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**OUTCOMES OF RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE YOUTH WHO GROW UP
IN BIOLOGICAL FATHER-ABSENT HOMES**

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Thesis Summary

There is limited research on how biological father absence impacts the outcomes of children and youth from racially and ethnically diverse groups in the U.S. Some research with racially and ethnically diverse samples, mostly young children, suggest that the relationship between a biological father and a child can be a union that has the potential to positively contribute to a child's growth and development. The purpose of this study was to conduct a systematic review to examine the state of the empirical literature on the outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse youth who are living in the U.S. and who are between the ages of 14 and 25 years of age associated to growing up in biological father-absent homes. A systematic search of peer-reviewed journal articles published in English was conducted using an electronic search. The rigorous search identified 9 studies that addressed outcomes of growing up in a biological father-absent homes and racial and ethnic differences in youth meeting eligibility requirements. The search yielded few studies, indicating a need to conduct future research in this area. The studies primarily addressed differences among Black and Latino youth. Latino and Black youth are particularly impacted by biological father absence. Biological father absence has a negative influence on the outcomes of youth, including early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy, homelessness, healthcare uninsuredness, political nonparticipation, externalizing and internalizing behaviors, and to a lesser extent poor health and educational well-being. Although, limited analyses by race and ethnicity did not allow for us to determine the extent of the influence on racially and ethnically diverse youth. As part of appraising and synthesizing the evidence, recommendations for research, practice, and policy are presented.

Keywords: fathers, single families, youth, race and ethnicity, negative consequences

Author Biographical Summary

Joshua Jeremiah Parker is in the process of obtaining his master's degree in Social Work with a concentration in families. He has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Counseling from the University of Toledo (2013), located in Ohio. He has also obtained two Associates Degrees in Applied Science from the Community College of the Air Force in Bioenvironmental Engineering Technology and Fire Science.

OUTCOMES OF RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE YOUTH WHO GROW UP IN
BIOLOGICAL FATHER-ABSENT HOMES

Dedication

This thesis project is dedicated to my mother, Tamaron Wilson, who has always been there supporting me during my academic journey and throughout life. She is a strong woman that has endured many obstacles but has always continued to work hard and ensure that I had the opportunity to succeed. She has been my inspiration to complete my master's degree.

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Outcomes of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Youth Who Grow Up in Biological Father-Absent Homes: A Systematic Review

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

There is limited research on how biological father absence impacts the outcomes of children and youth from racially and ethnically diverse groups in the U.S. Some research with racially and ethnically diverse samples, mostly young children, suggest that the relationship between a biological father and a child can be a union that has the potential to positively contribute to a child's growth and development (London Bocknek et al., 2014). Despite these findings, many children in the United States (U.S.) grow up in single-parent households with an absent biological father, especially children from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Black and Latino families are amongst the groups with some of the highest single-mother household rates in the U.S. In 2019, about 3.29 million Latino families and 4.15 million Black families with a single mother were living in the U.S. (Statista Research Department, 2020). The majority of single parent homes in the U.S. are led by women. According to the Population Reference Bureau, the composition of children in single-parent families by race and ethnicity in the U.S. includes African American (64%), American Indian (52%), Hispanic or Latino (42%), Two or more races (40%), Non-Hispanic White (25%) and Asian and Pacific Islander (15%) (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020). The consequences of father absence are various. Children from fatherless homes are more likely to be poor, become involved in drug and alcohol abuse, drop out of school, and suffer from health and emotional problems. Boys are more likely to

become involved in crime, and girls are more likely to become pregnant as teens (DeBell, 2008, McLanahan et al., 2013, Lang & Zagorsky, 2001; Smith Hendricks et al., 2005). Thus, it is critical to understand how the absence of a biological father impacts the outcomes of youth, as youth are more likely to engage in risky and deviant behaviors than adults (Balocchi et al., 2013), and youth from racially and ethnically diverse families are more likely to experience social and economic disadvantages (Chen et al., 2020), which in turn may heighten youths' negative outcomes.

Justification and Significance

Youthhood is a unique period in a person's life marked by important physical and psychological changes and an increased vulnerability to behavioral and emotional problems (Costello et al., 2011). Family can play a critical role in helping youth manage these challenges (Dworkin & Serido, 2017). Unfortunately, racially, and ethnically diverse families supporting role may be compromised, as many of these families experience unique stressors due to social, economic and health disparities (APA, 2017). For example, in the U.S. 39% of African American children and adolescents are living in poverty, which is more than double the 14% poverty rate for non-Latino, White, and Asian children and adolescents (Kids Count Data Center, 2014); African American and Latino children and adolescents are more likely to attend high-poverty schools than Asian American and White children and adolescents (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007); and racially and ethnically diverse children and adolescents often suffer from poor mental health outcomes due to multiple factors including inaccessibility of high quality mental health care services and discrimination (Alegría et al., 2011). These and other unique stressors impact family structures in the U.S. Racially and ethnically diverse youth living

in the U.S. disproportionately experience higher rates of biological father absence compared to White youth.

The high number of racially and ethnically diverse groups living in biological absent father homes has been a public policy debate and concern for several decades. The U.S. government has established at the federal, state, and local levels various policies and initiatives to promote responsible fatherhood and father engagement (Tollestrup, 2018). Over the years, public funds have been allocated for fatherhood programs through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Child Support Enforcement funds, Social Services Block Grant funds, and the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grants. Most fatherhood programs include media campaigns that highlight the importance of emotional, physical, psychological, and financial connections to fathers to their children. They also include elements such as parenting education, responsible decision making, mediation services for both parents, skills development for conflict resolution, coping with stress and problem solving, information on the child support enforcement program, and job-training opportunities (Tollestrup, 2018).

This issue of absent fatherhood matters for several different reasons. First, some research suggests that children who are raised in biological father absent homes can be four times more likely to be at risk of poverty, seven times more likely to become pregnant as a teen, twice as likely to drop out of school, and more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, commit crime, have behavioral problems, and face abuse and neglect (U.S. Census, 2021). Second, research has also identified that “children who experience the physical or psychological absence of the father can suffer from paternal deprivation, a psychological reaction to loss of the father”, (Dick, 2011, p. 109) and it is possible for this sense of loss to be carried on into adulthood and influence interpersonal relationships. Finally, much of the research conducted on father involvement is

limited in comparison to research on maternal involvement. According to Cano (2018), much research on how parental inputs affect child development focuses on maternal time, and it remains empirically unclear how paternal involvement in the child's upbringing influences child and youth outcomes. In addition, most research has focused on the childhood development period, and there is less research on how father absence impacts the outcomes of youth.

Given the potential negative consequences youth may face as consequence of growing up without the presence of a biological father and considering the stressors that families from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds experience and which may impact family structure, more research is needed to understand how father absence impacts racially and ethnically diverse youth outcomes.

Although the focus of this study is on exploring how father absence may impact the outcomes of racially and ethnically diverse youth, it is important to emphasize that fatherhood, like motherhood is a social construction linked to the construction of gender roles in cultural and historical contexts. This makes it impossible to argue that a biological father or mother is *essential* in a person's life, much less that a male father and female mother are *essential* figures. The paternal role and the maternal role can be embodied in other people who can contribute positively to the development of a person. However, research has demonstrated that good fathering or positive father involvement could be one of many factors that would contribute to positive child outcomes (Pleck et al., 2004).

Background

Youth Development and Parent-Child Relationships

The term youth is used to classify a group of individuals based upon their age. This term may be defined differently within separate areas of the world. However, in the U.S., youth are characterized as those persons under 25 years of age. Youthhood is usually categorized in three stages: Early adolescence (14 years of age and under), middle adolescence (15-17), and late adolescence and early adulthood (18-24) (Youthpolicy.org, 2014), 2013). Adolescence and young adulthood are crucial developmental periods characterized by dramatic physical, emotional, and intellectual changes, as well as changes in social roles, relationships, and expectations (Allen & Waterman, 2019). Adolescents and to a lesser extent young adults tend to engage in a variety of risky behaviors, such as reckless driving, substance use, and unprotected sexual activity, resulting in significant increases in morbidity and mortality rates in an otherwise healthy developmental period (Qu et al., 2015). Thus, it is imperative to identify protective factors that can prevent adolescents and young adults' engagement in these risk-taking behaviors.

The parent-child relationship, when positive, is an important protective factor for youth's psychological well-being and reduced risk-taking (Qu et al., 2015; Yoder et al., 2016). Until recently, father's parenting has received limited attention in research compared with mother's parenting (Barber et al., 2005; Flouri et al., 2008). Studies have found that fathers interact with children in an important way, often fostering exploration, autonomy, and independence in their lives. When a father is absent, these traits may not develop as quickly or at all (Markowitz & Ryan, 2016; Wineburgh, 2000). Unfortunately, most of the research on fathers has focused

primarily on younger children during early and middle childhood, to a lesser extent during adolescence, and with a few exceptions during young adulthood (Horowitz et al., 2008).

Biological Father Absence

While many children in Western societies grow up in a nuclear family with a primary caregiver mother and a secondary caregiver father, this family form is not a cultural universal (Abraham & Feldman, 2018; Osinga et al., 2021). There are variant family forms across cultural communities around the globe. The presence and involvement of fathers are also influenced by social and cultural norms and there is wide variability within and between societies (Osinga et al., 2021). Still, historically, fathers are viewed as providers, protectors of their families, role model for their children, and contributors to their development and wellbeing (Lopez & Corona, 2012; Makofane, 2015). Fathers are visualized by children as someone who will love, protect, and care for their needs. In the U.S. many children grow up in single-parent families. It is estimated that almost a quarter of children under the age of 18 live with one parent and no other adult (23%), more than three times the share of children around the world who do so (7%) (Kramer, 2019). More specifically, according to the U.S. Census, 24 million children (33%) live without a biological father in the home (Fathers.com, n.d.). The role of a father in a family should also be understood in terms of involvement, as fathers who are present may not necessarily be involved in the care of a child (Harris, 2002). Thus, these fathers while physically and economically present, may be emotionally absent from their child's life.

Father absence is a loose term that has not been well defined by the literature. The term encompasses a variety of circumstances, including,

Having a father who is non-existent in one's life, lost through death, divorce or family discord, absent through work commitments, absent from the family residence due to

incarceration or institutionalization, or physically present yet absent due to disinterest or neglect. (East et al., 2006, p. 285).

Furthermore, it is unclear what form of contact between a father and a child determines the presence or absence of a father (i.e., non-existent, weekly, monthly, etc.) (DeBell, 2007).

Boothroyd (2007, p. 1) described the term as a “child who has lived for part or all their childhood in a house without a biological father”. However, the definition does not explain what ‘lived for part’ entails. Lack of clarity in the conceptualization of this term threatens the adequate interpretation of research findings, as well as the implications in the outcomes of child and youth development. Research has shown that outcomes experienced by persons who grow up without a father vary according to the reasons why that father is not present in that person’s life (East et al., 2006). In this study, we will employ the definition used by East and colleagues (2006), in which father absence is defined a situation “where a father, is not resident in the family home because of parental turmoil, parental relationship instability or breakdown of the parental relationship” (p. 285).

Father Absence in Ethnically and Racially Diverse Youth

In comparison to White children, Black and Latino children are more likely to grow up without a biological father. Recent estimates suggest that 57.6% of Black children and 31.2% of Latino children live without a biological father, in comparison to 20.7% of White children (Fathers.org, n.d.). In regard to Asian American children, evidence has shown that they are more likely to live with two married parents in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups (U.S. Census, 2021). Literature on fatherless children and youth is emerging (East et al., 2006; García et al., 2015; Martínez, 2020). However, there is a lack of research on ethnically and racially diverse fatherless children and youth. Research has shown important race and ethnic differences

in family patterns (Hofferth, 2003; Ellerbe et al., 2018). Studies examining variation in father presence and involvement by race and ethnicity have found that nonresident minority fathers pay less child support, visit less, and are less engaged with their children than nonresident White fathers (Cabrera et al., 2008). Fathering patterns vary by race and ethnicity for several reasons, including economic circumstances, neighborhood environments, and cultural factors (Hofferth, 2003).

Youth from racially and ethnically diverse groups face unique personal, interpersonal, and contextual challenges in the U.S. (i.e., acculturation, unemployment, poverty, racial/ethnic discrimination, exposure to adverse life events). As biological father absence may be explained by the confluence of these challenges, and as it impacts children's and youth's development outcomes, it is important to further study how biological fatherlessness manifests in racially and ethnically diverse groups in the U.S.

Reasons for Biological Father Absence in Racially and Ethnically Diverse Youth

The reasons for biological father absence among racially and ethnically diverse children are diverse. Factors contributing to father absence include economic factors, cultural factors, gender ideology, imprisonment, and intergenerational transmission of trauma (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004; Martinez, 2020; Gramlich, 2019). Below, the most salient factors will be discussed.

Economic Factors

Employment and economic stability have been identified as key predictors of father involvement, because 'breadwinning' remains an important aspect of the father role (Ellerbe et al., 2018) across diverse racial and ethnic groups. In 2019, the share of Black people in poverty was 1.8 times greater than their share among the general population. Black people represented

13.2% of the total population in the U.S., but 23.8% of the poverty population. Similarly, the share of Hispanic/Latino people in poverty was 1.5 times more than their share in the general population. They comprised 18.7% of the total population, but 28.1% of the population in poverty. In contrast, non-Hispanic/Latino White and Asian people were under-represented in the poverty population (Creamer, 2020). Hispanic/Latino people are also disproportionately impacted by unemployment in comparison to White and Asian people (Brown & Dehry, 2020). The lower socioeconomic status of minority groups reduces the ‘opportunity cost’ of nonmarital childbearing (Willis 1999), contributing to its higher prevalence, and among unmarried parents, Whites tend to be socioeconomically slightly better off (Hummer and Hamilton 2010).

Cultural Factors

Father’s relationships with their child can vary based on cultural group attitudes, values, and social mores. Different cultural groups will have distinct perceptions of the role of fathers within the family. Thus, these varied perceptions will influence parenting behavior (Cruz et al., 2011; Martinez, 2020; Marsiglio et al., 2000). While the media may portray fathers from diverse racial and ethnic groups as uncaring and irresponsible, research shows that fathers from these groups may be as involved or more involved in many aspects of childcare than White fathers (Cruz et al., 2011; Lu et al., 2010).

For example, studies with Black families, have demonstrated that unmarried Black fathers are more likely to visit and to participate in child-related decision making and marginally more likely to provide financial support than their White counterparts. Among Black families, maternal grandmothers have also been found to play a “gatekeeping” role in father involvement. Studies have found that fathers are more involved in households in which maternal grandmothers had higher levels of education and reported a positive relationship with the baby’s father

(Burton, 1990; Krishnakumar & Black, 2003; Gavin et al., 2002). Similarly, Latino families value strong familial ties and intense relationships, and fathers are expected to provide financially for the family, to protect, be hardworking, and courageous (La Hoz, 2012).

Acculturation has also impacted Latino father's involvement in their child's lives. Studies have found that more acculturated fathers demonstrate greater involvement (such as preparing meals, changing diapers, telling stories) with their infants than less acculturated fathers (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012).

Changes in Asian fatherhood and fathering have received less attention than other family changes. However, research related to fathers in East Asia has increased dramatically over the past decade (Shwalb et al., 2010). Asian American fathers, similar to Latino fathers, are expected to be providers. In contrast with Black and Latino fathers, they are expected to be emotionally distant from children (Seward & Rush, 2015). In Asian American men, acculturation also has a significant relationship with father involvement, indicating that higher levels of acculturation are associated with higher levels of father involvement (Molenda-Kostanski, 2016).

Gender Ideology

Gender role attitudes and beliefs also impact fatherhood behavior. These attitudes and beliefs are also influenced by culture. Traditional gender-role theory argues that mothers' and father's attitudes and beliefs will determine the level and type of involvement with their children. Traditional fathers provide instrumental support, including financial support and discipline, but less emotional support. Thus, they are likely to exhibit less warmth with children than nontraditional fathers. From a role perspective, fathers who hold traditional values with regards to marriage and parenthood are likely to be less involved, whereas fathers who endorse gender equity are likely to be more involved with their children. To the extent that fathers endorse the

importance of fathers in children's lives, they should be warmer in relationships with their children and take more responsibility for them (Hofferth, 2003).

Based on the strong financial role of the Black mother, Black children's fathers are likely to have less traditional attitudes toward marriage and motherhood than do White children's fathers. Black fathers may espouse more gender equitable and more individualistic attitudes than White fathers as well. Latino children's fathers are likely to have more traditional attitudes toward marriage and mothering (Cauce & Domenech Rodriguez, 2002). Research has found that values such as Machismo and Marianismo impact paternal involvement, including engagement, accessibility, and responsibility (Glass & Owen, 2010). Less traditional attitudes may be associated with more warmth and responsibility for children. Asian American fathers also hold traditional gender attitudes and beliefs, whereby men are expected to economically provide for their children and families and be more authoritarian (Hulei et al., 2006). Fathers are also expected to be less emotionally involved than mothers in their child's lives (Hulei et al., 2006). More recent studies with Asian fathers have found that fathers who experience less gender role conflict show higher levels of involvement (Molenda-Kostanski, 2016). Different beliefs about the appropriate roles of men and women may also alter the parenting of various groups, but again, little is known about gender-role attitudes of minority fathers (Hofferth, 2003).

Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement System

The overwhelming majority of individuals in prisons/jails are people of color and men. Ethnically and racially diverse groups are overrepresented within the criminal justice system. According to Gramlich (2019), in federal and state prisons Black inmates are the majority. Black inmates make up approximately 475, 900 of those held in jails/prisons, 436, 500 are White inmates and 336, 500 are Latino inmates. The National Fatherhood Initiative (2014) found that

(92%) of parents in prison are fathers. The panorama of these fathers upon release is also harsh, as many offenders upon release have a very difficult time acquiring basic resources such as, housing and employment. In the U.S., when a person is labeled a felon, it can almost be a form of legal discrimination. Many offenders that have a criminal record often are denied employment due to their criminal status. As a result, these offenders are unable to provide for their children or themselves (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2014). These circumstances may lead fathers, which have already been absent in a youth's life, to continue being absent or less engaged and involved.

Consequences

The empirical literature has shown mixed results regarding the pernicious effects of growing up without a biological father. While some studies claim that the negative effects of growing up without a biological father have been overexaggerated (DeBell, 2008; Lang Zargosky, 2001), numerous research studies suggest a link between a biological father's absence and negative social, emotional, and developmental outcomes for children and youth (East 2014; McLanahan et al., 2013, 2014). Those who argue that these effects have been overexaggerated suggest this may be the case due to methodological limitations of studies, which have been predominantly cross-sectional, and unable to assess changes in outcomes through developmental trajectories from childhood to adulthood. In addition, others believe that when socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors are considered and controlled for, the effects of growing up without a biological father on children's and youth outcomes is non-significant.

Children with absent biological fathers are at higher risk for engaging in negative behaviors and of having lower levels of psychological well-being and may be more vulnerable to mental health issues, substance abuse, and lower educational achievement (McLanahan et al.

2013). According to Cabrera (2018), the complete absence of a father is associated with less success in school, impaired cognitive function, aggression, and delinquency in children. In contrast, children who have contact with their fathers (regardless of the residency status of the father) regulate their emotions more effectively than children who have no contact. Kruk (2012) conducted a study which found that 71 Percent of high school dropouts are fatherless, and that fatherless children perform poorly on tests in reading, mathematics, and critical thinking.

McLanahan et al. (2013) conducted a review of 47 articles. This study explored biological father absence in relation to their causal effects. Biological father absence was defined as “children who live apart from their biological father because of divorce, separation, from a cohabitating union, or nonmarital birth” (McLanahan et al., 2013, p.1). The studies reviewed by McLanahan and colleagues used numerous research designs. Some of the studies and models used were lagged dependent variable models, growth curve models, individual fixed effects models, sibling fixed effects models, and natural experiments. Some of the studies were more rigorous than others, and as a result findings are limited by the type of methodology (McLanahan et al., 2013). The review showed that father absence may negatively affect a child’s social-emotional development. Externalizing behavior was one area that stood out amongst all other areas explored. The earlier in age of the child that the father was absent the more likely certain negative behaviors were likely to occur. It was also discovered that boys were more likely to externalize negative behaviors when compared to girls. Some of these behaviors included early increased risky behavior and drug use. In addition, the children of absent fathers appeared to have weaker cognitive ability.

According to Dick (2011), low self-esteem is another consequence of father absence, as the “formulation of the self is dependent upon the caretakers in the child’s environment being

able to continually provide certain psychological responses that support the child's emerging sense of self" (Dick, 2011, p.112). The author also found long-term mental health consequences persisting into adulthood. Consequences have also been found to vary by gender. A study conducted by Lundberg (2017) found that boys who grew in single parent households and without the presence of a father displayed more externalizing behaviors in the school setting, while girls display more internalizing behaviors. The author also found that in comparison to girls, boys were more likely to quit formal education and receive disciplinary actions. Brown (2018) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study with 20 daughters of absent fathers and found that young girls who had lacked paternal presence were more likely to experience negative outcomes including risky sexual behavior, psychological disturbances, and low self-esteem. Similar to the findings in the study conducted by Lundberg (2017), girls' educational outcomes were not negatively impacted by the absence of their fathers. An important limitation identified in the literature on consequences is that for the most part it has focused on children and young adolescents, and less is known about the consequences on other developmental groupings within youth.

Theoretical Framework

Diverse perspectives and theories have been developed and applied over the past decades to understanding how father absence impacts youth adolescent developmental outcomes. Fatherhood scholars have recognized the need for theory to guide research (Pleck, 2007). In this section, the most relevant theories will be discussed, with a special emphasis on cultural and social structural factors which historically have impacted families and youth from diverse racial and ethnic background.

Attachment Theory

John Bowlby, the first attachment theorist, defines attachment as an “intense and enduring emotional bond that is rooted in the function of protection of infants from danger” (Palm, 2014, pg. 283). Attachment theory proposes that an “infant is biologically wired or programmed to seek proximity with caregivers to get their needs met” (Palm, 2014, p. 283). The attachment relationship provides a secure base for the child to explore and a safe haven to return to in times of distress.

Research has been slow to consider and investigate father-child attachment, and the majority of empirical studies have primarily focused on the attachment relationship between a mother and a child (Ahnert, 2020). Earlier theorists, including May Ainsworth (1967) and Bowlby (1991) recognized that fathers were important attachment figures in the families they observed. Findings from studies suggest that attachment relationships can and do form in most father-child dyads (Lamb, 2002) and that mothers and fathers have unique influences on child personality development (Grossman et al., 2002) and life outcomes (Lamb et al., 2004; Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999; Verissimo et al., 2011). Father-child attachment security has been associated with numerous child outcomes, including having fewer behavioral problems, greater sociability, and lower risk of internalizing problems, such as depression and anxiety (Brown et al., 2012). In addition, the effects of infant-father attachment are independent of the effects of infant-mother attachment (Pleck, 2007). Consequently, the involvement of a father in a child’s life may promote child development because father involvement promotes secure infant attachment (to the father), which in turn promotes good child outcomes through the process hypothesized by attachment theorists (Pleck, 2007).

Attachment theory has viewed parental presence and warmth as the most relevant attributes of the parent-child relationship. However, recent research on father-child relationships has explored the dimensions of quantity (i.e., involvement) and quality (i.e., sensitivity). But results have been mixed (Brown et al., 2012). Lamb and colleagues (1985) and later Pleck (2010) proposed an influential model integrating both dimensions. Their model of parental involvement includes: 1) interaction- the father engaging directly with his child; 2) accessibility- the father being physically and/or psychologically available to his child; and 3) responsibility- the father assuming responsibility for his child's welfare and care. (Pleck, 2010).

Although attachment theory is well established within the field of human development, it has been widely contested by scientists (Vaughn & Bost, 1999). A criticism pertinent to our study is its narrow focus on maternal-child relationships and its inability to provide insight on paternal or maternal involvement in other developmental stages, including youthhood. In addition, it does not fully contemplate how family and sociocultural factors shape the quality of the father-child relationship. Some scientists argue that attachment theory represents the Western middle-class perspective, ignoring the caregiving values and practices in the majority of the world (Keller, 2018). Substantial evidence suggests that fathers in low socioeconomic households, non-western cultures, and ethnic minorities within the U.S. differ markedly in the ways that they choose to enact their parenting roles, and there remains increasingly critical need for research on fathers in each of these contexts (Cabrera et al., 2000). Thus, other theories need to be contemplated in the understanding of how father absence impacts youth outcomes, particularly among racially and ethnically diverse groups.

Ecological Theory: The Concept of Proximal Process

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory portrays child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from immediate settings of family and school to broad cultural values, laws, and customs. A child's development is influenced not only by her immediate environment, but also by the interaction between the immediate environment with larger environments. Bronfenbrenner's divided the person's environment into five different systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem is perhaps the most influential level of the ecological systems theory, as this is the most proximal environmental setting containing the child, the family, peers, and the school (Guy-Evans, 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's employed the concept of proximal process to describe the interaction between the person and the environment. Through this concept he suggested that "enduring patterns of reciprocal, increasingly complex interaction with significant others (both adult and peer) ultimately are what "drives" development of the child into an adult" (Pleck, 2007; p. 4). Applied to fatherhood, the concept of proximal process indicates that 1) fathers function as microsystem partners with whom children can experience good "proximal process" promoting development, and 2) fathers are a unique kind of microsystem partner. Regarding the first aspect, the more microsystem partners the child has with whom he or she has good proximal process, the better for the child's development—as long as the child's microsystem partners are not in conflict with each other or overload the child cognitively and emotionally (Pleck, 2007). Regarding the second aspect, because fathers' personalities differ from mothers', children's proximal process interactions with fathers differ those with mothers in ways that are important for development. Parke (2002) found that fathers' rough-and-tumble play may have a unique role in promoting the child's emotion regulation. Thus,

To the extent that fathers engage in rough-and-tumble play with the child more than mothers do, and to the extent that rough-and-tumble play promotes a particular aspect of development, emotion regulation, that is not promoted to the same degree by other forms of interaction, children's relationship with father will have distinctive consequences (as cited in Pleck, 2007, p. 5)

Bronfenbrenner's concept of proximal process supports a better understanding of the unique contributions of fatherhood into a child's development.

Fatherhood-Masculinity Model

This model was developed by Joseph Pleck and it advances earlier theories of fatherhood, specifically the essential father theory. The essential father theory describes that:

First, fathers make a contribution to children's development that is essential. Second, fathers make a contribution that is unique; what makes fathers' contribution essential is precisely that it is unique. Third, fathers make a contribution that is uniquely male and uniquely masculine; that is, fathers' contribution is unique specifically because fathers are males and have masculine characteristics (Pleck, 2010, p. 34).

Through the fatherhood-masculinity model, Pleck argues that it is possible to specify systematically the possible processes involved in fathers' potentially essential, unique, masculine contribution to child development. He suggests various potential pathways of influence. These pathways are 1) that being male may be associated with distinctive parenting behaviors, which in turn affect the child's development, 2) the same parental behavior may have distinctive effects on the child when exhibited by fathers compared to mothers, 3) simply having a resident father or having contact with a nonresident one could also have a direct effect, and 4) variations among fathers in their masculinity orientation may also play a role, in that fathers' having more

masculine behaviors or attitudes may influence child outcomes, in particular, children's sex typing, directly and indirectly via effects on paternal behavior, and via moderating the influence of paternal behavior on the child.

After a careful analysis of these pathways, Pleck (2010) finds that the essential father hypothesis has two major deficiencies. First, the research around the uniqueness of fathering effects does not support the notion that fathers make a contribution to development that is different from mothers, in the sense of fathers' influence not being substitutable by mothers. Second, researchers examining the association between fathers' influence on development, specifically with their masculinity orientation provide little substantiation, as illustrated in research on the relationship of fathers' masculinity orientation with child outcomes and with fathers' parenting. Furthermore, research comparing child outcomes in two-parent heterosexual families with two-parent lesbian families, the effects of having a second parent besides the biological mother are not found to vary according to the second parent's gender. Thus, current evidence does not support the notion that fathers' influence on child development is a uniquely masculine one.

Pleck (2010) then proposes an alternative framework, the important father hypothesis, whereby good fathering is acknowledged as a relevant and important factor contributing to a child's development. In his alternative hypothesis, good fathering is considered one of many important influences on positive child development, instead of a unique and essential influence. In addition, Pleck and colleagues have developed additional frameworks on paternal involvement. Paternal involvement is composed of five dimensions: positive engagement activities, warmth and responsiveness, control, indirect care, and process responsibility. The model highlights the importance of the amount of involvement. Pleck acknowledges the role

played by large-scale and powerful factors including migration, mass incarceration, and low SES in fathers' involvement (Pleck, 2010; Miller et al., 2020). In the next section, these forces will be analyzed from a critical race theory perspective.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) has been utilized to explain the absence of fathers in racially and ethnically diverse families. Families from ethnic and racially diverse groups have historically been heavily impacted by racism and oppression. The major tenets of CRT foster an in-depth examination of the intersection between historical, political, economic, and social factors and how families from diverse racial and ethnic groups are structured and function within those intersections (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lemmons & Johnson, 2019). When discussing the structure and functioning of families in racially and ethnically diverse groups, issues related to urbanization, employment, poverty, migration, mass incarceration, and institutional racism must be taken into consideration (Toldson & Morton, 2012). For example, Brown et al. (2018) have argued that the historical trauma of slavery, racism, poverty, and segregation has affected black fathers' ability to obtain housing, educational, and employment opportunities. These missed opportunities have created nefarious consequences affecting families. Experiences of discrimination may result in emotional distress for fathers. Anderson et al. (2015) also found that racism and discrimination may affect a father's ability to act as a safe haven for their child, as fathers may be psychologically unavailable for their children. These fathers may be lacking the ability to provide emotional and physical regulation that their children need to thrive as securely attached individuals.

Alexander (2012) describes how the deindustrialization of the economy and the onset of joblessness, the war on drugs and subsequent mass incarceration, and (3) welfare reform has

impacted Black fathers in the U.S. Her findings can also be applied to the experience of other racially and ethnically diverse fathers in the U.S., particularly Latinos. These three tactics employed by U.S. political, economic, and social institutions have kept some racially and ethnically diverse fathers at a disadvantage. First, chronic work instability contributes to low marriage rates among Black males, particularly among young men who tend to have higher rates of unemployment (Johnson, 2014; Mincy, 2014). In turn, low marriage rates contribute to decline in two-parent families and increases in nonmarital childbearing (Lemmons & Johnson, 2019). The employment status of parents, especially Black fathers, is a direct determinant of the formation maintenance and stability of the Black family. The intersection between race and economy, shows how lack of viable employment options and unfavorable economic conditions make it next to impossible for Black men to fulfill the provider role, thereby obstructing the path to family formation (Johnson, 2014; Lemmons & Johnson, 2019).

Second, the war on drugs has been another system put in place to control those at the bottom of the hierarchy, which usually are poor minorities. When examining the intersections of race and U.S. drug enforcement policies, it is evident that since its inception, the war on drugs has been unfairly targeted towards persons from racially and ethnically diverse groups (Drug Policy Alliance, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2008). The result of these harsh drug laws and new forms of racial discrimination have removed ethnically and racially diverse groups biological fathers out of the lives of their children. Racial discrimination in relation to drug laws has been responsible for the dramatic rise in incarceration rates for young Black and Latino males (Clayton & Moore, 2003; Human Rights Watch, 2008). This large increase in incarceration rates among young ethnically and racially diverse fathers has contributed to the dismantlement of families.

Purpose of the Study

Given the limited evidence on how father absence may impact youth outcomes, the purpose of this study was to conduct a systematic review to examine the following research question: What is the state of the empirical literature on the outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse youth who are living in the U.S. and who are between the ages 14 and 25 years of age associated to growing up in biological father-absent homes. Emotional, behavioral, psychological, and social outcomes will be assessed. A systematic review of the literature implies a critical evaluation of the literature, which included a compilation and summary of findings of the studies and the interpretation of those findings. This study will open a new line of inquiry to help researchers, practitioners, and politicians gain a better understanding of how youth from diverse racial and ethnic minority groups are impacted by biological fatherlessness.

Methods

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines informed the process for this systematic review. PRISMA is an evidence-based 27-item checklist and recommends a four-phase flow diagram for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher et al., 2009). Specific PRISMA tools used in this review include the PRISMA checklist.

Search Criteria

This systematic review went through a process of examining journal peer-reviewed articles, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations in English from January 2000 to January 2021 on various topics such as biological absent fatherhood, biological absent fatherhood by race and ethnicity, and consequences and outcomes of growing up without a biological father.

A thorough research was conducted using several sources, including Google Scholar, and the University of Puerto Rico Library Systems databases. Diverse specific databases were used to conduct searches using the University of Puerto Rico matrix database. These specific databases include: PsycINFO, Psychology Database, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Social Science Database, Medline, and Family Health Database.

The keywords searched were grouped and combined in the following categories: father's absence, race and ethnicity-related, outcomes-related, gender, and age group. Terms included: *Growing up without a father, fatherless homes, absent fathers, race and ethnicity, Black or African American or Black, Latinos, youth, adolescents and teenagers and young adults, gender, age, effects on youth, effects on adolescents, effects on young adults, fatherless children psychological effects, outcomes and/or consequences.*

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

There were gaps in literature for many of the areas explored for this topic, so the inclusion criteria were more generalized during the search process. The authors identified articles that met the following eligibility criteria: (1) articles published between January 2000 and December 2021 (when literature search was finalized). Originally, recent articles from the past decade were searched for. However, very few articles were found, and consequently the year range was expanded. (2) Published in peer-reviewed journals and written in English; (3) Published master's thesis and doctoral dissertations, (4) Conducted in the US; (5) Included study participants who were youth between the ages of 14 to 25 (United Nations, n.d.); (6) referenced only absence of biological fathers for the following reasons, parental turmoil, parental relationship instability or breakdown of the parental relationship; and (7) referenced outcomes

and consequences, and ethnic and racial aspects. No limits were placed on studies' methodologies.

Exclusion Criteria

The articles were excluded for review if they (1) did not meet the publication timeline criteria, (2) were not published theses, dissertations, or peer-reviewed articles and written in English, (3) were not conducted in the US, (4) did not meet the age criteria, (5) included a wide range of ages but did not parse out the age range of interest throughout the duration of the article, (5) did not reference absent biological fatherhood for the specified reasons, and (6) did not reference outcomes and consequences, and racial, and ethnic aspects.

Selection of Studies and Data Extraction

After the author thoroughly discussed inclusion and exclusion criteria, the author proceeded to screen the titles and abstracts of $n = 4,049$ articles, dissertations, and theses. The author did this process four time, resulting in $n = 4,020$ articles, books, dissertations, or theses being excluded. The remaining $n = 29$ articles, dissertations or theses were screened at full-level text by the author. From the full-text screening, $n = 19$ articles were excluded for the following reasons: did not include any analyses by race and ethnicity, did not focused on outcomes, did not meet age criteria. Thus, the final sample for this study was $n = 9$ research studies. Data was extracted by the author and organized using the data referencing tool Zotero. To ensure the literature's quality, the authors used a Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), which is intended to be used as a checklist for simultaneously appraising and/or describing studies included in systematic mixed study reviews (*Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool*, n.d.).

Chapter 2

Summary of Findings

Three of the nine articles reviewed were published within the last 10 years (Markowitz & Macy, 2016; Turney et al., 2018; Yoon et al., 2020). All articles reviewed employed quantitative methodologies, specifically secondary data analyses of large datasets. Six out of the nine articles conducted longitudinal analyses (Ellis et al., 2003; Foster et al., 2007; Markowitz & Macy, 2016, Mendle et al., 2009; Turney et al., 2018; Yoon et al., 2020). Sample sizes were large ranging from 242 (Ellis et al., 2003) to 12,426 (DeBell, 2007). Ages in the studies reviewed ranged from 10 (Carlson et al., 2006) to 37 years of age (Markowitz & Macy, 2016). All studies except one (Mendle et al., 2019), assessed data from participants outside the 14 to 25 years age range established in the study's inclusion criteria. These studies were included because they assessed youth with ages within the established range. One study used data which sample was composed of women only (Ellis et al., 2003). The other studies assessed data of both men and women, and the samples of men and women in each study were evenly distributed. Two studies examined maternal generation sibling pairs (Mendle et al., 2009) and offspring sibling pairs (Markowitz et al., 2016). In terms of racial and ethnic composition, all studies included robust samples of racially and ethnically minoritized groups, with Black and Hispanic/Latinos being the primary minoritized groups for which analyses were conducted for. Black participants ranged from 14.9% (Carlson et al., 2006) to 69% (DeBell, 2007); Hispanic/Latino participants ranged from 6.8% (Yoon et al., 2020) to 39% (De Bell, 2007); and White participants ranged from 21% (Turney et al., 2018) to 81% (Ellis et al., 2003). Only one study provided data for Asian

participants (3.6%, King et al., 2004). Participants in the “other racial/ethnic” category ranged from 2% (Ellis et al., 2003) to 34% (DeBell, 2007).

Finally, in terms of family structure, study samples were diverse. The percentage of adolescents who lived in single parent households ranged from 12% (Carlson et al., 2006) to 52% (King et al., 2004). Regarding father absence, five studies disaggregated data by race and ethnicity and/or onset of father’s timing of departure from the child’s life (i.e., early, late) (De Bell, 2007; Bruce et al., 2003; Markowitz et al., 2016; Mendle et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2020). Bruce et al., (2007) reported that 33% of participants’ fathers left early (at or before age 5), while 12% left later in the participant’s life (birth father present in the home through age 5 but subsequent absence of the birth father from the home beginning sometime during ages 6 through 13). Yoon et al., (2020) reported that only 10.1% of participants had a father present in the home during infancy and toddlerhood, 30.6% during early childhood, 32% during middle childhood, and 40.4% during adolescence. Studies which analyzed data by race and ethnicity found that 28% of White participants, 39% of Hispanic/Latino participants, and 69% of Black participants did not live with their fathers (DeBell, 2007). Markowitz et al. (2016) found that 74.19% of African American participants’ fathers were always absent and that 40% of fathers left early. Fourteen percent of the Hispanic/Latino participants’ fathers were always absent and 22.96% left early. Eleven percent of White participants’ fathers were always absent and 36.25% left early. For a full description of the studies please see Table 1.

Table 1.
Description of Studies Reviewed

Author(s)	Title	Aims	Study Design	Sample Characteristics	Summary of Findings
Carlson, Marcia J. (2006)	<i>Family Structure, Father Involvement, and Adolescent Behavioral Outcomes</i>	To assess whether fathers' involvement mediated the relationship between family structure (i.e., father absence) and four measures of adolescent behavior—delinquency, negative feelings, externalizing behaviors, and internalizing behaviors.	Quantitative secondary data analysis using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) in 1996 and 2000. <u>Inclusion:</u> Adolescents between the ages of 10 to 14 years of age who responded to the self-administered survey in 1996 and 2000. <u>Exclusion:</u> Cases whose biological father were no longer living with their mother in the survey year, and who had missing data on the father involvement items. All eligible children in the family were included. <u>Data collection:</u> Self-administered questionnaire.	n = 2, 733 adolescents ages 10- 14 years old n = 1,367 men; 1,366 women (48.5%) 7.5%Hispanic; 14.9 Black non-Hispanic; 77.6 % White non-Black, non-Hispanic 58% lived with continuously married biological parents from birth to early adolescence, 12% experienced their parents' divorce but their mothers remained single, 7% experienced a divorce and their mothers remarried, 4 % were born to unmarried parents who later married each other), 3% were born outside of marriage and their mothers married another man, 9% lived with a continuously unmarried mother, and 7% experienced another family	Adolescents living with their continuously married biological parents had significantly lower behavioral problem scores compared to all other family types, after controlling for maternal and adolescent background characteristics. Adolescents whose mothers divorced and remained single, those born outside marriage and their mothers remained unmarried, and those in other family types had the greatest behavioral problems, scoring significantly higher on all four outcomes than their counterparts with married biological parents. Adolescents who experienced their mother marrying a stepfather after parental divorce had worse behavioral scores for the externalizing BPI and negative feelings but not for the other two measures.

				history	
DeBell, Matthew (2007)	<i>Children Living Without their Fathers: Population Estimates and Indicators of Well-Being</i>	To estimate the number of American children in grades Kindergarten–grade 12 who live without their biological fathers and to examine the association of absent-father status with children’s well-being.	Quantitative secondary data analysis of Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2003; <u>Inclusion:</u> Parents and guardians of 12, 426 children in kindergarten through grade 12, in regular school or in homeschool. <u>Data collection:</u> Telephone surveys of civilian non-institutionalized population in the U.S.	N=12, 426 school age children K-12 representative of the nation’s school-age children 36% Men, 37% Women 28% White, 69% Black, 39% Hispanic and 34% other 28% White students, 39% Hispanic students, and 69% Black students did not live with their fathers	While, in bivariate comparisons, absent-father status was associated with reduced well-being: worse health, lower academic achievement, worse educational experiences, and less parental involvement in school activities, in multivariate analysis, some differences in well-being disappeared, and the ones that remained were not very large, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors. Father residence status was not strongly associated with child-wellbeing and was but one of many variables associated with outcomes studied here. Race, but not ethnicity was associated with differences in paternal involvement.
Ellis, Bruce J. et al. (2003)	<i>Does Father Absence Place Daughters at Special Risk for Early Sexual Activity and Teenage Pregnancy?</i>	1. Is earlier onset of biological father absence associated with increasing risk of early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy in daughters? 2. Did earlier onset of biological father absence uniquely	Quantitative multisite longitudinal study; <u>Inclusion:</u> Parents of kindergarten students were randomly selected at pre-registration in the summers of 1987 (cohort 1) and 1988 (cohort 2) via mail or in person. <u>Location:</u> Nashville and Knoxville, TN; Bloomington, Indiana.	n = 242 female subsample in U.S. Participants began at age 5 (Years 1 through 9; ages 5-13) and ended at 17 years old (Years 10 through 13; ages 14-17) 81%	Early father-absent girls had the highest rates of both early sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy, followed by late father-absent girls, followed by father-present girls. In the U.S. sample, father absence constituted a unique and independent path to early sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy.

		<p>increased risk for early sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy in daughters, independent of both early externalizing behavior problems and familial and ecological stressors that covary with father absence?</p> <p>3. Did earlier onset of biological father absence discriminantly increased risk for early onset of sexual activity and teenage pregnancy—but not for adolescent behavioral and mental health problems more generally—independent of early externalizing problems and life-course adversity?</p>	<p><u>Data collection:</u> Parents interviewed at home via open- ended and semi-structured audio recorded interviews.</p>	<p>White, 17% African American, 2% other</p> <p>28% lived with single mother at start of study, 33% early father absent (absence of birth father from the home at or before age 5), 12% late father absent (Me); 55% father present</p>	<p>Although measures of early conduct problems and life-course adversity covaried with both timing of father absence and adolescent sexual outcomes, these measures either did not account for the links between father absence and early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy.</p> <p>In the U.S. sample, father absence was discriminantly associated with early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. This association was specific to sexual outcomes and, after controlling for early conduct problems and familial and ecological stressors, did not extend to academic, behavioral, or mental health problems more generally.</p>
<p>Foster, Holly et al. (2007)</p>	<p><i>Incarceration and Intergenerational Social Exclusion</i></p>	<p>1. To explore intergenerational implications, specifically the troubled transitions of the children of incarcerated fathers from adolescence to</p>	<p>Quantitative secondary analysis of longitudinal data with three waves from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health; <u>Inclusion:</u> Adolescents sampled from grades 7 to 12 from 132</p>	<p>N= 10, 828 in all three waves</p>	<p>In terms of race and ethnicity, being Hispanic, black non-Hispanic, and Native American all significantly increased the probability of father's imprisonment, consistent with sociodemographic patterns using official data. However, father's</p>

		<p>adulthood regarding homelessness, healthcare uninsuredness, and political nonparticipation.</p> <p>2. To assess the cumulative mechanisms by which biological father's incarceration—net of critical features of the biological father's background—effects the potential social exclusion of their children during the transition to adulthood.</p>	<p>randomly selected U.S. schools. <u>Exclusion:</u> Respondents with missing data on key variables. <u>Data collection:</u> In-home interviews using computer assisted personal interviewing to gather less sensitive information and audio-computer assisted self-interviewing for gathering sensitive data.</p>		<p>higher educational attainment reduced all of those effects.</p> <p>Bivariate analysis found that homelessness was reflected in the strongest intergenerational incarceration-exclusion relationship (OR = 3.34, $p < .001$), while the weakest significant relationship involved the correlation of father's incarceration and high versus low political disengagement (OR = 1.96, $p < .05$), with the association of father's incarceration and healthcare uninsuredness in between (OR = 2.00, $p < .001$). The overall bivariate relationship between father's incarceration and the latent social exclusion scale in emerging adulthood was highly significant (OR = 2.21, $p < .001$).</p> <p>The pivotal mediating mechanism in analysis of the effects of father's incarceration on the social exclusion of their emerging adult children involves intergenerational processes of educational detainment.</p> <p>A cumulative process of intergenerational disadvantage that begins with father's</p>
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					educational detainment and incarceration, moves through their children's educational detainment, and results in forms of emerging adult social exclusion. Problems of socialization associated with father's incarceration and absence from the household, as well as economic strains of low family income and unemployment, and also neglect, are early parts of the cumulative disadvantage process that diminish the educational success of children.
King, Valarie et al. (2004)	<i>Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Nonresident Father Involvement</i>	<p>1. To contribute to the understanding of non-resident father involvement by examining diversity among several racial/ethnic groups for a variety of domains of father involvement documenting whether and where difference exist.</p> <p>2. To ascertain whether racial/ethnic differences in both the amount and types of involvement are due mainly to socioeconomic and</p>	Quantitative longitudinal study using Wave 1 of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health; <u>Inclusion:</u> Adolescents with valid sample weights who had nonresident biological father still living and who were 18 years old or younger. <u>Data collection:</u> Questionnaires completed by adolescents and by parent or parent-figure.	<p>n = 5, 377 middle school and high school students</p> <p>47% men</p> <p>n = 2,569 non-Hispanic White, 1,729 non-Hispanic Black, 886 Hispanic, and non- 193 Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander</p> <p>Hispanic ethnic groups included Mexicans (n= 349), Cubans (n= 150), Puerto Ricans (n= 203), Central/South Americans (n= 167), and all other Hispanics</p>	<p>Differences did exist for racial/ethnic groups with nonresident fathers. No one racial or ethnic group stood out as being significantly higher or lower on father involvement. Instead, particular groups were significantly higher or lower on certain activities, and these patterns varied with the activity.</p> <p>In some cases, socioeconomic and demographic characteristics explained racial/ethnic differences in nonresident father involvement, but in other cases they did not. Of the factors considered, socioeconomic circumstances, and the father's education in particular, were the most</p>

		<p>demographic differences that exist among the groups.</p> <p>3. To determine whether racial/ethnic differences vary significantly by fathers' education.</p>		<p>(n= 17). Asian subgroups include Chinese (n= 43), Filipinos (n= 94), and all other Asians (n = 56)</p> <p>34% biological mother and stepfather, 52% single mother, 14% others, 45% born within marriage, 30% outside marriage, 26% unknown</p>	<p>influential in explaining racial/ethnic differences. Whether the youth was born within marriage was also influential in explaining some of these differences.</p> <p>The lower education of Black and Hispanic fathers, and the greater likelihood of nonmarital childbearing, especially among Blacks, was linked to lower levels of involvement. Once these differences were controlled, overall levels of involvement for minority fathers increased.</p> <p>Father's level of education interacted with race/ethnicity to further differentiate patterns of nonresident father involvement. White fathers fell at the two extremes, with the lowest levels of father involvement reported for White fathers with a high school education or less and the highest levels of involvement reported for White fathers with high levels of education. In contrast, minority fathers exhibited fewer significant differences by education, with levels of involvement that were between the two extremes exhibited by White fathers.</p>
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<p>Markowitz, Anna et al. (2016)</p>	<p><i>Father Absence and Adolescent Depression and Delinquency: A Comparison of Siblings Approach</i></p>	<p>This study used a rigorous, within-family comparison to address (a) whether observed associations between father absence and adolescent behavior, were indexed by depressive symptoms and delinquency, were plausibly causal and (b) what mechanisms explained these links. Additionally, the study tested whether links between father absence and adolescent behavior varied by gender.</p>	<p>Quantitative secondary data analysis using information from the Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979- the Young Adult survey (CNLSY-YA); <u>Inclusion:</u> The analytic sample was limited to all youth with at least one YA interview between 1988 and 2008, at least one interviewed sibling, and data on age at father departure from the home (n=6,141 individual YAs drawn from 2,330 nuclear families). The sample was further limited to young adults with valid data on depressive symptoms and delinquency. <u>Data Collection:</u> biennial personal interviews.</p>	<p>n = 5,108 for depressive symptoms; n = 4,882 for delinquency; descriptive statistics calculated on smaller sample.</p> <p>49.08% men</p> <p>The most recent data used in this study were collected in 2008 when YA respondents were between ages 15 and 37</p> <p>34.72% family has half siblings</p> <p>43.79% non-Hispanic/non-African American, 33.74% African American, 22.74% Hispanic</p> <p>Non-Hispanic/non-African American: 11.71% father always absent, 36.25% father left early (0-5), 43.46% father left late (6-13), 58.62% father always present</p> <p>African American: 74.19% father always absent, 40.79% father left early, 29.63% father left late,</p>	<p>Father departure later in childhood was associated with increased adolescent delinquency but not depressive symptoms, whereas early childhood father departure was not associated with adolescent outcomes.</p> <p>Youth with fathers always present reported significantly lower levels of depressive symptoms and delinquency than youth in all other family types, whereas youth with fathers always absent reported higher levels of depressive symptoms than youth in all other groups.</p> <p>Within-family estimates indicated that siblings who had a father leave late (ages 6-14 years) reported higher levels of delinquent behavior than their siblings whose fathers were always present.</p> <p>The association between timing of father departure and delinquency was positively significant for Hispanic, but not for other racial groups.</p> <p>Models did not differ substantially by gender.</p>
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				<p>17.23% father always present</p> <p>Hispanic: 14.10% father always absent, 22.96% father left early, 26.91% father left late, 24.15% father always present</p> <p>21.24 mother's age at first birth, 18.98 father always absent, 20.28 father left early, 20.78 father left late, 22.61 father always present</p>	
<p>Mendle, Jane et al. (2009)</p>	<p><i>Associations Between Father Absence and Age of First Sexual Intercourse</i></p>	<p>The present study used offspring of sister dyads to discriminate among the several plausible explanations for the association of paternal absence and earlier age of first sexual intercourse.</p> <p>Because the sister dyads (and, correspondingly, their offspring) differ in their level of genetic relatedness, they vary both in their exposure to father absence and in their exposure to potential confounding</p>	<p><u>Mothers.</u> Data on the maternal generation of sister dyads come from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY79). Of the 12,781 adolescents identified in 1978 as eligible for the study, 11,406 were interviewed in 1979 (90%). This included an oversampled group of minority and economically disadvantaged youth. NLSY79 participants were re-interviewed annually through 1994 and biennially from 1994 to the present. <u>Inclusion:</u> Particularly relevant for</p>	<p>Ages 14 to 21</p> <p>The NCLSY subsample comprised 1382 offspring (691 men, 691 women) born to 679 mothers from 435 NLSY79 households-of-origin (488 mothers from 244 complete sister pairs and 191 mothers whose sisters did not participate in CNLSY follow-up). Age in this subsample ranged from 14 to 33 years old at the 2006 assessment (median = 21 years, SD = 3.9, mode = 17 years).</p>	<p>Father-absent children were more likely to report having had sexual intercourse than father-present children: 63.2% of children whose fathers were always absent reported having sexual intercourse (N = 240), compared to 52.5% of children whose fathers were partially absent (N = 228) and only 21.0% of children whose fathers were always present (N = 205).</p> <p>Those who father was still alive but nonresidential had sexual intercourse at an earlier age represented (68.9%)</p>

		<p>variables, either genetic and environmental in origin. By accounting for these uncontrolled confounds in data from a large and diverse population-based sample, this method allows a more accurate assessment of the extent to which father absence influences the timing of offspring's first intercourse.</p>	<p>the current analyses, data were collected on all qualified adolescents residing in the sampled households at the time of assessment, meaning the NLSY79 generation can be organized into sister pairs. In some households, first cousins were reared together as siblings; All participants raised in the same household referred as "sister" pairs.</p> <p>Offspring. Beginning in 1986, biennial assessments of the biological children of the females in the NLSY79 sample were conducted (termed NCLSY). Beginning in 1994, CNLSY offspring aged 14 years and older were directly interviewed every two years on family interactions, substance abuse, delinquent activities, and other aspects of the transition to adulthood, including age of first sexual intercourse. The study aimed to investigate age of first intercourse in a CNLSY</p>	<p>The NLSY79 mothers reported at each assessment whether each child's biological father was absent or present in the household in which their children were being raised. From these longitudinal data, the authors constructed a category of biological father absence to indicate whether children were raised without fathers in the household since birth (termed always absent; N = 345, 25.0%), raised with fathers who were absent for some time after birth and before age 14, when the young adult interview replaced the maternal interview as an assessment (partially absent; N = 360, 26.0%), or raised with fathers present in the household from birth until age 14 (always present; N = 615, 44.5%). The remaining 62 children (4.5%) had missing data for father absence.</p> <p>Of the 1,382 offspring, 677 (49.0%) reported having sex, 362 (26.2%)</p>	<p>African American and Hispanic adolescents did not significantly differ from non-Hispanic White adolescents in timing of first intercourse.</p> <p>While father absence predicted an earlier age at first sex, these predicted estimates varied significantly by gender and nonsignificantly by race/ethnicity.</p>
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			<p>subsample, termed the <i>Offspring of Sister Pairs</i>, who were at least 14 years old by the 2006 assessment, and whose mothers had sisters raised in the same household-of-origin.</p> <p><u>Data Collection:</u> Interviews</p>	<p>reported never having sex, and 343 (24.8%) had missing data values for all items related to sexual activity. Of the 677 offspring who reported ever having sex, 13 offspring had missing or invalid (less than 5 years old) reports for age at first sex, thus analyses on observed age at first sex were conducted using the remaining 664 offspring.</p> <p>In the Offspring of Sister Pairs subsample, there were 90 children of cousins, 32 children of halfsiblings, 226 children of ambiguous siblings, 1,002 children of full siblings, and 32 children of twins.</p>	
Turney, Kristin et al. (2018)	<i>Paternal Incarceration and Early Sexual Onset Among Adolescents</i>	<p>To examine the relationship between paternal incarceration and one indicator of adolescent risk behavior, early sexual onset.</p> <p>First, the authors estimated early sexual</p>	<p>Quantitative study using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (N=3405)—a cohort of urban children born around the turn of the twenty-first century and followed for 15 years. <u>Inclusion:</u> The analyses draw on data</p>	<p>The analytic sample comprised 3405 children (70% of the original sample).</p> <p>Differences between the full and analytic samples were examine, which showed some statistically significant differences</p>	<p>Paternal incarceration was positively associated with early sexual onset. That is, adolescents who experienced paternal incarceration in early or middle childhood, compared to adolescents who did not experience paternal incarceration during this time period, were more likely to have reported having</p>

		<p>onset as a function of experiencing the incarceration of a biological father in early or middle childhood (between ages 1 and 9), net of an array of characteristics associated with both paternal incarceration and early sexual onset. Then they explored five sets of family-level mechanisms that might explain this association (including parent–child relationships, parental monitoring, family instability, economic strain, and prior externalizing behaviors) and examine heterogeneity in this association by child gender and parental residential status prior to incarceration.</p>	<p>through the 15-year survey. Analytic sample was restricted to observations with non-missing data on the dependent variable, early sexual onset. This excludes 1485 observations (with 1454 missing due to adolescent non-participation in the 15-year survey and 31 missing due to item non-response). An additional 8 observations who report first sex prior to age 10 were removed, assuming that these youth represented a distinct group with a particularly high likelihood of having experienced sexual abuse or non-consensual sex.</p> <p><u>Data collection:</u> Mothers and fathers were interviewed between 1998 and 2000, immediately after their children were born, and have been re-interviewed when their children were ages 1, 3, 5, 9, and 15 (with only primary caregivers interviewed at the last survey).</p>	<p>between the two. Mothers in the analytic sample, compared to mothers in the full sample, were more likely to identify as non-Hispanic Black and less likely to identify as Hispanic. Both mothers and fathers in the analytic sample were less likely to be foreign born. Mothers in the analytic sample were likely to be employed and less likely to have not completed high school. Fathers in the analytic sample, compared to fathers in the full sample, were more likely to have experienced incarceration prior to the 1-year survey.</p> <p>Most parents identified as a racial/ethnic minority, with about half (50%) of mothers identifying as non-Hispanic Black and one-quarter (25%) of mothers identifying as Hispanic. About 13% of mothers and 15% of fathers were born outside the United States. Mothers, on average, had their first child at age 22. Nearly 56% of parents</p>	<p>sexual intercourse before age 15. This relationship persisted despite adjusting for an array of demographic, socioeconomic, and behavioral indicators that are tightly correlated with exposure to paternal incarceration (e.g., parental substance use, impulsive behaviors).</p> <p>Few control variables were independently associated with early sexual intercourse. For example, boys were more likely than girls to report early sexual onset ($b=1.065$, OR 2.90, $p < 0.001$). Non-Hispanic Blacks, compared to non-Hispanic Whites, were more likely to report early sexual onset ($b=0.427$, OR 1.53, $p<0.05$). Mothers' income-to-poverty ratio was negatively associated with early sexual onset ($b= - 0.119$, OR 0.89, $p<0.05$). Neighborhood disadvantage was positively associated with early sexual onset ($b=0.048$, OR 1.08, $p<0.05$).</p> <p>Of the five mediators studied—parent–child relationship, parental monitoring, family instability, economic strain, and externalizing behaviors—</p>
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				<p>were in a marital or cohabiting romantic relationship with one another at the 1-year survey. An additional 10% of parents were in a non-residential romantic relationship and 34% were separated at the 1-year survey. Most parents—57% of mothers and 66% of fathers—did not have education beyond high school.</p>	<p>externalizing behaviors was the only mediator statistically significantly associated with the outcome variable.</p> <p>Family instability (measured by parental separation and maternal repartnering) explained a modest percentage (10%) of the relationship between paternal incarceration and early sexual onset among adolescents but that these indicators of family instability were not independently linked to early sexual onset.</p> <p>The relationship between paternal incarceration and early sexual onset was concentrated among boys living with their fathers. This group of adolescents was especially vulnerable to the negative consequences of paternal incarceration.</p>
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<p>Yoon, Susan et al. (2020)</p>	<p><i>Child Maltreatment, Fathers, and Adolescent Alcohol and Marijuana use Trajectories</i></p>	<p>To examine how child maltreatment and father structural factors at different stages in the life course were associated with different patterns of alcohol and marijuana use trajectories.</p> <p>Research questions: 1) Was there heterogeneity in adolescent alcohol and marijuana use trajectories?; 2) Did child maltreatment (i.e., physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect [physical neglect/deprivation of basic needs, inadequate supervision]) at four developmental stages (i.e., infancy/toddlerhood [ages 0–2], early childhood [ages 3–5], middle childhood [ages 6–11], adolescence [ages 12–18]) predicted patterns of adolescent alcohol and marijuana use trajectories?; and 3) Did father structural factors (i.e., presence,</p>	<p>Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN), which is a multisite cohort study ($N = 1,354$) that investigates the long-term effects of child abuse and neglect on child development. LONGSCAN involves five study sites: Eastern, Midwest, Northwest, Southwest, and Southern. All five study sites share study constructs, measures, data collection methods, and data management strategies. <u>Data were collected</u> from children and caregivers through face-to-face interviews at child ages of 4, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16, and 18 from July 1991 to January 2012. The analytic sample of the current study included 903 adolescents who completed at least two waves of age 12, 16, or 18 assessments and had no missing value on any of potential predictor variables.</p>	<p>$n = 903$ adolescents</p> <p>Ages 12 to 18</p> <p>Adolescents in the analytic sample were more likely to be Black and live with mothers who have no spouse or partner, compared to the adolescents in the full sample.</p> <p>47.1% male</p> <p>25.1% White, 54.5% Black, 6.8% Hispanic, 13.6% Other</p> <p>Father presence in the home: Infancy/toddlerhood father presence 10.1%, 30.6% early childhood, 32.0% middle childhood, 40.4% adolescence</p> <p>Nature of relationship with father/father figure: 9.4% infancy/toddlerhood biological fatherhood, 19.8% early childhood, 18.5% middle childhood, 19.6% adolescence</p>	<p>Found two latent classes/subgroups (<i>stable no/low use</i> class and <i>increasing use</i> class) for both alcohol and marijuana trajectories.</p> <p>Compared to the <i>stable no/low alcohol use</i> group, adolescents who experienced emotional abuse during early childhood had 2.56 times higher odds of membership in the <i>increasing alcohol use</i> group. Physical abuse during adolescence was also associated with 1.71 times higher odds of membership in the <i>increasing alcohol use</i> group. The presence of father in the home during early childhood was associated with lower likelihood of being in the <i>increasing alcohol use</i> group (OR: .57, 95% CI: .33–.96). Adolescents who were female, Black, or from families with below-poverty income were less likely to be in the <i>increasing alcohol use</i> group.</p> <p>Compared to the <i>stable no/low marijuana use</i> group, neglect during infancy/toddlerhood was associated with lower odds of membership in the <i>increasing</i></p>
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		<p>type/biological relations) at four developmental stages (i.e., infancy/toddlerhood, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence) predicted patterns of adolescent alcohol and marijuana use trajectories?</p>			<p><i>marijuana use</i> group. Adolescents who experienced emotional abuse during early childhood were approximately 6 times more likely to be in the <i>increasing marijuana use</i> group. Physical abuse during adolescence was associated with 1.87 times higher odds of membership in the <i>increasing marijuana use</i> group. Adolescents who were male also had higher likelihood of being in the <i>increasing marijuana use</i> group. White adolescents were more likely to be in the <i>increasing marijuana use</i> group than Black adolescents.</p> <p>Three significant interaction terms were noted. The association between middle childhood emotional abuse and membership in the <i>increasing marijuana use</i> group was stronger for youth who had their father in the home during middle childhood. Conversely, the association between middle childhood physical abuse and membership in the <i>increasing marijuana use</i> group was attenuated when the father was present in the home</p>
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					during middle childhood. Similarly, the association between sexual abuse in adolescence and membership in the <i>increasing marijuana use</i> group was attenuated when the father was present in the home during adolescence.
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Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this systematic review was to review and analyze the empirical literature on the outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse youth in the U.S. between the ages of 14 and 25 years of age who grew up in biological father-absent homes. This systematic review consisted of nine articles that examined different outcomes that were linked to father absence for racially and ethnically diverse youth in the U.S. Overall, the findings of this systematic review indicate that the research on the outcomes of growing up without a biological father for racially and ethnically diverse youth is still very limited. While initially thousands of articles were identified and screened, very few of them met all inclusion criteria. Two critical findings yielded by this systematic review is that Black youth are particularly impacted by biological father absence, and that most authors agree that biological father absence has a negative influence on the outcomes of youth. Although, limited analyses by race and ethnicity did not allow for us to determine the extent of the influence on racially and ethnically diverse youth.

The articles reviewed explored different questions and youth outcomes. Three articles explored father absence and the ways in which it was related to early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy, and age of first sexual intercourse (Ellis et al., 2003; Mendle et al., 2009; Turney et al., 2018). The three studies found that biological father absence was linked to early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy (Ellis et al., 2003; Turney et al., 2018) and age of first sexual intercourse (Mendle et al., 2009). More important, the three studies found that participants whose fathers were always absent or left early experienced worst sexual outcomes. Only two studies conducted complex analyses by race and ethnicity (Mendle et al., 2009; Turney et al., 2018). Mendle et al. (2009) did not find significant variation by race and ethnicity in the timing of first intercourse. In addition, the association between father absence and earlier sexual intercourse did

not vary significantly by race and ethnicity. In contrast to Mendle et al. (2009), Turney et al., (2018) found differences by race and ethnicity, with non-Hispanic Black participants whose biological fathers had being incarcerated being more likely to report early sexual onset, in comparison to non-Hispanic White participants. Both studies also found differences by gender, with women initiating sexual intercourse at a later age. Analyses by gender and race and ethnicity were not conducted.

As previously described in the review of the literature, the findings of these studies demonstrate that the absence of a biological father has negative impacts on the sexual outcomes of participating youth. The findings of Ellis et al. (2003) appear to somewhat contradict Pleck's (2010) critique of the essential father theory, as their findings illustrate that biological father absence has a unique and discriminant contribution to participating youth outcomes. Also, according to Turney et al. (2018), one of the factors discussed in the review of the literature—criminal justice and law enforcement system—appears to impact the sexual outcomes of Black participating youth. Applying a critical race theory lens, it is not surprising that participating Black youth were particularly affected by father absence via incarceration, since Black men are overrepresented in the criminal justice system of the U.S (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lemmons & Johnson, 2019). Other studies have also found that Black youth are more likely than White youth to report first sexual intercourse at younger ages (Biello et al., 2013). Regarding gender, the findings of the three studies are consistent with previous literature, which has found that men have their first sexual experience substantially earlier than women (Grunbaum et al., 2004).

Another reviewed study which explored the role of biological fathers incarceration on the transitions from adolescence to adulthood and the outcomes of homelessness, healthcare uninsuredness, and political nonparticipation was the study conducted by Foster et al. (2007).

Their study finds evidence that being Hispanic, black non-Hispanic, and Native American all significantly increased the probability of father's imprisonment. In addition, the study results indicated a significant association between incarceration and homelessness, healthcare uninsuredness, and political nonparticipation. Education was found to mediate the relationship between incarceration and homelessness, healthcare uninsuredness, and political nonparticipation. The authors explain that,

A cumulative process of intergenerational disadvantage that begins with father's educational detainment and incarceration, moves through their children's educational detainment, and results in forms of emerging adult social exclusion. Problems of socialization associated with father's incarceration and absence from the household, as well as economic strains of low family income and unemployment, and neglect, are early parts of the cumulative disadvantage process that diminish the educational success of children. (Foster et al., 2007, p. 421)

The findings of this study are consistent with what was articulated in the review of the literature. Racially and ethnically minoritized youth are more likely to be negatively impacted by economic and law enforcement criminal justice system factors. In addition, as argued by critical race theorists, the large increase in incarceration rates among young ethnically and racially minoritized fathers and unfavorable economic conditions has contributed to the dismantlement of minoritized families. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory describes that a child's development is influenced not only by her immediate environment, but also by the interaction between the immediate environment with larger environments (Guy-Evans, 2020). Applied to the findings of this study, Bronfenbrenner's concept of proximal process also suggests a child's positive socialization is driven by the interaction with significant others.

Three studies explored the impact of father absence on a variety of externalizing (Markowitz et al., 2016; Yoon et al., 2020; Carlson et al., 2016) and internalizing behaviors (Carlson et al., 2006; Markowitz et al., 2016), including alcohol and drug use, delinquency, and depression. The findings from the three studies demonstrate that biological father presence decreases participants engagement in externalizing behaviors. Yoon et al. (2020) and Markowitz et al. (2016) conducted analyses by race and ethnicity. Yoon et al. (2020) found that participating youth who were Black or from families below-poverty income—which are primarily minoritized families as articulated in the review of the literature— were less likely to be in the increasing alcohol use group. Markowitz et al. (2016) found a significant association between timing of father departure and delinquency for Hispanic/Latino participating youth.

Regarding internalizing behaviors, Carlson et al. (2006) found that participating youth who experienced their mother marrying a stepfather after parental divorce had worse negative feelings. Markowitz et al. (2016) study showed that although participating youth with biological fathers always present reported significantly lower levels of depressive symptoms and delinquency than youth in other family types, an association between timing of father departure—later in childhood—was not linked to greater depressive symptoms in study participating youth. Analyses by race and ethnicity regarding internalizing behaviors were not reported in any of the studies.

As illustrated in the review of the literature, the findings of these three studies are consistent with what other research has found on the impact biological father presence has on youths' externalizing and internalizing behaviors. Interestingly, the findings from the study conducted by Markowitz et al. (2016) contrast with previous studies on depressive symptomatology (D' Onofrio et al., 2005; Langsford et al., 2006). A potential explanation for

this finding is that chronic depression tends to emerge later in young adulthood, and the study sample was too young (Richards, 2011). Attachment theory and the ecological theory concept of proximal process illustrate how the presence and development of a secure father-child attachment can positively influence a child's behaviors through modeling (Brown et al., 2010; Pleck et al., 2007). Secure father-child attachment has been associated with several positive child outcomes, including fewer behavioral issues, greater social abilities, and lower risk of internalizing issues like anxiety and depression (Brown et al., 2012). Considering that the findings from Markowitz et al. (2016) and Yoon et al. (2020) indicate that Black and Hispanic/Latino youth are particularly vulnerable to being in biologically absent father homes and to engage in externalizing behaviors, such as drinking (Yoon et al. 2020), it is imperative that more studies explore the development of attachments and relationships between fathers and children and youth from racially and ethnically diverse groups, and approach the study of this relationship employing critical perspectives. It is also important to consider the findings from the study conducted by Markowitz et al. (2016) regarding timing of departure. In contrast with attachment theory, it appears that later departure had an influence on externalizing behaviors, instead of earlier departure. Thus suggesting, that perhaps other mechanisms other than paternal socialization and relationship development may be influencing this association.

Only one study focused on biological father absence and health and educational well-being outcomes (DeBell, 2007). In contrast with the other reviewed studies, DeBell (2007) multivariate regression findings showed smaller and less significant associations between biological father absence and youth outcomes, specifically health and educational well-being, when factors such as parental income and education level were considered. In addition, they also found that father residence was not strongly linked to youths' health and educational well-being.

Regarding race and ethnicity, the study found that race, but not ethnicity was associated with differences in paternal involvement.

As described in the review of the literature, the findings of this study contradict other study findings which have demonstrated an association between father absence and youth outcomes. Similar to what Pleck (2010) formulated in his Fatherhood-Masculinity model, the study from DeBell (2007) indicate that father absence is not harmful per se to children and youth. The findings of this study indicate that father presence is important to youth development, however the absence of a biological is not necessarily detrimental to youths' development, if they are not otherwise disadvantaged, which many families are, particularly minoritized families. Thus, the importance of understanding these structural factors, as argued by critical race theory scholars. Regarding the findings on race, the review of the literature showed how families from different racial and ethnic groups have different definitions on paternal involvement based on cultural norms and values.

Finally, only one study focused exclusively on racial and ethnic diversity in regard to biological father involvement (King et al., 2004). King et al. (2004) found differences in racial and ethnic groups with nonresident fathers. While no group stood out in terms of higher or lower father involvement, particular groups were higher or lower on specific father involvement domains. Similar to what DeBell (2007) and Foster et al. (2007) found, sociodemographic characteristics of the father, particularly education level, explained the observed differences in nonresident father involvement. Most importantly, they found that the lower education of Black and Hispanic/Latino fathers, and the greater likelihood of nonmarital childbearing, especially among Blacks, was linked to lower levels of involvement. Once these differences were controlled for, overall levels of involvement for minoritized fathers increased.

In the review of the literature, different factors, including education, were identified which informed the reasons for biological father absence in racially and ethnically diverse youth. The findings of this study suggest that indeed there are different economic, social, and cultural factors impacting the ability of racially and ethnically diverse youth fathers' involvement in their children's lives. As with most of the studies included in this review and in alignment with ecological and critical race theory, context influences a fathers' ability to be present in their child's live, as well as how biological father absence will impact the outcomes of youth.

Chapter 3

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to review the empirical evidence related to biological father absence and outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse youth who are living in the U.S. and who are between the ages of 14 and 25 years of age. A total of nine peer-reviewed articles were examined within this systematic review. The articles addressed diverse outcomes of youth who grew up biological father absent homes. The findings from this study add to the existing literature on father absence by assessing the state of the literature for youth from diverse racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

The findings of the studies reviewed paralleled in some regards the findings of the studies discussed in the review of the literature section. The studies reviewed show that Black and Latino youth are particularly vulnerable to growing up without the presence of a biological father. Most of the studies reviewed suggest that children and youth grow up in biological father absent homes in the U.S. have various negative outcomes including early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy, homelessness, healthcare uninsuredness, political nonparticipation, externalizing and internalizing behaviors, and to a lesser extent poor health and educational well-being. The theories informing this study suggest that the presence of a biological father is important in the life of a child given the unique contributions fathers make to child development, yet their absence does not automatically imply that children and youth will have worst outcomes. In addition, some of the theories emphasize the importance of context in a father's ability to be present in his or her child's life. A series of structural barriers, including incarceration, lack of education, unemployment, racism, among others were identified as factors which could impact the presence and involvement of a biological father. Unfortunately, while various of the studies

reviewed indicated that Black and Latino youth have a higher likelihood of growing up in biologically father absent homes, very few studies conducted more complex analyses by race and ethnicity, and it is impossible to ascertain what are the true outcomes of growing up in biologically father absent for youth from racially and ethnically minoritized groups. The few articles that conducted such analyses showed associations between being Black and Hispanic/Latino and negative outcomes. In addition, two article showed how structural barriers, such as paternal incarceration and low levels of education, position youth from racially and ethnically minoritized groups, specifically Black and Latino youth, at risk of experiencing negative outcomes stemming from the absence of a biological father.

Limitations

The studies reviewed had important strengths. However, they also had limitations. First, studies conducted within the past decade are scarce, suggesting a dearth of empirical research on fatherhood in racially and ethnically diverse youth in the last decade. Second, historically few studies have focused on racially and ethnically diverse youth. Third, the studies reviewed did not conduct analyses by age, making it difficult to determine for which specific age ranges biological father absence was most impactful. Fourth, not all studies reviewed performed analyses by race and ethnicity. Even those studies who conducted analyses by race and ethnicity, did not necessarily conduct complex analyses, and the presentation of findings was circumscribed to descriptive statistics. Fifth, also related to race and ethnicity, data for Asian youth was not presented, limiting the possibility of conducting richer comparative analyses. Sixth, there is a dearth of qualitative studies, which would allow an in-depth exploration of youth lived experiences of growing up in biological father absent homes. Seventh, none of the studies reviewed compared the outcomes of children who grew up without the presence and involvement

of a biological father, but which were able to grow up with the presence and involvement of other father figures. Finally, critical race theory suggests there are multiple factors attributed to biological father absence and youth outcomes, such as poverty, employment, urbanization, migration, and racism, however none of the studies explored in depth these structural factors.

Recommendations

Social Work Practice and Education

The work of social work practitioners and educators in its various forms' centers around the promotion of social change, human development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Practitioners and educators address the diverse and often complex relationships between people and environments with the goal of helping persons, families, and communities to address their basic and complex needs in a way that enables their development and well-being.

Understanding the root causes and consequences of father absence for families from racially and ethnically diverse groups, as well as the development and implementation of strategies at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels is an issue that seems to be neglected within social work practice and education. For example, the academic curriculums of many social work programs do not explore the topic of fatherhood on a level that is necessary to influence change. There should be more course work that helps students understand fatherhood and its relation to community and society, particularly the experience of fatherhood in racially and ethnically diverse families. In order for social work practitioners to address major issues surrounding fatherhood and father absence they need to gain awareness and insight on the subject, as well as on strategies and interventions on how to address the factors that lead to and the consequences of father absence with persons, families, and communities. Courses on fatherhood may include

information such as, separation, child custody, father involvement, outcomes of father absence, reasons why fatherhood is important, how fathers contribute to the lives of their children, and blended families. Courses should also integrate critical and intersectional theory perspectives, given the complex issues and environments families from racially and ethnically diverse groups are involved in.

There are numerous situations that social workers encounter daily that involve fathers and children needing specific assistance. There are many fathers that struggle to be present in their children's lives, due to homelessness, loss of employment, previous history of sexual assault, imprisonment, child custody issues, economic support, among other issues. Still, there are less resources and formal interventions available for them. Providing academic courses on fatherhood for students going into the social work profession may result in practitioners being better equipped to provide tools, information, and resources to support persons and families, especially fathers. It is important that practitioners are knowledgeable about fatherhood and the complex dynamics influencing father absence so that they can create change by way of advocating for the development of policies and programs that assist with supporting fathers to be present and become more involved in their children's lives.

Social Welfare Organizations and Institutions

There are not enough resources available that focus on strengthening fathers and/or encouraging fathers from racially and ethnically diverse groups to keep being present and involved in their children's lives. There are little resources for father figures that are stepfathers or any father figure type that has stepped up to be involved with a child that is not biologically theirs. Basically, there is very little positive reinforcement that assist fathers with creating a positive environment to do the best that they can. There are also extended family members that

are raising children that either are missing their father or both parents. For example, a child's grandmother may be raising a child due to various circumstances that has caused them to be with a grandparent. This is a very common occurrence within the Black and Latino communities. However, there is not adequate assistance from social welfare organizations and institutions to help with ensuring the child gets all that is needed to succeed.

There are also obstacles in the way for fathers that would like to be involved in the lives of their children but find it difficult at times. The child support system has been a system established by the government to provide support for children in different circumstances, but the most common situation involves mothers having custody and separated fathers ordered to provide financially. This system enforces the financial portion of supporting the child but lacks to enforce or assist with father involvement, emotionally speaking. For example, a father that is separated from their child may just simply pay their monthly child support payment and never form a physical and emotional relationship with their child. There are no real consequences for this action, but if this father in this same situation misses a child support payment, then they may be liable to be incarcerated, fined, or get their driver's license revoked. Social welfare organizations and institutions need to create or implement more measures in to encourages father involvement.

Social Policy

Fatherhood and father absence is a social issue that needs more government attention. There aren't sufficient resources available for fathers in need, who often times have competing demands and face structural obstacles, as is the case with racially and ethnically diverse fathers. There are many fathers that are working hard and that enjoy spending time with their children

but there are certain obstacles that negatively impact their intentions. Some of these obstacles include child support orders that limit father's time with their child. For example, there are fathers that have arranged visits only for weekends or some other agreed upon time range per month but there are also holidays, birthdays, vacations, and other special events that do not fall in the time frame that they usually have visits. Many fathers may wish to bring their child(ren) to certain events like family holiday events or out of town events. However, they are only legally permissible to have their children during the set timeframe that the court ordered or the agreed upon timeframe. Yes, there are special orders that allow fathers to have their children during times outside of their agreed time but for the most part they are usually limited if they do not have full custody.

The federal government is taking some important steps to address these limitations. The National Fatherhood Initiative is a nationally recognized program that offers multiple resources for the community, fathers, and children. The National Fatherhood Initiative has a website that provides key information about fatherhood, such as, statistics for absent fathers and more. There are also racial and ethnic breakdowns for the amount of father absent homes for different racial and ethnic groups. This program also provides resources such as, training for fathers, single mother, and children. This is a non-for-profit organization that strives to end father absence and bring about awareness. There needs to be more programs like this on the state and local level. There should also be more information provided to the community, fathers and mothers about already established programs and resources like the National Fatherhood Initiative.

Research

There is a gap in the literature for research on father absence and the various ways in which fatherhood absence impacts the families and children from racially and ethnically diverse groups. Research in this area can support the development of plans of action at the policy level and within social welfare organization and institutions to address the problematic areas identified in research studies. Methodologically robust research with more diverse samples of racially and ethnically diverse youth and analyses by age and racial and ethnic subgroups is needed to inform the development of programs. Related to this, there is a need needs for more qualitative research. All the articles reviewed used quantitative methodologies. Qualitative studies will allow to obtain data on the perceptions and lived experiences of youth of growing up without a biological father.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

PRISMA ITEM CHECKLIST

PRISMA 2020 item checklist

Section and topic	Item #	Checklist item	Location where item is reported
Title			
Title	1	Identify the report as a systematic review.	
Abstract			
Abstract	2	See the PRISMA 2020 for Abstracts checklist (table 2).	
Introduction			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of existing knowledge.	
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of the objective(s) or question(s) the review addresses.	
Methods			
Eligibility criteria	5	Specify the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review and how studies were grouped for the syntheses.	
Information sources	6	Specify all databases, registers, websites, organisations, reference lists and other sources searched or consulted to identify studies. Specify the date when each source was last searched or consulted.	
Search strategy	7	Present the full search strategies for all databases, registers and websites, including any filters and limits used.	
Selection process	8	Specify the methods used to decide whether a study met the inclusion criteria of the review, including how many reviewers screened each record and each report retrieved, whether they worked independently, and if applicable, details of automation tools used in the process.	
Data collection process	9	Specify the methods used to collect data from reports, including how	

Section and topic	Item #	Checklist item	Location where item is reported
		many reviewers collected data from each report, whether they worked independently, any processes for obtaining or confirming data from study investigators, and if applicable, details of automation tools used in the process.	
Data items	10a	List and define all outcomes for which data were sought. Specify whether all results that were compatible with each outcome domain in each study were sought (e.g. for all measures, time points, analyses), and if not, the methods used to decide which results to collect.	
	10b	List and define all other variables for which data were sought (e.g. participant and intervention characteristics, funding sources). Describe any assumptions made about any missing or unclear information.	
Study risk of bias assessment	11	Specify the methods used to assess risk of bias in the included studies, including details of the tool(s) used, how many reviewers assessed each study and whether they worked independently, and if applicable, details of automation tools used in the process.	
Effect measures	12	Specify for each outcome the effect measure(s) (e.g. risk ratio, mean difference) used in the synthesis or presentation of results.	
Synthesis methods	13a	Describe the processes used to decide which studies were eligible for each synthesis (e.g. tabulating the study intervention characteristics and comparing against the planned groups for each synthesis (item #5)).	
	13b	Describe any methods required to prepare the data for presentation or synthesis, such as handling of	

Section and topic	Item #	Checklist item	Location where item is reported
		missing summary statistics, or data conversions.	
	13c	Describe any methods used to tabulate or visually display results of individual studies and syntheses.	
	13d	Describe any methods used to synthesise results and provide a rationale for the choice(s). If meta-analysis was performed, describe the model(s), method(s) to identify the presence and extent of statistical heterogeneity, and software package(s) used.	
	13e	Describe any methods used to explore possible causes of heterogeneity among study results (e.g. subgroup analysis, meta-regression).	
	13f	Describe any sensitivity analyses conducted to assess robustness of the synthesised results.	
Reporting bias assessment	14	Describe any methods used to assess risk of bias due to missing results in a synthesis (arising from reporting biases).	
Certainty assessment	15	Describe any methods used to assess certainty (or confidence) in the body of evidence for an outcome.	
Results			
Study selection	16a	Describe the results of the search and selection process, from the number of records identified in the search to the number of studies included in the review, ideally using a flow diagram (see fig 1).	
	16b	Cite studies that might appear to meet the inclusion criteria, but which were excluded, and explain why they were excluded.	
Study characteristics	17	Cite each included study and present its characteristics.	
Risk of bias in studies	18	Present assessments of risk of bias for each included study.	

Section and topic	Item #	Checklist item	Location where item is reported
Results of individual studies	19	For all outcomes, present, for each study: (a) summary statistics for each group (where appropriate) and (b) an effect estimate and its precision (e.g. confidence/credible interval), ideally using structured tables or plots.	
Results of syntheses	20a	For each synthesis, briefly summarise the characteristics and risk of bias among contributing studies.	
	20b	Present results of all statistical syntheses conducted. If meta-analysis was done, present for each the summary estimate and its precision (e.g. confidence/credible interval) and measures of statistical heterogeneity. If comparing groups, describe the direction of the effect.	
	20c	Present results of all investigations of possible causes of heterogeneity among study results.	
	20d	Present results of all sensitivity analyses conducted to assess the robustness of the synthesised results.	
Reporting biases	21	Present assessments of risk of bias due to missing results (arising from reporting biases) for each synthesis assessed.	
Certainty of evidence	22	Present assessments of certainty (or confidence) in the body of evidence for each outcome assessed.	
Discussion			
Discussion	23a	Provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence.	
	23b	Discuss any limitations of the evidence included in the review.	
	23c	Discuss any limitations of the review processes used.	

Section and topic	Item #	Checklist item	Location where item is reported
	23d	Discuss implications of the results for practice, policy, and future research.	
Other information			
Registration and protocol	24a	Provide registration information for the review, including register name and registration number, or state that the review was not registered.	
	24b	Indicate where the review protocol can be accessed, or state that a protocol was not prepared.	
	24c	Describe and explain any amendments to information provided at registration or in the protocol.	
Support	25	Describe sources of financial or non-financial support for the review, and the role of the funders or sponsors in the review.	
Competing interests	26	Declare any competing interests of review authors.	
Availability of data, code, and other materials	27	Report which of the following are publicly available and where they can be found: template data collection forms; data extracted from included studies; data used for all analyses; analytic code; any other materials used in the review.	

Source: Page M J, McKenzie J E, Bossuyt P M, Boutron I, Hoffmann T C, Mulrow C D et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews *BMJ* 2021; 372 :n71 doi:10.1136/bmj.n71