionality of black families. Inherent in the functional versus dysfunctional dichotomy is an implicit assumption regarding normative families. The belief that a statistical model of the American family can be identified with which all families can be compared is mythical(ARTHUR)

The dysfunctional view comes out of the cultural homogeneity approach and is associated with the works of E.Franklin Frazier (1939)and Daniel P. Moynihan(1965). Their works culminated in the, as discussed earlier too, adoption of governmental social policies which view the black family as unstable, disorganized and unable to provide its members with the social and psychological support and development needed to assimilate fully into the American society. The opposite view, primarily a reaction to the above, advocates that the black family as a functional entity.

It is clear from the examination of the research literature on the black family, that the researchers have consistently offered evidence, information, theory and analyses which focussed on the so called problems inherent in black family systems.(WADE W NOBLES). Professor M .Jones(1976) of Atlanta university has noted that

systematic scientific inquiry begins where common sense leaves off. In fact, common sense constitutes the base upon which scientific information is built. The social scientist's role is to present the truth scientifically, that is, to extend or expand the common sense understanding of one's people with scientific understanding.

This paper discusses four studies which suggest that black families do not constitute a monolithic pattern of familial relationships. The studies indicate that black families vary by social class as do white families. The studies included: *Willie's studies(1976)*, *The TenHousten Study(1970)*, *The Mack Study(1978)* and *The Middleton and Putney Study(1960)*, are considered to be "classic" studies because they suggest how black family research should be conducted. Research must be sensitive to the variety found in black family life styles.

Also, historically black fathers have been either invisible in the study of child development and family life or characterised in negative terms such as deadbeat dads and absent fathers who are financially irresponsible and rarely involved in their children's lives. According to the demographic data discussed earlier, there is an increase in

household without the biological fathers or legal fathers. Some of the confusion about fathering in the African American community is due to lack of a clear definition of what a father is or is not. Traditional definitions of fatherhood underestimates the role of Black fathers and do not adequately capture the cultural nuances that surround the fathering role in the African American experience. Fluent and inclusive term is needed to capture the essence of the fathering role in African American social and family networks. Social fatherhood plays an important role in the African American families. As more inclusive term, social fatherhood encompasses biological fathers, but also extends to men who are not biological fathers who provide a significant degree of nurturance, moral and ethical guidance, companionship, emotional support and financial responsibility in the lives of children.

Apart from the issues dealt in the earlier sections, one important issue is the development or formation of masculinity among black men. The high involvement of black men in criminal activities is a marker of a different form of masculinity they develop and follow. The problems facing black males today are so serious

and their consequences so grave that it is tempting to view these men primarily as victims. It has been argued (MASCULINITY READER) that there is contemporary 'institutional decimation of black males', which the author describes as the 'coordinated operation of various institutions in American society which systematically remove black males from the civilian population'. Recent research has shown that young black males are experiencing unprecedented setbacks in their struggles for economic and educational equality in the United States, a nation that holds equal opportunity as one of its founding principle. Black men are among the predominant victims of an entire range of socio economic, health and stress related problems. These problems include, but are not limited to, higher rates of heart disease, infant mortality, homicide, unemployment, suspension from school, imprisonment, morbidity and low life expectancy.

Black males have responded in various ways to this constricted structure of opportunity. What is of interest here is how black males' relationships to dominant definitions of masculinity have figured into their responses to institutionalized racism. Many black males

have accepted the definition, standards and norms of dominant social definitions of masculinity (being the bread winner, having strength and dominating women). However, American society has prevented black males from achieving many aspects of his masculinity by restricting their access to education, jobs and institutional power. In other words, the goals of hegemonic masculinity have been sold to black males, but access to the legitimate means to achieve those goals has been largely denied to black males. As a consequence of these conditions and because of many frustrations resulting from a lack of opportunities in society, many black males have become obsessed with proving manliness to themselves and to others. Lacking legitimate institutional means, black males will often go to great lengths to prove their manhood in interpersonal spheres of life.

Institutional racism and a constricted structure of opportunity do not cause all black males to exhibit anti social behaviours, nor do these problems succeed in erasing black men's expressions of creativity. One such creative response to institutional racism which bars the black males from pioneering the fields of politics, academics etc is the cool pose in

sports world, which is accessible to black males in American society at ease. Cool pose is the expressive lifestyle behaviour that is there not only in sports but also in music and entertainment industry where the black people have carved out their own niche. This cool pose expressed by black males in sports may be interpreted as means of countering social oppression and racism and of expressing creativity. The demonstration of cool pose in sports enables black males to accentuate or display themselves, obtain gratification, release pent-up aggression etc.

To conclude, it can be said that buried beneath the statistics is a world of complexity originating in the historic atrocity of slavery and linked to modern discrimination and its continuing effects. It would highly wrong to correlate the high number of absent black father household with the high rate of involvement in crime by the black males. There are several other factors that need to be studied by shunning these statistics and leaving the practice to link two statistical data to prove or disprove a dyad that of absent father and delinquent son. Indeed, father plays an important role in the development of a child, be it cognitive, social or emotional development. But the absence of father

doesn't imply that a male role figure is absent from the scene or that it means that the young boy won't be able to achieve masculinity and won't be 'normal' but always a delinquent. The boys learn from their social fathers, peer groups and society at large which creates and dismantles many agencies through which a child learns what it means to be masculine or male. The absent father delinquent son dyad would be better understood if we try to go beyond the race factor. And identify the lack of access to opportunities and resources leading to poverty as one of the prime reasons of high rate of delinquency among black males.

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