

**BOYS  
IN  
FATHERLESS  
FAMILIES**

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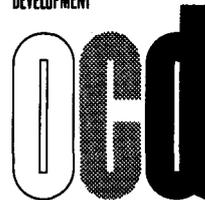
**BOYS  
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DEVELOPMENT



**CHILDREN'S BUREAU**

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## INTRODUCTORY COMMENT

An increasing number of children are growing up in homes without fathers. The number is increasing chiefly because the population has increased. However, there has been a gradual, slight increase in divorce rates since 1958, and a more marked increase in the proportion of divorces involving children.\* There has also been at least a minor numerical increase in homes broken by separation.\*\* On the other hand, the number ( and proportion ) of children orphaned by paternal death has decreased during the past three decades, despite a rise in numbers since 1955.\*\*\*

Although the proportional increase is less dramatic than is often assumed, over 6 million children were in fatherless homes in 1967.+ The numbers involved, and the probability that they will increase rather than decrease in the near future, serve warning that we would do well to consider carefully what we do and do not know about the effects on children of growing up in fatherless homes.++

The need for such a review is intensified by the nature and frequency of generalizations about the adverse consequences of father absence. These generalizations, and the research directly relevant to them, can be roughly subsumed under three main headings which, though not mutually exclusive, provide a feasible framework for organizing a

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\* National Center for Health Statistics.

\*\* Bureau of the Census, 1968a.

\*\*\*Bureau of the Census, 1967.

+ Bureau of the Census, 1968b.

++ It must, of course, be recognized that not all children who are living in fatherless homes as of a certain date are "growing up" in such homes, since divorced or widowed mothers often remarry. Although many of the studies reviewed include stepparents, the primary focus of the present review is on the effects of continuing father absence.

somewhat sprawling mass of material. They are: (1) overt behavior that is socially condemned (e.g., juvenile delinquency, extramarital pregnancy); (2) intellectual ability and achievement; and (3) psychological and social adjustment, not covered by (1) and (2). Selected aspects of each will be discussed.

### Focus of review

The review reported here was conceived in rather simple terms: merely to inquire whether growing up in a fatherless home is likely to affect a child adversely in ways that would interfere with achieving his full potential. Yet several corollaries and at least one footnote are implicit in the question, and it is advisable to recognize them even if they cannot all be dealt with satisfactorily. The inquiry as initially posed involves at least three questions:

1. Are the alleged adverse characteristics more often associated with fatherless homes than with two-parent homes?
2. If so, why?
3. What clues can be drawn from answers to the first two questions concerning ways of diminishing such adverse effects as are shown to be associated with growing up in a fatherless home?

For a number of reasons, it has seemed necessary to give a large share of attention to the first question. One is what appears to be a widespread assumption--shared by many social scientists and professional practitioners as well as by the general public--that the answer is unequivocal and affirmative. Another reason is that answers to the second and third questions are conditioned by answers to the first. And still another is that answers to the first question--whether positive or negative--can serve as self-fulfilling prophecies.

A reason for giving attention to the second question lies in a popular syllogism more often implicit than explicit: if a certain condition is strongly associated with a certain trait or type of behavior, then the condition caused the trait or behavior; and, accordingly, the way to change the trait or behavior is to change the condition. This reasoning argues, for example, that a large proportion of juvenile delinquents come from fatherless homes; therefore, fatherlessness causes juvenile delinquency; therefore, to reduce delinquency rates, it is necessary to block divorce. Such a thesis was made explicit by Charles Ellwood in 1910, and in less explicit form it still permeates a good

deal of discussion concerning juvenile delinquency.\* The conclusion is challenged by some who doubt the existence of a "real" correlation between juvenile delinquency and fatherless homes, by some who accept the correlation but question the causal relation, and by some who doubt that removing even a demonstrated cause will necessarily reverse the effect.

All these considerations dictate thorough exploration of the first two questions. Nevertheless, for a Federal agency established to investigate and report upon the well-being of "children...among all classes of our people," a major value of such a review lies in answers to the third question. To the extent that generalizations concerning the adverse consequences of father absence are supported by evidence, analysis of relevant research can offer clues to ways of minimizing the ill effects.

A review such as this is exploratory and pragmatic, approaching the findings of others as raw data to be processed. The objective does not include the development or testing of a specific theory, except to the extent that empirical findings may support or challenge one or another theoretical tenet implicit or explicit in the studies reviewed.

Certain broad underlying assumptions are inevitable, and some of them should be stated: that the early years of childhood are formative and crucial, but that later changes are not precluded; that the present parent's attitudes and behavior affect the child directly and indirectly; that both environment and heredity are important in the child's development; that other things being equal, a two-parent home is more favorable than a one-parent home for the child's development.

### The core group of studies

The primary group of studies reviewed is limited for the most part to those, published during the last 2 decades, which focus directly on children in fatherless homes, plus several studies that include such a focus as part of a broader inquiry.\*\* A few earlier studies have been included for various reasons. This "core group" is further limited to studies that have a control or comparison group relevant to the first question listed above. The unquestioned assumption that fatherless homes

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\* Ellwood.

\*\*For the most part the review is confined to the United States, even though a number of relevant studies involve other cultures. A few exceptions have been made for studies in other cultural settings that are frequently referred to as part of the literature relevant to fatherless homes in this country.

breed antisocial behavior has been fostered by countless studies which show high proportions of fatherless children among a delinquent population, but do not have control groups matched for socioeconomic status (SES) and cultural background. To test the assumption obviously calls for systematic comparison with adequately matched controls. Nevertheless, the stipulation ruled out a considerable number of studies, especially among those involving deviant, patient, or treatment groups.

The inquiry is further limited to homes in which the absent parent is the father, since these are the majority of broken homes and because fatherless homes cannot be equated with motherless homes. In addition, the focus is primarily on boys. Concern about the effects on children of growing up in fatherless homes is more often directed to boys than to girls, and investigations of the effects are more likely to study boys than girls. A number of studies in the core group used only boys as subjects, while only two concentrated exclusively on girls. The limitation in the scope of this review does not reflect an assumption that effects on girls would be less real or less profound than effects on boys, but merely limitations in space and in material.

Although some 400 studies or discussions were abstracted or briefly summarized, the primary list or "core group" that met our criteria came to 60 studies. To check on the frequent assumption that research consistently shows adverse effects associated with fatherless homes, we made a crude count of the conclusions offered by the studies in the core group: how many reported adverse effects associated with fatherless homes; how many reported the opposite; and, in each group, how many studies appeared reasonably sound in method, how many exhibited research defects too gross to permit serious consideration, and how many lay in the dubious territory between these two. Obviously, these classifications were subjective, although each represented a conference judgment and the author's statement was accepted in classifying conclusions. With regard to method, we think that both of our extreme groups would probably be agreed to by most serious research investigators.\* There

\*The specifications for rating a study "reasonably sound" were by no means as stringent as research ideals would counsel. Most investigators are too well versed in the exigencies of real life projects to expect full compliance with the rules laid down in university classes and seminars. The most frequent departures from ideal requirements, obviously and unfortunately, are the ones most likely to distort findings: matching of sample and control, especially on SES; differentiating between types of father absence and age of child at separation; validity of measures. Our specifications excluded a judgment about validity of measures, accepting the investigator's choice, since judgments about validity are peculiarly low in reliability. Accordingly, our count reports respectfully on findings derived from measures whose validity may be challenged in the succeeding pages.

would probably be disagreement about the dubious group which was coded, quite literally, with a question mark. The inevitable danger of rater bias remains, despite unremitting effort to avoid it.

Relatively few studies were rated so defective in method as to preclude serious consideration. These were omitted from the count (and from the core group), although relevant points unrelated to defects of method were considered in the qualitative analysis. Studies rated dubious in at least some aspects of method were included in the count, partly because the rating would probably be objected to by some research investigators and partly because they form a substantial part of the research cited as support for generalizations about children in fatherless homes.

For convenience, we refer to the studies that report adverse traits or behavior associated with father absence as upholding the "classic" view; and to the others as challenging the classic view. To challenge the classic view means that they did not report a significant correlation between father absence and the effect specified. With important exceptions for specified subcategories, none reported significant correlations between father presence and the adverse effect under investigation--correlations which would be expected if, in fact, no significant relationship were involved.

The rough overall count, in effect, allowed each study to cast one vote for or against indicting the fatherless home as inflicting on its children adverse effects of some specified kind. The purpose was merely to document direction and degree of consensus, without necessarily assuming that the results would prove one view right and another wrong. Actually, most studies of this subject look at only one area or, more typically, only a few items of information within one area. Specific content will be considered after a report on the nonspecific count.

Among the core group investigating the effects of continuing father absence, 24 studies support the classic view that fatherless homes are associated with adverse characteristics or behavior in the child; 20 challenge this position; and 16 report conclusions too mixed or qualified to count clearly on either side.

Of the 24 reporting adverse effects, 11 were rated as reasonably sound. Of the 20 challenging the classic view, 12 were rated as reasonably sound by two not-too-confident judges.

The count was undertaken as a preliminary skirmish rather than as a serious exercise, if only because the aspects investigated and the conclusions reached were so scattered and fragmentary. Yet, although we view it as inexact and mildly frivolous, its inconclusive answer seems,

on the whole, fortunate. It serves warning against the "Error of the Third Type"--namely, the erroneous belief that we have evidence adequate to support a firm and generalizable conclusion.

### Defining father absence

Generalizations about the effects of father absence usually assume a simple dichotomy between "broken" and "intact" homes. However, the varying research definitions of broken and intact quickly demonstrate that the differentiation is far from simple. "Intact homes," for example, may be defined as homes in which both of the child's natural parents are present, or as including homes in which one natural parent has remarried, so that stepparents are at times included under "intact" and at other times included under "broken." Yet when the stepparent home is handled as a separate category, it usually is reported to vary in significant ways from "both real parents" and "mother only" homes.

Even a brief preliminary skirmish with research relating to children in fatherless homes points up a need to consider the kind of father absence involved.\* An elementary difference is between temporary and continuing absence, a distinction sometimes ignored. Some studies repeatedly cited as evidence of the adverse effects of fatherlessness turn out to be studies of temporary father absence. One of the most familiar is the Norwegian father-absence study.\*\* It is a careful study, with carefully qualified conclusions. As often happens, it is not the investigators but the commentators who go beyond the evidence; some point to its conclusions as "proof" of the deleterious effects to be expected for Negro boys growing up in poverty-stricken homes in American central cities. However, the Norwegian fathers were sailors of the officer class who were often away for 2 years at a time, returning regularly for periods of a few months. The families were rural, white, of the managerial class, and rigidly straitlaced.\*\*\* Accepting the findings at face value, there would still be question about assuming their blanket applicability to Harlem youth.

It seems at least a reasonable speculation that temporary, planned, socially approved (or even honored) father absence is likely to have a different impact on a child than permanent, socially deplored absence, even if the social and economic settings were similar. The question is underlined by the fact that some of the more solid studies of planned temporary absence have concluded that the chief problems were

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\* Sprey.

\*\* Lynn and Sawrey; Tiller, 1958.

\*\*\*Tiller, 1958; Grønseth.

precipitated by the father's return rather than by his absence.\* It is further reinforced by the fact that when the study was replicated in Italy, the findings were quite at odds with those obtained in Norway, a contrast discussed in a later section.\*\*

In view of obvious and radical differences between temporary and continuing father absence, a separate count was made of studies involving temporary absence. The division was fairly even between the "classic" position (3 studies), challenges to it (4 studies), and mixed findings (7 studies). When the count was limited to studies rated reasonably sound in method, the division was also fairly even (2-3-4).

Separation into the continuing and the temporary is; of course, only a first step in classifying types of father absence. Review of many studies underlines a need to recognize further variations, including degree, duration, the child's age when separation occurred, and the reasons for its occurrence. These variations will be considered in more detail in connection with problems of intellectual and psychosocial functioning.

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\* Stolb et al.

\*\*Ancona et al.

## JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

One of the most frequent generalizations about children in fatherless homes is that they are prone to juvenile delinquency. Accordingly, a separate count was made of relevant core studies, plus some additional studies of juvenile delinquency that did not meet specifications for inclusion in the core group but seemed to escape the distortions usually involved when a sample selected for one purpose is analyzed for a different purpose.

Of the 18 studies included in the count, 7 upheld the classic view, 4 opposed it, and 7 presented conclusions too mixed or qualified to fall clearly on either side. Thus, although fewer found father absence unrelated to juvenile delinquency, the conclusions were as likely to be mixed or qualified as to be unequivocal.

The difficulty in ranging studies on one side or the other arose from two sources. One was finding of different answers for different kinds of children. Some studies reported the association differing according to ethnic or national background,\* income,\*\* color,\*\*\* rural vs. urban community,+ age,++ etc. Important variations are also reported in relation to sex and to type of offense.+++

\*Shaw and McKay. \*\*Eisner; Willie. \*\*\*Eisner; Toby, 1957; Willie.  
+Ferdinand. ++Monahan, 1960; Toby, 1957. +++As noted above, this discussion will be limited primarily to boys and, accordingly, sex comparisons will not be considered here. Also, few of the studies reviewed analyzed by type of offense, and of those few most did not include a control group of nondelinquent children. Partly for this reason and partly because of space limitations, this important topic will not be considered in relation to the question of relative frequency. The few that inquire into type of delinquency classify it variously as serious vs. minor (Sterne, 1964), offenses against property vs. offenses against authority (Ferdinand), property, traffic, misdemeanor, "ungovernability" (Weeks), etc. The studies which analyze type of offense agree that the child from a broken home is more likely to be involved in offenses against authority than against property, particularly those offenses commonly classed as ungovernability (including running away, truancy, etc.) (Nye, 1958; Weeks). The majority of offenses are against property, mostly theft; and the majority of larcenies involve sums under \$50. (Children's Bureau, 1966 (A).)

## Problems of differential treatment

The other source of difficulty in classifying conclusions arose from qualifications and reservations voiced by the investigators, that are related to but not identical with the group differences just mentioned, and that prompted some investigators who upheld and some who challenged the "classic" view to report strongly qualified conclusions. The qualifications involved a question: whether the overrepresentation of children from fatherless homes, reflected in many research findings, derives from differences in the behavior of children in one-parent and two-parent homes, or is a product of differences in the treatment of children from different kinds of backgrounds. Some investigators who found delinquent behavior significantly correlated with fatherlessness distrusted their own findings because of indications that children from broken homes are more likely than others to be brought into court and, once charged, are more likely to be committed; or that the proportion of broken homes is high among low-income Negroes who are more likely than others to be apprehended and also more likely to be committed. Commitment tends to promote recidivism, further magnifying the proportion of broken homes among juvenile delinquents.

The problem of bias is an old one. Shaw and McKay cited it in the early thirties, and it has continued to be discussed from various angles. Tappan in 1949 commented, "Clearly, whether or not one is delinquent depends not on his conduct alone but, to a great extent, on referral practices that obtain in the community."\* That the problem has persisted is clear in similar comments by more recent investigators.\*\* In 1965, for example, it was reported that "about one-third of the delinquency cases referred to courts serving large cities were dismissed with a warning or an adjustment. This does not mean that a high proportion of the children were innocent of delinquent acts. (The complaints were not substantiated in only 11 percent of cases.) Rather, stability of the child's family and his potential for receiving proper parental supervision seemed to be the most common basis for dismissals." (p. 19.)\*\*\*

Others add that children of different social and economic levels are treated quite differently with regard to reporting and handling offenses. Cicourel documents such differences with regard to policies of apprehending, committing, and reporting juvenile delinquents, using intensive analysis of police records and observations of police and

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\* Shaw and McKay; Tappan.

\*\* Axelrad; Briar and Piliavin; Cicourel; Diggs; Sterne, 1964; Toby, 1957; Weeks; Werthman.

\*\*\*(*Italics ours.* Welfare in Review, 1965.)

probation officials in their actual management of cases. He concludes that if the police believe rather strongly that a "broken home" or some other social fact leads to delinquency, this belief leads them to structure their perception and reporting of cases, so that children from these backgrounds are arrested sooner and for less serious causes, are put on probation sooner, and committed sooner. This bias in treatment, he believes, has also imparted a bias to the way juvenile delinquency is perceived and studied.\*

Equally emphatic statements are made about differential treatment of different ethnic groups. Axelrad, for example, after analyzing case records of the New York State Training School for boys, concluded that Negro boys are more likely to be brought into court at a younger age than white boys, and to be committed after fewer offenses and less probationary effort.\*\*

Cicourel and Sterne both document drastic variations between communities in practices with regard to juvenile delinquency, reflecting differences in political and social beliefs and attitudes.\*\*\*

The investigators who document differential treatment of children from different kinds of homes do not necessarily criticize the tendency to return children to homes deemed stable. To some extent, differential treatment reflects differential resources for different groups of children--including fewer available opportunities for other kinds of placement, such as foster homes or homes for dependents. The point emphasized is merely that statistical evidence concerning the overrepresentation of children from fatherless homes in reports of juvenile delinquency does not necessarily reveal the relative frequency of delinquent behavior in children of broken or intact homes. Tappan suggests that skepticism on this score is supported by such studies as White Collar Crime, or Porterfield's Youth in Trouble, which reported that college youth had committed many of the same offenses as institutionalized delinquents.+

Concern about the various kinds of bias involved would dictate reservations with regard to the findings of any study that employs police records or national statistics as the criterion for determining which children engage in delinquent behavior, and most of the studies reviewed did so. As is natural in studies of frequency, official records and school records have been used either as the sole data source or as the criterion measures for comparison with the results of written questionnaires administered to school populations, including such paper-and-

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\* Cicourel.

\*\* Axelrad.

\*\*\*Cicourel; Sterne, 1967.

+ Sutherland; Porterfield, cited in Tappan, p. 27.

pencil inventories of personality as the MMPI. A few reports are based on intensive study of homes or of individual children, checking these against official records.

The only exceptions to the use of official records as the basic criterion of delinquent behavior are three studies employing self-report.\* All three found significant overrepresentation of delinquent behavior among children in fatherless homes. All of them included some behavior that does not usually bring children to the attention of police authorities, such as outright disobedience to parents. Whether this would tend to bias results remains a question.

More serious questions concern the validity of self-reports and the adequacy of SES controls in all these studies. Those who employ self-reports of delinquency argue that they are at least as valid as official records which, for reasons given above, are open to doubt. Those who are skeptical about self-reports ask whether children in fatherless homes may be more likely than others to "confess" to misdeeds.

In support of such a speculation they point to a finding that children in fatherless homes evince lower self-esteem than other children.\*\*

Our national statistics do not relate delinquency rates to socioeconomic status. However, numerous special studies of individuals and of census tracts have established an inverse relationship between income level and reported delinquency.\*\*\* There is little doubt that the great majority of reported juvenile delinquents come from low-income families and low-income neighborhoods, where the proportion of broken homes tends to be high.+

Although national statistics concerning juvenile delinquency do not report father's income, education, or occupation, they do report color. Yet there is reasonable doubt concerning the extent to which reported white-nonwhite differences are, in fact, due to socioeconomic differences.++ This confounding makes the omission of socioeconomic factors seem unfortunate, the more so since some socioeconomic

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\* Nye, 1958; Slocum and Stone; Stiegman.

\*\* M. Rosenberg.

\*\*\* Bordua, 1958-59; Chein; Chilton; Fleisher; Gordon; Lander; Rodman, 1968; Willie.

+ Whether alleged trends to middle- and upper-class delinquency have weakened or will weaken this relationship is not apparent in the studies reviewed, most of which were completed no later than early 1968.

++ Herzog, 1967; Lefcowitz.

information is available in the police records from which national figures are compiled.\*

Sources of bias relating to differential treatment are specific to reported delinquency.\*\* Those relating to differences in color and socioeconomic status, and to adequacy of control or comparison groups, are shared with much other research about fatherless homes. These shared problems will be discussed in a later section.

### Are they really overrepresented?

Our effort to answer the question about overrepresentation leads to three main observations:

- (1) Available figures are much too confounded to permit a definite answer to the question of whether children in fatherless homes are more likely than others to engage in delinquent behavior. The kind of count just reported can prove nothing except that a clear affirmative answer is not to be taken for granted--but this is an important exception.
- (2) It is our impression that if all relevant variables could be adequately controlled, there would probably be a somewhat greater frequency of delinquent behavior among children in fatherless homes than among children in intact homes.
- (3) The difference, even though statistically significant, might well be so small as to have little practical significance.

### CONNECTION BETWEEN FATHER ABSENCE AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Some of the studies reviewed go beyond the question of relative frequency to inquire into the nature of the reported connection between father absence and juvenile delinquency. As Bordua suggests, the

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\* In 1968, 36 States began to include on the birth certificate an item showing educational attainment of the mother and father. (Ventura.) Presumably, this information will be included in national illegitimacy figures. Possibly, national reports of juvenile delinquency will follow suit.

\*\*Similar biases are often alleged in relation to reported pregnancy out of wedlock--sometimes (although not always) categorized as delinquency--and to some other types of overt behavior that are socially condemned.

importance of the father's role in juvenile delinquency depends on the particular theory of causation espoused.\* Those theories that relate delinquency to the social-economic structure have little to say about family factors, including the father's presence or absence.\*\* In fact, an extensive review of current research on juvenile delinquency contained no mention of the broken home, or of the family.\*\*\*

Since the present review is focused on father absence, discussion that excludes the family is beyond its scope. It may merely be commented in passing that it is difficult to believe either intrafamily factors or broad socioeconomic factors could be wholly divorced from the processes and events which determine whether a given child will engage in delinquent behavior.+ A few commentators have criticized what they view as underemphasis on socioeconomic and community factors by analysts who attribute juvenile delinquency primarily to family factors.++ Others may see reciprocal blindspots among social-structural analysts.

Studies that inquire into the nature of the reported association between father absence and juvenile delinquency usually focus exclusively or primarily on overt family factors, on individual psychological factors, or on community factors.

### Family factors

It is often implied or stated that the causal element in the reported association of father absence and juvenile delinquency is lack of paternal supervision and control. Studies that inquire into family factors confirm (expectably) the importance of supervision, but not the indispensability of the father to that element of child rearing. (Actually, of course, few fathers pay a direct primary role in supervision of children, especially in the groups producing the majority of reported juvenile offenses.)

Family-oriented studies usually include father absence as part of the family configuration rather than as a sole and separate factor. Some of them find father absence significantly related to juvenile delinquency and some do not. A recurrent finding, however, is that other factors are more important, especially competent supervision of the child and general family climate or harmony.

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\* Bordua, 1960.

\*\* Cloward and Ohlin; A. K. Cohen.

\*\*\* Empey.

+ Redl.

++ Toby, 1957.

Supervision by the mother.--Among the best known, most influential, and most sharply criticized of such studies are those of Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, using a sample of adolescent boys committed for juvenile delinquency and a control group matched for age, intelligence quotient, ethnic-racial background, and residence in the depressed areas of greater Boston. Their work represents an early effort to predict juvenile delinquency, and the shortcomings of their Social Prediction Table have been discussed at length in other publications.\* However, while failing to predict satisfactorily, the studies did provide information relevant to the role of father absence in juvenile delinquency.

Their analysis was based on school, court, and social welfare records, and on intensive interviewing by social workers. All information was carefully rated, with high rater reliability. The analysis identified 41 home factors significantly associated with juvenile delinquency, including father absence, which was found in 61 percent of their delinquent sample as compared with 34 percent of the control group. However, 14 other factors that are also significant at the .01 level show a larger percentage difference between experimental and control groups than does the proportion of father-absent homes. Foremost among these are "unsuitable discipline of boy by mother," (96 percent in the experimental as compared with 34 percent in the control group), and "unsuitable supervision of boy by mother," (64 percent as compared with 13 percent). Other items among the 14 are harsh and unsuitable discipline by the father, indifference or hostility of father to boy, delinquency of either parent but especially of the father, poor work habits of the father. Some of these serve as reminders that certain kinds of present fathers may also promote delinquency, a point brought out in several studies.\*\*

Subsequent reanalysis by Maccoby of the Glueck data relating to maternal unemployment underlined the paramount importance of the mother's role and especially the quality of her supervision.\*\*\* This emphasis was reinforced in later efforts by the New York Youth Board to test out the Glueck Prediction Table. Eventually they dropped the items involving parental affection because raters found it difficult to agree in their estimates, and they eliminated items involving the father because there were so many broken homes in the low-income area involved, and also because their raters decided that even a one-parent home could be "cohesive."† It is relevant that Leslie Wilkins eliminated father absence as a factor in his Borstal studies because it was not predictive.††

\* Glueck and Glueck; Fahn; Rubin; Toby, 1965.

\*\* Gardner and Goldman; McCord et al.; Robins.

\*\*\*Maccoby, 1958.

† Craig and Glick.

†† Wilkins.

The importance of maternal supervision, highlighted by Maccoby's reanalysis of the Glueck data, is underlined in a special analysis by the New York Youth Board of 20 cases of Negro boys erroneously predicted to become delinquent.\* In these cases, it was evident that the mother, or occasionally the grandmother, had been very active in maintaining supervision. Toby, in criticizing the prediction attempt, argued that the really potent factor in low-income, high-delinquency areas is supervision of the children.\*\* He maintained that rural families have better control than do urban families, white families suffer less disruption and, therefore, have better control than Negro families, adolescent boys of any class or nationality have less supervision than younger boys, or than girls. Using statistics from the State of New Jersey, he showed that, in fact, girls and younger boys represented a larger proportion of urban than of rural delinquents, and a larger proportion of white than of nonwhite.\*\*\* †

Family climate.--Emphasis on family quality, harmony, or climate as more important than father absence per se is another recurrent finding among studies that attempt to analyze family factors in relation to juvenile delinquency. The Gluecks found "lack of family cohesiveness" more strongly correlated with juvenile delinquency than was father absence, and used it (but not father absence) in their five-factor prediction table. Lack of family cohesiveness was also among the 14 factors that differentiated between study and control groups more strongly than did father absence. The 14 factors included other aspects of family climate, such as incompatibility of parents, "poor conduct standards of family," "lack of family self-respect."††

Four other family-oriented studies disagree about the relation between father absence and juvenile delinquency, two finding it significant and two finding it not significant.††† All four, however, agree that the home climate--variously categorized as happiness of home, amount of friction, child's evaluation of parent-child relationships, family functioning rated "good," "fair," or "poor"--is significantly more important than father absence per se. Nye found delinquent behavior reported more often by boys in unhappy intact homes than by boys in broken homes.

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\* New York Youth Board.

\*\* Toby, 1965.

\*\*\*Toby, 1957.

† It is not expedient to report for each study discussed the level of probability selected as statistically significant. No difference referred to as statistically significant falls short of the .05 level, and some attain the .01 or .001 level.

†† Glueck and Glueck.

†††Nye, 1958; Slocum and Stone; Ferguson; McCord et al.

Some studies of adult delinquents also point to family disharmony as more salient than father absence. A number rank parental pathology (crime, alcoholism, mental illness) along with general family quarreling and stress.\*

The McCords, reanalyzing the data of the Cambridge-Somerville study,\*\* added that the older the boy when the break came, the more likely he was to be delinquent. This, they suggest, supports the finding that conflict is more conducive than father absence to juvenile delinquency, and that some results attributed to father absence may be due to conflict preceding the break.\*\*\* Others also raise a question: whether the adverse impact of father absence derives less from the absence itself than from the period of stress preceding separation.+

Thus, some studies that report significant overrepresentation of father-absent children among juvenile delinquents nevertheless rate other family factors as more important, especially the climate of the home--regardless of its composition--and the adequacy with which the mother fulfills her supervisory role; while some report that father absence is not a significant differentiating factor but that these other elements are.

Consideration of these studies suggests that if, in fact, father-absent children are overrepresented among those who engage in delinquent behavior (as differentiated from those represented in official reports of delinquency), the absence of the father may be a result or concomitant of some other cause rather than a direct cause of delinquency. Such a speculation is encouraged by the likelihood that divorce, separation, and desertion will be preceded by periods of acute stress, and that supervision of children is likely to be more difficult for a mother in a one-parent than in a two-parent home.

### Individual psychological factors

The most frequent hypothesis relating male juvenile delinquency to the psychological effects of father absence is that lack of a resident father is likely to impair a boy's self-concept, especially his concept of his own maleness, since on the one hand he lacks a male model within the intimate family circle and on the other hand he is exposed to

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\* Robins; Gardner and Goldman; Roebuck and Cadwallader.

\*\* Powers and Witmer.

\*\*\*McCord et al.

+ Glueck and Glueck; Goode, 1956; Gurin et al.; Illsley and Thompson; Langner and Michael; Rodman and Grams; Shaw and McKay.

overdependence on and excessive interaction with the remaining female parent. If he is at the same time involved in a neighborhood culture that emphasizes maleness and equates it with toughness, it is argued inner uncertainty tends to lead him to overcompensate. One corollary is that if there are many boys of similar background in the neighborhood, a violent antisocial youth culture may develop as a counter-culture to "matriarchal" mothers and their views of good behavior.\*

A great deal of research on fatherless boys is relevant to this hypothesis, but very little of it has been conducted primarily in relation to juvenile delinquency. Research involving sex role concepts and identity is included in a later section, under the heading of masculine identity. With regard to the "matriarchal" corollary, however, it should be noted that the Gluecks found "dominance of mother in family affairs" almost equal in study and control groups (49.6 percent and 49.7 percent respectively), and one of only three items in their list of 43 that failed to show a significant difference.\*\*

### Community factors

A number of investigators have focused on areas or neighborhoods rather than on individuals or families--whether the areas involved be census tracts, neighborhoods, regions, towns, or cities. Two kinds of conclusions emerge from such studies.

1. The outstanding relationship is between juvenile delinquency and a cluster of factors primarily socioeconomic or strongly correlated with socioeconomic level, rather than between juvenile delinquency and father absence per se. Several report, for example, that census tracts with high proportions of broken homes are likely to have a high delinquency rate, but that the children in broken homes are not necessarily the ones who are delinquent.\*\*\* Robins found that boys' behavior problems but not their academic problems positively correlated with the proportion of father-absent children in the school attended. The broken home as an individual factor was not related either to behavior or to academic problems, although both types of problems increased as the SES of the school declined or as the mobility of a boy's schoolmates increased.<sup>+</sup> Such conclusions are in line with a number of ecological studies of delinquency that are not concerned with family variables but use a variety of socioeconomic indicators.<sup>++</sup>

\* W. B. Miller.

\*\* Glueck and Glueck.

\*\*\*Chern; Robins et al.; Willie.

<sup>+</sup> Robins et al.

<sup>++</sup> Bordua, 1958-59; Chilton; Gordon; Lander.

Marked relationships are also reported with "social climate" which, in turn, is closely related to socioeconomic indicators. Chein, using 1960 census data from 1,400 tracts in New York City, reports very high correlations between juvenile delinquency and a number of other social indices, including broken homes, "socioeconomic squalor," and the presence of underprivileged minorities, but concludes that a community factor of anomie is responsible for "contranorms" that result in delinquent behavior.\* Others who focus on community rather than family refer to norms that directly favor juvenile delinquency.\*\* However, in studies specifically concerned with father absence and juvenile delinquency, community norms tend to be mentioned in passing, if at all.

2. Broken homes are associated with juvenile delinquency in some socioeconomic groups but not in all. Eisner, analyzing 1960 data for San Francisco, reports juvenile delinquency significantly associated with the absence of a parent at all income levels except the lowest, in areas predominantly white. For areas that were predominantly Negro, this pattern was significant only at the upper-middle-income level, but was significantly reversed at the lower-middle and showed a tendency to reversal at the other two (lowest and highest) income levels.\*\*\* Although the study leaves a number of questions unanswered, its findings may be fruitfully compared with others that raise fewer or in any case different questions. Willie, comparing census tracts in Washington, D.C., reported a stronger relation between broken homes and juvenile delinquency among whites and a stronger relation between juvenile delinquency and income level among Negroes.+

The lack of correlation between juvenile delinquency and broken homes at the lowest income level for predominantly white areas in the San Francisco study, coupled with the stronger relation between income level and broken homes for low-income Negroes in the Washington study, points to the ever-present problem of differentiating between color differences, socioeconomic differences, and differences relating to broken homes. The problem derives partly from the fact that white incomes are, on the whole, higher than Negro incomes, so that in the San Francisco study the highest income quartile for predominantly white areas is far

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\* Chein.

\*\* A. K. Cohen; Cloward and Ohlin; W. B. Miller.

\*\*\*Eisner. Another example of relatively low juvenile delinquency rates among one-parent families at the lowest income level comes from Burgess and Price: An American Dependency Challenge, which found that the delinquency rate among AFDC children was lower than the national norm: "the delinquency and criminal rates of those children appear to be far below the national average, and indications of antisocial behavior are slight indeed." (p. 184.)

+ Willie.

above the highest income quartile for predominantly Negro areas; and in Washington, white tracts categorized as "affluent and stable" (32 out of 37) had a far higher income level than the Negro tracts so classified (6 out of 51). Incomes in the tracts classified as poor were correspondingly much lower for Negroes than for whites. Thus, the income segments being compared are not strictly comparable.

#### To sum up

Studies that analyze case material relating to home factors present varying conclusions about the existence and strength of an association between broken homes and juvenile delinquency. However, their findings give clear support to the proposition that father absence per se is less salient among relevant family factors than are the climate and tone of the home and the kind of supervision given to the child.

The findings of area studies also support the impression that the direct contribution of father absence per se to juvenile delinquency is probably less than that of concomitant factors, such as socioeconomic level, the climate of the home, the nature of parental supervision, and community traits. Its indirect contribution, according to both types of study, would lie chiefly in the impact of father absence on the mother's ability to maintain effective supervision and a harmonious home climate. The strength of the impact, in turn, could be critically influenced by social and economic factors.

## INTELLECTUAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONING

A number of the effects ascribed to growing up in a fatherless home have to do with impairment of intellectual functioning or of social and psychological processes and mechanisms. Although some studies focus on one area, a considerable number investigate one or more clusters of interrelated characteristics.

For present purposes, it seems expedient to discuss only two of these in relative detail, with merely summary or incidental mention of the others. These two are school achievement and sex concept or identity.

### SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

Studies of school achievement often report that children from fatherless homes do less well in school than children in homes with father present.

For example, Mackie et al., using a variety of tests and assessments, studied 60 children from low-income Negro families and found that those in father-present families did better in a preschool program than those in father-absent families.\* The father-present families had an average per capita income twice as high as those with fathers absent. The correlations between income and IQ as evidenced in test performance on the Primary Mental Abilities scale and the Peabody scale were statistically significant (.40 and .27). However, the correlation between income and IQ was only .17. The conclusion was that the father's presence has an effect over and above the differential due to economic status. By the time the children were in first grade, the effects of the program had disappeared for all groups, but the association with father absence was still very much present. The authors conclude that the "effect of the fathers precedes the effect of family income on child development." (p. 9.)

This may be compared with Hess et al., who found the father-absent children essentially equal to the father-present in ability at age 4, before they entered preschool or kindergarten. His carefully

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\* Mackie et al.(A).

selected sample of both boys and girls found that the children did not differ in their scores on the Stanford-Binet IQ, Columbia Mental Maturity Scale, the Sigel Sorting Task, or a Curiosity Task. While he found a number of differences in the mothers' behavior which might affect later achievement, it would seem that, at the time of entry into school, the children did not differ in intellectual capacity.\*

A larger study, involving about 200 children from grades 4, 5, and 6 in a low-income, 99 percent Negro school, led to the conclusion that although the fatherless children scored significantly lower on school achievement tests, the broken home factor was not the basic determinant of group differences. "It is highly unlikely that any one factor could account for the poor performance and deprived psychological state of the experimental group; it is more realistic to see the urban Negro child as subject to many influences which converge on him, all contributing to the effects noted." (p. 11.) This conclusion was supported by a factor analysis which pointed to "objective social conditions which are associated with poor school achievement, rather than the more specific individual and familial factors, although these last, in turn, are of course influenced by the objective life conditions." (p. 18.)\*\*

An interesting subconclusion produced by the factor analysis is that "broken home and negative self-image are not related to individual achievement levels, or, if they are...these individual differences are small enough to be completely obscured by the magnitude of group differences. This suggests again the singular importance for school achievement of being Negro and being subject to all the environmental disabilities associated with lower-class minority group life." (p. 18.) This finding is reminiscent of the area studies, discussed in connection with juvenile delinquency, that found delinquency rates associated with high rates of broken homes, although the juvenile delinquents were not necessarily themselves products of broken homes.\*\*\*

Three large surveys also conclude that school achievement scores are much more closely related to race and income than to family status, especially in the low-income group.+ Coleman's nationwide study has been criticized on a number of grounds. However, the criticisms are not of a nature to raise question about his report on the effects of father absence which he found to be insignificantly related to school performance except in certain subgroups (Puerto Rican, Chinese, and Mexican).

Tabler et al. reanalyzed some of the Coleman data in an effort to produce more accurate findings with regard to several variables,

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\* Hess et al.

\*\* Deutsch.

\*\*\*Chein; Robins et al.

+ Coleman et al.; Levinson; Tabler et al.; Wilson.

including father absence--defined somewhat differently than in Coleman's study. Their conclusion was that children from father-absent homes scored lower than children from father-present homes, but that all scores relative to absent fathers faded into insignificance when compared with race differences. The effect of father status was least for first grade Negro children in poorer schools (where, in fact, the father-absent children did better than the father-present ones), and for white children in better schools on the grade 12 level. At all levels, but least at grade 12, the association with father status was stronger among whites than among Negroes; and for both groups, it was stronger among children attending "better" schools than among those rated as poorer. This suggests again the conclusion stated by Deutsch and implied by Coleman: that the critical element is not father absence per se, but rather a complex of family, economic, and community factors which interact among each other.

Wilson used the Coleman model for a study of some 2,600 students within a single area, Contra Costa County in California.\* The subjects were selected to be representative of white and nonwhite, type of neighborhood, economic level, and degree of integration of schools on the first, third, sixth, and eighth grade levels. Twenty-two percent of the Negro sample and 9.5 percent of the white were from broken homes (again classified somewhat differently than by Coleman and Tabler). When the low SES students having high grades in English were compared, both Negro and white father-absent boys scored better than the father-present boys. On the other hand, verbal test scores at different grade levels showed the father-absent boys significantly higher in the third grade, the father-present boys significantly higher in the sixth grade, and differences nonsignificant or nonexistent in the first and eighth grade--results so oddly mixed as to defy interpretation. In contrast, the effects of race did appear to be significant. Unfortunately, tests on math ability were not available. The investigators concluded that father presence or absence is not a critical variable with regard to school performance, and eliminated it from their further analysis. Similar analysis was not performed for middle-class children.

A study by Deutsch and Brown came to roughly similar conclusions about the relative importance of race and father absence in influencing school performance.\*\* In this study, efforts to control for SES were far more energetic than those of Coleman and Tabler. However, the representativeness of the very large Coleman sample may have helped somewhat to mute the defects in control. Wasserman, studying Negro boys in a low-income housing project, used questionnaires answered by mothers, as well as school reports. He found no differences related to father absence in

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\* Wilson.

\*\* Deutsch and Brown.

school achievement or school attitudes.\* Mackler, studying children in a "typical" Harlem school, also concluded that father absence was not significantly related to school achievement. "Having a father in the home," he observes, "does not insure success nor does his absence insure failure. What is common to most successful children is an adult, usually mother, whose interest in the child and his education...is keenly sensed by the child. Mother may be working, most often she is, but she is there asking about school daily, or a least once a week." (p. 459.)\*\*

One is tempted to speculate that careful sampling or careful SES control serves to put the effects of father absence into perspective as a contributory though not a primary factor in depressing school achievement. However, two large "buts" must be recognized. The first is that no study reviewed has been entirely successful in controlling for SES (nor did Deutsch and Brown claim complete success); the second is that the Coleman model, used in both of the larger studies, fails to differentiate clearly between types of father absence and this failure leaves an open question.

### SES controls

The problem of adequate control for SES is complex, pervasive, and seldom fully faced. It is by no means limited to studies of school achievement. However, since this problem and that introduced by various types of father absence are particularly salient in such studies, they call for consideration at this point.

In some small studies, using homogeneous samples, defects in SES controls may not be gross enough to influence the findings substantially. In a number of the studies reviewed, however, it loomed large enough to throw some doubt on the extent to which conclusions might be modified by really sensitive controls.

There is abundant evidence that one-parent families and Negro families are, on the whole, less prosperous than two-parent families and white families. The differences between male-headed and female-headed families are as striking as the differences between white and nonwhite. (Table 1.) In 1967, for example, the proportion of female-headed white families with incomes under \$3,000 was three times as large as the proportion of male-headed white families: 32 percent as compared with 10 percent. The proportion of Negro female-headed families with yearly income under \$3,000 was over twice as large as the proportion of male-headed Negro families: 53 percent as compared with 24 percent.\*\*\*

\* Wasserman.

\*\* Mackler.

\*\*\*Mackie finds that in Maryland, the Head Start mother who works makes an average of \$65 more per year than does the mother on welfare. (Mackie, 1967 (B).)

Table 1.--INCOME DISTRIBUTION FOR ALL FAMILIES BY SEX AND  
COLOR OF HEAD, 1966

Total Money Income	WHITE		NEGRO	
	Male-headed family	Female-headed family	Male-headed family	Female-headed family
Number (in thousands)	39,007 100%	4,010 100%	3,196 100%	1,128 100%
Under \$3,000	10.3	32.0	23.7	53.3
\$3,000 to 5,999	19.7	33.5	34.3	33.7
\$6,000 to 9,999	36.0	23.1	28.2	10.3
\$10,000 and over	33.7	11.4	13.6	2.6

Source: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 175; adapted from Table 6, p. 7, 1968(c).

The pattern becomes stronger in families with children under 18, but recent figures are not available for that breakdown. However, any study that compares one-parent and two-parent families drives home the familiar differential.

Cagle and Deutscher report that in their study of families in a housing project in Syracuse, New York, the total sample had a median income which approximated the median for the census tract. The median for the father-present families was \$4,071; for the father-absent, it was \$2,056. The median number of people in the family was the same for father-present and father-absent:

Wife and 3.7 children  
Husband, wife, and 2.7 children

This would give a per capita yearly income of \$866 in two-parent families and of \$437 in fatherless families, or a ratio of about two to one.\*

The typical income difference between one-parent and two-parent families comes out clearly in the study by Hess et al., where, among 81 Negro families classified as "working class--unskilled," four-fifths of the father-present families had incomes of \$3,000 or more, and four-fifths of the father-absent families had incomes under \$3,000.\*\* Examples could be multiplied, but the differences by now are proverbial--except that the income differences between male-headed and female-headed Negro families are sometimes forgotten or underestimated.

\* Cagle and Deutscher.

\*\*Hess et al.

Two conspicuously unsolved research problems are: (1) differentiating between the effects of fatherlessness and the effects of depressed income; and (2) differentiating between the consequences of poverty and the consequences of color. Neither problem is likely to be solved without effective income controls, and such controls are extremely difficult to achieve. One source of difficulty is that Americans, for a number of reasons, typically regard income as a sensitive subject.\* Another is that at very low income levels, where employment is irregular, people often do not know just what their annual income is.

The problem is less acute when no control is claimed than when controls are claimed but inadequate. It is easy to point out, for example, that a high proportion of broken homes among juvenile delinquents can be assessed only in comparison with the proportion of juvenile delinquents in homes of similar socioeconomic and cultural background. It is more difficult to demonstrate that a rough, three-way breakdown into low-, middle-, and high-income groups may fail to effect an adequate SES control. Yet such a breakdown is likely to be an inadequate control for two reasons. One is that Negro families and female-headed families tend to cluster at the lower layers of each level, so that the three-way break does not obviate substantial differences within each level. For example, Coleman et al., in stratifying their sample, found it necessary to use a different division point for whites and Negroes. The lowest level for whites included six or fewer from a list of household items; the lowest level for Negroes included four or fewer.\*\*

Some studies explicitly report such within-level difference with regard to Negroes when describing the sample, although it is seldom taken into account in formulating final conclusions. More often, broad SES controls are regarded as adequate without regard to variations within strata. And some studies that claimed SES control failed to utilize such SES comparisons as they had; that is, they reported SES composition and family composition--but not at the same time. A few inquiries elicited the explanation that this would have made the calls too small to achieve statistical significance. Yet failure to achieve adequate SES control leaves open a question about the extent to which adverse effects attributed to broken homes reflect the high proportion of broken homes among low-income groups, the relatively low income of female-headed homes

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\* A recent incident from a small intensive study that involved long-term contact with subjects is enlightening. Only after 3 years of acquaintance, with frequent contact, did the father in one of the very low-income families admit that his income was only half of what he had originally reported, and that he had not been, as reported, employed all year round. Although all contacts had been friendly and apparently frank, his pride had kept him from admitting the extent of his inability to support his family.

\*\* Coleman et al.

within a given SES level, and the relatively high proportion of Negroes among the poor.\* Myron Lefcowitz has demonstrated roughly (as have a good many others) that color differences on a number of variables, such as family composition, education of children, relative education of wife and husband, are dwarfed by difference related to income.\*\*

The second reason why a three-way break is an insufficient control is that the lower one goes on the income ladder, the more important rather small dollar differences become. An increase of \$500 adds 25 percent to a yearly income of \$2,000. It adds only 2.5 percent to a yearly income of \$20,000. It would not be surprising to find a 25 percent increase more perceptibly reflected in life style than an increase of 2.5 percent.

The importance of relatively small dollar differences in low incomes was evident in a Children's Bureau study of a preschool enrichment program, which shows interesting relations between dollar income per child and the pattern of gain in IQ score as measured by the Stanford-Binet test within a low-income group, the highest group tending to gain more during the first year and the lowest during the second year.\*\*\* An analysis of materials collected for the Child Rearing Study in Washington, D.C., concluded that "the amount and regularity of family income [in a very low-income group] makes a significant difference in the child-rearing priorities of parents." (p. 11.)<sup>+</sup>

Clearly, a gross grouping by income, or even by several rough SES indicators such as education, does not necessarily constitute a true control, especially when there is some doubt about the accuracy of the information recorded. There is reason to suspect that differences ascribed to color in some studies could as accurately be ascribed to SES. Similarly, it is often difficult to know whether reported differences related more strongly to family factors (including fatherlessness) or to SES--the more so since family factors and SES are intricately intertwined. One consequence of losing the father from a two-parent home is likely to be reduced income. Among the effects of reduced income may be moving the family to a different home, reducing the standard of living, financial worry for the mother, need for her to work, fatigue, stress reaction of the mother to worry, impaired supervision by the working mother, feeling that the family has lost status.

Remarkably few studies of father absence inquire into the nature and consequences of its effects on socioeconomic level and the repercussion of these effects on family life. Among the exceptions, Fagen et al. describe the straitened circumstances of middle-class families

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\* Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1966.

\*\* Lefcowitz.

\*\*\*Fuschillo.

+ Jackson.

with the father temporarily absent for military service, and Rowntree describes the greater likelihood of shared households and poorer grooming among children of broken homes.\*

Although problems of control for SES are particularly acute in relation to reports of school achievement, they are shared by studies concerned with all aspects of fatherlessness. They have been touched on in connection with juvenile delinquency and they are involved also in studies of psychological aspects discussed in the following section. Even if no other questions were raised with regard to study findings in this area, doubt concerning SES controls alone would be a sufficient basis for suspecting that evidence is not yet adequate for an unqualified answer to questions about the effects of father absence.

### Types of father absence

Reliance upon the findings of the extensive Coleman survey and the studies that reanalyze its data or follow its model is inhibited by ambiguity in the classifications of father absence. To study the effects of father absence was not, of course, its primary objective. Nevertheless, it is tantalizing to have results from so large a sample and to have their meaning obscured.

The children were asked: "Who is now acting as your father?" Eight classifications were provided for answers, but these answers were grouped under three categories in analyzing the data:\*\*

1. Real father living at home, or stepfather.
2. Foster father, grandfather, other relative, other adult.
3. No one (acting as father):

Since the child living with a stepfather is often (though not always) rated less favorably than the child living with only one parent, it is peculiarly unfortunate to lump natural father and stepfather in one category, confounding the effects associated with these two kinds of two-parent homes. Studies of middle-class children and youth have more often isolated the stepparent category than have studies of

\* Fagen et al.; Rowntree.

\*\*Using the same questions and data, Tabler developed three different father-status categories: 1. real father; 2. real father not at home and stepfather; 3. all other categories, including "no one." Wilson's Contra Costa study employed only two categories: 1. father present, meaning father or any male surrogate present in the home; 2. father absent, meaning no father or male surrogate present in the home.

lower-class families, so that the two-parent classification in low-SES studies is quite varied in composition. This may or may not relate to the fact that on the whole studies of lower-class children report fewer differences between father-present and father-absent children.

Uncertainty remains about the extent to which adding the step-father to the intact group confounds the findings; whether the disabilities of being poor and deprived are so great that they overshadow the effects of father absence; whether relationships with fathers are typically less close in the lower SES level, and the fathers in this group may contribute less than in other groups to the social and psychological well-being of the children; or whether some other elements or interactions are involved.

Among studies included in the core group, over half defined "intact home" to mean that both biological parents were present. About one in four included stepparents in the "intact" group. Definitions of "broken home" ran a gamut of variations, sometimes combining all types, sometimes separating death from all other types of father absence. Regardless of these classifications, studies sometimes specify whether absence was temporary or permanent and sometimes they combine the two without specification.

Like problems of SES control, definitions of father absence raise questions concerning many of the findings reported, but especially about the large surveys that relate school performance to father absence. It is expedient, therefore, to comment a little more fully at this point upon the different kinds of father absence briefly sketched in the introductory section.

Amount and degree of separation.--That the difference between temporary and continuing father absence is basic has already been observed. Under continuing absence of the natural father, a quantitative continuum might be set up, ranging from father never present, through father absent from infancy, from early childhood, from preadolescence, and so on. Yet the fact that the father lives outside the home does not necessarily mean that the child lacks all contact with him. There may be regular visits or occasional visits. There may be support payments, the regularity or irregularity of which may or may not be communicated to the child and thus influence the child's perception of the father. Accordingly, even in strictly quantitative terms, the continuum based on measurement of the child's age at separation becomes complicated by variations in the completeness of the separation.

Temporary father absence may involve brief or long periods of time, ranging from weeks or months to 2 years or more; and may occur once in a lifetime, or regularly, or sporadically. At the other extreme

is a pattern very common in contemporary American life--repeated short absences for business or work. Some investigators include under temporary father absence the frequent need to be away from home during the dinner hour, even if the father is otherwise present.\*

A continuum of physical father absence that includes frequent evenings away from home invites consideration of physical separation during hours spent at home, and leads to speculation about psychological father absence or presence. Some fathers who are required to be away a good deal try to make up for it by shared activity with their children when they are able to be at home. Some others, who are at home a great deal, have little give-and-take with their children, leaving child rearing strictly to the mother. Very few studies of father absence attempt to assess amount or quality of father-child contact in homes classified as intact. The prevailing tendency has been to differentiate types of father absence a good deal more than types of father presence, although children from homes classified as intact are often used as a control group.

Reasons for absence.--Reasons for father absence can be divided initially into those that are socially sanctioned or even honored and those that generally carry, or are assumed to carry, some degree of social disapproval. Among the socially sanctioned or honored reasons are absence for military service, or for the fulfilling of business or professional obligations. Absence because of death is regretted but not usually stigmatized unless the death was caused by suicide or in the course of a dishonored activity. Among the socially disapproved or deplored reasons for father absence are divorce, separation, desertion, nonmarriage, incarceration or institutionalization.

Regardless of the specific theory underlying a study, it may be assumed that the child's perception of the father and of the reasons for his absence are of crucial importance. To have a hero father who has gone forth to battle in defense of home and country is obviously different from having a perfidious father who deserted wife and children, or a disgraced father serving time for criminal acts. Different from both is to have a father who was struck down by death, as an act of fate or of God.

Despite exceptions and despite varying definitions of broken and intact homes, the prevailing conclusion is that continuing father absence is less strongly associated with adverse effects when the absence is caused by death than when it is caused by voluntary separation of two living parents. The studies reviewed seldom probe or discuss the

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\*Billler, 1968(A); Bronfenbrenner; Whiteman and Deutsch.

reasons for this repetitive pattern which is so familiar by now that occasional deviations from it are perceived as surprising.\*

Given the existence of the pattern, explanations are not difficult to suggest, although data supporting them are scarce. Moreover, explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. If absence of paternal supervision and control is assumed to be the connecting link, it can be said that a father is likely to be removed by death when a child is older and, on the whole, divorce, separation or desertion is likely to occur earlier in the child's life.\*\* If role model, source of identification, and self-concept are invoked, the father removed by death has a better chance to be regarded as a paragon of manly virtues than the father perceived by the child as deserting his family--with or without the formality of divorce. The father removed by death is certainly more likely to be presented in a favorable light by the mother, and by the community at large.

On the other hand, the pattern fits in also with belief that it is not the father's absence per se but rather the friction and disorganization that often precede voluntary separation that produce the reported adverse effects. There is no reason to assume that, as a rule, a father's death would necessarily be preceded by a period of friction and stress. Such a period might accompany a long terminal illness, but probably this is not frequent in fathers of young children.

Two other elements could operate more strongly in voluntary separation than in separation by death. One is that whatever social stigma attaches to voluntary separation, it is not likely to operate or to be suspected by the child in the case of paternal death--unless the death were "shameful" (while committing armed robbery, during a brawl, suicide). The other is that although very small children may perceive a father's death as desertion by him, as they grow older this perception will change--at least on the conscious level. There is far less likelihood that a child orphaned by death will grow up cherishing a conscious and uninhibited bitterness against his father for deserting him, and a conception of himself as the son of an unworthy father, and as one who has been rejected.

Thus, to the extent that the boy's response to father absence accounts for reported differences between father-absent and father-present boys, there seems some grounds for explaining the response on the basis of friction within the home, sense of social stigma, resentment of desertion, and a sense of self as the kind of person who is abandoned

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\* Burchinal.

\*\*Monahan, 1960.

and the son of a father who would abandon. In theory, all these could be as important as the absence of a resident role model in contributing to adverse effects of father absence.

Age of child.--Few of the reports reviewed presented data clearly relating reported effects of father absence to age of the child at separation. Those that did so tended on the whole to report that the younger the child at time of separation, the more strongly were the adverse effects related to father absence. Two, however, found a stronger association when the child was over 6--the McCords with regard to "feminine aggressive behavior" and Langner and Michael with regard to general mental health. Carlsmith reported that the younger the boy when the father left, or the longer he was absent, the greater the proportion showing a reversal in the math-verbal ratio. Hetherington also points to the possibility that length of absence rather than age at separation is the important factor.\*

Investigators who are concerned with sex role identification tend to assume that if the father is present until the child reaches a specific age--variously set at 3, 4, or 6--appropriate sex role learning will have occurred, and absence after this critical period will have less effect. Thus, D'Andrade and Whiting believe that the second and third year are crucial, but in their small sample they found no clear and consistent differences relating to this thesis.\*\*

On the other hand, Kohlberg argues that sex role identification is a product of gradual cognitive learning, varying somewhat with the intelligence and experiences of the child, but responsive to influences outside the family as well as within it, so that presence or absence of a father is not the sole and not necessarily the critical factor. Rosenberg's data also support the idea of gradual development rather than a specific critical age. He does report lower self-esteem for father-absent children, and to a more marked degree for those who experienced separation from the father at a younger age. However, the increment is gradual and there is no break or point at which it is especially marked.\*\*\*

Rosenberg also considers the age of the mother and concludes that the self-esteem and psychosomatic symptoms of the child are more closely related to her age than to that of the child. However, his data are not controlled for SES, and are not presented in a way that makes it possible to disentangle the familiar constellation of disabilities: youth, poor education, low income, broken home--all of which may be associated both with self-esteem and with psychosomatic symptoms.+

\* Carlsmith; Hetherington; Langner and Michael McCord et al.

\*\* D'Andrade and Whiting.

\*\*\* Kohlberg; M. Rosenberg.

+ M. Rosenberg.

Scattered findings reveal, once again, the effect of social and economic factors. Langner and Michael, for example, find that in the low SES level, adult adjustment is related to age at separation from the father; but that the relation is less marked on the middle SES level and disappears on the upper SES.\*

Family adjustments.--In temporary absence, the family is apt to know in advance that the father will be leaving, to have some idea how long he will be gone (even if this is indeterminate, as "for the duration of the war"), and to have an opportunity to make plans for managing during the interim. In temporary as in permanent absence, the mother is the key figure in family adjustment--a relatively obvious point which is amply supported by research evidence.\*\* Her responsibility will be increased, but she still shares the planning with her husband, and to a widely varying extent the sharing may continue while he is gone. (Canary Island fishermen may be gone 6 months with no possibility of communication, and the same was true previously of Norwegian whalers--sometimes for an absence of 2 or 3 years. On the other hand, in one American study, some servicemen and their wives reported that they wrote letters "every day.")

A crucial difference between a single temporary absence and permanent father absence is that the family's adjustment to temporary absence is probably more tentative. The mother expects to give up her additional authority and responsibilities when the father returns (although at least one study suggests that this shift may be difficult).\*\*\* Certain problems may also be put off or saved for his return. This difference is diminished in cases of frequent, extended absence. Tiller points out that for certain Norwegian families, the normal pattern is for the father to be present only 3 to 6 months at a time, and absent for 2 or more years. This pattern, representing an extreme in temporary absence, is rare.+

Return of the father.--The characteristic which is common to all forms of temporary absence, and which does not occur in permanent absence, is the return of the father. Some children have been studied shortly after his return and it seems clear that the return may be traumatic.++ If so, then all post-return studies may be measuring effects due, in part, to the father's absence and, in part, to the re-adjustment after his return, so that it is impossible to separate the influence of these two related experiences. Some of the more carefully planned, executed, and reported studies fall in this category.\*

\* Langner and Michael.

\*\* Ancona et al.; Fagen et al.; Lynn and Sawrey; Pederson; Tiller, 1958.

\*\*\*Baker et al., 1968.

+ Tiller, 1958.

++ Baker et al., 1968; Stolz et al.

If children are very young, the return of the father after an extended absence may be, in some ways, analagous to the entry of a step-father into a home. In any case, it seems clear that studies involving temporary absence must be generalized with care.

Attitudes and norms.--Consciously and unconsciously, the impact of father absence will be affected by a child's perception of community attitudes toward the absent parent and toward himself as the child of an absent parent. The child of divorce will have a different experience in a neighborhood where female-headed families are almost unheard of or in one where they are too frequent to occasion comment. This common-sense speculation is reinforced by the reports in one study that children in Catholic or Jewish homes evidenced a stronger impact of parental divorce than children in Protestant homes, presumably because divorce is less frequent and more disapproved of in Catholic or Jewish homes.\*\* The child's perception of community attitudes is suggested by the frequency with which children try to conceal the fact of parental divorce or suicide.\*\*\* In the studies reviewed, the impact of community attitudes was more likely to figure as a byproduct of analysis than as a focus of investigation.

The version of father absence communicated to the child by his mother and by the community will interact with his individual perception of the father and with his own individual temperament and makeup. The later the separation occurs, the more time there will be for his individual perceptions to color his view of his father. The ultimate perception will be a product of multiple interactions. And this perception will be one of many interacting factors that determine the impact on him of his father's absence.

Temporary father absence.--Inherent differences between temporary and continuing father absence are magnified by some prevailing features of the samples most often used in studies of temporary absence. For the most part, the studies of temporary absence that were reviewed involve middle-class children and youth whose fathers are or have been absent for socially approved or even honored reasons. (See above p. 29.) Some of these studies were conducted during the father's absence, some shortly after his return, some a good many years after his return, and some during the interim between two absences. One group of studies involved children who were born after their fathers' departure for military

\* Carlsmith; Leichty; Steigman; Stolz et al.

\*\* M. Rosenberg.

\*\*\*J. Landis, 1960.

service or were very small infants when he left, so that he returned as a stranger with the possibility that he might be perceived as an inter-loper and that he, himself, might see the child in this light. We have found little study of the effects on children when the father was temporarily absent for a dishonored reason such as a term in jail, although no doubt some children of such fathers are included in a number of studies.\* The time of study, the social class of the subjects, and the social acceptability of the absence must all be taken into account in considering study findings involving temporary or continuing father absence.

Four studies of middle-class American children were conducted during the time their fathers were away on military service.\*\* Three used samples of 30 or less, with subjects ranging from 5 to 10 years of age, while one used a sample of 75 children 3 to 5 years old.

Bach found that the urban children, aged 6 to 10, whose fathers had been away from 1 to 3 years (in World War II), included their father in doll play and fantasy about as often as did the father-present children (23 percent as compared with 25 percent). He summarized the picture of the absent father as "an idealistic fantasy" father who "has a good time with the family" and "is enjoyed by them...shows very little hostility and does not exert his authority." (p. 71.) He suggests that the children picture this absent father as "much nicer" than a present father is likely to be, and that they may have some adjustment problems when the real father returns.

Baker et al. found a similar "maintaining of the father's presence." Both mothers and fathers felt that there was continued participation by the father and that he continued to play a significant role. The Blacky test revealed stronger feelings of rejection and rivalry with sibs in the experimental than in the control group, although this may have been related, in part, to the fact that the experimental group was somewhat younger. Doll play techniques revealed greater independence and maturity in the experimental group but no other significant differences.

Crain and Stamm, studying 30 children age 7 to 8, whose fathers were away 3 months or less, reported that they differed very little from their controls, although the picture of the present mother may have been less loving (perhaps because she was exercising more authority) and that of the absent father less democratic.

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\* Pauline Morris explored various aspects of the effect of a father's prison term on family life in England, suggesting some of the problems experienced by children. (Morris.)

\*\*Bach; Baker et al., 1967; Crain and Stamm; P. Sears.

Sears, studying 75 younger children, found the two groups alike at age 3 but, at age 5, the boys showed a pattern of aggression unlike the girls and also unlike that of the father-present children. She speculates--as others have done--that absence of the father may delay development rather than alter it. Possibly, father-absent boys learn boyish patterns of aggression from their school peers rather than at home, and are somewhat delayed in their learning.

On the whole, these studies of young children during the father's absence suggest minor or negligible effects. The Norwegian and Italian studies referred to earlier were conducted mainly during the father's absence, but, since repeated absences were involved, they also represented both "before" and "after." Their conflicting results are discussed in the following section.

Three studies have observed children fairly soon after the return of the father. Stolz, using observations, projective tests, and interviews with parents, has presented a carefully documented picture of parent-child relationships and child behavior in a group of children whose fathers were absent in military service during their first year of life and who averaged about 16 months of age when the father returned.\* They were studied at age 3 1/2 to 8. As compared with their own sibs, or with controls whose fathers had not been absent, the study children showed a number of differences, mostly in an unfavorable direction: greater hostility, more aggression, "compulsive" patterns of obedience and defiance, less friendliness, and a number of others.

The fathers were graduate students at Stanford University, from diverse backgrounds but, for the most part, upwardly mobile, striving to make up for lost time, and immersed in a highly competitive and intellectually demanding program. Interviews with the fathers and mothers separately showed the separated fathers less warm than the other fathers, more critical of the child, more severe in discipline, more likely to view the child's problems as serious--in short, more negative and more ambivalent about the child born during their absence than were the non-separated fathers, and more negative about this child than about children born later.

Some of the observed differences might be ascribed to ordinal position, but these were shown to slighter degree by the control group, and familiar differences in favor of the firstborn were lacking from the study group. The separated fathers had fewer problems with children born later and saw fewer problems in them.

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\*Stolz et al.

It is difficult to know to what extent the problems special to striving graduate student fathers, struggling against interruptions to sleep, work, and wifely supports, may enter into the picture. For the separated children, however, the evidence appears to support the author's suspicion that the father's return posed more problems than did his absence.

Seplin, studying children about 8 years old, and their younger siblings, found a pattern very similar to that of Stolz with regard to the child who had experienced temporary father absence at a very young age.\* However, she did not study the fathers and apparently did not consider the return as a possible aspect of the problem.

Baker et al. studied a group of boys aged 7 to 10 about 6 months after the father's return from military service.\*\* Since the sample had been depleted from 40 to 12 experimental families, and the control group had shrunk to 6, the findings are merely suggestive. To judge from the experience of this group, as derived from projective tests, inventories, interviews, and teacher ratings, the return of the father brings fewer problems for children who had a relationship with him before he left than for those who had not established a previous relationship with him. Some problems of adjustment are reported for the mother, both during his absence and after his return. Some changes reported in the children were favorable rather than unfavorable--for example, better behavior and better school grades. No negative effects were reported for the boy's identification with the father or with the masculine role. On the whole, as compared with the Stolz study, effects in this very small sample seem minor and are interpreted as representing developmental lag. These boys already had a relationship with their fathers, understood the situation, maintained communication, and thus received him as a returning father and not as a stranger.

In the studies of temporary father absence just reviewed, all dealing with small samples of young middle-class white children, several clues point to the crucial role of the mother, the impact of the father's return, and the possibility that effects associated with absence rather than with return may represent developmental lag rather than continuing deficit.

With few exceptions, studies confined to temporary father absence are concerned with children no older than 10 years, and often a good deal younger. Among the exception are some with samples of college age, discussed in the following section.

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\* Seplin.

\*\*Baker et al., 1968.

## MASCULINE IDENTITY

Among the disadvantages ascribed to fatherless homes is difficulty for the children in developing adequate sex role concept and identity. The most frequent hypothesis is that, for boys, lack of a resident father means lack of an effective masculine role model and source of identification, as well as presence of an overwhelming feminine model and source of identification; and that, consequently, the boy fails to develop an adequate sense of his own masculinity. This defect, it is held, may appear as feminization, as sex role confusion, or as overcompensatory masculinity that attempts to conceal the underlying weakness under a false front of bluster, bravado, and aggressive--at times delinquent--behavior.

A number of studies attempt to test this hypothesis or one of its variants. The concepts used include masculine and feminine roles, role models, identity and identification--terms neither strictly synonymous nor mutually exclusive. Without attempting to define their areas of overlap and margins of difference, it is possible to summarize briefly the drift of the relevant findings. In referring collectively to this gender-related cluster of concepts, we shall use the blanket term "masculine identity."

The studies reviewed tended to focus chiefly (as does this discussion) on boys who grow up in fatherless homes. Differences in various directions are reported for girls, but far more attention has been given to masculine identity. Only two of the "core group" studies focused exclusively on female subjects.\*

A number of studies use projective tests or masculinity-femininity (M-F) scales to inquire into sex role confusion or inadequacy on the part of fatherless boys. Among those reviewed, there is a fairly even division, about half (8) reporting no difference and about half (8) reporting more weakness or confusion of masculine identity among fatherless boys than among those in two-parent families. Three present a mixed picture. The reported differences, although statistically significant at the levels selected, tend to be relatively small and to occur in relatively few of the items used by each study. Detailed review of relevant research supports Kohlberg's statement that the differences reported are "slight and ambiguous" and that, on most measures of sex role

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\*Vincent; Illsley and Thompson.

attitudes, "there are little or no differences between the two groups." (p. 157.)\* Such an observation does not negate recurrent reports of differences in sex role attitudes and identifications, nor the possibility that improved measures and refined controls might increase their magnitude and consistency. It does, however, point up a need to inquire further into the meaning and relative importance of such differences, and to discover ultimately whether improved research techniques would tend to make the differences more or less salient. At the same time, it must be remembered that, where differences do occur, they are less often on the side of greater sex role confusion or inadequacy among boys from two-parent homes than would be expected if a chance association were involved.

Aside from use of projective tests and M-F scales, a number of studies (discussed below) report findings interpreted as reflecting inadequate or disturbed masculine identity on the part of fatherless boys. These include reversal of the "math-verbal ratio" (5 studies), high "field-dependence" (1 study), and delayed, accelerated, or disturbed marital experience (6). Among such indirect studies, consensus is much higher than among those using M-F scales or projective tests of masculine identity.

On a referendum basis, then, investigations into the effects of father absence on masculine identity line up on the side of associating fatherless homes with sex role problems for boys, although the evidence is less clearcut and the dissenting minority is probably larger than is often assumed.

Questions remain about the meaning of the results reported. Some of the questions concern research methods and measures, while others have to do with interpretation and underlying assumptions--two sets of questions that are inextricably intertwined.

### Controls and replications

It has already been pointed out that almost no study reviewed was entirely successful in controlling for socioeconomic status. Although in some studies this may have been unimportant, in almost any group fatherless families tend to cluster at the lower edge of an SES level, so that this factor cannot be wholly written off.

In addition to reduced income, the fact of father absence is likely to involve environmental problems and adjustments that may or may not have psychological concomitants. Fagen et al., for example, report that the father's absence for military service usually resulted

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\*Kohlberg.

in diminished family income and often necessitated moving to another locality--sometimes to the home of relatives where problems of accommodation had to be coped with.\* Deutsch reports the socioeconomic level of school children from fatherless homes consistently lower than that of children in two-parent homes.\*\* Other examples have already been discussed. Yet, for the most part, the so-called "reality factors" (including income, employment, housing, health nutrition) and their psychological consequences and concomitants are not invoked in interpreting differences revealed by psychological tests and measures.

Efforts to answer questions about the extent to which inadequate controls distort study findings are hampered by the lack of replication. With a few exceptions, studies relating to adequacy of sex roles and concepts tend to be small and unreplicated. Because replication is so rare, it is the more arresting to find a careful replication that reports results at odds with the original study.

This was the case with the Norwegian father absence study which, as mentioned above, was replicated in Italy. Because both studies were conducted and reported with unusual care, because replication is so unusual, and because the Norwegian study is so frequently cited as demonstrating the adverse effects of father absence on boys, these two studies merit a concise case summary.\*\*\*

In both studies, the fathers were sailors and the absences involved were temporary and recurrent. The Norwegian fathers were sometimes absent for up to 2 years at a time and were at home for periods of a few months. The Italian fathers were absent for shorter periods up to 1 year, and present for a very short time, a few days or weeks.<sup>+</sup> Thus, in a sense, for both groups the father's absence was more usual than his presence. Boys in both studies were 8 to 9 1/2 years old.

On the basis of structured doll play tests and interviews with the mothers, the Norwegian boys were reported as showing immaturity and dependency, with insecure masculine identification and evidences of compensatory masculinity. Their peer adjustment was also reported as less good than that of the control group. The mothers were reported as overprotective, and as having few outside activities. The "Draw-a-Family Test" showed no significant differences between experimental and control groups. This could be interpreted as showing appropriate sex role

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\* Fagan et al.; Molish; Tindall.

\*\* Deutsch.

\*\*\*The Norwegian study data were reanalyzed by Lynn and Sawrey who reached similar conclusions but placed more emphasis on the father's absence than on the mother's compensatory behavior.

+ Personal communication from Dr. Ancona.

identification for both groups of children, but the authors lean toward regarding it as evidence of inadequacy in the test.\*

When Ancona et al. replicated the study with children of Genoan sailor families, they found no differences between the father-absent boys and a control group with regard to peer adjustment and evidence of masculine identification, and assessed the father-present rather than the father-absent boys as overprotected.\*\*

It is striking that, in contrast with American interpretations of the Norwegian study, its author attributes the reported differences not to the absence of a male model but rather to the effects of husband-absence on the mother, as mediated by her to the child.\*\*\* The authors of the Italian study attribute the contrast between their findings and those of the Norwegian study to differences in cultural and social setting as influences on the mother. Thus, in both studies, the role of the present mother is seen as more critical than the absence of the father per se.

The tradition in Genoa is described as conferring on the wife considerable responsibility and independence in trade and in managing household finances. The Norwegian authors report a rigid puritanical tradition, and a village setting in which attitudes were repressive and activities greatly restricted.+ The Norwegian mothers were significantly less likely than their controls to be employed outside the home, and they had somewhat less social activity, although this difference fell short of statistical significance. The Italian mothers resembled their controls in rarely working outside the home and in having a restricted social life. As phrased by Tiller, "The effects of the absence of the father on the child are believed to be indirect ones, effected through the mother, her personality, attitudes and behavior."++ As rephrased by Lynn and Sawrey, "Tiller considered his findings as resulting primarily from indirect effects of father-absence, mediated by the fact that father-absence for the child also means husband-absence for the mother. In his view, the mother's reaction to husband-absence is reflected in her treatment of the child, and this treatment in turn affects the child.+++

In the Italian study, every effort was made at faithful replication. It may be that the different cultural settings account for the

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\* Tiller, 1958.

\*\* Ancona et al.

\*\*\*Tiller, 1958.

+ Tiller, 1958; Grønseth

++ Tiller, 1958.

+++Lynn and Sawrey.

contradictory findings. If so, there would be the more question about generalizing the reactions of upper-middle-class Norwegian boys to low-income Negro boys in inner cities of the United States.

Rounding out the tabloid case history is a later study by Tiller of boys aged 14-15 from the same kind of sailor families represented in the earlier study, using an attitude test, an interview, a projective picture test, and teacher ratings.\* As compared with a control group matched for SES, these boys showed no evidence on the Terman-Miles scale of the "femininity" reported earlier for younger boys. Since there is no difference between experimental and control group on "idealized masculinity," it is difficult to regard the lower femininity score as compensatory. The reduction in reported "femininity" could be interpreted to mean that this manifestation had been outgrown--in line with shifts interpreted as developmental lag in other studies. However, the experimental group was higher than the controls on "overprotection-dependence"--a double-barreled variable. Also, on a projective test resembling the TAT (Alexander's Adult-Child Interaction) a subsample were rated as showing more hostility or opposition to the mother than their controls. On the F-scale, the sailor boys showed significantly less authoritarianism than any other groups in the study. Tiller seems to interpret the observed patterns as demonstrating in ways we are unable to follow--support for a hypothesis of "ambivalent mother identification."\*\*

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\* Tiller, 1961.

\*\*Children (age 14-15) of Norwegian whalers, included as part of Tiller's study, differed from the sailor children both in the pattern of father absence and in socioeconomic status, being somewhat more like working class. (Whaler fathers are present from 4 to 6 months of each year.) When compared with their controls (and also with the sailor boys), these boys were, on the one hand, rated as somewhat more dependent and feminine (a difference "not very secure"), and, on the other hand, as showing a significantly higher tendency to assume the father's role--a tendency the author feels may be due to the mother's assignment of duties rather than the boy's voluntary assumption of the role. With regard to "idealized hyper-masculinity," they were lower than the controls, but, unlike the sailor boys, they scored higher on authoritarianism. The subsample of whaler boys also were rated as showing more ambivalence toward their mothers than did their controls, but not to the degree reported for the sailor boys.

Thus, these boys experiencing more father presence in an intermittent and predictable pattern, show more of the "classic" femininity and dependence than do the sailor boys--whether this is the result of the different pattern of father absence, the interpretation of roles on a lower socioeconomic level, the mother's more tentative adjustment to the father's absence (as suggested by Tiller), or other factors not explored.

## Measures employed

Aside from questions about adequacy of controls and stability of findings, nagging doubts persist concerning the measures used in studies of masculine identity. Some of these have become troublesome enough to prompt consideration of what the measures really mean.

Projective tests.--A number of studies employ structured doll play, as did the Norwegian and Italian studies just mentioned. As in these two studies, findings vary. Baker et al., using structured doll play tests with boys 5-8 years old, found--in contrast with the findings of the Norwegian study--no differences between father-absent and father-present boys with regard to oedipal, dependency, or masculine or feminine identification factors. They also found increased independence-maturity behavior in the father-absent group. Sears found in boys 3 to 5 less aggression (often interpreted as sex-role-related) than in controls, but suspected that the difference represented developmental lag. Stolz found differences that seem attributable more to the return than to the absence of the father.\*

Baker et al., like Bach and Tiller, reported a tendency to idealize the absent father, picturing him as much nicer than he really is. And, like several others, these investigators suggest that such children may have some adjustment problems in accepting the reality when the father does return.

Sears noted, as some others have done, that even as early as age 5, boys tend to reject doll play as feminine.\*\* Whether this attitude would depress or magnify differences between father-present and father-absent children is a matter of speculation. However, in free or structured forms, doll play has long been used to explore the attitudes and concepts of boys from 5 to 12 years old.

It is an artifact of research situations that the studies reviewed which used doll play all involved middle-class white subjects whose fathers were or had been temporarily absent. This fact must influence interpretation of findings. However, it does not affect consideration of this kind of projective test as a tool, nor the fact that when findings are comparable they are, at times, in conflict with each other.

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\* Baker et al., 1967; P. Sears; Stolz et al.

\*\*Sears, P. et al., 1965

Other projective tests used in these studies are the IT scale for children, the Franck, the "Draw-a-Family," and the "Blacky." Whatever the projective method, the result is an interpretation of what the individual's behavior really means. Thus, in the Norwegian study, the boys from father-absent homes were more likely than other children to choose the father doll in preference to the mother doll. This was interpreted as strong striving for identification with the father. In an early study that used the IT scale, girls from fatherless homes were more likely than other children to select toys appropriate for boys rather than for girls, as what the presumably sexless "IT" would want to play with. This was interpreted as showing that the girls were over-masculine. Later, this interpretation was challenged on the ground that the sex of IT was not as ambiguous as it was intended to be.\* If so, the girls were being considerate and empathic--traits rated, if at all, as feminine.

Whether the conclusions are correct or not, the point to be made here is merely that they involve a two-leap interpretation. The first leap says that the choice or behavior in doll play reflects a specified attitude or identification. And the second predicts that this attitude will significantly affect the individual's present and presumably his future life. The interpretation has support in theory but so far the theory has tenuous empirical support.

These points are intended merely to define the nature of the evidence. Moreover, they do not apply to all uses of doll play. For example, among well-known studies using doll play were the ones attempting to discover whether children differentiated between whites and Negroes at a very early age.\*\* In this use of doll play, the child actually did or did not show a preference for one skin color or the other. It was not necessary to hypothesize that because he made a certain choice, he had a leaning toward a certain type of behavior. He was discriminating and he was preferring. If a consistent preference was shown for one color or the other, by a number of children, it could not be said that children of this age were unable to differentiate between skin colors. But if a group of father-absent children choose the father doll significantly more often than do father-present children, a number of interpretations are possible: it could be that the child misses his father; or it could be that he finds his ever-present mother difficult in some way; or it could be that he is showing compensatory masculine identification.

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\* Hall and Keith.

\*\*Clark and Clark.

M-F scales.--Studies that use M-F scales again report varied findings. Altus, studying college men whose parents were divorced, found that the M-F scale of the MMPI was significantly high (more feminine) as compared with students from intact homes. However, Miller, reporting on a group of junior high school boys and using the Terman-Miles M-F, found no significant differences. This was also true of the large statewide sample reported by Hathaway and Monachesi (MMPI, M-F); and Barclay and Cusumano found no differences among lower-class male adolescents, using the Gough femininity scale (from California Test of Personality).\*

Thus, only the select middle-class group showed significant differences. It may be that separating the Hathaway and Monachesi group by reason for father's absence, and by class, would yield different results. Or it may be that within the multiplicity of factors affecting the lower-class boys, this one has relatively little impact upon answers to standard M-F tests.

Barclay and Cusumano have interpreted their CIP finding as compensatory masculinity. This is possible of course, yet if high-F scores are to be classified as femininity and high-M scores as pseudomascularity, the cards seem somewhat stacked against the sample.

These examples reinforce the recurrent questions: Are the differences really there? If so, what do they mean? Any attempt at answers lead to scrutiny of test items.

A number of M-F scales have been used, most of which were constructed by selecting through trial and error the items that discriminated most effectively between males and females. The items typically include activity preference, occupational preference, avowed anxieties and emotional reactions, psychosomatic symptoms, leadership, self-confidence, and aggression.

A number of commentators have objected to the M-F scales currently used on the ground that they embody outmoded conceptions of masculine and feminine roles,\*\* and that some of the items are curiously culture bound and class bound.\*\*\* Coffman has assembled impressive evidence in support of the thesis that many of the items are closely related to social desirability and are probably best considered as a measure of conventionality.+

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\* Altus; Barclay and Cusumano; Hathaway and Monachesi; B. Miller.

\*\* Pollak, 1960; Vincent, 1966.

\*\*\*Erikson, 1966; Vincent, 1966.

+ Coffman; Edmonds.

An exercise performed by Vincent illustrates some points made by these and other observers. The California Personality Inventory was administered to 97 percent of the senior class in a suburban high school-- 260 males and 257 females. The 50 high-F females and the 60 high-F males were matched with low-F subjects of each sex. The low-F females and high-F males rated "higher" (i.e., "better") on about two-thirds of the remaining 17 scales than did their matched comparisons. While these differences fell short of the .05 level of significance, they were opposite to what would be expected. For example, the low-F girls were high on poise, ascendancy, and self-assurance, and the high-F boys were higher on dominance, "capacity for status," and responsibility. Item analysis showed that low-F girls were not afraid of windstorms or the dark, did not feel they would "go to pieces," and did not want to be librarians. High-F boys did not like Popular Mechanics or want to drive a racing car, or feel like starting a fist fight.\*

The points made by the various critics seem to us cogent, especially at a time when women are increasingly invading hitherto masculine fields of activity and men are increasingly ready to lend a hand with formerly feminine activities and duties. However, these M-F scales present some other problems. One is that, by far, the majority of the scales assume a single continuum, from high masculine to high feminine. By scoring high M, the subject automatically scores low F, and vice versa. Yet the basic premise seems open to question. If one conceives of ideal manhood, the ideal is likely to embody traits commonly viewed as "high F"-gentleness, tenderness, compassion, sensitivity. The gentleness of the strong man is proverbial.

One of this country's favorite men is Abraham Lincoln. Another more recent, is Martin Luther King. Neither has been generally accused of inadequate manhood. Both represent qualities that American adults regularly hold up to American youth as essential ingredients of this country's ideal male role model. Yet it is doubtful that either would score very high on a M-F scale (and one was the product of a broken home). On the other hand, Hitler would probably score very high-M. So would Billy the Kid.\*\* Of course, some would say it was overcompensatory masculinity, and this could be so. Yet the point remains that, in order to determine the adequacy of a subject's masculinity, it is necessary to decide what traits are essential to adequate masculinity.

Conversely, the courage and stamina of the ideal woman are also proverbial. It seems reasonable to believe that the highest embodiments

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\* Vincent, 1966.

\*\*Apparently, many homosexuals produce normal or above normal scores on M-F tests. (Kohlberg, p. 92.)

of manhood and of womanhood would include some shared qualities; and that in some respects the most defective examples of manhood or womanhood would differ from those highest examples more than ideal manhood would differ from ideal womanhood. In other words, if one could construct a perfect M-F scale, it would probably include two continua which would resemble each other at the high-M and high-F ends more than either high end would resemble its respective low end.

Some investigators have found it necessary to move from a one continuum to a two-continua model in assessing dependence-independence and happiness-unhappiness, and have found that an individual's standing on one continuum was not likely to be a mirror image of his standing on the companion continuum.\*

If one were to construct an ideal man from the single-continuum M-F scale, he would bear a close resemblance to the machismo ideal--that is, overdone, overt manifestations of he-man-ness. When this ideal is met in real life, he is often described as showing overcompensatory efforts at masculine identity, as a result of lacking an adequate male model and, consequently, adequate masculine identity. Yet the higher a male scores on the typical M-F scale, the closer he comes to the machismo picture.

Doubt about the extent to which a high-M score represents desired real-life characteristics is reinforced by the fact that, typically, the scores of more highly educated male and female subjects are closer together than those of the less educated ones; and that sex typing is far more sharp in the child-rearing practices of low SES than of high SES parents.\*\* Nevertheless, a low-M score for a boy is generally viewed as an unfavorable characteristic and a high one as favorable. Similarly, the higher the M-score for a girl, the less favorably is it interpreted.

Math-verbal ratio.--In college board examinations, typically girls do better on the verbal than on the mathematical side, and boys do better on math than on language-dependent tests. A number of investigators report, however, that father-absent boys, somewhat more often than father-present boys, show a reversal of the usual math-verbal ratio, doing better in verbal skills than in math. Since this pattern is more typical of females than of males, the reversal has been interpreted to mean that their masculine identification has been impaired by growing up in a fatherless home.

The math-verbal ratio is one of the more fascinating measures, since it appears relatively immune to deliberate limitation on frankness or deliberate cultivation of social acceptability. It is not necessarily

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\* Brim; Rosenberg et al., 1961; Rossi.

\*\*Kagan, 1964; Kohlberg; Maccoby, 1966.

immune to social influence, as Kagan has pointed out.\* However, in connection with reversal of the math-verbal ratio in father-absent boys, the elements of social influence he points to in the following excerpts would not necessarily contaminate the findings:

"...It seems that the typical female believes that the ability to solve problems involving geometry, physics, logic or arithmetic is a uniquely masculine skill, and her motivation to attack such problems is low. This decreased involvement may reflect the fact that the girl's self-esteem is not at stake in such problems, or the fact that she is potentially threatened by the possibility that she might perform with competence on such tasks. For unusual excellence on such tasks may be equated with a loss of femininity." (p. 156-157.)

"...How can we explain the fact that girls' academic performances are superior to boys during the early school years but gradually become inferior during adolescence and adulthood? One reason is that among late adolescent boys, academic proficiency is linked to vocational success, and the boy's motivation toward mastery is stronger than it was during the early years of school. Moreover, the girl's motivation toward mastery is decreasing with age as a result of anxiety over feeling intellectually more competent than the boy and conflict over excessive competitiveness." (p. 158.)

An interesting question about the math-verbal ratio reversal--whether the math scores were depressed or the verbal scores elevated--received conflicting answers or none at all. One study reports that the verbal scores were raised in instances of ratio reversal.\*\* Two state or imply lower math scores.\*\*\* Two do not specify on this point, but merely report direction of differences.+ If growing up without a father makes a boy less good in math, it could be counted as a loss. But if it makes him just as good in math and better in verbal activities, should this be scored as a net loss for him?++

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\* Kagan.

\*\* Altus.

\*\*\*Carlsmith; Sutton-Smith et al.

+ Nelson and Maccoby; Gregory (II).

++ It is difficult to decide the real direction of these differences using the restricted college samples now available. As Carlsmith points out, if the math score (or any other) is indeed lowered, then it influences the student's chance of admission to college, and the father-absent group (or any other with systematic reductions in scores) is not represented proportionately in a sample composed of those admitted to college.

For the most part, we are not told the size of the relation between fatherlessness and higher verbal, or between higher verbal and female sex. As Nelson and Maccoby observe, the resemblance between the math-verbal ratio of fatherless boys and of girls in general could result from some shared trait, not necessarily femininity--for example, from higher anxiety.\* To equate the ratio reversal with evidence of inadequate masculine identity is, in the present state of our knowledge, another example of two-leap interpretation.

Only two of the investigators definitely attribute the ratio reversal to defective masculine identification of the father-absent boys.\*\* Altus found that his broken home group--25 white college freshmen from homes broken by divorce--scored significantly higher on the MMPI femininity scale than did his control groups, and concluded that the "feminine" math-verbal ratio fits in with the higher M-F scores on the MMPI; "one wonders whether the frequent lack of a male figure to identify with may not be at least partially causative in this instance."\*\*\* Nelson and Maccoby consider this as an alternative hypothesis but think "tension interference" is a more acceptable explanation--an opinion in which Gregory concurs.+

The ratio reversal is included under masculine identification because the pattern is sex-typed and the studies are, on occasion, referred to as demonstrating the "feminization" of father-absent boys. Such references are sometimes made as if the ratio reversal characterized all fatherless boys, which of course is not the case.

It should be added that, in the one study reporting on these points, the math-verbal ratio shows no relation to whether or not a student graduates, or to his choice of an academic major, his athletic achievement, the frequency of visits to health service or of "psychiatric referrals"--items that in other connections are sometimes assumed to be related to the M-F picture.++

There are additional points to be fitted into consideration of the math-verbal ratio. Martin Deutsch, in a study of low-income elementary school children, reported that the Negro children scored higher in arithmetic than in language and that this balance was not related to the father's presence or absence.+++ Coleman found that median scores for

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\* Nelson and Maccoby.

\*\* Altus; Carlsmith.

\*\*\*Altus; Nelson and Maccoby.

+ Gregory (II); Nelson and Maccoby.

++ Gregory (II).

+++Deutsch.

Negro children in first grade were slightly higher on verbal than on nonverbal tests, while median scores for white first graders were slightly higher on the nonverbal. In twelfth grade, the median for verbal and nonverbal were identical within each group, although the white children scored higher than the Negro children.\*

Stodolsky and Lesser report that at each class level, Negro and Jewish children scored higher on language than on math, and that the reverse was true of Chinese and Puerto Rican children--without reference to family composition.\*\*

Somehow we should be able to hook these three sets of findings together but we have not yet been able to do so to our own satisfaction.

Kagan, as quoted above, speculates that social pressures incline women to analyze and respond to the human rather than to the physical-nature environment.\*\*\* Pursuing this line of thought, it may be speculated further that women are a "minority" group in the sense that accommodation has required a high degree of empathy and sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others, and that this has resulted in a life view more "people-oriented" than "thing-oriented," more attuned to feeling than to analyzing, or--as Parsons puts it--more expressive than instrumental. In this view, it might be argued that Jews and Negroes should be expected to have a more "feminine" pattern than would white non-Jewish males. On the other hand, Chinese and Puerto Ricans are also rated as minority groups in this country. It is true that the Chinese people do not have a tradition of minority status, so perhaps their culture has not been forced to develop a "people-oriented" approach. Yet since anthropologists often comment on the similarities between value systems of the Chinese and Jewish cultures, it is somewhat surprising to find them dissimilar in so important a culture trait.

On the other hand, sex differences are reported at such young ages that a case could be made for at least some element of biological determination.+

Field dependence.--Witkin's Rod and Frame test is similar to the math-verbal ratio in using a measure unlikely to stimulate consciousness of and desire to display social acceptability. It consists of a tilted frame and a rod which the subject is asked to adjust so that it will be perpendicular. If he uses general body cues in adjusting the rod, it will be upright and he will be adjudged as being "field independent."

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\* Coleman.

\*\* Stodolsky and Lesser.

\*\*\*Kagan, 1964.

+ Goodenough, 1957; Garai and Scheinfeld.

If he accepts visual cues from the tilted frame, the rod will not be upright and he will have exhibited field dependent behavior. (The same kind of assessment can also be made by a body adjustment test or by an embedded figures test.)

Barclay and Cusumano, using the Rod and Frame test on 40 boys aged 15 found the 20 Negro boys more field dependent than the white, and the 10 father-absent in each group more field dependent than the father-present.\* The same subjects showed no significant differences between father-present and father-absent on the Gough femininity scale or the romantic differential scored for overt role identification or cross-sex identification (similarity to mother and father). This was interpreted by the investigators as showing the case of deception in those two measures, while the relatively high field dependence was interpreted as showing the feminization of the father-absent boys. It is easier (for reasons discussed above) to accept the verdict of inadequacy for these measures than to be sure that field dependence does, in fact, measure femininity. Maccoby cites some indirect evidence that "field independent" men may, in fact, be more feminine than "field dependent" men.\*\*

The Rod and Frame test has elements in common with the math-verbal ratio, and Carlsmith has suggested that they are both measuring the same thing. It does seem to demonstrate some difference in cognitive orientation between father-absent and father-present boys (and, in this case, between Negro and white boys). But with this measure, as with the math-verbal ratio, we lack substantial evidence showing whether and to what extent the differences reflect greater feminization of father-absent boys and of Negro boys.\*\*\*

A difference statistically significant may, as Nelson and Maccoby point out, result from association with a third variable which is, in fact, the crucial one.<sup>+</sup> Typically, women weigh less than men. Yet relatively low poundage would not necessarily, in itself, convict a successful jockey of feminization.

### Long-term prognosis

Although studies of the math-verbal ratio have drawn chiefly on college youth, the majority of studies concerned with the masculine identity of fatherless boys have used samples of children. Presumably,

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\* Barclay and Cusumano.

\*\* Maccoby, 1966.

\*\*\*Carlsmith.

+ Nelson and Maccoby.

the interest in such studies is primarily prognostic. The results at age 3 or 5 or 10 are taken to imply something about the boy's prospects of attaining full and well-rounded development as an adequate male. If it were assumed that findings in early childhood had no relevance for youth and adulthood, then less concern would be expressed about the findings of early tests and observations. Study findings would still be of great interest, but the interest would be more theoretical and would not give rise to suggestions for remedial programs, as is now the case.

It is relevant, therefore, to consider some of the evidence concerning the prognostic significance of the kinds of tests, observations, and ratings made in early childhood.

An interesting example of changes relating to age is furnished by two ingenious studies that are focused, not on sex identification, but on ability to defer gratification. These were conducted by Mischel, in Trinidad and Grenada. Children were asked whether they would like to have a 2-cent candy bar now or a 10-cent candy bar next week, and their answers were interpreted as revealing their ability to defer reward for the sake of greater gratification.\*

A number of questions can be raised about the interpretation and possible alternatives or qualifications, but, for present purposes, it suffices to take the results at face value. Both in Trinidad and in Grenada, father-absent children at age 8-9 were less likely than father-present children to choose the deferred reward, although in Grenada the difference fell short of the .05 level of significance. However, in the same study, the difference was not found for children aged 11-14. There were variations between Trinidad and Grenada, and between Negro and Indian children, but these appear not to affect the findings with regard to age.\*\*

Longitudinal studies of children predominantly in two-parent homes cannot illuminate the effects of father absence, but they can throw light on this prognostic value of psychological measures and ratings made in early childhood. A recurrent finding in such studies is that forecasts of adult behavior based on childhood indicators have grossly overpredicted pathology.\*\*\* Children who have problems frequently continue to have them through adolescence and into early adulthood. At age 30 or later, they appear much less problem-ridden than at age 18.+

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\* Mischel, 1958, 1961

\*\* Mischel, 1961.

\*\*\* MacFarlane.

+ Meier, 1965, 1966; Otterstrom.

In following up a normal group, MacFarlane notes that predictions were accurate in less than one-third of the cases. In about one-fifth, the investigators predicted better adjustment than was achieved, and in about one-half they underpredicted adjustment. There is general agreement that no adult characteristic can be predicted on the basis of any one test. This generally accepted axiom has been frequently forgotten in the studies of father absence, although some have employed a battery of tests, interviews, observations, and ratings.

Within these broad generalizations about the predictive power of early childhood assessments, a number of variations or qualifications can be made. Reliability of prediction varies with sex and with the trait under investigation.\* According to MacFarlane, some forms of serious pathology can be predicted relatively early--for example, mental deficiency, a compulsive defense system, and the results of exposure to extreme variability of family treatment--alternately very harsh and very indulgent.\*\* Aside from serious pathology, predictability varies according to the type of trait being assessed. Several investigators have observed that physical characteristics can be predicted earlier than intellectual, intellectual earlier than personality characteristics, and that personality characteristics appear to be more stable than social characteristics.\*\*\*

A few excerpts from MacFarlane's observations on the reasons for making more false than true predictions are especially relevant to interpretation of the findings of psychological assessments made in early childhood, and touch on some of the points just covered:

"...Since most personality theory has been derived from work with pathological groups, we were oversensitized to these aspects in respect both to overt and covert patterning and inadequately sensitized to the stabilizing and maturity inducing aspects....

"...We unquestionably overestimated the durability of those well-learned behaviors and attitudes that were characteristic and habitual patterns over a substantial period of time....

"...We have...observed experiences which we regarded as highly traumatic and therefore nonmaturing that our subjects as adults regard as forcing them to come to terms with what it was they wanted and didn't want out of their lives. These...were in fact maturity-inducing experiences....

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\* Anderson; Kagan and Moss; MacFarlane.

\*\* MacFarlane.

\*\*\*Anderson; Kagan and Moss; MacFarlane.

"...many of our subjects did not achieve what Erikson (1956) calls 'ego identity' until after marriage and parenthood forced them or presented an opportunity to them to fulfill a role that gave them a sense of worth....

"...One of our predictions was that our long over-dependent boys with energetic dominant mothers would pick wives like their mothers and continue their patterns. For one or two we were right, but nearly all of the dependent boys picked for wives girls who were lacking in confidence...giving themselves a role as the proud male protector and giver of support. They thrived under this new non-self-centered change of status....

"...Some subjects did not get consolidated until they had a job that encompassed what earlier had seemed conflicting needs or gave them 'at last' a meaningful job they enjoyed." (p. 87-88.)\*

Some points made by MacFarlane relate to speculations mentioned earlier about the possibility that fatherless children may show some developmental lag that is later made up. The boys studied by Tiller did not show at 15 the signs of "feminization" reported at 8 or 9. Sears found that father-present boys were more aggressive than father-absent boys at nursery school age, and that their aggression increased between the ages of 3 and 4. The father-absent boys made this kind of increase between the ages of 4 and 5, leading her to posit that the father-absent boys learn the appropriate "boy" behavior more slowly, through interaction with their peers. Baker reported a developmental lag in boys 7 to 10 during the father's absence, and concluded that the absence may be seen as prolonging the oedipal conflict but not necessarily as increasing its intensity.\*\*

The children studied by Sears, Tiller, and Baker experienced temporary (and in Tiller's study recurrent) father absence. To the extent that the father's return affected their development, their experience would not necessarily apply to children who undergo continuing father absence. A question remains whether interaction with their peers and with adults not resident in the home might enable the latter also to "catch up." Mischel's studies suggest that they might, with regard to ability to delay gratification. However, aside from the fact that these are slight straw-in-the-wind exercises and open to divergent interpretations, the dynamics of one characteristic cannot be assumed to duplicate the course of another.

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\* MacFarlane.

\*\*Baker et al., 1968; Lynn and Sawrey; P. Sears; Tiller, 1958.

The findings of the Fels Institute are especially relevant to questions about masculine identity.\* They found that boys (mostly middle or lower-middle class) reliably rated as high or low masculine did differ in adult adjustment. However, their findings do not suggest that the adult who had been rated "high masculine" in childhood was the one whose life pattern would appear preferable to most adults who investigate such typology. The high masculine boys, according to this study, chose "masculine" occupations, had a more active sex life, but were lacking in dominance, "capacity for status," and self-acceptance. "Low masculine" boys when they became men were more sociable, showed social leadership, assuredness, more introspection and less self-sufficiency, more self-acceptance, and less good sexual adjustment. "The boys who chose masculine interests and vocations, and entered into competitive activities during the early school years were the men who established frequent sexual relationships with women."

A comment made in this study about adult attitudes and preferences underlines some comments made in connection with M-F scales (p. 68):

"...The social class of the family is clearly related to the sex-typed interests of the adult. The higher the educational level of the family, the less likely was the individual to prefer the traditional attitudes appropriate to his or her sex role. The upper-middle-class men rejected orthodox masculine traits; the upper-middle-class women rejected orthodox feminine traits." (p. 171.)

Mussen, after studying a selected sample of the subjects followed by MacFarlane et al. concluded that "...the data from adult personality tests and impressionistic ratings, based on interview data, seem to be consistent and lend support to the hypothesis that the self-assurance and positive self-conceptions of the highly masculine subjects decreased after adolescence, while correlatively, the less masculine group changed in a favorable direction." (p. 439.)\*\*

As MacFarlane indicated, predictions based on environmental and family problems are also subject to strong qualifications. Children placed in adoption and children placed in foster homes because of behavior problems or parental neglect do much better than might be expected, according to followup studies--although the degree of ultimate well-being is by no means unrelated to early history.\*\*\*

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\* Kagan and Moss.

\*\* Mussen.

\*\*\*Kadushin, 1967; Meier, 1965, 1966; Otterstrom; Skeels.

It is proverbial that some individuals attain high achievement in spite of adverse family background. A study of 400 "eminent" people reported relatively few (58) with home backgrounds that would be described as free from stress and trouble, although only nine families experienced severe poverty.\* A study of "high achievers" from very low-income homes found over half in fatherless families.\*\* Apparently, adverse factors can act either as a block or as a spur. However, the occasional person who is spurred does not diminish the need to discover the effects of adverse conditions for the many, and ways of diminishing adverse effects.

### Mental illness and marital instability

Time and space preclude a detailed review of evidence concerning the relation of father absence to mental illness in adults, or to marital instability; yet it is impossible to bypass these two important subjects entirely.

Mental illness.--A considerable number of studies report the proportion of adults, in patient groups, who grew up in fatherless homes. For the most part, however, despite notable exceptions, they lack comparison with a similar population not characterized by special problems. Studies that lack control or comparison groups tend to report high proportions of adults who grew up in fatherless homes. Studies with a nonpatient control group often, though by no means always, tell a different story. Although examples of both could be cited with equal ease, the present point requires only the listing of some studies that fail to show a significant association between mental illness and a broken home: Granville-Grossman (1966); Hopkinson and Reed (1966); Hudgens (1967); Morrison et al. (1968); Munro (1966); Oltman and Friedman (1967); Pitts (1965); Robins (1966); Schofield and Balian (1959); Waring and Ricks (1965).

Taken as a whole, the evidence with regard to mental illness--as Kadushin has observed--is ambiguous and conflicting if only the findings of studies with adequate controls are considered.\*\*\* Limiting his careful review to "only the more recent, more fully reported and more methodologically rigorous studies," he concluded that research findings do not support a proposition that "growing up in a single-parent home is clearly associated with increased psychic vulnerability and a higher rate of psychiatric and emotional disability." (p. 22.) Our own review, using somewhat less stringent research criteria, led to

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\* Goertzel and Goertzel.

\*\* Mackler and Giddings.

\*\*\*Kadushin, 1969.

the same conclusion. Gregory, reviewing a number of relevant studies, also reported that evidence is inconclusive concerning an increased frequency of parental deprivation associated with various forms of mental disorder, although certain studies point to increased frequencies in connection with specified categories. He added that "further investigation will be necessary to establish consistent patterns of parental deprivation...and that such patterns per se may not indicate exact modes of causation..." (p. 441.) It appears, then, that research evidence does not either establish or rule out an association between father absence and mental illness.

Two recurrent findings are as salient in studies of mental illness as in others relating to father absence:

(1) Despite a few exceptions, reported associations between father absence and mental illness are likely to be more marked for voluntary absence (divorce, separation, desertion) than for death.

(2) There are repeated indications that other factors override, and may at times be confounded with, father absence itself.\* Socioeconomic factors are especially difficult to disentangle since the frequency of mental ill health, as of father absence, increases as income level decreases.\*\* Family climate is also conspicuous as an important and, at times, confounding factor.

Marital instability.--Despite the common assumption that growing up in a broken home is related to later marital disruption, evidence is relatively limited. Gurin et al.\*\*\* and Langner and Michael<sup>+</sup> do find evidence for greater marital instability associated with parental divorce, but not with parental death.

Reasons for this relationship are unclear, some arguing that it is due to a lack of appropriate parental role models; others believe that individuals from a divorced home are more prone to consider divorce as an acceptable solution when troubles occur, particularly when this is reinforced by the fact that the society already has a high divorce rate.

Studies of college students throw some light on attitudes toward marriage. One indicates that children of divorced homes are interested

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\* Gregory, 1958.

\*\* Hollingshead and Redlich.

\*\*\*Gurin et al.

+ Langner and Michael.

in marriage, and determined to make it a success.\* There is also evidence from college studies that courtship patterns may be somewhat atypical. However, this is far from clear, since one study finds father-absent boys retarded or delayed in courtship behavior,\*\* while a similar study finds them accelerated, but with more broken engagements and similar disruptions.\*\*\* The study finding delay ascribed this to a psychological closeness of mother and son, but it seems at least as reasonable to conclude that delay might be a result of relative economic deprivation and greater family responsibilities.

Since no studies were found that reported a lower incidence of marital instability for children of broken homes, it is again difficult to dismiss the probability of some relationship between father absence and broken marriage. Whether the separations involved were more harmful to the individuals involved than continuance of a stressful marriage would have been is a question beyond the scope of the reports available. It is conceivable that children of broken marriages are more sensitive to marital problems<sup>+</sup> and more ready than others to end an unhealthy relationship; it is also conceivable that they are less likely to enter into a healthy one. Available evidence is too insubstantial to afford a solid answer about relative frequency of broken marriages. It is even further from demonstrating whether greater frequency among children of broken homes, if established, should be ascribed to absence of the father, to stress preceding his departure, or to other factors that, so far, research has not succeeded in disentangling from each other and from father absence.

### Recurrent findings and questions

The findings reviewed do not provide clearcut and conclusive answers to two recurrent questions about the sturdiness of the masculine identity of fatherless boys as compared with boys in two-parent homes: Are the differences really there? If so, what do they mean?

Some systematic differences have been reported. However, they are slight and ambiguous. When projective tests, questionnaires, and M-F scales are used, studies report conflicting conclusions, and the similarities are more impressive than the differences. Analysis of the math-verbal ratio is more consistent in showing ratio reversal for a larger proportion of father-absent than of father-present students in high school and college, as are tests of field dependence or independence

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\* J. T. Landis, 1960.

\*\* Winch.

\*\*\* Andrews and Christensen.

<sup>+</sup> Gurin et al.

The way in which differences in the math-verbal ratio are reported leaves some questions about their magnitude. There is more question about their significance--whether the differences they reflect relate to masculine identity or to other psychological or cognitive attributes.

With regard to the differences shown by some (but by no means all) studies using psychological tests and ratings, there is evidence indicating that, to some extent, they may represent developmental lag on the part of fatherless boys. There is reason to suspect also that some differences may result from inadequate SES controls, and some may represent reactions to public attitudes or to the social situation of fatherless families. There is repeated evidence, made explicit by a number of investigators, that some differences relate to the present mother rather than to the absence of the father per se.

To the extent that reported differences stem from sources other than the absence of the father, questions are raised about the theory that lack of a resident male model is the crucial element involved. This theory has, in fact, been challenged from a number of sources. Kohlberg proposes instead what he calls a "cognitive developmental" theory which he describes as the reverse of what psychoanalysis and social learning theories have held concerning the processes by which a child's sex identity is acquired and maintained.\* D'Andrade proposes a different formulation.\*\* DuBois and Hannerz, among others, raise sharp questions about the extent to which a boy depends on a resident male model in order to develop sturdy masculine identity, holding that concepts of what it is to be a man and motivation to be a man are derived from many sources outside the home.\*\*\* "...I believe it is an ethnocentrism on the part of middle-class commentators to take it for granted that if information about sex roles is not transmitted from father to son within the family, it is not transmitted from generation to generation at all." (p. 5.)<sup>+</sup> Erikson remarks that "in our one-family culture (supported by pediatricians and psychiatrists who exclusively emphasize the mother-child relationship) we tend to lose sight of the fact that other people besides parents are important to youth." (p. 44.)<sup>++</sup>

An anecdote related by Kohlberg provides a sharp though homely reminder that a boy does not necessarily derive his concept of maleness by direct learning through identification and imitation:

"During this early period (age four-eight) the boy's identification with the father tends to be assimilated to general stereotypes of

\* Kohlberg.

\*\* D'Andrade and Whiting.

\*\*\*DuBois; Hannerz.

+ Hannerz.

++ Erikson, 1960.

the masculine role having little to do with the father's individual role and personality...we report the following bed-time conversation of a five-year-old boy who had recently shown a marked shift of orientation from his mother to his academician father:

"Oh, Daddy, how old will I be when I can go hunting with you? We'll go in the woods, you with your gun, me with my bow and arrow. Daddy, wouldn't it be neat if we could lasso a wild horse? Do you think I could ride a horse backward if someone's leading me like you?" (Italics by the author.)

Among other points relating to this conversation, the author comments that "The content equated with we activities has little to do with the father's actual interests and abilities, and much to do with the concrete masculine sex-role stereotypes of children." (p. 136-137.)\*

A final question that recurs has to do with the cross-sex parent. One set of theories holds that sex typing is critically influenced by the cross-sex parent. A number of studies of working mothers that report boys passive and dependent attribute these characteristics to the mother's absence from the home. These same characteristics, in studies of father absence, are attributed to lack of a male role model. Moreover, while studies of working mothers often emphasize the importance of the cross-sex parent, studies of father absence appear to assume that girls are less affected than boys by his absence.

It is not the purpose of this review to demonstrate that one theory is wrong and another right. It is the purpose, rather, to show that a theory underlying much discussion of fatherless boys is not beyond challenge. We cannot afford to wait for a challenge-proof theory. But we also cannot afford to reify a theory so vulnerable to contrary evidence, and to propose it as a basis of programs and popular assumptions.

It is also not the purpose to belittle the importance of the father's role or the advantage to a child of having a father in the home. The question here is merely whether the father is the only available source of masculine identity and absence of a father from the home necessarily impairs a boy's masculine identity. The studies reviewed do not, in our view, provide solid support for such a thesis.

At the same time, these studies do make clear the need to recognize cultural and class differences in the social and psychological processes by which a boy becomes a man. In spite of defective controls for socioeconomic status and in spite of doubts about the meaning or

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\*Kohlberg.

validity of some measures, they provide evidence of differences between socioeconomic levels. There is reason to believe, in fact, that some differences ascribed to family composition are accounted for by socioeconomic differences. These have been discussed especially in connection with school performance and will be considered further in the following section.

## SOME CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND QUESTIONS

Without attempting a formal summary, it is appropriate at this point to summarize briefly the main drift of the evidence, as we read it, concerning two of the three questions posed at the outset: (1) Are fatherless boys more prone than others to the problems widely attributed to them? (2) If so, why?

Three areas have been discussed in some detail: juvenile delinquency, school achievement, and masculine identity. In none of these is the evidence clear and firm enough to demonstrate beyond doubt whether fatherless boys are or are not overrepresented among those characterized by the problems attributed to them. Nevertheless, the basis is sufficient for some highly qualified conclusions.

Juvenile delinquency.--It seems likely that even if all sources of bias were adequately controlled -- including bias in apprehension and treatment of boys from low-income homes -- these boys would be somewhat overrepresented among juvenile delinquents. However, it also seems likely that the differences, if found, would be dwarfed by other differences, especially those relating to socioeconomic status and to home climate.

Moreover, it seems likely that such differences as did survive adequate controls could not be attributed primarily to father absence per se, but rather to precursors, concomitants, and consequences of father absence: stress and conflict within the home, inability of the mother to exercise adequate supervision, depressed income and living conditions (including exposure to unfavorable neighborhood influences), the mother's psychological and behavioral reaction to separation from her spouse as well as to the social and economic difficulties of her situation as a solo parent, and community attitudes toward the boy and the family.

School achievement.--With regard to academic performance, it seems unlikely that father absence in itself would show significant relation to poorer school achievement, if relevant variables (including type of father absence and SES) were adequately controlled.

Masculine identity.--The evidence here is so fragmentary and so shakily based that it is difficult to achieve or to claim judicious perspective. Taken as a whole, this evidence constitutes almost a projective test. Its ambiguous outlines invite the imposition of form and structure dictated by the predispositions of the analyst rather than by the data.

Our best efforts to analyze the studies and findings reviewed, with allowance for refraction through the lenses of the observers, yield a negative conclusion: that the evidence so far available offers no firm basis for assuming that boys who grow up in fatherless homes are more likely, as men, to suffer from inadequate masculine identity as a result of lacking a resident male model.

Reversal of the typical male math-verbal ratio appears to occur more frequently among father-absent college men than among others, suggesting some difference in cognitive approach. To label the reversal as evidence of femininity is, in the present state of knowledge about it, confusing and premature. The significance of the reversal, pending further evidence, is still in doubt. It may be added that, in view of the tendency for sex typing to become less clearcut as education and socioeconomic status increase, and the scant evidence available concerning the relation of math-verbal ratio reversal to academic achievement, there is also doubt whether the ratio reversal is associated with any unfavorable consequences or correlates. Similar points would apply to field dependence and independence.

Concerning all three areas.--Two conclusions apply to all the areas considered: (1) the perceptible impact on a boy of growing up in a fatherless home is determined at least as much by elements that are present before and after separation from the father as by father absence in and of itself. (2) The impact of father absence on a boy is mediated and conditioned by a complex of interacting variables and probably cannot be explored fruitfully as a discrete critical variable in itself. Two corollaries are:

- (a) That the number of parents in the home is probably less crucial to a child's development than the family functioning of the remaining members--which is far harder to determine.
- (b) That family functioning is determined, not only by the individual characteristics and interactions of its members, but also by the circumstances and environment of the family unit.

## Recurrent themes and differentiations

Some of the conclusions summarized above--like many generalizations--lump together all fatherless boys as if they were a homogeneous group. Yet the final one bears witness to the need for moving immediately beyond the homogeneous fallacy. However inconclusive present answers to our two first questions may be, there is firm basis for recognizing at least some of the interacting factors that condition the impact of father absence on a boy. There is also firm basis for rejecting blanket generalizations about the effects of father absence.

Type of father absence.--High on the list of factors that mediate and condition the impact of father absence is the kind of absence involved. And no attribute of father absence is more important than degree of finality--that is, whether the absence is temporary or continuing, and whether it is for one time only or is recurrent. Interacting with degree of completeness and finality is the reason for the absence as perceived by the child. These elements have been discussed in the section on school achievement. At this point it is necessary merely to reemphasize the need for extreme care in generalizing the findings reported in studies of temporary absence as if they obviously represented the effects of continuing father absence.

One reason for extreme caution is found in the evidence that: when the separation is temporary, reported problems in studies of young children appear to be related more to the return of the father than to his absence. To the extent that these findings are accepted, they preclude applying to continuing father absence the effects reported in connection with temporary absence.

A further reason for caution lies in the fact that almost all the studies reviewed involved socially sanctioned or even honored reasons for temporary absence. This means that any effects relating to feelings of lowered self-esteem would be unlikely to be present in children whose fathers were away on planned and respected missions.

The importance of this element is underlined by the recurrent finding that father absence because of death is associated with less reported detriment to the child than absence through voluntary separation, and that in a number of instances death is associated with no difference from the presence of two parents in the home.\*

Another reason for finding less adverse effects associated with death than with voluntary separation may be that death is likely to

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\*e.g., Gregory (II); Gurin et al.; Langner and Michael; Nye, 1957; M. Rosenberg.

occur later in the child's life.\* This difference could be regarded as support for the theory that absence of a resident male model is the crucial factor. On the other hand, it could be related to the formative importance of the early years and to the lack of association between death and preceding conflict and stress within the home. Or conceivably, it could have some relation to the better income, greater security and greater social acceptability of Social Security or Veterans Administration benefits as compared with lower earnings, economic insecurity and dependence on public assistance programs.\*\* Thus, the differential relations between adverse manifestations and involuntary as opposed to voluntary separation cannot, in themselves, be viewed as supporting or challenging different explanations.

Age of child.--A large body of theory in child development supports the thesis that the age of the child when the father leaves the home is an important factor influencing the impact of father absence. Few of the studies reviewed control for the child's age at the time the father left the home. Those that do are, on the whole, likely to report or to speculate that the younger the child at separation, the greater the impact of the father's absence. Findings seldom give clear support to this generalization, however, and at least two studies contradict it.

It is hard to believe that the child's age at separation would not make a difference. However, we lack clear and consistent evidence about the nature of differences, the ages at which most difference appears, and the characteristics involved. On this point, as on some others reported, differences are slight, ambiguous, and inconsistent to a degree that encourages interpretation in the light of the analyst's preconceptions.

Social and economic factors.--Among the reasons for uncertainty about the meaning and the dependability of reported findings are the confounding effects of social, economic, and ethnic factors, and serious challenges to some familiar generalizations regarding family norms and values among the poor generally and the Negro poor in particular. The confounding of socioeconomic factors has been discussed in connection with school achievement, and some comments about cultural assumptions are included below under "Research Considerations" (p. 71). At this point, it must merely be noted that the impact of father absence, for whatever reason, can be expected to vary in different social, cultural, and economic groups because of "reality factors" on the one hand and, on the other, differing assumptions about the roles of wife and husband, and different family patterns--including different child rearing practices.

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\* Monahan, 1960.

\*\*Eppley.

The impact differs also because of different community norms and attitudes relating to father absence, factors discussed elsewhere but requiring mention here.

Family climate.--A recurrent finding is that when family functioning and climate are analyzed, they loom as more important than the number of parents in the home. With regard to juvenile delinquency, Rodman and Grams comment that "studies which have focused on the internal structure of the family have generally shown greater associations with delinquency than studies focusing upon outward structure. The internal dynamics rather than family structure per se is the more significant variable related to delinquency."\* This point has been documented in the section on juvenile delinquency, especially in studies by the Gluecks, the McCords, and Nye. A number of other studies show home climate and cohesiveness more strongly associated with a variety of outcome measures than is father absence per se.\*\*

The difference between focusing on the family constellation or on father absence is pointed up by Goode's somewhat sweeping remark that "in all likelihood, almost every serious researcher in American family behavior has suggested that the effects of continued home conflict might be more serious for children than the divorce itself."\*\*\* The studies reviewed do not bear out the statement about serious researchers, but they are consistent with the weight given to home conflict.

It can hardly be argued that the absence of a father, in and of itself, has no effect on a child. It would, in fact--as Goode also remarks--be surprising if this were so. It can be argued, however, that the impact and interaction of other variables condition the effects so strongly as to overwhelm the detectable impact and predictive value of this single and easily determined variable. Family functioning and climate provide a number of these overwhelming other variables. This is the message of the Gluecks' studies and the Cambridge-Somerville studies, among others. At least 13 of the studies reviewed (including 9 in the "core" group) offer some form of evidence that adverse characteristics popularly attributed to the effects of father absence are more pronounced among children of troubled unbroken homes than among children of presumably less stressful one-parent homes.

The present mother.--It is as necessary as it is difficult to differentiate the effects of father absence from the effects of the

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\* Rodman and Grams.

\*\* e.g., D'Andrade and Whiting; Ferguson; Gardner and Goldman; Gurin et al.; Illsley and Thompson; Kadushin, 1969; J. Landis, 1962; Langner; B. Miller; Pederson; Powers and Witmer.

\*\*\*Goode, 1951.

mother's presence, including her behavior and her attitudes with regard to the father as well as to her children and her current circumstances. The need is practical as well as theoretical, since efforts to diminish adverse effects of father absence will be based on beliefs about their nature and causes.

The crucial role of the mother, in two-parent as well as one-parent families, has come to be accepted as an axiom in the field of child development. The studies reviewed offer no challenge to that axiom.

With regard to juvenile delinquency, studies of home factors overwhelmingly point to the importance of the mother's supervision and leave room to speculate that in the early years of childhood the father's absence may affect the children indirectly as much as directly--through impeding the mother's ability to exercise adequate supervision. The authors of the Norwegian studies attribute the effects of father absence that they report to the reactions of the husband-absent mother, and repercussions--direct and indirect--of the absence on her child-rearing patterns.

It is appropriate, therefore, to consider briefly the role of the one-parent mother. Few would deny that it is a difficult and demanding role. For many, it is a dual role, as homemaker-child-rearer and as breadwinner. By definition, it is a role that must be enacted without the psychological and physical support of a parent partner to help with household responsibilities, family decisions, and all that child rearing involves. For many, it includes reduction in income, social status and social activities, posing a struggle against resentment, isolation and self-doubt. It is likely also to pose a need--recognized or not--for struggle against overpossessiveness, overpermissiveness, and/or over-control, pushing a child into precocious maturity, demanding and giving excessive affection or its counterfeit, and a sense of guilt for all of these and for the father's absence.\*

Each facet of the impact of father absence on the present mother is likely to affect other facets. The emotional impact has repercussions on her coping ability. The social impact has repercussions on the emotional impact. The economic impact is likely to have repercussions on any or all other facets. And all together impose a drain on the physical and psychological energy available for meeting her children's needs. The low health and energy levels of solo mothers in poverty have been amply documented.\*\* The efforts of middle-class mothers are less often described, except as they figure in discussions of working mothers. Since these discussions tend to focus on mothers in two-parent families,

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\* Kadushin, 1968.

\*\*Glasser and Navarre; Schorr, 1964; Strodbeck.

a large part of the picture with regard to one-parent families is likely to be obscured.\*

Few studies of temporary absence and very few of continuing absence depict mother and child in interaction. Many focus on one or the other. Many give indirect evidence that the content and force of the impact in any facet are strongly influenced by the family's socioeconomic situation. Most of them shed little light on the relation of a mother's individual characteristics to the effects of father absence, although a few include her temperament and coping capacity as part of the picture.\*\*

The extent to which, and the manner in which, the father's image is maintained in his absence depend, to a large extent, on the mother's attitude and have received little research attention. Bach reports that the mother's attitude toward the father strongly affects the child, and Baker et al. report that his influence is perceived as continuing within the home.\*\*\* Tiller explores the extent to which the child moves into the father's role.+ All these studies involve temporary absence. A number of other studies--also of temporary absence--investigate the extent to which the father is idealized or the nature of the child's impulse to identify with him, but without investigating or discussing the mother's influence on the child's perceptions and response.

The idea of mother dominance is central to the hypotheses of a good many studies, and is used to explain the findings of the Norwegian study.++ In this study, the conclusion is based partly on an interview with the mother. In many studies, however, the dominance is deduced from psychological measures administered to children rather than based on direct family study, and involves temporary father absence. Four tests used in connection with continuing father absence (Family Relations Scale of the California Test of Personality, Anderson's Intrafamily questionnaire,+++ Bene-Anthony Family Relations test,<sup>1</sup> and the projective "Draw-a-Family" test<sup>2</sup>) show no significant differences between father-present and father-absent children with regard to intrafamily relationships.

The mother's own perception of her role is reported in a considerable number of studies that do not include direct observation,

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\* Herzog, 1960 (A); Nye and Hoffman.

\*\* Fagen et al.; Pederson; Tiller, 1958.

\*\*\* Bach; Baker, et al., 1967.

+ Tiller, 1961.

++ Tiller, 1958.

+++ B. Miller.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas.

<sup>2</sup> Lawton and Sechrist.

interviewing, or testing of the children. The picture of divorced mothers in the middle-income range differs according to the nature of the sample. Those involved in group therapy, group discussions, or family life education report many problems: a sense of incompleteness and frustration, of failure and guilt, feelings of ambivalence toward their children, loneliness, loss of self-esteem, hostility toward men, problems with ex-husbands, problems of income and how to find the right job, anxiety about children and their problems, and a tendency to overcompensate for the loss to their children.\* This anxious picture seems related to the findings of Rosenberg and Landis that children of divorce show less self-esteem.\*\* However, the selectivity of the groups is such that problems of parents in general, problems of solo parents, and problems of working mothers cannot be differentiated.

Goode's study, using a representative sample of divorced women from a particular area (Detroit), does not show the same focus on problems. This sample, which included middle-class, working-class, and lower-class women, discussed problems relating mainly to external circumstances and social pressures. Mothers did feel pressure to remarry, both from their children and from their associates. Our society has no recognized role for a woman who is a mother and not a wife.\*\*\*

Among low-income mothers, Rainwater found a majority of female respondents saying that a separated woman will miss most companionship or love or sex, or simply that she will be lonesome.+ Descriptions of AFDC mothers repeatedly stress their loneliness and anxiety, which breed and are bred by apathy, depression, and lethargy. Less is said about the demands of the dual role of homemaker and wage earner, complicated by lack of a partner to give support in both aspects. This may be in part because at very low-income levels, a husband often does not give much support in either.++ The problems of the very low-income mother are likely to be compounded by concern about physical and social welfare of her children, loss of self-esteem because she is left alone, and grinding fatigue, malnutrition, physical ailments, and the baying of the wolf at the door--all but one of which are often problems for the mother in poverty whose husband is still in the home.

The psychological problems of the middle-class, one-parent mother have received more research attention than the physical demands and economic stresses her role is likely to impose. Nevertheless, although the relative weighting of factors may be different, the ingredients of

\* Freudenthal; Ilgenfritz.

\*\* J. Landis, 1960; M. Rosenberg.

\*\*\*Goode, 1956.

+ Rainwater.

++ Bell; Jeffers; Lewis, 1967; Liebow.

her role and the strains it imposes present problems in many respects parallel to those experienced by the low-income mother.

There is little doubt that the aspirations of husband-absent mothers for their children are at least as high as those of their husband-present peers. Apparently few are able to translate their aspirations into behavior that would enhance the probability of the child actually achieving, but this inability shows little visible relation to the number of parents in the home.\*

Child rearing practices are clearly related to SES but there is little research, aside from the Norwegian and Italian studies, relating them to marital status. On the contrary, most American studies that throw any light on the subject at all suggest that SES, individual temperament, and community norms exercise a good deal more influence in this respect than does the husband's presence or absence.\*\* Hess et al. have detailed a number of differences in mothers' behavior which may be related to the child's later achievement.\*\*\*

#### Fathers, present and absent

Whether its findings supported or challenged the "classic" view concerning the effects of father absence, no study has been found that raised question about the advantages of a two-parent home over a one-parent home, other things being equal. That it is good to have a father in the home is a truism which happens to be true, and which is probably regarded as true by most people who grew up in a home with a "good" father, and by many who did not. It is a truism that has support in a wide array of research and theory, as well as in observation and experience.+

To say that some functions of a good and present father can be served by individuals who are not a child's father by no means implies that such substitution is ideal or desirable. It implies merely that the adverse effects of father absence may not be as inevitable, invariable, or resistant to modification as is often assumed. The role and functions of the father are discussed elsewhere in this volume, and the direct

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\* Kriesberg; McMillan; Moles.

\*\* Kriesberg; Lewis, 1961; Moles; Wortis et al.

\*\*\*Hess et al.

+ Although this review is focused on boys, it seems unlikely that the presence of a father in the home is less important for girls--in fact, some studies claim certain adverse correlates of father absence are more marked for girls than for boys. (Monahan, 1957; Toby, 1957; Weeks.)

values of father presence do not need to be rehearsed here. The values, of course, are by no means limited to those derived through interpersonal relations or to individual and interactional modeling.

That the social and economic situation of child, mother, and family unit would be strongly influenced by the father's presence or absence is too obvious to require saying but too important to risk forgetting. Every time a child at school is asked his father's occupation, every time there is a "Father's Night," every time he hears about other boys being taken to ball games by their fathers, every time he wishes his father were there for a game or a talk, he is reminded that his father is not present and that he is, therefore, different from some other children. That children are sensitive to prevailing (or assumed) attitudes is easily observed, and is implied in the reports of Landis and of Rosenberg.\* The more unusual a broken home is in a community, the more strongly the children are likely to react. This is one respect in which middle-class children may suffer more disadvantage than those in very low-income families, since father absence is more unusual and present fathers tend to be more active as parents in middle-class families. However, as a number of investigators have shown, it is unlikely that any community or any child is indifferent to father absence, even though such indifference has become part of popular stereotypes about "the poor" and especially the Negro poor.\*\*

Although the economic values of a father's presence hardly call for documentation, some repercussions of the economic deficit often left by his absence have received less than due attention. Some of these have been mentioned in reverse as concomitants of father absence: reduced income, changed life style, a different neighborhood with its attendant influences, for some boys the need to drop out of school to help support the family, and for some boys delay in courtship and marriage. Winch has suggested that this delay is a function of psychological attachment between mother and son.\*\*\* However, it seems at least as likely to be a consequence of economic restrictions and the boy's additional responsibilities. The tendency to attribute solely to psychological factors characteristics that may result from economic and physical deprivations has been documented far more extensively for the poor than for the middle class.+

A value of a present father that is documented by some of the studies reviewed, and especially by those of temporary father absence, is the buffering and diluting function. The Norwegian and Italian

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\* J. Landis, 1960; M. Rosenberg.

\*\* Herzog, 1967; Jeffers; Lewis, 1961; Rodman, 1963.

\*\*\*Winch.

+ Herzog, 1967; Lewis, 1967; Schorr, 1963.

studies are the ones that are most explicit about the impact on a boy of the mother's adjustment to husband absence. Tiller's study is the only one that inquires specifically about the induction of the boy into some aspects of the father's role. The buffering function operates in general and in particular. If a mother is mentally or emotionally unstable, or is deviant in her behavior, an effective father can serve as a balancing, mitigating, and supportive agent.\* Life and literature abound in examples of father-absent children who carry an undue burden of their mother's emotional energy and attention.

If all present fathers were model fathers, the results of this review might be more clear cut than they are, although even in that case the answers would not be a foregone conclusion. However, some homes are broken precisely because the father is not able to meet the requirements of his role. And some unbroken homes contain fathers whose presence seems of dubious benefit to their children.\*\*

Whether an inadequate father is better for a child's development than no father at all depends on a great many factors, including the individual characteristics of the father, the child, the mother, and also the persuasion of the analyst who hazards an answer. The studies cited in relation to climate of the home indicate that with regard to juvenile delinquency and general adjustment, children in unhappy intact homes seemed to be worse off than children in happy broken homes.\*\*\* In these instances and these respects, the presence of some fathers seems to be less favorable than their absence would be. Some studies of patients in mental hospitals give similar indications.+ All in all, however, the studies reviewed provide no basis for questioning the overriding advantages to a boy of growing up in a "good" two-parent home.

#### RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

Conclusions are necessarily limited by the nature of the evidence: the variables investigated or unexplored, the type of father absence involved, the age and SES of the samples. Some overt characteristics of the core group of studies are summarized in Table 2.++

\* Pederson.

\*\* Gordon and Shea; McCord et al.; Robins.

\*\*\*J. Landis, 1962; Nye, 1957.

+ e. g., Heacock and Seale; Ingham; Kohn and Clausen; Pitts et al.

++ The number on the Table is not the same as the number in the count. Two studies in the core group (Chen; Pederson) were not adapted to charting in this way; two (Vincent; Illsley and Thompson) were concerned with girls only; and two other studies, not in the core group, are included in the Table in brackets, as comparisons of broken and unhappy unbroken homes (J. Landis, 1962; Nye, 1957). One study, including two different populations with contrasting findings, is entered twice (Tiller, 1961).

Table 2.--REPORTED DIFFERENCES, MALES IN FATHER-ABSENT FAMILIES AS COMPARED WITH MALES IN FATHER-PRESENT FAMILIES

## CONTINUING ABSENCE

Age When Studied	Lower SES <sup>a</sup>	Other or All SES <sup>a</sup>	Females <sup>b</sup> Included	Ratio Unfavorable vs. Other <sup>c</sup>	National or Ethnic Group	Investigators
4	d	No difference re behavior problems; more enuresis in middle class; physical care seems less good.	F	2:7	W, British	Rowntree ('55)
4	Differences negligible.			3:20 ca.	N	Hess et al. ('68)
4-5	Poorer school achievement.		F	1:0	N	Mackie et al. ('67)
6	(No difference re school achievement. { Lower school achievement.		{ F { F	{ 0:1 { 1:0	{ W & N { Other minority groups	Coleman et al. ('66)
6 ave.	Lower masculinity scores; no difference in behavior, or knowledge of sex roles.			1:2	N & W	Biller ('68)
3 1/2-6 1/2		Greater anxiety.	F	1:1	W	Koch ('61)
7-9	Choose immediate gratification		F	1:0	Trinidad & East Indian	Mischel ('58)
6 & 11 ca.	Lower IQ, with cumulative decrement from age 6 to age 11.			1:0	N	Deutsch & Brown ('64)
9-11	No difference re self-concept or family roles.			0:10	W	Thomas ('68)
9-12	Early separated: less masculine sex preference, less physically competitive or aggressive. All separated: more dependent on peers.			5:7	N & W	Hetherington ('66)
10-18 ca.	No individual differences re behavior or academic problems. More behavior problems in schools with many absent fathers, except in upper-lower SES.			0:2	N	Robins et al. ('66)
6-13 ca.	Father-absent slightly better in English; achievement scores did not differ when other factors controlled.			0:2	N & W	Wilson ('67)
10-13 ca.	Lower on school achievement tests.		F	2:6	N	Deutsch ('60)
7-14		"No difference" on "Draw-a-Family Test."		1:6	W	Lawton & Sechrist ('62)
8-14	8-9 Choose immediate gratification. 11-14 No difference.		F	1:1	Trinidad & Grenada	Mischel ('61)
15 ca.		Impulsive-rebellious; socially extroverted.		1:9	W	Hathaway & Monachesi ('63)
12-15 ca.	Lower peer status; no difference re M-F, dependency, aggression, or reported family relationships.			1:4	Puerto Rican & N	Miller ('61)

Table 2.--Continued

Age When Studied	Lower SES <sup>a</sup>	Other or All SES <sup>a</sup>	Females <sup>b</sup> Included	Ratio Unfavorable vs. Other <sup>c</sup>	National or Ethnic Group	Investigators
15	More field dependent; no difference on M-F, or identification with either parent.			1:2	N & W	Barclay & Cusumano ('67)
5-15	More feminine but depends on circumstances; role preference more feminine.			3:0	N, Barbadian	D'Andrade & Whiting ('66)
10-15	Several differences reported re feminine-aggressive behavior, sex anxiety, oral regression. No differences re abnormal fears or gang delinquency. Difficulties attributed to family instability, not father absence.			4	W	McCord et al. ('62)
10-16	No differences re school attitudes, problems or achievement. More "neurotic" symptoms reported.			1:5	N	Wasserman ('68)
12 & 17 ca.		No difference re personality, school relationships, attitude to school peer relationships; poorer school attendance.		2:10 ca.	W	Burchinal ('64)
10-17	d	Juvenile delinquency slightly greater but difference not significant.		0:0	N & W	Shaw & McKay ('32)
10-17	d	Reported for census tracts, not individuals. Delinquency rates higher in tracts with high broken home rate, except for affluent nonwhite tracts.		3:1	N & W	Willie ('67)
10-17	d	Juvenile delinquency rate higher for whites, (except lowest SES), Chinese and upper-lower SES Negroes but no difference for Negroes in other 3 SES levels.		8:4	N, W, Chinese	Elsner ('66)
14-17	d	No difference re enrollment and graduation high school as compared with all U.S. children. Nonwhite child less likely to graduate high school, especially if mother less well educated, or receiving AFDC.	F	1:2	W, Nonwhite	Palmore et al. ('66)
14-18		Moderate effects re authority, number of problems, and amount of family tension. With stepfather, effects greater on these measures, plus resentment of family life style.	F	4:10	W	Moore & Holtzman ('65)

Table 2--Continued

Age When Studied	Lower SES <sup>a</sup>	Other or All SES <sup>a</sup>	Females <sup>b</sup> Included	Ratio, Unfavorable vs. Other <sup>c</sup>	National or Ethnic Group	Investigators
14-18	d	Juvenile delinquency rate higher in voluntary but not involuntary separations. Other family factors outweigh composition.		1:1	British	Ferguson ('52)
12-18 ca.		Report less affection from parents; no difference re achievement, conformity, dependence, independence, mastery, dominance, recognition; "heterosexual striving."	F	1:7	W	Bartlett & Harrocks ('58)
16-18 ca.		Lower self-esteem and more psychosomatic symptoms.		2:0	W	Rosenberg ('65)
17-18 ca.	d	Slightly more problems reported (21:19); more often included in family councils; earlier economic maturity.		21:19 ca.	W	Landis, P. ('53)
15-18 ca.	d	Unhappy unbroken homes show more juvenile delinquency, more psychosomatic symptoms, more problems outside home and with parents than broken homes.			W	Nye ('57)
15-18 ca.	d	More self-reported delinquency.		6:10	W	Nye ('58)
15-18 ca.		Higher juvenile delinquency, dropout rate.		2:0	W	Gregory I ('65)
16-18 ca.	No difference re self-esteem. Inadequate father worse than none. Lower sex salience.			1:1	N, (Am. Indian 3%)	Gordon & Shea ('67)
18 ca.		Lower scores in math, relative to language; other factors produce similar effect.		1:0	W	Nelson & Maccoby ('66)
18 ca.		Lower scores in math, relative to language. No difference re grades, graduation, major, health or psychiatric referrals.		1:7	W	Gregory II ('65)
18-19 ca.		Higher language scores; no difference re math; high femininity rating.		2:8	W	Altus ('58)
18-22 ca.		Less close to father before divorce, more sex information, less likely to date in junior high (but not senior high), and rate personality lower as compared to boys in unhappy unbroken homes.		4:14	W	Landis, J. ('62)

Table 2--Continued

Age When Studied	Lower SES <sup>a</sup>	Other or All SES <sup>a</sup>	Females <sup>b</sup> Included	Ratio, Unfavorable vs Other <sup>c</sup>	National or Ethnic Group	Investigators
18-22		Lower scores in math, relative to language.		1:0	W	Sutton-Smith et al. ('66)
18-22 & older		Courtship behavior more active and earlier.		2:11	W	Andrews & Christensen ('51)
19-25		Delays courtship status.		1:0	W	Winch ('49)
adult	d	Emotional stress; marital instability.		11:3 ca.	W	Gurin et al. ('60)
adult	d	Greater marital instability, poorer mental health; middle class only.	F	2:2 ca.	W	Langner & Michael ('63)
adult	More likely to be single or divorced; feel discriminated against; lack sense of "fate control" and trust re promise keeping.			4:7 <sup>f</sup>	N	Pettigrew ('64)

## TEMPORARY ABSENCE

3-5		Less aggressive; father-absent boys about a year retarded in this characteristic. <sup>h</sup>		3:8 ca.	W	Sears ('51)
6	d	Differences "minor"; somewhat more frequent nightmares, nail biting but not bedwetting.	F	4:2	W, British	Douglas & Blomfield ('58)
3-7 1/2		More likely to be dominant, show hostile aggression. More likely to be aggressed against and to react more passively. Response to adult authority-compulsive obedience and defiance.		15:8	W	Stolz et al. ('54) (Selected chapters)
5-8		Strong feelings of rejection, rivalry with sibs, and overt hostility. No difference re sexual identification, oedipal involvement or dependency. <sup>h</sup>		3:21 ca.	W	Baker et al. I ('67)
5-8		Prolonged oedipal conflict, without intensity increase; persistence of sibling competition and hostility; less overtly competitive and less freely endorsing of father.		6:21 ca.	W	Baker et al. III ('68)
7-8		No significant difference. <sup>h</sup>		1:7	W	Crain & Stamm ('65)

TABLE 2--Continued

Age When Studied	Lower SES <sup>a</sup>	Other or All SES <sup>a</sup>	Females <sup>b</sup> Included	Ratio, Unfavorable vs. Other <sup>c</sup>	National or Ethnic Group	Investigators
8-9 1/2		Greater immaturity; inadequate sex identification; poor peer adjustment. <sup>b, i</sup>		7:8	Norwegian	Lynn & Sawrey ('59)
6-10		Idealistic fantasy picture of the family, with less aggression to and from all members of the family. Resembles picture of father-present girls. <sup>h</sup>		11:5	W	Bach ('46)
7-10		No difference re dependency, pseudomaturity, feminization, compensatory masculinity. Greater admiration of father. Less likely to be overprotected. <sup>b, i</sup>		1:14	Italian	Ancona et al. ('63)
14-15		<u>Sailor boys</u> - not feminine, less authoritarian, slightly less likely to assume father role, slightly dependent. No difference idealized masculinity. More hostility and ambivalence toward mother. <u>Whaler boys</u> - high on substitution for father, slightly higher femininity and dependency. No difference regarding authoritarianism or idealized masculinity. More ambivalent toward mother. <sup>b, i</sup>		7:3  8:2	Norwegian	Tiller ('61)
18-19 ca.		Lower math scores in relation to language.		1:0	W	Carlsmith ('64)
18-19 ca.		Greater intensity attachment to mother, ambivalent in their identification to parents; no difference re castration anxiety.		3:10	W	Leichty ('60)
22-23 ca.		More likely to report antisocial behavior; no difference on disobedience toward parents.		1:1	W	Stiegman ('66)

**Notes:**

<sup>a</sup> All differences reported are significant at the .05 level or better, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>b</sup> Females not separable from males in findings as reported.

<sup>c</sup> Number of reported differences unfavorable to father-absent boys as compared with number of variables showing no significant difference or difference favorable to father-absent boys.

<sup>d</sup> Study group included a few lower-class subjects.

<sup>e</sup> Ca. indicates that grade levels have been converted into approximate age in years.

<sup>f</sup> Not reported.

<sup>g</sup> Number of subgroups makes count of variables impractical.

<sup>h</sup> Measured during father's absence.

<sup>i</sup> Measured during father's absence, but absence is periodic, so all have also experienced his return.

The differences summarized in the chart refer only to father-absent males, where possible. However, in a few studies, males and females were not reported separately, and these are indicated by an F in the column headed "Females Included." Many studies (20 out of 60 in the core group) have concentrated on boys. Two, omitted from the chart, studied girls only.\* Thirty-eight included both boys and girls, although the inclusion is noted on the chart only when separation of the sexes was not feasible.

The chart serves as a rough map of what has been studied and who has been studied in relation to which effects of father absence. An interesting relation appears between content and the socioeconomic status of the samples. In general, low SES samples have been studied more with regard to problems that trouble society (e.g., school achievement and juvenile delinquency). Middle-class groups have been studied more with regard to traits that can be defined as problems to the individual (e.g., self-esteem, psychosomatic symptoms, immaturity, masculine identity, dependency).

In some respects, content of studies is naturally related to the age of the subjects. Juvenile delinquency occurs chiefly during the teens, even though its incidence might be affected by separation at an earlier age. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that most studies of juvenile delinquency involve children between 10 and 18. Similarly, school achievement is naturally studied during the school years. The relation of father absence to academic achievement in college has hardly been explored, except for one study that found it unrelated to reversal in the math-verbal ratio.\*\* The ages at which some other subject areas were likely to be investigated seem less inherently related to the nature of the area.

Temporary absence has been studied only with middle-class samples, usually young children. The emphasis has been chiefly on psychological effects. Some studies of temporary absence have been made while the father was away, some after his return, and some before, during, or after repeated absences.

Only three of the core group had samples of adults past college age. However, a considerable number of studies using adult samples but lacking control or comparison groups, have been concerned with the effects of father absence. And a number that dealt with samples of treatment or patient groups included control groups but for other reasons fell outside our specifications.

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\* Illsley and Thompson; Vincent, 1961.

\*\*Gregory (II).

The same psychological factors have rarely been studied at different ages, so that the longitudinal picture must, on the whole, be deduced from relevant longitudinal research with children in two-parent families. The few studies of father absence that investigate the same or similar factors do not give consistent results.

Aside from the Norwegian and Italian studies, almost no examples of deliberate replication have been found. And in the few cases of deliberate replication or accidental near-duplication, agreement is lacking. Thus, in three studies using structured doll play, Lynn and Sawrey report greater dependency among father-absent boys, Ancona found no difference, and Baker found increased independence.\* Altus obtains high-F scores for father-absent college men as compared with the father-present, while Barclay and Cusumano, using a different M-F scale, obtain no difference in F scores for younger boys.\*\*

Studies of school achievement also report variegated results. Two report that father-absent boys score significantly lower than father-present boys in reading and arithmetic school achievement scores and in IQ scores. Another reports reading scores correlated with SES but not with father absence. Wilson finds that father-absent boys do better in high school English than father-present boys, but that, in general, the association of father absence with school achievement is not great. Coleman reports no significant difference between father-absent and father-present boys, except in a few subgroups.\*\*\* Wasserman finds no difference in school attitudes or achievement.+

Measures and controls.--Throughout this review we have discussed in some detail findings obtained with measures we do not trust and often with controls we view as inadequate. If these findings had shown more consensus and added up more impressively, we would have needed to explain with more specificity the respects in which measures or methods seemed to raise doubt about them. However, many research investigators and analysts do not share our skepticism concerning some measures and some methods. Therefore, if it is possible, without entering deeply into controversy about methods, to demonstrate that even when taken at face value, results fall short of impressive evidence, our conclusions may suffer less from analytic bias.

It would, of course, be possible to take the opposite position, and some readers may do so. It would be possible to say that if measures

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\* Lynn and Sawrey; Ancona et al.; Baker et al., 1967.

\*\* Lawton and Sechrist; Mischel, 1958, 1961; Altus; Barclay and Cusumano.

\*\*\*Deutsch; Deutsch and Brown; Whiteman and Deutsch; Wilson; Coleman et al.

+ Wasserman.

were more valid and controls more effective, differences between father-present and father-absent boys would be more convincing. Our own reading of the evidence points in the opposite direction. With regard to SES controls, we have explained why at some length (in connection with juvenile delinquency and school achievement). With regard to the measures used, we believe that ancillary evidence has been cited in support of our conclusions. Some of this has already been indicated and some will be discussed below, at least in part.

A heavier count against our line of reasoning lies in the frequent inclusion of stepfathers under the classification "intact homes," since stepparent homes often tend to look less favorable than one-parent homes, when they are examined separately. We can only acknowledge the point. Our assessment of the magnitude of differences leads us to hold to our conclusions in spite of it, but others may interpret the evidence differently.

### The family

Through time and space, the family has assumed a wide variety of forms. Without rehearsing details about its fascinating variations, it seems safe to hazard two broad generalizations: (1) that each society tends to view its own version of family structure as natural, adequate, and right; and (2) that the family has survived its myriad mutations and seems likely to do so for the indefinite future. Lamentations about its imminent demise are perhaps less frequent than formerly, at least among social scientists, a number of whom have proclaimed its continuing viability.\*

Most societies, as far as we know, recognize the importance of the parent-child relationship. The majority assume a continuing relationship between sex-mates. The majority, however, do not require the intense one-to-one relationship fostered by our norms and ideals--not to mention our theories of child development.\*\* It is worth recognizing both the variety of family patterns and the constants or near-constants that cut across these patterns, especially at a time when we are faced with, and concerned about, apparent changes in family forms and functions within our own society.

The modal American family structure is hardly "patriarchal." The ideal of equalitarianism is widespread. Children in two-parent homes are reared by women at home and taught by women at school. "Momism" has been

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\* Goode, 1963; Linton; Litwak; Pollak; Vincent, 1967; Witmer and Kotinsky.

\*\*Linton.

lampooned and denounced, especially on the middle-class level. Some disadvantages of boys, as compared with girls, familiar in countless studies of children from intact homes, are at times attributed to the woman-dominatedness of their lives. Also, a good deal of abbreviated father absence occurs in two-parent homes when the father commutes to work or travels frequently for business. All in all, the lives of most children are strongly pervaded by women.

The occasional absence of a father from a two-parent home is certainly different from permanent or greatly protracted father absence. At the same time, the prevalence of partial father absence and the prominence of women in the lives of most children may dilute, to some extent, the contrast between children in homes classified as "father-absent" and "father-present." Biller is among the few investigators of father absence who have given serious consideration to varying degrees of father presence.\*

The inaccuracy of terming the modal United States family "patriarchal" is paired with the inaccuracy of calling this country's mother-based family "matriarchal." The term is applied most frequently to the low-income Negro family. And since public concern has been directed especially to low-income, female-headed Negro families, the objection seems to merit passing attention. Labels are not necessarily important in themselves, but they acquire importance through their capacity to help or hinder perception and understanding.

The term "matriarchy" poses a double-barreled problem. It seems reasonable to assume that a matriarchal society, on the whole, accepts its form and the roles which that form prescribes. If this is so, then it includes acceptable male roles, and furnishes acceptable male models. It does not view the women as arrogating to themselves functions that should belong to men, or as stepping into the breach caused by the inadequacy or perfidy of the men. It also provides a tenable economic situation for a family that is viewed as a "real" family, functioning in accordance with the norms of the society. However, one of the points on which there is strong consensus among those who have studied low-income Negro families is that the norms and values of the "mainstream society," including the male-headed family, are basically accepted in the ghetto--even though the ghetto subculture is also accepted, on a different level. There is a considerable literature, dating back at least to the thirties, documenting the thesis that the poor, like the rich, subscribe to the values and patterns of the overarching culture as a set of norms which they prefer, but feel they cannot always quite afford; and, at the same time, live by a different set which they view as dictated by the

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\*Biller.

exigencies of life.\* Hyman Rodman has referred to this pragmatic double-take as "the value stretch," an expressive term although there may be some question whether it applies much more to the poor than to the non-poor.\*\*

Another part of the problem with the term "matriarchy" is a suspicion that the alleged dominance of the low-income Negro female is, at most, fragmentary and may be a fiction of middle-class white social scientists. Neither the males nor the females of the Negro ghetto think that the woman is dominant. True, she is in charge of child rearing--as are women in most American families. And true, again, she may be a more steady source of income than the male, though her earning rate is lower.\*\*\* However, in the area of man-woman relations, and of life arrangements generally, neither women nor men think that women have the upper hand.+ Our stock quotation on that score is the remark of a Negro woman, "I've often heard a woman wish she was a man but I never heard a man wish he was a woman." And a man remarked, "I ain't got no education but I do have a lot of mother wit, and I know that there ain't nothing no more important to a woman than a man." (p. 10.)++

If the women feel put upon, exploited, and at the mercy of men, and if they resent--as they do--the responsibilities forced on them by what they view as the man's reprehensible abdication of his role, can it be truly said that they are living in a matriarchy?

The question is relevant because, in studies of fatherless children, so much emphasis is placed on the problems of sex role models, especially the problem of the fatherless boy in developing adequate masculine identification. In studies of low-income Negro boys, sex role problems are often ascribed to the matriarchal home. (Studies of middle-class children also highlight sex role problems, but without reference to matriarchy.)

The matriarchal label has not been reserved exclusively for the one-parent family but is sometimes applied to all low-income Negro families, whether one or two parents are in the home. Such reference

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\* e.g., Lewis, 1967; Powdermaker; Rodman, 1968; Herzog, 1967; Jeffers.

\*\* Rodman, 1963; "The experience of local Departments of Welfare concerning the integrity of their clients based on a national ADC study and the NYC Department of Welfare's experience during the January 1965 strike compares favorably with that of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service in regard to integrity of these persons who file income tax returns." (Weingarten.)

\*\*\*Bureau of Census, 1968(D).

+ Pohrer and Edmonson; Jeffers; Liebow.

++ Jackson.

serves as a reminder that, viewed across a social distance, traits sometimes appear more unitary than they are. As Elizabeth Bott has pointed out in connection with English families, the man may have dominance in some areas and the woman in others.\* It is not necessary--or even likely--that one sex will have ascendancy in all areas. Cohen and Hodges, applying Bott's reasoning to lower blue-collar workers in the United States, comment that "to describe the working-class family as both 'male-authoritarian' (or 'patriarchal') and as 'mother-centered' is not paradoxical. They are, indeed, both, depending upon the functional area which one is attending to." (p. 327.)\*\* Thus, as with sex role identification, the complexities of real life defy a neat either-or pattern.

### Un-families

On the whole, in our society the one-parent family has been viewed as a form of un-family or non-family or sick family. Evidences of this attitude are legion. At a conference on family planning, a participant refers to "the one-parent family--if it can be called a family." A newspaper article refers to the broken family as having reached "epidemic proportions." The one-parent family has been conspicuously absent from textbooks and college courses on family life education and from the formulation of research questions about "family life."

There are a number of reasons why it would be of advantage to recognize the one-parent family as a form that exists and functions, rather than as an aberration.\*\*\* One reason, though perhaps not the strongest, is that over 6 million children--almost 10 percent of the population under 18--live in fatherless families. Another is that, as a number of investigators have discovered, such families can be cohesive, warm, supportive, and favorable to the development of children.

Some other reasons for recognition of the fatherless family as a family form in its own right have already been noted: that the family has absorbed a vast array of different forms and still has continued to function as a family; that the modal United States family may not be as "patriarchal" as is sometimes assumed; that children in one-parent homes are adversely affected by prevailing negative assumptions concerning that kind of family.

Among the more cogent reasons for reassessment of the father-absent family is a prevailing tendency to focus on its problems and weaknesses, without inquiry into the nature or even the existence of

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\* Bott.

\*\* Cohen and Hodges.

\*\*\*Goode, 1956; Morisey.

positive aspects. A few investigators and commentators have pointed to some strengths.\* Studies that draw on free interviewing, repeated observations, and long-term relationships with individuals and families are more likely than those that rely on one-time administration of highly structured tests and questionnaires to offer examples of family cohesiveness under stress, of strong ties that are maintained in some families, the mutual aid, support, and acceptance often evident within and between these families, the mothering competence that enables some women to raise children who can maintain courage and perseverance under severe and constantly recurring trials, the independence and coping abilities developed--if only in self-defense--by very young children. The Child Rearing Study directed by Hylan Lewis describes unmarried or deserted women who mother not only their own children but their nieces and nephews, and mothers (white and black) who suffered and mourned when their daughters became pregnant out of wedlock, but held to the rule that "you don't turn your back on your own flesh and blood."\*\*

We hear a good deal about the apathy, despair, isolation, and paralysis into which many AFDC mothers sink, and these pictures are accurate.\*\*\* But there are also pictures of maternal devotion, such as those found in Greenleigh's study, and Wickenden's description of AFDC mothers who would rather risk starvation by withdrawing their application than risk losing their children under the "suitable home law."† There is also the fact that less than half of those who are eligible receive public assistance.††

Those who emphasize the positives have, to a large extent, been discussing very low-income Negro families. Some of them, viewing the father-absent family as an adaptive response to highly unsatisfactory economic and social conditions, maintain that it is a functional form and will be so until these conditions are improved. Because of the low and unstable earning power of many Negro men and the regulations that have prevailed among welfare departments, Besner describes the father-absent home as "economically advantageous for some women at a poverty level." (p. 26.)††† Riessman concurs, maintaining that because of the functions it serves, "the so-called broken family...deserves re-examination," but predicting that its numbers and proportion will drop substantially as poverty declines. (p. 418.)<sup>1</sup>

\* e.g., Coles; Erikson, 1966; Kasman; S. M. Miller; Riessman. 1962, 1964, 1966; Rodman, 1968; Teele.

\*\* Lewis, 1961, 1967.

\*\*\*Schorr, 1964; Strodbeck.

† Greenleigh; Wickenden.

†† W. J. Cohen; National Center for Social Statistics.

††† Besner.

<sup>1</sup> Riessman, 1964.

Insistence on family strengths coexists (sometimes in the same reports) with emphasis on some features of child rearing generally agreed to be extremely negative. We are in no position to estimate the balance between weaknesses and strengths among low-income, father-absent families, because the prevailing emphasis has been to so large an extent on weaknesses; and because, to so large an extent, both weaknesses and strengths seem to be shared by two-parent families at the same income levels. Nor are we in a position to guess what proportion of children at any income level live in "good" one-parent homes, as compared with the proportion in disturbed two-parent homes.

A detailed description of child-rearing practices in a very low-income group of mothers suggests the extent to which other factors may overshadow marital status of the parents.\* Although 60 percent of these mothers were married, their children did not tend to have an exclusive relationship to one maternal or paternal figure, and child-rearing practices appeared to relate far more to poverty than to family structure.

Even less has been learned about the strengths and coping patterns of middle- and upper-income fatherless families than about those with very low incomes. Yet experience and observation suggest that this is because they have been so little explored rather than because they do not exist. To focus only on problems and weaknesses is to distort the picture and obscure some clues to ways of building on strengths. It is often easier to document negatives than positives, but it is often more feasible to build on strengths than on weaknesses.

### Context and perspective

A number of the studies reviewed suggest a need: (1) for viewing father absence in the perspective of the family as a functioning organization composed of interacting individuals; and (2) for viewing the family as a complex organism set within and interacting with a complex social, economic, and cultural organism. Such a prescription is easy to recite and inordinately difficult to fill. Without insisting on its immediate feasibility, it is nevertheless useful to recognize some essential ingredients.

Most serious investigators would readily grant that, on the one hand, reality is complex and, on the other hand, research models often impose an unrealistic simplification. Social scientists, it is sometimes said, are forced to look at small bits and pieces and to construct from them a model of reality. In doing this, they are often forced into

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\*Wortis et al.

talking a kind of shorthand. The problem is that this shorthand tends to become a substitute for reality--in interpreting results, in reporting them, and in making recommendations based on them.

There sometimes seems to be an implication that when a father is missing, one discrete delimited element is missing. It may be paternal supervision; it may be a resident male role model and source of identification. Efforts to test a hypothesis necessarily focus on one element or on a few elements. Yet the impact of any one variable may be grossly modified by the actions and interactions of a great many variables. In reporting research findings, it is very difficult to do justice to this complexity. Yet failure to recognize and allow for complexity may carry oversimplification to the point of distortion.

There has been repeated evidence that when factors within the home were studied, family climate has been a more potent variable than father absence per se; that socioeconomic situation has overshadowed father absence; that the mother's response to the father's absence is a crucial factor, mediating the impact of that absence on a child; that the mother's definition of the father's absence and of her role in the current situation affect her treatment of the child; and that the child's individual characteristics affect both her treatment and his response. It must be assumed that the individual characteristics of the mother, including her ability to cope with her current situation, are crucial factors in her response; and that all of these are affected by the social and economic circumstances of the family, as well as by community norms and attitudes.

Because a number of investigators have explicitly pointed to the necessity and the difficulty of perceiving father absence as part of a complex and interacting constellation of factors, it seems worth adding a few relevant quotations referring to the research problem, though not necessarily to father absence.

"It is suggested that the patterning of life experiences may be more crucial than occurrence or absence of specific psychic stresses." (p. 225.)\*

"We have in effect followed an arc leading from the concept of the person, through the matrix of social relations, to the economic conditions of the labor market. If this arc is short-circuited by focusing solely on one area or by leaving out one field of forces, explanatory power declines." (p. 11.)\*\*

\* Schofield and Balian.

\*\*Stone and Schlamp.

"It is the combination of many factors rather than any single one that exerts influence." (p. 48.)\*

"Loss of a parent in early life constitutes a non-specific trauma whose effects depend upon complex interactions among such variables as sex, biogenetic vulnerability, parent surrogates, type of loss, availability of compensatory supports, and developmental status" (pp. 350-351.)\*\*

"Other factors are always present; other phases constantly modify the factors in the family background, so that to say that any one of them is a determinant of delinquency is spurious." (p. 691.)\*\*\*

The need to underline the importance of configurations as compared with discrete variables is brought home by the frequency with which it is reported that a statistically significant difference exists, without reference to its magnitude in comparison with other significant variables, and by the readiness to grasp at any statistically significant difference as characterizing a whole group, without regard to the number or nature of variables that showed no significant differences.

Much has been written concerning what a statistically significant difference does and does not mean, and no effort will be made here to recapitulate the familiar and often forgotten points. A refreshing statement about the real-life significance of statistical significance is the first chapter in David Bakan's On Method.+

The need for context and perspective includes a need to recognize that studies of young children, made at a single point in time, must be related to long-term probabilities, drawn from relevant longitudinal research; and that replication is necessary before the results of small intensive studies can safely be generalized. There are indications also that cause and effect are not always easily distinguishable and that some factors can operate both as cause and as effect.

Neglected interactions and processes.--To achieve context and perspective means to broaden and deepen knowledge about individual roles and interactions and family processes, taking account of strengths as well as weaknesses and of shared characteristics as well as differences.

Several sets of interrelated subjects would repay more attention than they have had. One already mentioned is study of the fatherless American family as a form in itself, rather than as a mutilated version

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\* Allen.

\*\* Archibald et al.

\*\*\*Barker.

+ Bakan.

of some other form--not a preferred form, but, nevertheless, one which exists and functions and represents something other than mere absence of true familiness. (Herein lies one excuse for quibbling about the term "matriarchy.")

Another set of questions concerns the role models that actually influence children in both one-parent and two-parent homes. On the one hand, there have been suggestions that many father-absent boys are not as totally lacking in resident male models as is often assumed--especially boys in very low-income families. On the other hand, there are questions about how indispensable a resident male model is. It is often pointed out that children learn about life and people and maleness and femaleness from many sources, including resident adults--male and female, their peer groups, TV, movies, other mass media, and heroes or mentors outside the home.

What one hears less about, somehow, is the influence of siblings who are conspicuous by their absence from many--though by no means all--of the studies reviewed. When they are included, they are usually reported to mediate the impact of father absence in perceptible ways.\* And in theories of child development as well as in the life history of most people who have had siblings, their importance is impressive.\*\*

Granting that an adequate affectionate resident father is desired for and by most boys and most girls, much more needs to be learned about the extent to which models who are not fathers and who may not be resident do or could help fill the model-gap. This would include study of male models other than the father in the lives of children who grow up in two-parent homes--homes with fathers adequate and inadequate, ever present, or intermittently present.

A number of questions about fatherless homes center on the present mother. How does she cope with her dual role as sole family head? How does she cope with her children? What picture of the absent father does she project to them? What kind of supervision and discipline is she able to exercise? What expectations does she impart to them about life and about people? What supports does she have from family, friends, or community? Assuming that the impact on children of the mother's behavior and attitudes is profound in any family, it is beyond question that, in the absence of a father, her role is extremely difficult and the demands on her are extreme.

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\* e.g., D'Andrade and Whiting; Sutton-Smith et al.

\*\*Brim; H. L. Koch, 1954, 1955, 1956(A), 1956(B), 1960.

## Misleading research models

A number of ways have been mentioned in which unrealistic models can distort perception of reality. An oversimplified model of the family has been discussed at some length, with emphasis on the distortion produced by assuming as the critical variable one among many interacting factors in a complex field of forces. Other examples involve imputed unity, imputed dichotomy, imputed stability, and imputed symmetry.

Imputed unity is involved in conceiving as a single continuum characteristics more accurately conceived as dual continua. Masculinity and femininity have been discussed in this connection, with passing reference to dependence-independence and happiness-unhappiness.

Another form of imputed unity was noted in connection with mother-dominance and father-dominance, which may exist simultaneously in different areas of behavior. Similarly, it is likely that both the maternal and the paternal roles are segmented with regard to expressive and instrumental functions. During the early years of childhood, the mother's role is strongly instrumental and the father's is largely expressive. To conceive of either one as typically expressive or instrumental is too far from reality to be acceptable even as a schematization.

Imputed dichotomy. Closely related to but not identical with imputed unity is the forced dichotomy, illustrated by classifying all homes as broken or intact, although each has important variations--including the stepfather category, which is sometimes classified as "broken" and sometimes as "intact."

Imputed stability. The snapshot study of children at a given point in time is a dubious predictor of their long-term development. Longitudinal studies of children in two-parent homes have cited as reminders that effects noted may represent developmental lag or may not be precursors of the problems predicted on the basis of one-time studies in early childhood.

Imputed symmetry. The possibility of one-legged as well as two-legged dimensions has also been noted. All variables do not necessarily have symmetrical plus-and-minus valences. This fact of research life is embedded in an old Yiddish proverb: Money is not so good as lack of money is bad. Kadushin has applied this asymmetry in reverse to father absence: "Lack of a father is not as bad as having a father is good." (p. 31.)\* It has also been

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\*Kadushin, 1969.

applied to the view of marriage that prevails among many very poor people: Lack of marriage is not so bad as a happy marriage is good.\*

Neatness vs. accuracy.--In each of the imputations noted, a convenient and neat oversimplification can function as the enemy of accurate perception. Such examples serve as a reminder of the need to guard against premature or inflexible structuring which can exercise what Sapir called "a peculiar quality of self-determination."\*\* Related to premature structure is reliance by some investigators on instruments which are challenged by other investigators. This is a subject on which researchers display low reliability. Those who doubt the validity of some instruments in common use do not employ them. Those who employ them or rely on their results do not raise questions about their validity. Like Disraeli's "two nations," these two schools of thought appear to read a different literature, to be governed by different laws of evidence, and to apply different criteria of credibility.

One kind of safeguard against premature or over-rigid structuring is provided by continuing descriptive studies in depth. Theory as well as applied research might profit by a good deal more preliminary observation and description. This, after all, was the basis of Piaget's theories which have contributed substantially both to theoretical psychology and to its practical applications.\*\*\* Our most telling information about very low-income families, fatherless or fathered, has not come from ingeniously prestructured studies. It has come rather from detailed accounts based on intimate, prolonged, repeated observations and free interviewing, such as those of Hylan Lewis, Walter Miller, S. M. Miller, and Robert Coles, to name a few.

Continuing study in depth of families as they function within their real life setting would provide continuing checks of the theories on which research instruments and studies are based, and a continuing source of fresh clues to elements and processes not yet perceived or inaccurately perceived.

Question formulation.--The preceding remarks concerning context and perspective point to a need for reformulating research questions about father absence. The studies reviewed have been asking, in effect: How, and how much, are children harmed by growing up in fatherless homes? The history of research about working mothers provides a useful parallel with regard to question formulation. Until rather recently, research projects and professional conferences were discussing the adverse effects

\* Herzog, 1962.

\*\* Sapir.

\*\*\*Hunt.

on children of having a mother work outside the home. Distressed mothers, alarmed at the publicizing of an inadequately controlled research study, were writing to the Children's Bureau to ask, "Am I making my child into a juvenile delinquent because I have to work?"

Today, there is remarkable consensus among research investigators that mother's outside employment is not, in itself, the crucial variable. Rather, the impact on a child of her employment depends on a number of other variables, such as her physical and psychological makeup, her attitudes toward working and toward homemaking, the attitudes of other family members, the marital relationship (if any), the age, sex, and special needs of the child.

The parallel lies in the shift of focus from a single variable, assumed to be the determining factor, to a cluster of interacting factors that, on the one hand, mediate its effects and, on the other hand, provide clues to methods of diminishing identified adverse elements in its effects. The question has become: Under what circumstances and in what ways does a mother's outside employment combine with other factors to produce identifiable effects relevant to a child's development?

In line with this model, more rewarding questions concerning father absence would explore both negative and positive elements. They would try to discover what elements interact to produce what effects in father-absent or father-present homes, not assuming that father absence or presence is the crucial determining element. For purposes of applied research, a next step would be to identify positive elements that could be strengthened by some form of intervention or assistance.

There seems to be a natural history of research on a given topic or in a given area. It starts out global and categorical: Does social casework help? Is group care bad for children under 3?

Gradually, the large, smooth, unbroken surface of the question is perceived as a fabric made up of many interwoven strands. On inspection, each strand is seen to be made up of many fibers. And from a broader perspective, the fabric itself is perceived as part of a larger pattern. Such a sequence has occurred in other areas and it seems likely to happen in this one.

### The Type III error

Reading that covers a wide range of subjects often yields impressions that are not supported by systematic, sharply focused review. Accordingly, intensive review of research within a given subject area is likely to hold surprises. Two outstanding surprises in this review were

the number of studies challenging the "classic" view of father absence and the fact that some studies, often cited as demonstrating its adverse effects, involved temporary absence and offered conclusions far less sweeping than the generalizations attributed to them. Both surprises point to the dangers of premature and insufficiently based generalizations.

The Type III error has been defined as the erroneous belief that available evidence is adequate to support a firm and generalizable conclusion. (See p. 6) A corollary of and contributor to the Type III error is the habit of generalizing limited, qualified, or shakily based research findings in unqualified terms to a population for which these findings are not clearly applicable or are clearly inapplicable.

A frequently cited review of the literature, for example, in one paragraph refers to five studies as showing that father-deprived boys are more immature, submissive, dependent, and effeminate than father-present boys. These studies concern middle- or upper-middle-class white children ages 3 to 9, whose fathers were temporarily, and in one study repeatedly, absent. In the same paragraph, a study of teenage, low SES, white and Negro gang members, not controlled for father absence, is cited as evidence of the characteristics these children are likely to develop. No mention is made of differences in the samples or of qualifications emphasized by the investigators.

This is but one of many examples in which different kinds of father absence are lumped together and the findings stretched to apply to boys of different ages, different family status, and different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The particular publication cited is immaterial, for the important point is the frequency of this kind of generalization and the value of guarding against it--a value illustrated by reviews that do so.\*

The Type III error poses a serious dilemma for research investigators and for those who try to utilize their findings. It is not feasible to analyze critically the methods and detailed figures of every study cited. Yet it is not safe to depend solely on summaries and abstracts that report findings uncritically and without the qualifications stated by the investigators or dictated by the nature and quality of the measures and procedures employed.

Perhaps some social or intellectual invention is required to resolve the dilemma. But pending such invention, it is feasible to recognize that a dilemma exists, struggle against it, and take it into account in formulating generalizations, conclusions, and recommendations.

\*e.g., Kadushin, 1969; St. John.

## SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The studies reviewed support or suggest a number of practical implications, some general and some specific. Several of these constitute reinforcement of current programs rather than suggestions for change; others point to new or modified directions.

### Programs for all boys

In general, fatherless boys are likely to benefit more by programs designed for all boys, or all children, than by programs designed exclusively for the fatherless. The studies reviewed reveal more similarities than differences between boys in father-present and father-absent homes. They also suggest that a major disadvantage for children in fatherless homes is the sense of being different. It would follow that programs which include fatherless boys along with the others are likely to be more acceptable and also more helpful than programs that set them further apart. Deliberate efforts would be desirable to make sure that fatherless boys are included, without singling them out as special targets for help. Since boys in two-parent homes are likely to have similar needs,\* such a principle would have no taint of window dressing or beneficent fraud.

### Supports for the one-parent mother

Fatherless boys are likely to benefit from programs designed to facilitate the role of the one-parent mother at least as much as by programs designed for the boys themselves. This follows from the importance of the present parent in the life of a child, the repercussions on the mother of the father's absence, and the impact on the child of the mother's reactions to the difficulty of her role.

Consideration of ways to help the one-parent mother immediately raises the question of what can and cannot be accomplished by services and programs. It is difficult to counteract hurt, rejection, loneliness, and anger at a defecting spouse, although counseling services and opportunities for social life might help in handling such feelings and in supplying activities that leave less solitude for brooding. Counseling might help also by moderating the impact on the child of the mother's psychological difficulties. Some find assistance through such an organization as Parents Without Partners, and a very different group seek self-help through the AFDC League. However, it is unlikely that all one-parent

\*Moles.

mothers would seek counseling or group participation, or that they could be accommodated if they did. Moreover, the effectiveness of various kinds of counseling still needs to be documented.

Another kind of difficulty is more amenable to intervention--namely, the physical homemaking problems of one-parent mothers, especially those who work outside the home. The proportion of working mothers is much higher in one-parent than in two-parent homes.\* And, as has been noted, the difficulties of combining homemaking with outside employment are multiplied for one-parent mothers. Some European countries have been more energetic than this one in devising ways to support the homemaking activities of mothers, and we could benefit by more study of their programs.

Housekeeping helps are remarkably underdeveloped in this country, considering the large and growing numbers of employed mothers. By housekeeping helps is meant help with the mechanics of homemaking: cleaning, laundry work, cooking. Occasional efforts have been made to organize community services staffed by part-time workers who are not in a position to accept full-time employment--including somewhat older women. Community kitchens to supply "meals on wheels" have also been attempted on occasion, but seem not to have prospered. Commercial convenience foods have become common, but their cost makes them less available for many families and their nutritional balance makes them questionable substitutes for home cooked meals.

Perhaps the kinds of housekeeping services suggested are not profitable at prices working mothers could afford. In that case, some thought might be given to government initiative and support, or partial support. One-parent motherhood, in addition to strictly psychological problems, is likely to involve physical strain and fatigue, and a sense of being overwhelmed by too many things to do, which, in turn, invite depression and apathy. Substantial housekeeping help to the one-parent mother in her dual role would free energy that might then be applied to supervision of children and to more effective mothering. Help with care of children in the home would also free her for some degree of outside activity and recreation, which again might contribute to the spirit and effectiveness of her mothering activities.

The vocation of homemaker has had a good deal of development and much could be learned from the homemakers now in practice. But these homemakers are organized for emergency service. What is needed is a much broader kind of continuing service. Perhaps no other program could contribute more to improving the prospects of fatherless children. And probably no other kind of service would be as sure-fire in its effectiveness.

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\*Waldman.

Although the singling out of fatherless children for services appears more harmful than helpful, it seems less likely that the singling out of one-parent mothers would necessarily have negative effects. For one thing, it would highlight the mother's problems and, to that extent, relieve the "broken home" focus on children. Homemaking services might well be extended to mothers in two-parent homes, many of whom are employed and have great need for them. But to give explicit priority to one-parent mothers would not, in itself, be harmful.

A certain amount of babysitting might be included in homemaker services, to free the mother for occasional outside activity and recreation. However, the need for better and more extensive day care of small children far exceeds what should be expected of the kind of homemakers discussed here.

That day care for children is urgently needed on a large scale is generally agreed and relates to the children's well-being and development aside from the mother's problems. So many programs are now under way to develop the quality and quantity of day care services required that discussion here is unnecessary.\* On the other hand, the relation of adequate day care facilities to the mother's performance as a parent merits more emphasis than it has had. The director of a model day care facility for very small children remarked recently that she feels "her" mothers are able to be better mothers because they have been freed from worry about their children while they work; they have more energy to respond to the children when they are together. "When I see the love growing in their eyes as they look at their children," she said, "then I know that--aside from whatever we can give to the children here--we are helping those children to have better mothers."

Although these comments have emphasized the one-parent mother who is employed outside the home, the mother who does not have outside employment often needs similar supports. With regard to the recreation available to a one-parent mother, little has been developed that would meet the varied needs in different socioeconomic levels. That the need exists is clear, but how to meet it remains a question.

Among the "reality needs" of one-parent mothers is income. Even if far more community supports become available, the mothering capacities of the one-parent mother (and of many two-parent mothers) are likely to suffer from the worries, deprivations, exhaustion and despair often associated with lack of money. Shlakman cites Schorr's "imaginative suggestion that we devise a way of protecting children against the risk of family breakdown, that the status of social orphanhood be recognized as

\*Dittmann; Federal Panel on Early Childhood; Low and Spindler; Ruderman; Children's Bureau, 1966(B); Women's Bureau.

a compensable risk, as is actual orphanhood through survivors insurance."\* At a time when varied forms of income maintenance are being discussed, this may be one that deserves consideration.

### More men in their lives

The lives of children in both two-parent and one-parent families are strongly pervaded by women. Regardless of what research has shown or failed to show about the harm done by lack of a resident father, observation and experience suggest that both boys and girls can benefit by contact with adult members of both sexes whom they can respect and like. Both boys and girls would profit especially by the presence of men or "big boys" in elementary school classrooms, in kindergarten, and in nursery school. Some projects employing high school dropouts as nursery school aides return glowing reports of gains and satisfactions both for the nursery school children and for the aides.

The need for men in the classroom goes beyond the functions that can be served by teenagers. Kagan suggests that one reason boys do less well than girls in elementary school is that the feminine environment seems "silly" to them. When they move into higher grades, he points out, boys begin to excel over the girls, presumably because their motivation and interest increase as they see the relevance of classroom activities to their own lives. "...the introduction of men into the primary grades, and an appreciation of the importance of creating a more masculine atmosphere in the primary grades, may reduce the frequency of reading problems in young boys. A significant education experiment on this issue would involve a comparison of reading progress in Grades 1 and 2 between children taught by male versus female teachers." Such a program, he adds, is now under way.\*\*

A considerable number of tutoring projects are in operation, using the abilities of boys and men to help students "catch up" with school work at all levels, and drawing from different socioeconomic groups. These seem to be useful and rewarding, and could well be increased and institutionalized. The needs exist for father-present as well as for father-absent boys. However, for the latter, the advantages of male teachers might be even greater than for those with a father in the home.

Outside of the schoolroom or tutoring center, more men in the lives of fatherless boys could contribute to the learning of skills and the development of socially constructive values and habits, as well as cutting into the need for "killing time" in ways that can become socially

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\* Shlakman.

\*\*Kagan, 1964.

and individually destructive. A number of youth interest groups provide opportunity to pursue and develop various kinds of activities under the guidance and supervision of men: recreation, vocational development, civic service. The Boy Scouts, the 4-H Clubs, the YMCA represent different aspects of activity for boys. However, participation in some volunteer organizations is difficult for fatherless boys. One stumbling block is that voluntary organizations often depend on the mothers to help organize and carry out activities and may not be eager to enroll a child whose mother works--and maternal employment is much more frequent in one-parent than in two-parent families. There are also problems connected with the participation of fathers.

Organizations that draw on children from middle-income families could ease life for both mother and sons in one-parent families by systematically encouraging fatherless boys to participate, and by working out arrangements for them in events that feature parent participation. Present fathers could give transportation and a paternal presence to father-absent children as well as their own. Or substitute fathers could be inducted to "sponsor" the activities of father-absent boys.

In low-income neighborhoods, where parent involvement is often difficult to achieve, father substitutes might be employed as staff members--with benefit both to the men and the boys. The Big Brothers claim some success in the role of father substitutes, and a number of demonstration projects have reported varying degrees of success. If the function of supervision, guidance, and simple masculine contact could be combined with activities that would be meaningful and socially constructive--such as a domestic variant of the Peace Corps--it might be more feasible to secure the participation of both men and boys. In some neighborhoods, "Detached Workers" have been effective, not as father substitutes but rather as male companions and, in a sense, models.\*

It should be repeated that such programs are likely to be more effective if they include boys from both two-parent and one-parent homes, but should exert special efforts to secure the participation of fatherless boys. The participation of men would, on the one hand, increase the readiness of boys to be involved and, on the other hand, would present boys with "value models" that might serve as an antidote to adverse neighborhood influences and to some youthful stereotypes about adults, including the notion that some prevailing middle-class values are for women only.

Camp is another opportunity for boys to mingle with men.\*\* Again, it would be useful if special efforts were made to include boys from fatherless homes.

\* Bernstein.

\*\*Richards.

## Public attitudes and information

A limited number of research studies offer evidence in support of testimony furnished by biography, literature, and observation that fatherless children suffer a "minority status" by virtue of being fatherless, and suffer further disadvantage and detachment as a result of unfavorable stereotypes. Since research evidence generally fails to support these stereotypes, it would be useful if deliberate efforts could be made to counteract those that are both adverse and inaccurate.

Since both the numbers and the proportions of children with divorced parents have increased, and are likely to do so in the near future, it is possible that some of the hurt suffered through general public attitudes will diminish naturally. Concerted efforts to include children of fatherless homes along with father-present children in activities and programs may help somewhat in that direction.

### "Prevention"

It would probably be undesirable as well as impossible to restore all absent fathers to the homes they have left. To judge by the research evidence, it would also be undesirable to prevent all family breakdown. Since the evidence indicates that discord and conflict in the home can be more detrimental than father absence, one is forced to prefer a "good" one-parent home for a child. Marital counseling may help to preserve harmony and two parents within a home but, in some instances, divorce may be the more constructive solution for all concerned.

On the other hand, if family discord and eventual breakdown result from environmental conditions that are subject to control, then it should be possible to reduce the number of broken homes with advantage to the children. Divorce, separation, and desertion increase as one descends the socioeconomic scale. This is true both for whites and for nonwhites. Moreover, the kinds of marital problems brought to social agencies differ as one descends the socioeconomic scale.\*

That family breakdown is produced by inadequate income, inadequate skills, and job insecurity is by now a generally accepted proposition, as is the fact that such breakdown is more frequent among Negroes than among whites as a result of the greater social and economic disadvantages suffered by Negroes.\*\* It seems clear that family breakdown among the poor is unlikely to be reduced until and unless job security, job satisfaction, job opportunities, and income stability for men are increased.

\* Beck and Roberts.

\*\*Broderick; Herzog, 1967; Lefcowitz; Lipset; Orshansky and Karter.





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