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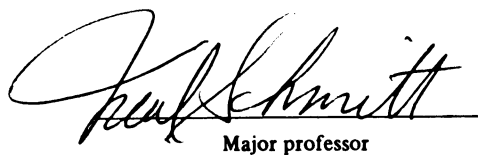
FATHER ABSENCE AND CHILD
PROBLEMS IN JAMAICAN FAMILIES

presented by

Jennifer S. Durst

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FATHER ABSENCE AND CHILD PROBLEMS IN JAMAICAN FAMILIES

By

Jennifer S. Durst

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ABSTRACT

FATHER ABSENCE AND CHILD PROBLEMS IN JAMAICAN FAMILIES

By

Jennifer S. Durst

Father absence in the United States and other patrifocal societies has been linked theoretically and empirically to many different child problem outcomes, including delinquency, aggression, teenage pregnancy, and lower competency beliefs. Jamaica and other Caribbean societies are more matrifocally based than that of the U.S. Thus, the role of fathers in the lives of their children is de-emphasized in comparison to U.S. culture. This de-emphasis may lead to different outcomes for Jamaican children who experience father absence than has been shown in U.S. samples. This study examined the relation between father absence and child problems in a Jamaican sample. No differences were found between father-present and father-absent children on level of youth behavior problems as reported by parents, teachers, and youth themselves. This finding suggests that the cultural differences between Jamaican and Western societies may impact the effect of father absence on children.

**In memory of my grandfather, Lester L. Laser, who exemplified dedication, hard work,
generosity, love, and the character to which I aspire.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1	
FATHER ABSENCE.....	3
Theoretical Consideration of Father Absence.....	3
Psychoanalytic Theory.....	3
Cognitive Theory.....	5
Essentialist and Evolutionary Theory.....	6
Ecological Theories.....	8
Empirical Considerations of Father Absence.....	9
Studies in the United States.....	9
Cross Cultural Studies.....	12
Father Absence in the Caribbean and Jamaica.....	13
CHAPTER 2	
POTENTIAL FACTORS IMPACTING THE EFFECT OF FATHER ABSENCE.....	21
Economic Loss.....	21
Family Relationships.....	24
Gender of the Child.....	26
Reason for the Absence.....	28
Contact with the Father.....	28
Reporter of the Child Symptoms.....	29
CHAPTER 3	
SUMMARY.....	31
Goals of the Present Study.....	33
Research Question and Hypotheses.....	33
CHAPTER 4	
METHOD.....	35
Sample.....	35
Measures.....	36
Socioeconomic Questionnaire.....	36
Socioeconomic Status.....	36
Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale II.....	37
Jamaican Youth Checklist.....	37
Jamaican Youth Self Report.....	37
Procedures.....	38

CHAPTER 5	
RESULTS.....	40
Preliminary Analyses.....	40
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the FACES-II Measure.....	40
Exploratory Principal Component Analysis of the FACES-II Measure...	40
Examination of ANCOVA Assumptions.....	41
Examination of Proposed Covariates.....	42
Primary Analyses of Father Status Groups.....	43
Repeated Measures ANCOVA for Total Problem Scores.....	43
Repeated Measures ANCOVA for Internalizing Problem Scores.....	44
Repeated Measures ANCOVA for Externalizing Problem Scores.....	44
Repeated Measures ANCOVAs for the Syndrome Scores.....	45
Correlations between Parent and Youth Reports.....	46
Secondary Analyses for Reason for Father Absence Groups.....	47
Examination of ANCOVA Assumptions and Covariates.....	47
ANCOVAs for all Three Problem Types.....	48
Summary of Results.....	50
CHAPTER 6	
DISCUSSION.....	52
Limitations of the Current Study.....	59
Implications for Future Research.....	61
Conclusion.....	62
REFERENCES.....	65
APPENDICES.....	77
Appendix A: Table 1.....	77
Appendix B: Table 2.....	78
Appendix C: Table 3.....	79
Appendix D: Figure 1.....	81
Appendix E: Table 4.....	82
Appendix F: Table 5.....	83
Appendix G: Figure 2.....	84
Appendix H: Table 6.....	85
Appendix I: Table 7 and Table 8.....	86
Appendix J: Table 9.....	87
Appendix K: Table 10.....	88
Appendix L: Table 11.....	90

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Percentages of Father Status and Gender Groups

Table 2 - Percentages of Sample at each Smith Scale SES Level

Table 3 - FACES-II Items and Component Loadings for the Jamaican Sample

Table 4 - Mean Levels for Total Problem Scores for each Father Status Group by Gender

Table 5 - Mean Levels for Internalizing Problem Scores for each Father Status Group by Gender

Table 6 - Mean Levels for Externalizing Problem Scores for each Father Status Group by Gender

Table 7 - Correlations for Parent and Youth Reports for the Three Problem Scores

Table 8 - Mean Differences between Youth and Parent Reports for the Three Problem Types

Table 9 - Summary of Nonsignificant Results of Interest

Table 10 - Summary of Significant Results of Interest for Total Sample

Table 11 - Summary of Significant Results of Interest for Father-Absent Subjects

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Total Problem Scores of each Gender for both Reporters

Figure 2 - Externalizing Problem Scores of each Gender for both Reporters

INTRODUCTION

Given the wide cultural differences that exist among humans, it is conceivable that the concept of a father may be different across societies and that the absence of a father leads to variable outcomes for children in one society versus another. Yet in all known cultures, the role of the father is recognized (Munroe & Munroe, 1992). In addition, the traditional Western family structure, which includes the provider father and homemaker mother, has generally been lauded by social scientists as the structure that produces the most psychologically healthy children. The opposite belief is also held: that families that deviate from this traditional structure are likely to produce negative effects for children. However, there is little empirical evidence that 'non-traditional' families characterized by maternal employment, extrafamilial childcare, and role reversal of parents, lead to more deviant results for children (Lamb, 1999).

Yet, both psychological and biological theorists (e.g. Bereczkei & Csanaky, 1996; Furman & Furman, 1989; Kirshner, 1992; Lewis, 1991) and empirical evidence (e.g. Gulati & Singh, 1987; Hilton & Devall, 1998; Levai, Ackerman, Kaplan, & Hammock, 1995; McClanahan & Teitler, 1999; Srinivasan & Raman, 1987; Stanley, Weikel, & Wilson, 1986) provide support for the claim that single parenthood and the lack of a father are associated with negative child outcomes. Many empirical studies, however, have been based upon work within western industrialized societies and white, middle-class populations. According to ecological psychological theories (Bronfenbrenner, 1992), societal and cultural differences may impact the effects of father absence on

children. This impact may display itself directly by affecting the meaning a father has in a child's life and change the father absence-child outcome relationship.

CHAPTER 1

FATHER ABSENCE

Theoretical Considerations of Father Absence

Psychoanalytic Theory

Different psychological theorists have implicated father absence in the possible difficulties of children. Psychoanalytic theorists posit that young children in one-parent families have difficulties during the phallic-narcissistic phase and subsequent problems progressing to the oedipal stage. Difficulties progressing to or establishing oedipal dominance can, in turn, affect superego formation. During their phallic phase, all children wish to elicit parental appreciation that challenges their feelings of low self-worth (Furman & Furman, 1989). In addition to this appreciation, the ego ideal model provided by fathers can help to compensate children's feelings of smallness and helplessness (Kirshner, 1992). Yet, children from single-parent households may feel an urgency to maintain the pleasing relationship with their remaining parent, sometimes to the detriment of their own desires. This maintenance may also interfere with children utilizing their own resources or developing trusting, appreciative relationships with others. These problems hinder their progression to the oedipal phase leaving children with the more primitive personality characteristic of the phallic-narcissistic phase, including lowered self-esteem, an avoidance of new challenges, and the tendency for feelings to be easily hurt (Furman & Furman, 1989).

Entering latency age with the personality characteristics of the phallic phase may create symptoms in children that include temper outbursts and unruly behavior. This type

of behavior may stem from the children's attempt to externalize the punishing role to their parents in an avoidance of the severity of their own superego introject, which may include the feeling they have to hurt or kill themselves (Furman & Furman, 1989). Superego formation may also be hindered by the lack of a father's representation of social order and adherence to time schedules, leading to difficulty for children in following societal rules. Inaccurate time perception is associated with impulsive behavior and an inability to delay gratification, which has been linked with antisocial behaviors. Additionally, without a father present to provide discipline and set constructive limits, children may be less likely to develop internal controls and internalize moral standards (Biller & Salter, 1989).

The father also plays an important role during the separation and individuation process. The father can come to represent the non-mother space in comparison to the home base of the mother. Using this representation, the child can safely explore "non-mother space," helping to develop a sense of self and independence (Lewis, 1991). The triangular configuration of two parents and a child is also important to female children's later development. The lack of opportunity to resolve the oedipal triangle stemming from father absence may deny girls the interpersonal skills necessary for later heterosexual functioning (Biller & Salter, 1989).

The absence of a parent may also create anger in young children at both the absent and remaining parent. It is difficult for children to express this anger and the accompanying destructive wishes toward the remaining parent, the loss of whom is a very real possibility to the child who has already lost one parent (Furman & Furman, 1989). After the loss of a parent, children may struggle between the conflicting desires to deny

their loss and confront it along with the accompanying feelings of anger and hurt (Rafman, Canfield, Barbas, & Kaczorowski, 1997). In a study of children who had lost a parent in war, children's play reflected their need to reenact their loss and its accompanying negative emotions in their play. Compared to other children who lived in areas where deaths due to war occurred, 93% of the children who had lost a parent recreated the loss in play whereas only 20% of the comparison children referred to death in their play. Yet, after reenactment of the loss, the majority of the children's behavior reflected their anxiety and desire to deny the loss through sudden termination of the play sessions (Rafman, et al., 1997).

Father hunger, an affective longing for the missing parent, is another possible result of the lack of contact with and knowledge of a father that accompanies father loss (Erickson, 1998; Lewis, 1991). In the case of father hunger, children experience their relationship with their father as a void (Lewis, 1991). In later life, children may attempt to fill this void with unhealthy substitutes such as food, drugs and alcohol, sexual acting out, or violence (Erickson, 1998).

Cognitive Theory

According to Piaget, concrete thinking and egocentrism characterize the thinking of young children (Kuhn, 1992). This egocentrism and the inability to reason abstractly that accompanies concrete thinking may cause children to misunderstand the reasons their fathers leave and attribute the leaving to themselves (Erickson, 1998). This line of thinking may lead children to worry that others about whom they care will also leave them, causing them to believe they are unlovable or unworthy of love. It may be even more difficult for children to avoid these cognitions if the reason for the fathers' absence

can be viewed as the fathers' choice, which is the case with most types of separation besides non-self-inflicted death (Erickson, 1998). Similarly, separations from parents may elicit cognitions of helplessness and rejection, which could evoke feelings of depression and sadness (Sandler, Reynolds, Kliewer, & Ramirez, 1992).

Essentialist and Evolutionary Theory

The essentialist framework posits that the source of many child difficulties stem from the absence of fathers in children's lives (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). The essentialists claim that mothers and fathers develop fundamentally different parenting behaviors because of their biological sex differences. They stress that men make a singular contribution to the development of children, specifically for male children for whom fathers provide a male role model for gender identity development.

Like the essentialist framework, the evolutionary theory of socialization posits that the negative impact of father absence stems from biologically influenced factors (Berezkei & Csanaky, 1996). According to this theory, father-absent children will mature earlier, leading to higher levels of non-compliant behavior and increased sexual behavior. These children are also hypothesized to form less stable pair bonds than do children from intact families. As a result of father-absent children's lower expectations for paternal investment for childrearing and beliefs in the instability of pair bond relationships, they learn different ideas about the routes to reproductive success than father-present children. Father-absent boys learn that short-term mating, not paternal investment, leads to reproductive success. This short-term mating strategy will lead to a higher effort in competing for mates, which, in turn, leads to a greater degree of risk-

taking and risk-prone behavior according to Darwinian theory (Bereczkei & Csanaky, 1996).

Girls without fathers learn that males cannot be expected to assist with childcare and that paternal care is not necessary for reproduction. This belief by father-absent girls may lead to more out-of-wedlock pregnancies. In addition, evolutionary theory posits that the instability to which father-absent children are exposed may lead them to adopt r-selected strategies. R-selected behavior strategies include earlier sexual activity and younger first reproduction, producing higher numbers of offspring, and less-stable family systems. The unstable environment leads to the adoption of such strategies because these behaviors increase reproductive fitness under such conditions. In turn, selection rewards reproductive fitness, leading to a survival of the species (Bereczkei & Csanaky, 1996).

Despite these evolutionary claims, some investigators argue that theories, such as evolutionary theory and the essentialist framework, that rely heavily on the notion of fathers as the sole socializing agents of male behavior for children overlooks the adaptability and resiliency of the human species (Teidje & Darling-Fisher, 1995). Silverstein and Auerbach (1999) relate the argument that mothers' and fathers' treatment of children does not vary significantly, pointing to the fact that fathers' socializing contributions are not all that unique. Yet, there is evidence that mothers and fathers do behave differently with their children, providing different experiences and socializing milieus. Evidence from U.S. studies has shown that fathers participate in more stimulating and functional play, express less physical affection, and are more harsh and less demanding than mothers (Lamb, Ketterlinus, & Fracasso, 1992; Shek, 1998). The differential treatment by mothers and fathers may also depend upon the gender of the

child, especially during infancy and adolescence (Lamb, Ketterlinus, & Fracasso, 1992). For example, fathers play more and a wider variety of games with their infant sons than with their infant daughters, whereas mothers generally do not differentiate between male and female infants. Despite this evidence for parental behavioral differences with children, it is unclear if these findings generalize across different cultures.

Ecological Theories

In many developmental theories, psychological development was conceived as an individual process; biological and intrapsychic systems interacted in an orderly and sequential way to create similar developmental outcomes (Yamamoto, Silva, Ferrari, & Nukariya, 1997). Some argue that the intrapsychic focus of developmental theories separate children from their environments, are products of Western-European society and psychology, and overlook the development that may be typical of a major portion of the world's children (Kagitcibasi, 1985). The psychological theories (e.g. psychoanalytic, social evolutionary) that posit that paternal absence has a universal detrimental effect on children's behavior regardless of their cultural environment are ones that may be guilty of such separation. These theories posit that the circumstances of father absence, and its inevitable intrapsychic or evolutionary repercussions, will create similar developmental outcomes for children regardless of cultural context.

Theories such as ecological and cultural-context posit that there are many social and ecological factors that influence and affect the developing child. The ecological model of child development proposes that conditions of the larger social system affect children's development, causing them to acquire similar values, attitudes, and behaviors that stem from the experience of those social conditions (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). These

social conditions interact with the intra-individual characteristics over a person's lifetime to produce the characteristics of that person (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). The cultural-context theory (Cole, 1992) asserts that the interaction between the inner mechanisms of a child and the social conditions of his environment must be examined through a third lens of culture. Both the biological and environmental forces contribute to behavioral development, but the developmental outcome of their interaction may differ depending upon cultural context. While certain psychological disorders may stem from biological roots that are common to all humans, the symptom expression and behavioral manifestations of those disorders are affected by an individual's cultural surroundings (Yamamoto, Silva, Ferrari, & Nukariya, 1997). According to the cultural context model, father absence may prompt differential behavioral manifestations for children depending upon their cultural context.

Empirical Considerations of Father Absence

Studies in the United States

U.S. researchers have linked father absence to such negative child and adolescent outcomes as school dropout, delinquency, aggression, sex role difficulties, teen pregnancy, and reduced educational and occupational attainment (e.g. Avison & Gotlib, 1993; Hilton & Devall, 1998; Levai, Ackerman, Kaplan, & Hammock, 1995; Lykken, 1998; McClanahan & Teitler, 1999; Menaghan, 1996; Stanley, Weikel, & Wilson, 1986). Children in military families, who may regularly experience prolonged periods of father absence, commonly experience behavior changes, such as decline in school performance and disciplinary problems, when their fathers are away (Jensen, Grogan, Xenakis, &

Bain, 1989). Levai et al. (1995) found that deployment of fathers and their subsequent absence placed children at higher risk for psychiatric hospitalization.

Mott et al. (1997) found a positive association between both externalizing and internalizing problems, as measured by the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), and the absence of a father in the homes of male children, even after controlling for such background factors as maternal stressors and economic circumstances. In another study employing the CBCL, children in separated or divorced families were twice as likely as children in two-parent families to have internalizing and externalizing scores that surpass clinical cutpoints (Gotlib & Avison, 1993). Following divorce or separation, both single mothers and single fathers of school-aged children reported significantly more child externalizing problems, like lying and cheating, bragging, and destruction of property, than married mothers. Single mothers also reported significantly more internalizing difficulties such as sadness, depression and fear in their children than did married parents (Hilton & Devall, 1998).

Even after controlling for the effects of family size, place of residence, and education and race of parents, McClanahan and Sandefur (1994) found that growing up in a single parent household doubled children's risk of dropping out of school. Similarly, children raised by one biological parent had lower standardized test scores and higher levels of absenteeism than those raised in two-parent families. In an investigation of the effect of one-parent households on high school grades and tests scores, Mulkey, Crain, and Harrington, (1992) found that poor parental supervision and school-related behavioral difficulties, such as tardiness, absenteeism, and not doing homework, were the

most important in explaining the relationship between lower grades and living in a father-absent household.

In a review of several large, nationally representative, longitudinal data sets, McClanahan and Teitler (1999) found that the increase in the rate of teen childbearing ranged from 50% to 145% for daughters from father-absent homes when compared to those from intact families. Some researchers argue that the increase in teen pregnancy may stem from female adolescents' sexual acting out in response to the breakup of their parents' marriages or the presence of a new stepparent. This acting out may lead to an earlier than planned initiation of sexual activity, which, in turn, increase their chances of becoming pregnant (McClanahan & Teitler, 1999).

Other studies have also provided evidence for a relationship between status offenses, such as truancy, school disciplinary problems, running away, and broken homes (Free, 1991). Several analyses report that approximately 70 percent of juveniles, who are in jail for serious crimes, including murder, were raised in father-absent homes. This 70 percent occurrence of father absence also holds for elementary school children who had difficulties with truancy, theft, vandalism, assault, and arson (Lykken, 1998). Lykken (1998) calculates, using the current base rate of fatherlessness of adolescents, that children reared without fathers have a seven-time greater risk for social pathologies than those children raised by both parents. Male delinquents who lost their fathers before the age of six had a significantly higher recidivism rate than those from father-present homes (Biller & Salter, 1989).

Cross-cultural studies

Some cross-cultural investigations also lend support to the father-absence-child problem relationship. An investigation of Asian-Indian children revealed that a prolonged separation (greater than 3 months) before the age of 5 from fathers or both parents significantly increased children's risk of later development of a child psychological disorder (Srinivasan & Raman, 1987). In another investigation of Indian children, Gulati and Singh (1987) found that father-absent children scored significantly worse than father-present children on measures of several personality traits, including ego strength, excitability, scholastic mental capacity, and self-control. Makikyro et al. (1998) found that Finnish adults who resided in single-mother households as children, as opposed to two-parent families, displayed an elevated risk of developing a hospital-treated personality disorder, alcoholism, or depression. In a retrospective study of Hungarian adults, males that grew up in father absent households reported higher levels of rule-breaking and delinquent behavior like fighting and other violent activities as teenagers than those raised in father present homes (Berezkei & Csanaky, 1996).

In addition to negatively affecting child behavioral outcomes, father absence has been linked to children's poorer social and adaptive functioning. In an investigation of preschool children, those whose fathers were absent due to divorce or separation for eight months or more scored significantly lower on a measure of social adjustment than children from intact families (Stanley, et al., 1986). These results showed that the father-absent children were less able to solve real-life interpersonal problems involving sharing a desired toy and dealing with maternal anger. Adaptive functioning, which includes a socialization domain involving a child's interaction with and sensitivity to others, as well

as domains of daily living and communication, was also found to be affected by the presence or absence of a father. In an investigation of African American second and eighth graders, those children who had a father figure living in their home scored significantly higher on the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales than those children without fathers living with them (Dunn & Tucker, 1993).

Though much of the multiple-study survey research has been consistent in linking negative child outcomes like educational and occupational attainment with father absence, it is still difficult to conclude a causal relationship because of the inability to conduct experimental research in this area. It is impossible to randomly assign families to father-absent and intact groups, and so control for possible external variables that may accompany father-absent families and account for the negative child outcomes (McClanahan & Teitler, 1999). Instead, it is important to continue to analyze large, longitudinal datasets, controlling for variables associated with children's outcomes and adding to the body of evidence.

Father Absence in the Caribbean and Jamaica

The effects of father absence in the Caribbean may differ from those found in nations that prescribe to a Western-European family structure (e.g. U.S., India, Finland). The normative family and social structure found in these societies that have been the focus of much of the father absence research does not always apply in the Caribbean (Williams & Finley, 1997). Throughout Caribbean societies, there is wide variability in household composition and family relationships, ranging from common occurrences of nuclear families, single parent households, and extended family arrangements (Flinn, 1992). In Jamaica, three types of family structures are often found: the nuclear, patrifocal

family, the matrifocal family, and the quasi-matrifocal family (Dechesnay, 1986). The patrifocal family is similar to those described as the ideal or traditional in many Western societies, consisting of the provider father and homemaker mother who live in a home defined as the father's. The matrifocal family also subscribes to certain sex-role expectations, but the family resides in the mother's home (or that of her mother). The quasi-matrifocal household is one consisting of a single mother and her children living in the mother's or maternal grandmother's home. In addition, the mother is often visited by one or more males, usually the children's father(s). Though these latter two structures are termed matrifocal and the lineage of the family follows through the women, they still hold the patriarchal ideals of sex-role expectations (Dechesnay, 1986).

This mix of matrifocal emphasis and patriarchal ideals stems from the history of slavery in Jamaica (Dechesnay, 1986). The majority of Jamaican people are descended from Africans enslaved by the British. The British slaveholders did not encourage marriages among slaves; indeed marriages between slaves were illegal. Yet, female slaves were rewarded to have children that continually increased the workforce. The extraresidential mating system that derived from these two enforcements continues today. Additionally, it was the master of the female slave who was considered owner of the children; hence, children followed the maternal lineage, creating a weakened role for the father. Matrifocality was bolstered by the legacy of independence found among West African women (Dechesnay, 1986); this independence is even greater among Jamaican women (Gopaul-McNicol, 1993). During the nineteenth century after emancipation, matrifocality was encouraged first through the labeling of those wanting to legally marry as social climbers and, second, by the emigration of men that left a greater number of

women in the country. Despite the historical and cultural roots of matrifocality in Jamaica, the cultural influence of the English colonists is also pervasive in that the patriarchal family structure is still seen as the ideal. Still, among the lower class, the matrifocal family is the mode and neither the churches nor the culture at large exert pressure to conform to or reinforce patriarchal norms (Dechesnay, 1986). Women in Jamaica are traditionally viewed as strong and independent (Gopaul-McNicol, 1993), and hold prominence in the society as the heads of households, the links in kinship networks, and economic providers (Sargent & Harris, 1992). There are more single mothers in Jamaica than in any of the other West Indian Caribbean islands (Gopaul-McNicol, 1993) and the stigma they face as single mothers is not as great as in more patriarchal societies.

Matrifocality, and the accompanying detached paternal role, that followed from slavery still appears to influence the relationship between fathers and their children in Jamaica and the Caribbean. It is generally held that, in Caribbean mid-level subsistence societies, there is a low level of involvement between fathers and their children in the children's immediate environments (Munroe & Munroe, 1992; Williams & Finley, 1997). Within these subsistence societies, the primary goal of a father is to ensure the physical survival of children, providing food, clothing and shelter (Harkness & Super, 1992). More time must be dedicated to income-generating labor, leaving little free time for fathers to spend with their children in social or caretaking contexts.

In the matrifocal Black Carib society of Belize, in a sample of 3- to 9-year-old children, Munroe and Munroe (1992) found that over half of the Black Carib children had fathers who were absent from the children's daily lives. In addition, the fathers who were present spent relatively little time on caretaking duties of their infants (0% of time) or in

the social environments of their older children (7%). These levels of father absence and caretaking are consistent with other studies of Caribbean societies (Flinn, 1992; Williams & Finley, 1997). This level of father caretaking is far lower than generally found in societies such as the United States. In countries such as the U.S., where the labor needed to provide the basic requirements of food and shelter falls below that needed in developing nations, more of a father's time can be spent in caretaking and play activities with his children. Harkness and Super (1992) found, in a study of Cambridge, Massachusetts families, that fathers reported spending 24%-46% of their time at home caretaking for or interacting with their children.

It is argued that this lack of involvement by fathers in the caretaking and social lives of children in subsistence societies can be traced to the differing parental goals found in different types of societies. Because the major objective of fathers is to secure the physical survival of their children, fathers spend time focusing on economic security for their families (Harkness & Super, 1992). Economic necessity may require fathers to make long commutes or live outside the home during the week in order to secure employment (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). Therefore, relatively little of the fathers' time is spent concerned with the psychological or behavioral development of their children. Though the amount of quality time U.S. fathers spend with their children varies depending on family type and paternal characteristics (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996), it is reasonable to assume that, on average, fathers from an economically secure society such as the United States may have more time available to focus on their children's psychological lives than in Jamaica (Harkness & Super, 1992). In West Indian societies, the mother, for the most part, is responsible for the emotional well being of her children

and is accountable for their psychological health and difficulties (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993).

The need to secure economic resources may be what causes the Jamaican father to absent himself from the family. In Jamaican society, men are expected to support their children financially, even when separated from the family (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). Just as the necessity to find adequate employment may take fathers from their homes for long days and even entire weeks, many Jamaican men migrate from rural areas to urban ones or to other countries in order to economically support their families. In fact, in a study of children in Jamaica who had experienced early childhood separation, migration of the parents to other countries was the principal reason for the separation (Wray & McLaren, 1976). Migration has been and continues to be an important part of life in the Caribbean since Emancipation in 1834, as people have sought opportunities to combat and adapt to the poor socioeconomic conditions prevalent at home (Foner, 1998; Thomas-Hope, 1998). It was one of the few roads people could follow in order to improve their economic status and its success in doing so for many people has made migration an institutionalized part of Jamaican life. Far from abandoning or absenting from the family, migrants intend to return home after securing resources abroad that will facilitate acquiring important assets such as land and a home. While migrants are abroad, they generally maintain links with their households through regular visits, taking part in decision-making, and sending money and goods (Thomas-Hope, 1998). Though migrant fathers leave their families to attempt to improve the economic standing of their families and continue to remain connected to them, some Jamaican men may abandon their

families out of their embarrassment over not being able to adequately provide for their families (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993).

Studies have shown that co-residence between Caribbean fathers and their children increases their interactions with each other (Flinn, 1992). Additionally, in an investigation of a community in Trinidad, infants in father-absent homes received lower levels of care from all caretakers, except grandparents, than those in father-present homes (Flinn, 1992). Non-residential fathers' interactions with their children may be lessened even further by remarriage of either the fathers or their ex-wives. Fathers in Trinidad not living with their children interacted less frequently with their children after they remarried and interacted significantly less with their children after their ex-spouses remarried (Flinn, 1992). Stepfathers reported that they worried about the support their stepchildren received from their biological fathers because this indicated a possible continuing sexual relationship between the children's mother and the biological father. Yet, stepfathers also do not want to spend their own social and economic resources on stepchildren. These beliefs may leave children in stepfamily households with few resources or forced to move to their grandparents' homes (Flinn, 1992).

Some investigators have found that Caribbean fathers' interactions with their children increase when children reach adolescence and adulthood. Father-daughter interaction peaks during the period of late adolescence, which may involve the father's role in "guarding" the daughter from poor mating relationships (Flinn, 1992). There is evidence that the presence of a father in the home may shield daughters from teenage and unwanted pregnancy. In a study comparing pregnant or once-pregnant teenage girls with never-pregnant girls in urban Jamaica, Keddie (1992) found that only 53.5% of girls in

the pregnancy group had a father (or father figure) living with them compared to 75% of the non-pregnant group. Girls without father figures were 2.7 times more likely to have been pregnant than those living with fathers. However, there was no significant difference on pregnancy rates between father-present and father-absent girls living in the rural areas of Jamaica, where 68% of never-pregnant girls and 66% of pregnant or once-pregnant girls lived with their fathers. The difference in the effect of father presence between rural and urban residents of Jamaica may stem from the differing family structures often found in these two regions. Rural Jamaican children are more likely to live in close proximity to extended family members than their urban counterparts, who may be isolated from their relatives. The presence of greater social support for rural children may counteract the possible negative effects of father absence. Additionally, finding a greater father-absence effect in urban areas may be linked to the fact that urban residents in Jamaica are more influenced by Western culture (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993) and so may conform more to the traditional Western ideal of the importance of fathers than their rural counterparts.

In patrifocal cultures where fathers are believed to be more important than mothers and that emphasize male superiority, the loss of a father may be a great deprivation to children and lead to negative child outcomes (Robin & Spires, 1989). Also, it may seem that the impact of father absence would not be as great in Caribbean societies that are more female-centered, where women play a more culturally prominent role, and where father-absence is normative for a variety of culturally-approved reasons (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993; Sargent & Harris, 1992). Yet, few studies have looked at the

effect of father-absence on children in Jamaica and the possible effects of cultural and normative differences.

CHAPTER 2

POTENTIAL FACTORS IMPACTING THE EFFECT OF FATHER ABSENCE

Despite the clinical and empirical evidence cited in the U.S.-based literature, there is still considerable debate whether the negative child outcomes associated with father absence are directly related to that absence or instead result from other factors or some of the consequences of single parenthood. These factors and consequences include such variables as economic instability, family relationships, child gender, amount of child contact with the absent father, and reason for the fathers' absence (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998; McClanahan & Teitler, 1999).

Economic Loss

Several theorists and investigators have posited that the problems of U.S. father-absent children stem from the resulting economic deprivation associated with single-parenthood (Biller & Salter, 1989; Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997; Hilton & Devall, 1998; McClanahan & Teitler, 1999; Mott, Kowaleski-Jones, & Menaghan, 1997; Robin & Spires, 1989). The loss of income that generally follows the father's leaving the family may constrain female-headed families to live in poorer neighborhoods and the children to attend poorer quality schools (McClanahan & Teitler, 1999). Fewer economic resources and the need to secure those resources may also force female-headed families to move residences more often. One-parent families have been found to move more frequently than two-parent families, leading to a possible loss of community resources, such as youth programs, facilities, and extrafamilial childcare, that may serve to protect children from deleterious outcomes (McClanahan & Teitler, 1999).

In a comparison of single mothers, single fathers, and two-parent dyads of 6-10-year-old children, Hilton & Devall (1998) found that positive parenting, such as comforting and spending time together, was significantly lower for single mothers following divorce than for mothers in intact families. Single fathers actually became more positive in their parenting. It is possible that it is more difficult for mothers to take on the economic provider role in the family following marital dissolution than it is for fathers to undertake the primary caretaker role in the U.S. Women may generally face societal hurdles that hinder their efforts to provide economically for their families (Hilton & Devall, 1998). In addition, in the U.S., the economic losses generally following marital separations may create stress for single mothers, leading to a reduced capacity to parent (McClanahan & Teitler, 1999).

Yet, many researchers have found that controlling for economic situations of families do not completely eliminate all of the negative effects of father absence on children (Lamb, 1999). In their analysis of the Panel of Income Dynamics (PSID) data, McClanahan and Sandefur (1994) found that differences in income between one- and two-parent families accounted for only half of the effect for high school dropout and teen pregnancy. On measures of grades and test scores in high school, both children from mother-absent and father-absent homes scored similarly despite the fact that mother-absent households reported significantly higher incomes (Mulkey, et al., 1992). This finding points to the fact that it is the parental absence, not income level, which is the important variable in the relationship. Likewise, children in stepfamilies, whose incomes are similar to those of biological two-parent families, do as poorly as children in single-mother households on outcomes of educational achievement. It is possible that the initial

decline in income stemming from separation cannot fully be remedied by the economic gains accompanying remarriage (McClanahan & Teitler, 1999).

The likelihood of families falling into the lower socioeconomic bracket found in the United States may be even greater in Jamaica. Jamaica experiences problems with overpopulation and poverty (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). In the wake of policies implemented by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Jamaican economy has deteriorated. As a result of these policies, unemployment has increased, wages have declined, the cost of food, utilities, and transportation have risen, and social services like education and health have been cut back (Sargent & Harris, 1992).

The employment opportunities for Jamaican women regularly consist of nonprofessional, lower-end jobs (Dechesnay, 1986) and unemployment rates for urban Jamaican women are still higher than those of men; in 1985, the unemployment rate among adult women was 23.7% and 21.7% for female heads of households (Sargent & Harris, 1992). Secondly, there tends to be a relationship between social class and family structure in that higher-class families more commonly follow the European patriarchal norm of two-parent families (Dechesnay, 1986; Gopaul-McNichol, 1993).

On the other hand, a father may be absent from the family because he has migrated to find adequate employment. If he succeeded in his job quest, then the single-mother family receiving monetary support from an absent father may be better off financially than two-parent families where the father works locally. In this way, the economic status of father-absent Jamaican children depends upon the reason for the father absence. The possible economic differences between father-absent children in Jamaica may lead to variable outcomes in their level of behavior problems. This

difference may not hold for U.S. father-absent children, who, as a group, have been shown to fall into a lower SES bracket than children from two-parent homes.

Family Relationships

Many factors may affect the relations between single mothers and their children. Divorce and single parenthood may lessen parents' ability to adequately parent (Erickson, 1998; Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998; Hilton & Devall, 1998). Zill (1996) argues that, though economic difficulties, marital conflict, and parents' emotional problems explain some of the child outcomes of single-mother families, parent-child relationships and interactions are the most important in influencing children's outcomes. Others agree that positive family relations are related to good child outcomes (Hilton & Devall, 1998). Dysfunctional family relationships will intensify the consequences of parental separation on child behavior, whereas warm and cohesive relationships between remaining family members will aide children's adjustment (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998).

In Jamaica, it may be more important to assess family relationships rather than only mother-child relations. The West Indian family consists of an extended family system that includes non-related individuals as well as blood relations (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). Both the biologically and non-blood related members may help with household duties and childrearing, and may play an important role in the lives of both the mother and the child. Therefore, the relationships between all of these "family" members may influence Jamaican child outcomes just as Zill (1996) claims mother-child relations do in the United States.

The social support mothers receive may also affect their relationships with their children. Single parents, especially those who are recently divorced or separated, may experience social isolation from their coupled friends and also cannot count on respite from childcare that may be provided by a spouse (Lamb, 1999). The lack of social support and subsequent increase in stress that often accompanies single parenthood may interfere with a parent's relationship with her children and her ability to provide them with the necessary emotional support.

The lack of social support felt by many single mothers in the United States may not exist for the single Caribbean mother, who usually has an extended family network available in her community. Also, the social stigma that may accompany single-parenthood in some societies where the two-parent household is the ideal (Tiedje & Darling-Fisher, 1996) may not be an issue in the Caribbean, where father absence and lack of father involvement with his children is more common place and women traditionally possess a more prominent role in society (Sargent & Harris, 1992; Williams & Finley, 1997). Although, as in the United States, the patriarchal ideal of a two-parent family still lingers in Jamaica, possibly creating a label and feeling of dysfunction among some matrifocal families (Dechesnay, 1986).

It is also hypothesized that parental supervision suffers in the face of the lack of a second adult in the home, leading to higher rates of child misbehavior (Free, 1991; Mulkey, et al., 1992). Yet, children in stepfamilies, which would not suffer from lack of two-parent supervision, reportedly do not fare much better than those in single-parent homes (Erickson, 1998; Mott, et al., 1997), though the presence of a stepfather can affect children differentially based on their gender (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998).

The presence of a stepfather can lead to an accretion of difficulties for male children while prompting the reappearance of symptoms in girls (Mott, et al., 1997). It may be that stepparents do not supply the supervision and parental involvement that may be implied by their presence in the home. Children may actually resent the presence of a stepparent and, for this and other reasons, stepparents may avoid some of their responsibilities as parents (Lamb, 1999).

The presence of a stepparent may be even more detrimental to Caribbean children. Investigations of Caribbean communities find that males interact significantly more with their genetic children than with their stepchildren, even when all are located within the same household (Flinn, 1992). In addition, the percentage of conflictual interactions between fathers and their biological offspring is significantly lower than with their stepchildren. Caribbean father informants claimed that the less amicable relationships with stepchildren and greater care of blood children was “natural” in their society (Flinn, 1992).

Gender of the Child

There is some debate whether male or female children are more negatively affected by father absence (Free, 1991; Mott, et al., 1997). One reason females may be more affected is that females rely more upon their families than males and so disruption in the family will have a greater impact on them. In addition, the loss of parental supervision that accompanies father leaving more greatly impacts females whose behaviors are generally more carefully supervised than those of boys (Free, 1991). This is especially true in Caribbean societies where parents attempt to maintain control over girls well into adolescence (Keddie, 1992; Sargent & Harris, 1992) and girls are

answerable to parental rules (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). This supervision effect was apparent in the father-daughter relationship in Trinidad where interaction between father and daughter was highest during the daughter's adolescence when dating behavior begins (Flinn, 1992). Lack of supervision by the father during this period may result in daughters entering problematic romantic relationships. Conversely, single mothers in Jamaica were found to exert strict control over female children during adolescence that sometimes served to socially isolate or create resentment leading to rebellion and acting out by the daughters (Keddie, 1992).

Evidence is also available to point to more deleterious outcomes for male children due to father absence (Free, 1991; Gulati & Singh, 1987). In his review of the literature on parentally-separated children, Gabel (1992) concluded that boys are more vulnerable than girls to the development of antisocial and conduct behaviors when their fathers are absent from their lives. It is possible that boys display more manifest antisocial behaviors in response to a father leaving because of the disruption of a stronger father-son bond (Mott, et al., 1997). In Indian children, when prolonged separations from fathers of three months or more occurred in children's lives before the age of five, the risk for development of later psychopathology was 9.1 times greater for boys than for girls (Srinivasan & Raman, 1987).

In Jamaica, though overcontrol of female daughters by single mothers may produce deleterious effects, the cultural preference for girls in Jamaica (Sargent & Harris, 1992) may lead to more problematic effects for male children in Jamaican mother-headed homes. There is evidence that Jamaican women's attitudes toward men tend toward ambivalence or negativity, and that this attitude is also evident in women's opinions of

male children (Sargent & Harris, 1992). Yet, it is not clear whether these attitudes toward males affect Jamaican women's attitudes toward their male children. Generally, the mother-son relationship is a strong one that continues after the son is married (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993).

Reason for the Absence

Many of the investigations cited earlier either focus on father absence resulting from a single reason such as divorce, or do not differentiate between the reasons for father leaving. Yet, some studies have shown that there are differential effects of father absence depending upon the reason for the absence (Biller & Salter, 1989; Robin & Spires, 1989). In Jamaica and other West Indian societies, the reasons for parental absence may differ from those found in the United States. Child fostering, or the transfer of one's biological children to friends or relatives, occurs in West Indian society and can happen when the child is any age. If friends or relatives are not an option, children are sometimes transferred to the state (Sargent & Harris, 1992). In addition, as mentioned earlier, migration to urban areas or other countries for employment reasons is a primary reason for parent-child separation in Jamaica (Foner, 1998; Shepherd, 1998; Thomas-Hope, 1998). Generally, migrant fathers remain closely linked with their Jamaican households, command higher status within their native communities, and increase the economic status of their families (Thomas-Hope, 1998).

Contact with the Father

Many theorists and investigators posit that children's well being is better served if parents are reliably available, even if they do not share a residence with the children (Biller & Salter, 1989; Erickson, 1998). Though the cultural norm in the Caribbean calls

for minimal father involvement with his children, contact with their fathers may benefit Caribbean children as much as it may children in more patrifocal societies. In a study of father contact with their adolescents in Trinidad, Williams and Finley (1997) found that adolescents who reported higher levels of contact with their fathers perceived their fathers to have higher affective quality of fathering. In other words, children believed that lower father contact led them to feel disadvantaged emotionally.

Reporter of the Child Symptoms

A final factor that may impact the relation between father absence and child behavior problems is the person reporting the child behavior. Many of the empirical studies presently cited make use of different types of instruments to measure child problem behavior and utilize different reporters of such behavior. Usual reporters employed in studies include parents, teachers, clinicians, and the children themselves via both interview and self-report. When parents report on their children's difficulties, the results are mixed; some investigations find a significant relation between child behavior and father status (e.g. Dunn & Tucker, 1993; Hilton & Duvall, 1998) while others do not (e.g. Mott, et al., 1997). The few studies that employ teacher reports of child behavior also do not find a significant relationship between the teachers' reports and father status (e.g. Golombok, et al., 1997; Jensen, et al., 1989).

Interestingly, though, all of the studies in which children reported upon their own internal states found their reports of difficulties such as anxiety, depression, and personality deficits to be significantly related to father absence (e.g. Gulati & Singh, 1987; Mulkey, et al., 1992). Child reports produce significant results in studies that also utilize parent and teacher reports, even when these latter reports do not yield a significant

child problem-father absence relation (e.g. Golombok, et al., 1997; Jensen, et al., 1989). These differential results associated with the type of reporter and the prevalence of significant results associated with child reports jibe with investigations that have found higher CBCL problem scores reported by children than their parents (Lambert, Lyubansky, & Achenbach, 1998). It may be that children are more in tune with their internal states than their parents or teachers; research has found that this may be especially true for female adolescents (Sourander, Helstela, & Helenius, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

SUMMARY

Currently, much of the research examining the father absence-child problem relationship has differed greatly on methodological variables and instruments, making it difficult to compare the results (Najman et al., 1997). In addition, many studies have utilized small convenience or clinical samples, and have not employed larger, more representative samples. Also, in addition to focusing mainly on patriarchal societies, investigations have generally concentrated on white, middle-class subjects within those societies.

Despite the differences in methodology, most investigations in culturally patriarchal societies like the U.S. and India have found that father absence in these societies and samples is related to child psychological and behavioral difficulties. In these societies, kinship ties are aligned with the father's family and male children are generally preferred, and receive better treatment than female children. These findings from patrifocal societies support the psychoanalytic and essentialist theories that propose a universal detrimental effect of father absence on children. Yet, according to ecological and cultural-context theories (Cole, 1992), any effects of the interaction between father absence and a child's intrapsychic mechanisms are filtered through culture. As the cultural-contextual framework asserts, the "two factors labeled biology and the environment...do not interact directly. Rather, their interaction is mediated through a third factor, culture" (Cole, 1992, p. 735). A behavior needs to be considered within its cultural context or we risk misconstruing its meaning and its psychological importance.

The relation between father absence and child difficulties may not hold in more matrilocally-oriented cultures; the absence of a father may not be as psychologically important in matrifocal cultures as it is in patrilocally ones. In matrifocal societies, women's roles are central both as economic providers and as caretakers of the home and children (Sargent & Harris, 1992). Kinship ties are linked by female members of the family and, in fact, married men usually have closer bonds with their mothers than with their wives (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). Though there is still a social stigma applied to single parenthood in Jamaica, the matrifocal structure may provide single mothers with more social and economic support from her family than that found in the U.S. Typically, extended families in Jamaica and other Caribbean societies supply added security for children and assistance in childrearing (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993).

Yet, despite the matrifocal focus of Jamaican society and the normative nature of father absence, children may still suffer detrimental effects stemming from father-absence. The discipline and leadership role that the father provides may be lacking in female-headed households. Though mothers typically are the main disciplinarians, fathers are the enforcers of rules and behavior in West Indian families (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). Without this influence, children may tend to "act-out" more, causing higher reports of externalizing behaviors (e.g. hyperactivity, aggression). This higher report may be especially true in the case of parents and teachers because Jamaican society does not tolerate disobedience and disrespect of parental or elder authority (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). Additionally, research has shown that father-absent children report significantly higher levels of internalizing difficulties (e.g. depression, anxiety) than father-present children. This result may be heightened in Jamaica where children

generally report higher levels of internalizing problems than do children in the U.S. (Lambert, et al., 1998). Like with parents' and teachers' higher reports of externalizing problems, Jamaican children's greater tendency to report internalizing problems may also stem from the societal cultural value of respect for authority.

Goals of the Present Study

The goal of the present investigation was to determine if the presence of father figures in the home of Jamaican children leads to different levels of behavior problems compared to children whose fathers are absent. Both parent and child reports of behavior problems were examined for differences between three groups of children: those with a father figure present in the home, those whose father figure was not living in the home, and those with no father figure. The study utilized a large, representative sample of 11- to 12-year-old children. Comparisons were also made between children depending upon their gender. The possible effects of socioeconomic status and family relations were also examined.

The present investigation is important because it looks at the effects of father absence on child outcomes in a society that differs culturally from the patrilocally-based societies generally studied. In addition, child behavior problems are measured utilizing the reports of two different informants (parent and child). This design allows a comparison of reporters in regards to the outcome variables, as well as possible interactions between the type of reporter and other independent variables.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The primary research question of the present investigation concerns the effect of father absence on the behavior of Jamaican children. Some psychological theories argue

that the negative effect of father absence is a universal process. Differences in behavioral and emotional problems between father present and father absent children in Jamaica would provide added support for this argument. Conversely, no differences between the groups points to a possible effect of Jamaican cultural and societal norms that contrast with societies that are traditionally studied. This latter finding would furnish support for ecological theories that contend that the context in which a child is embedded influences that child's behavioral and emotional development.

A secondary question of the study concerned only the father-absent children. It was hypothesized that problem behavior would differ among the father-absent children depending upon the reason for their fathers' absence. Children who had been abandoned by their fathers would exhibit the highest level of behavior problems, those children whose father had died or whose parents had divorced would display fewer difficulties, and children whose fathers had migrated would present with the least amount of behavior problems. Additionally, it was hypothesized that the amount of contact a child has with his/her father and the length of the separation from the father figure would affect the level of behavior problems. Specifically, it was supposed that those kids with less contact and longer separation from their fathers would exhibit more behavior problems.

CHAPTER 4

METHOD

Sample

The sample of the present study consisted of a cohort of 1,152 children and one of their parents/guardians who participated in a larger epidemiological study investigating the effects of prenatal, neonatal, and early childhood factors on children's later cognitive and behavioral outcomes. All of the children were born between September 1 and October 31, 1986, giving them a mean age of 11.36 (SD=2.75) years at the time the data in the current study were collected. At the time of their birth, the children and their families were residents of Kingston or St. Andrew parishes (i.e. Southwestern Jamaica). The sample includes 113 children who were very low birthweight¹ (i.e. less than 1,500 grams at birth) and who reside throughout the nation of Jamaica.

1,009 children in the study had information available regarding the living status of their father figures, and both parent and youth reports of internalizing, externalizing and total problem scores. Father figures lived with their children in 522 cases and served a father role, but were absent from the home for 361 of the children. 126 of the children had no father figure. Of the children, 481 were male and 528 were female. All of the children were of African descent. Significant sample characteristics for variables of interest are listed in Table 1.

¹ The VLB children had a higher percentage of their fathers living at home (64.2%) compared to the non-VBL children (50.9%). The VBL children also had a lower percentage of fathers absent from the home (27.5%) and absence of father figure (8.3%) when compared to the non-VBL subjects (36.8% and 12.3%, respectively).

Measures

The Socioeconomic (SES) Questionnaire

The SES Questionnaire was designed for use in the epidemiological study. It contains questions assessing sociodemographic information, the child's social environment, the child's physical environment, and the child's home environment. The demographic section queries respondents about such information as name changes of the child and mother, child's place of birth, and age and sex of the child. The social environment section includes questions focusing on the relationship between the child's current parent figures, the age, occupation, and education of parents, the child's siblings, as well as questions describing possible parental separations. Information about the child's community, home facilities and environment, school environment, and religious attendance is assessed in the physical environment section.

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

The socioeconomic status of each child's family was measured by a Jamaican scale designed by Smith (1984). This survey uses five levels of parental/guardian occupation to measure SES, including top managerial and professional (5), supervisory and highly-skilled (4), semi-skilled and clerical (3), unskilled manual and service (2), and casual worker and unemployed (1). Most of the present sample fell into the unskilled and semi-skilled trade categories (see Table 2). The mean SES in the current sample was 2.55 (SD = .78), falling below the midpoint of the scale. This mean is similar to those found in previous Jamaican samples employing the Smith scale. Examining a combined urban and rural sample, Lambert, Lyubansky, & Achenbach (1998), cited a mean of 2.9

(SD = .9). Lambert, Knight, Taylor, & Newell (1993) found the mean of their sample to be 2.8 (SD = .9).

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale-II (FACES-II)

The FACES-II (Olson, Portner, & Bell, 1982) was designed to measure the level of family functioning. With U.S. samples, the 30-item measure consists of two constructs, cohesion and adaptability. With U.S. samples, the alpha reliability of the FACES-II has been shown to be .87 for cohesion, .78 for adaptability, and .90 for the total scale. The test-retest reliability (4-5 weeks) for the cohesion scale is .83 and .80 for the adaptability scale (Olson, et al., 1982). For the present study, some questions on the FACES-II were modified to more accurately reflect Jamaican idiomatic expression (Hohn & Krichmar, 1995). For example, the item “Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times” from the original FACES-II was changed to “Family members help each other emotionally and in other ways during difficult times” in the revised Jamaican version. The Jamaican version of the Faces-II measures items on a 3-point response scale (0-2).

Jamaican Youth Checklist, Jamaican Youth Self Report

Child psychopathology was assessed by the Jamaican Youth Checklist (JYC) and the Jamaican Youth Self Report (JYSR), which were administered to parents and children, respectively. These two measures were modeled after the Child Behavior Checklist and Youth Self Report (Achenbach, 1991a-c), but have been modified to more accurately reflect idiomatic expression and child problems encountered in Jamaica. The JYC includes the same competence and problem items of the CBCL except that the question about the child attending a special class was omitted because few Jamaican

schools have such classes. In addition, 35 items were added to the JYC that are believed to be clinically relevant for Jamaican children. The JYSR and the YSR are similar, though 29 items deemed clinically relevant for Jamaican children were added to the JYSR (Lambert, et al., 1998). The additional items on the two Jamaican measures include such questions as “Throws stones at objects,” “Talks foolishness or nonsense,” and “Begs at home or on the street.” Previous analyses have shown similar reliability and validity between the JYC and CBCL (Lambert, Knight, Taylor, & Achenbach, 1994). Test-retest reliability of the JYSR for a sample of Jamaican adolescents was found to be $r=.91, p<.01$ (Lambert, et al., 1998). In the current sample, coefficient alphas were $\alpha=.917$ for the JYC total problem scale, $\alpha=.816$ for the JYC internalizing problem scale, and $\alpha=.842$ for the JYC externalizing scale. For the youth reports, alphas were $\alpha=.913$ for the total problem scale, $\alpha=.825$ for the internalizing scale, and $\alpha=.820$ for the externalizing problem scale.

Procedures

Children, whose mothers participated in the original data collection at the time of their pregnancy, were identified through school records, health records, and government records (e.g. registration of births) to determine their eligibility for participation in the present data collection. Following identification, children’s parent(s)/guardian(s) were sent information letters and consent forms via their children’s schools and invited to participate. Interviewers administered measures to parents and children separately. Interviews generally took place at the child’s school from Fall, 1997 until Spring, 1999. For the most part, parents completed their interview early in the day while children completed their assessment throughout the school day. All the interviewers were

qualified registered nurses who completed a three-week training session before the commencement of interviews.

According to Cohen's (1977) guidelines to ensure power, the present sample size provided adequate power given the proposed repeated measures analyses. For a small effect size ($f=.10$, $\eta^2=.01$) at alpha level of .01 and an independent variable with three groups (e.g. father status, reason for father absence), a sample size of $N=1,000$ ensures power of .99 for a main effect, for a 2-way interaction for a 2×3 factorial design (e.g. reporter and father status), or for a 3-way interaction for a $2 \times 2 \times 3$ design (e.g. gender, reporter, and father status). For a 2-level independent variable main effect, the power level guaranteed by a $N=1,000$ sample size, an alpha level of .01, and a small effect size is .97. The size of the sample considered presently for the primary analysis ($N=1,009$) exceeded the sample size benchmark. For the secondary analysis involving only the father-absent subjects, the sample size of $N=526$ ensures a power level of .84 for a main effect for a factor with three levels (e.g. reason for father absence) at the same alpha and effect size levels cited above. A similar power level would hold for a 2-way 2×2 interaction. Cohen's (1977) criteria was used to judge effects sizes with effects accounting for 1% to 5.9% of the variance equaling small effects, those accounting for 5.9% to 13.8% are medium effects, and 13.8% and greater equal large effects.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Confirmatory factor analysis of the FACES-II measure.

Though the language of the FACES-II was changed to better reflect the idiomatic expression of Jamaica, the FACES-II measure has yet to be normed in the Caribbean. To test whether the factor structure developed employing U.S. samples were mathematically equivalent for the Jamaican sample, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. There are several different fit indices that are recommended to test the fit of the data to the model. Absolute fit indices, such as the chi-square test, provide information about how closely the model fit comes to perfect (Maryuma, 1998). In the present case, the chi-square test did not indicate a good fitting model, $\chi^2 = 2216.339 (404)$, $p = .000$. However, absolute and Type I indices are not as consistent across sample size as Type II fit indices, and chi-square especially, are sensitive to sample size (Maryuma, 1998). Two recommended Type II indices are the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the incremental fit index (IFI). Presently, both of these indices indicate an appropriate model fit (TLI=.962; IFI=.967). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) also suggests a good fit of the model, RMSEA=.043; a value of less than .05 is recommended as one indicating a good fitting model (Marayuma, 1998).

Exploratory principal component analysis of the FACES-II measure.

Because of the discrepancy between the chi-square tests and some of the other fit indices, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was executed to determine a FACES-II

factor structure that best fits the Jamaican data. A preliminary non-rotated principal component analysis was performed to determine the number of components to retain. According to the Scree plot and Kaiser's criteria to retain components with eigenvalues greater than 1, two components were retained for rotation. A principal component analysis was then executed with Promax rotation and the solution converged in three iterations. Twenty-one items loaded on the first factor while nine items loaded on the second factor (see Table 3). The first of the new components had an $\alpha=.814$ and can be described as positive family relations, characterized by spending free time with family members, sharing interests and chores, and helping family members emotionally. The second component had an $\alpha=.733$ and appears to represent negative family relations, characterized by avoiding family members, being closer to people outside the family, and being afraid to say what's on one's mind with other family members. The two components accounted for 26.374% of the total variance and correlated $r = -.353$. These two components were employed in all the analyses.

Examination of ANCOVA assumptions.

Repeated measures ANCOVAs, employing reporter of behavior as the repeated measure factor, were conducted to test for mean differences in child's behavior problems between the different father status groups and gender of the child. The father status levels included father figure living with the child, father figure not living with the child, or no father figure. Behavior measures consisted of total problem scores, internalizing problem scores, and externalizing problem scores. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that the data upheld the assumptions for a repeated measures ANCOVA model. Assumptions for ANCOVA include the homogeneity of variance of the dependent

variables across all factor levels. This assumption is especially important when there are unequal sample sizes across groups, which is the case in the present analyses. For the total problem scores, the variance matrices for the dependent variables were not equivalent across groups according to Box's M test, $F(15, 572051.6) = 1.799, p = .029$. This assumption was also violated when considering externalizing problem scores, $F(15, 572051.6) = 2.633, p = .001$. The assumption of the equality of variance matrices was upheld when internalizing problems were examined, $F(15, 572051.6) = 1.661, p = .062$. An examination of the variances of each dependent variable within the father status groups of each gender revealed that the smallest sample (no father figure) was paired with the smallest variance, which would lead to the F-tests to be biased downward. Therefore, any significant results for the total and externalizing problem scores can be considered valid and are discussed in the following sections.

Examination of proposed covariates.

One-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were performed to test whether the factor levels differed significantly on the covariates of interest, SES and the two FACES-II scales. There was a significant difference between the father status groups on the negative family relations scale of FACES-II, $F(2, 1103) = 6.119, p = .002$. This scale was included in the ANOVA model as a covariate. There were no significant differences between any factor levels of father status or gender for either SES or the positive family relations scale of the FACES-II, indicating that it is not necessary to control for the effect of these variables and include them in the model. The FACES-II negative relations scale did not significantly differ for the child gender groups. For all analyses, significance levels were set at $\alpha = .05$.

Primary Analyses of Father Status Groups

To address the study's main question of possible differences between father status groups, three separate 2 (gender) x 2 (reporter) x 3 (father status) repeated measures ANCOVAs were performed with reporter as the within-subjects factor and responses to the total problem, externalizing problem, and internalizing problem scales on the JYC and JYSR as dependent variables. Cell sizes range from $n=59$ for females with no father figure to $n=264$ for males with a father figure present in the home².

Repeated measures ANCOVA for total problem scores.

First, considering total problem scores, the 2 (gender) x 2 (reporter) x 3 (father status) ANCOVA revealed there was no significant between-subjects effect for father status. Overall, father-present children had lower total problem scores than father-absent youth, but the differences are not significant, $F(2, 1,002)=.178$, $p=.837$, $\eta^2=.000$. There was a significant within-subject two-way interaction between reporter and child gender, $F(1, 1002)=4.736$, $p=.03$, $\eta^2=.005$, as well as a significant two-way interaction between reporter and the negative family relations scale of the FACES-II, $F(1, 1,002)=5.786$, $p=.016$, $\eta^2=.006$. In addition, there was a significant three-way interaction between reporter, child gender, and father status, $F(2, 1,002)=3.298$, $p=.038$, $\eta^2=.007$ (see Figure 1). This latter result indicated that the reported gender differences in behavioral problems related to father status vary according to the reporter, either parent or youth. According

² Primary analyses were also conducted with a sample that excluded the 113 very low birthweight children. Results for total and internalizing problem scores do not change. For the externalizing problems, the three-way interaction between reporter, child gender, and father status becomes non-significant when the VBL children are removed. Because of the possible downward bias of the F-value due to heterogeneity of variance, it is difficult to say if this difference is valid (F-value decreased to 2.575 from 3.287).

to parents' reports, the total problem scores were lower for father-absent and no father-figure males than they are for father present males. According to parents, female father-absent children had higher problem scores than either father-present or no father figure girls. Youth, on the other hand, reported that male children who do not have a father living in the home experience more total problems than father-present males while father-present females exhibited only slightly higher total problem scores than father-absent or no father figure girls.

There was a significant within-subjects main effect for reporter, $F(1, 1,002) = 236.672$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .191$, indicating that parents and their children differ in their assessment of the children's total behavioral problems. Children reported higher levels of behavior problems than their parents did. See Table 4 for a list of the mean total problem scores for each father status group by gender.

Repeated measures ANCOVA for internalizing problem scores.

The 2 (gender) x 2 (reporter) x 3 (father status) ANCOVA for the internalizing problem scores also revealed no differences between the father status groups. Again, though father-present children exhibited fewer internalizing problems than either father-absent or no father figure children, the differences were not significant, $F(2, 1002) = .671$, $p = .511$, $\eta^2 = .001$. There was a significant within-subject effect for reporter, $F(1, 1002) = 315.319$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .239$. Again, youth reported significantly higher levels of internalizing problem behavior than their parents did (see Table 5).

Repeated measures ANCOVA for externalizing problem scores.

Similar to the other two problem scores, the 2 (gender) x 2 (reporter) x 3 (father status) ANCOVA for externalizing problem scores demonstrated no between-subject

effect for father status, $F(2, 1002)=.259$, $p=.772$, $\eta^2=.001$. There were several significant within-subject effects. As with the total problem scores, there was a significant three-way interaction between reporter, child gender, and father status, $F(2, 1002)=3.287$, $p=.038$, $\eta^2=.007$ (see Figure 2). In addition, there were two significant two-way interactions, the first between reporter and child gender, $F(1, 1002)=5.798$, $p=.016$, $\eta^2=.006$, and the second between reporter and the negative FACES-II scale, $F(1, 1002)=8.191$, $p=.004$, $\eta^2=.008$. As with the other problem types, youth reported higher levels of externalizing problems than parents, reflected in a significant difference for reporter, $F(1, 1002)=22.715$, $p=.000$, $\eta^2=.022$ (see Table 6).

Repeated measures ANCOVAs for the syndrome scores.

Analyses of the total, internalizing, and externalizing scores were followed up by 2 (gender) x 2 (reporter) x 3 (father status) ANCOVAs for each of the eight syndrome scores. The total problem score is made up of eight syndrome scores: withdrawn, somatic complaints, anxious/depressed, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, delinquent behavior, and aggressive behavior. The withdrawn, somatic complaints, and anxious/depressed syndrome scores comprise the internalizing problem score. The externalizing problem score includes the delinquent behavior and aggressive behavior syndromes.

In general, results for the individual syndrome scores closely reflected the findings for the three larger problem scores. As with the three major problem types, there was no significant between-subjects effect for father status for any of the individual syndrome scores. Like the total problem scores, the ANCOVAs for the social problems and attention problems syndrome scores revealed a significant three-way interaction

between reporter, child gender and father status, $F(2, 1002)=3.920$, $p=.020$, $\eta^2=.008$ and $F(2, 1002)=3.749$, $p=.024$, $\eta^2=.007$, respectively. For both the social problems and attention problems syndromes, the gender differences in behavioral problems related to father status varied according to the reporter in the same way as it did for the total problem scores, as depicted in Figure 1. In addition, there was a significant two-way interaction between reporter and child gender for the social problems syndrome score, $F(1, 1002)=4.033$, $p=.045$, $\eta^2=.004$, as well as a significant two-way interaction between reporter and the negative family relations scale of the FACES-II, $F(1, 1002)=5.162$, $p=.023$, $\eta^2=.005$, for the attention problem syndrome scores.

Similar to the results for externalizing problem scores, the ANCOVA for the aggressive behavior syndrome scores revealed a significant three-way interaction between reporter, child gender, and father status, $F(2, 1002)=3.617$, $p=.027$, $\eta^2=.007$, a significant two-way interaction between reporter and child gender, $F(1, 1002)=7.107$, $p=.008$, $\eta^2=.007$, and a significant two-way interaction between reporter and the negative FACES-II scale, $F(1, 1002)=6.154$, $p=.013$, $\eta^2=.006$. The pattern of findings for the aggressive behavior syndrome three-way interaction mirrored that found for the externalizing problem scores (see Figure 2). Analogous to the three larger problem types, there were significant within-subjects main effects for reporter for all individual syndrome scores except for aggressive behavior. Youth reported higher level of problems than parents for every syndrome.

Correlations between parent and youth reports.

The significant difference found between reporters in the three ANCOVAs was followed up with Pearson correlations between parent and youth reports for total problem

scores, externalizing problems, and internalizing problems (see Table 7). Correlations were extremely low for all reporter pairs across all problem types ranging from $r = -.041$ to $r = .000$. None of the correlations were significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level. Further analysis of the correlations by child gender revealed little difference in the correlations compared to those found for the total sample. Mean differences between reporter pairs for each of the problem scores were also calculated. The differences ranged from 1.21 for reports of externalizing problems, and 13.39 for total problems (see Table 8).

Secondary Analyses for Reason for Father Absence Groups.

Though no differences in behavior problems were found between the father-absent and father-present groups, further analyses were conducted to investigate possible differences and moderators within the father-absent sample. For this follow-up analysis, the father-absent group included both the father figure absent from the home and no father figure groups considered in the earlier analyses. Repeated measures ANCOVAs were performed employing only the father-absent subjects with reason for father absence serving as the between-subjects factor and the amount of contact with birth father and length of separation from father serving as continuous variables of interest. ANCOVAs were conducted for each of the three problem types. Reasons for father absence included migration ($n=141$), divorce/death/separation ($n=263$), and abandonment/never lived with the child ($n=122$).

Examination of ANCOVA assumptions and covariates.

Preliminary univariate analyses showed that there are no problems with normality within any of the reason for absence groups and there appear to be no extreme outliers. Cell sizes ranged from $n = 112$ for the abandonment group to $n = 233$ for the

divorce/death group. Covariance matrices were equal across groups for all three problem types according to Box's M test (for total problems: $F(6, 712369.4)=.328, p=.923$; for internalizing problems, $F(6, 712369.4)=.689, p = .658$; for externalizing problems, $F(6, 712369.4)=.419, p = .867$). One-way ANOVAs were performed to test whether the reason for absence levels differed significantly on the covariates of interest, SES and the two FACES-II scales. For both SES and the negative family relations scale of the FACES-II, the difference between reason for absence groups approached significance. For SES, $F(2,420)=2.866, p=.058$ and for the FACES-II scale, $F(2, 507)=2.963, p=.053$. Further, post hoc tests revealed that the migration group was significantly lower than the divorce/death group on SES (Tukey's HSD, $p=.044$). These tests also revealed that the abandonment group reported significantly higher levels of negative family relations than the divorce/death group (Tukey's HSD, $p=.04$). Because of these differences, both of these covariates were controlled for in subsequent analyses³.

ANCOVAs for all three problem types.

The three 3 (reason for father absence) x 2 (reporter) repeated measures ANCOVAs were performed with amount of contact with father, length of separation, SES, and the negative family relations scale of the FACES-II included as continuous variables. There was no significant between-subject effect for reason for absence for any

³ Because the overall ANOVAs for the covariates were not significant at $\alpha=.05$, the analyses involving the father-absent subjects were also run without the covariates in the model. The results of these repeated measures ANOVA models revealed only one difference from the ANCOVA models described in the text. When covariates were removed, the reporter x reason interaction became significant for internalizing problem scores, $F(2, 352) = 3.248, p=.040, \eta^2=.018$. Youth report the lowest amount of problems for the divorce group with little difference between the migration and abandonment group on the level of problems. Parents report the divorce group as displaying the greatest number of problems with the migration group exhibiting the next highest level of problems followed by the abandonment group.

of the three problem types (total problems: $F(2, 279) = .268, p = .765, \eta^2 = .002$, internalizing problems: $F(2, 279) = .079, p = .924, \eta^2 = .001$, externalizing problems: $F(2, 279) = .809, p = .446, \eta^2 = .006$). This finding indicated that the reason fathers leave the family did not lead to differences in the level of behavior problems exhibited by the father-absent children. In addition, neither contact with father or length of separation from father appeared to impact the level of children's behavior problems.

For all three problem types, there was a significant within-subject interaction between reporter and the Faces-II negative family relations scale (for total problems: $F(1, 279) = 5.559, p = .019, \eta^2 = .02$; for internalizing problems: $F(1, 279) = 6.645, p = .01, \eta^2 = .023$; externalizing problems: $F(1, 279) = 5.103, p = .025, \eta^2 = .018$). This result suggested that parent and youth reports of problems differed depending on the level of the negative family relations they reported. It appeared that when the level of negative family relations is low, youth reported more problems than their parents, but as negative relations increase youth reported the same level of problems as parents did. There was a significant within-subjects effect for reporter for both total problem and internalizing problem scores, $F(1, 279) = 8.630, p = .004, \eta^2 = .03$ and $F(1, 279) = 14.945, p = .000, \eta^2 = .051$, respectively. Youth reports exceeded parent reports across all reason groups. In addition, there were significant between-subject effects for the negative family relations scale for total and externalizing problems (for total problems: $F(1, 279) = 6.414, p = .012, \eta^2 = .022$; for externalizing problems: $F(1, 279) = 7.265, p = .007, \eta^2 = .025$). It appeared that as negative family relations increase so did total and externalizing problems.

Summary of Results

In summary, there were no differences in any problem scores found between the father status groups nor was any difference found between the reason for father absent groups when considering only father-absent subjects. For father-absent subjects, length of separation from father and amount of contact with the absent father had no impact on level of behavioral problems reported.

When comparing the father status groups, there was a significant interaction between reporter, child gender, and father status when considering total problem and externalizing scores. For total problems, youth reported that no father figure and father-absent males experience more problems than father-present males, but indicated little difference between the female father status groups. Mothers reported lower total problem scores for father-absent males than for either father-present or no father figure boys. Conversely, mothers indicated higher problem scores for father-absent females than either of the other two female father status groups. For externalizing problems, youth reports displayed a similar pattern to that found with the total problems. Parents indicated that the externalizing problems of boys decrease slightly when the father is absent or there is no father figure. For females, parents reported the opposite with regards to externalizing problems: girls with no father figure displayed the greatest number of problems followed by father-absent girls and father-present girls.

When individual syndrome scores were considered, significant three-way interactions between reporter, child gender, and father status were found for the social problems syndrome and the attention problems syndrome scores, which mirrored that found for the total problem scores. A significant three-way interaction between reporter,

child gender, and father status was also found for the aggressive behavior syndrome scores. The pattern of this interaction was the same as that found for the externalizing problem scores. As with the three major problem types, all of the syndrome scores, except aggressive behavior, revealed a significant within-subject effect for reporter. In all cases, youth reported higher levels of problems than mothers did.

In addition, when considering total problem and externalizing problem scores, there was a significant interaction between reporter and the negative family relations reported both when comparing father status groups and when only considering father-absent subjects. This interaction was also significant for internalizing problems when examining only the father-absent subjects. When negative family relations are low, youth appeared to report higher levels of problems than parents did, yet, as negative family relation scores increase, the difference in the amount of problems described by each reporter disappeared.

When comparing father status groups and when only considering father-absent subjects there were significant differences between the amount of all problem types reported by youth and their parents. Youth reported more problems in every case. Correlations between parent and youth reports for all problem types were extremely small and non-significant. See Tables 9, 10, and 11 for a list of nonsignificant results of interest and significant results of interest for the total sample and father-absent subjects, respectively.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The goal of the present study was to determine if there were any differences in levels of behavioral and emotional problems between father-absent and father-present children in Jamaica. No such differences were found across all problem types and syndromes, and both parent and youth reports when comparing children who reside with their father figure, children who have absent father figures, and children with no father figures. This result differed from those of many of the empirical studies employing samples from the U.S. and other patrifocal societies, and suggests that differences between Jamaican and other Western societies may influence the impact that father absence has on children's development and behavior.

The lack of differences between the father status groups in the Jamaican sample may stem from a number of features of the Jamaican society and culture. As members of a West Indian society, Jamaicans hold the concepts of obligation and reciprocity among family members in high regard. Such concepts pervade the society as a type of unwritten rule (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). In following this rule, extended family members, friends, and neighbors may feel an obligation to assist in the caretaking of others' children and may provide a substitute father figure for father-absent children. In addition, it is not an uncommon occurrence in Jamaica for the family to include not only the nuclear family, but grandparents, aunts and uncles, or even friends. Each of these people normally has a role in the caring and rearing of the family's children (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). If

children are separated from or lack a father figure, there may be numerous people to whom the child can turn to for guidance.

Past research has shown that the presence of a substitute caregiver is a factor that differentiates resilient from non-resilient children. In a longitudinal study of children living on the island of Kauai, many of who had experienced the loss of a parental caregiver, the establishment of a close bond with at least one person served as a protective factor for the child. This person was usually a member of the child's extended family (Werner, 1995). That a substitute serves as a protective factor for children mirrors a finding in the organizational literature. This latter research points to the importance of the presence of leadership substitutes in organizations where directive leadership is lacking (Howell, Bowman, Dorfman, Kerr, & Podsakoff, 1990).

Just as the presence and obligation of extended family and friends may lead to father substitutes for children in Jamaica, it is also normative in the Jamaican society for fathers to be absent. In the representative sample of the present study, nearly half of the children had either no father figure or a father figure that was absent from the home. The normative nature of father absence in Jamaica may lessen its potential impact on children's behavior. This lack of impact would be hypothesized by the problem suppression-facilitation model (Weisz, Suwanlert, Chaiyasit, & Walter, 1987). This model asserts that features of a culture such as values and role expectations are related to the suppression of certain child behaviors and the facilitation of others. Though the biological development of Jamaican children is similar to those elsewhere, the values and attitudes of Jamaican families differ from those of families from other societies, leading to possible differences in the developmental outcomes and behavior of Jamaican children.

The prevalence of father absence and the promotion of father substitution by other family members may be values that facilitate a positive behavioral response of children in the face of father absence. In addition, the matrifocal nature of the Jamaican culture, which emphasizes the centrality of mothers and the superficiality of fathers in the lives of children, may serve to foster attitudes that reinforce normative behavioral outcomes when fathers are absent.

For instance, there are variations in parental support networks implied by the cultural differences, namely that there is more support for the single mother from family members, community members, and society at large in a matrifocal society. In Jamaica, there are fewer stigmas involved with being a single or unmarried mother than in most patrifocal societies. Previous research has demonstrated that the greater the amount of family support for mothers the fewer behavior problems exhibited by their children (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). In addition, an earlier study found that social support was more potent in single-parent families than in two-parent families (Weinraub & Wolf, 1983), suggesting that Jamaican children of single mothers may benefit more from the greater support their mothers receive.

Past studies of Jamaican children have also described behavioral and emotional differences that may stem from cultural differences. Lambert, Weisz, and Knight (1989) found that Jamaican children were referred to clinics for higher levels of overcontrolled problems while the referrals of American children stemmed more from undercontrolled difficulties. The authors cited cultural rule and childrearing differences between the two societies as possible explanations for the different referral reasons. Just as the culture of a child may affect this manifestation of his/her emotional and behavioral difficulties

through a variety of mechanisms, it may also influence how family structure acts upon children's behavior.

Another finding of the present study was the difference among cross-informants in their reports of the behavioral problems. Youth reported significantly higher levels of behavioral difficulties than mothers did for all three problem types - total, internalizing, and externalizing - and for all syndrome scores except aggressive behavior. In addition, for some problems, differences in parent and youth reports, respectively, were found to depend upon the gender and father status of the child. Specifically, for total problems, the social problems syndrome, and the attention problems syndrome, mothers reported more problems for father-present males than for either father-absent or no father figure boys. For girls, mothers indicated that the father-absent group displayed more total problems than the no father figure and father-present groups. Concerning externalizing problems and the aggressive behavior syndrome, parents again reported that father-present boys exhibited more problem behavior than either father-absent or no father figure male children. For female children, mothers' responses again indicated that the father-present girls displayed fewer problems than the father-absent and no father figure groups.

It is possible that mothers of father-absent boys have a higher tolerance for their behavior than do those mothers with a father figure present in the home. In general, the Jamaican culture expects a certain level of obedience and respect for authority from all children (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). Yet, more defiant and aggressive behavior, and a certain degree of directness and confrontation, is tolerated in boys when compared to girls (Brice-Baker, 1996; Gopaul-McNicol, 1993). In fact, some level of this type of

behavior may even be encouraged in Jamaican sons (Lambert, Knight, Taylor, & Newell, 1993). Yet, it is conceivable that fathers may not be as tolerant of such defiance and confrontational attitudes in their male children as are their mothers, leading to greater awareness and disapproval of these behaviors in two-parent families. A single mother's expectations about appropriate male child behavior may be more in keeping with Jamaican cultural beliefs when possible father-son confrontations are not a part of her daily life.

Jamaican mothers have higher expectations for the behavior of their daughters than they do for their sons. Daughters are expected to remain close to home and are generally more closely supervised than boys to ensure female children stay out of trouble, especially as they enter childbearing age (Sargent and Harris, 1993). When fathers are absent from the home, mothers may be more concerned about their daughters behavior and the possible lack of supervision stemming from father absence, leading to higher reports of problem behavior for girls, especially acting out behavior, by single mothers.

Youth exhibited similar patterns of responses for both total and externalizing problems. In particular, youth reported that boys' problems are highest for the no father figure group and lowest for the father-present group. Youth reported the opposite for girls. Father-present girls had the largest number of problems followed by the father-absent and no father figure groups. Boys reports may reflect a belief by male children that they are at a disadvantage when they lack a father figure or their father is absent from the home. Though male children in Jamaica are allowed express greater independence than girls, father-absent boys may have greater opportunity to roam from home and become involved in more problem behavior of which their mothers are not aware.

Unlike boys, as girls enter adolescence and their childbearing years, fathers in Jamaican families sometimes increase their supervision of and involvement in the lives of their female children. This behavior by fathers stems from an attempt to discourage male suitors and possible sexual activity. This increased supervisory behavior by fathers may be interpreted as overbearing by girls, leading to an increase in emotional difficulties and acting out behavior by these girls that may be hidden from their mothers. The higher reports of problems by father-present female children may reflect their admittance of this covert problem behavior.

Correlations between parent and youth reports for all problem types were far lower than those reported previously in countries such as the U.S., Finland, and Taiwan (see Briggs-Gowan, Carter, & Schwab-Stone, 1996; Sourander, Helstela, & Helenius, 1999, Yang, Soong, Chiang, & Chen, 2000). In fact, correlations in the present study indicated almost no agreement between the two reporters on any of the three problem scores. Also inconsistent with previous investigations is that the present findings indicated no difference in the agreement level for internalizing and externalizing problems. Past investigations have shown that the correlations for externalizing problems are more than twice as large as those for internalizing difficulties for both clinic-referred and non-referred Jamaican children (Lambert, Knight, Taylor, & Newell, 1993; Lambert, Thesiger, Overly, & Knight, 1990).

As with past research in other parts of the world (e.g. Sourander, Helstela, & Helenius, 1999, Yang, Soong, Chiang, & Chen, 2000) and in Jamaica and the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico (Achenbach, Bird, Canino, Phares, & Gould, 1990; Lambert, Lyubansky, & Achenbach, 1998), the adolescents rated themselves as having more

problems than did their parents. This was true especially for total problems and internalizing problems. This finding and the low correlations between parents and youth indicated that in this Jamaican sample, as has been shown in previous studies, adolescents may suffer from higher levels of distress than their parents are aware. As children approach adolescence, they may be less inclined to reveal their personal difficulties to their parents. Adolescents may also spend increasingly less time in the physical presence of their parents as they gain independence, and add activities and friends of their own to their lives. Less time spent between parents and children allows parents less opportunity to witness their children's behavior. The data collection in the present study occurred as the children were entering adolescence and their high school years. In Jamaica, this is the time of life when parents begin to allow their children a measure of independence and children begin to spend less time at home. In addition, the reports of the Jamaican mothers may not accurately reflect the behavior of their children. In West Indian families, the psychological lives of children is viewed as the responsibility of mothers (Gopaul-McNichol, 1993). If their children were having emotional or behavioral difficulties, mothers may underreport such difficulties because they do not want to feel accountable for their children's problems.

An additional finding of the present study was that differences in behavior problems among father-absent children were unrelated to the reason for the father's absence. This finding is unexpected because, unlike when divorce and abandonment may be the reason for the absence, migration is seen as a positive reason for father absence. Migration of Jamaicans to nations such as England and the U.S. is widespread. Moreover, the status of a family who has a member migrate is enhanced in the

community and it generally possesses more financial resources than other families (Thomas-Hope, 1998). The lack of a difference between the reason for absence groups may stem from the fact that, in the present sample, the migration group actually had lower SES on average than the other two groups. The abandonment and divorce/death groups did not differ when compared on SES. It is conceivable that the possible positive effects of higher status and the potential negative effects of lower SES of the migration group cancel each other out. This cancellation may cause the migration reason to have little influence on child outcomes and lead to few differences in child behavior between the groups.

Though it was not a primary focus of the study, the component structure found for the FACES-II in the present Jamaican sample mirrored that found in a previous study of Jamaican families (Kalogiros, Durst, Lambert, & Samms-Vaughn, 1999). This replication of factor structure provides evidence for the accuracy of the Jamaican family relations construct currently presented. Further duplication of this factor structure in future studies utilizing Jamaican samples is needed to contribute additional corroboration for this Jamaican family relations factor structure.

Limitations of the current study

The findings of the present study and the implications of those findings should be interpreted in light of the investigation's shortcomings. Focusing solely on cultural and societal values and behavior as an explanation of the differences in child behavior may overlook a more substantial analysis of other factors that may influence the results (Kagitcibasi & Poortinga, 2000). It may not necessarily be cultural or societal norms or attitudes of Jamaica that lead to a lack of a relationship between paternal absence and

child problems. There may be any number of variables, presently unmeasured, that cause father-present and father-absent Jamaican children to exhibit similar levels of behavioral problems. Because no specific measure was made of the level of matrifocal principles adhered to by each family, their beliefs about the importance of fathers, or the existence of possible father substitutes, it is not possible to link any of these specific cultural or societal features to the relationship between father absence and child behavior problems.

It is also conceivable that other microsystem variables (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) affect the children's behavior levels. Father absence is only one factor that contributes to family adversity, which has been linked to child problems and disorders. Rutter and Quinton (1977) created an index of family adversity that included family structure as well as measures of variables such as parental criminality and mental disorder, and large family size. When this family adversity index was controlled for, the differences in rates of psychiatric disorders found previously between rural and city children disappeared. It was the combination of variables, not just family structure alone, that mediated the relation between urban/rural status and psychopathology. In addition, a limitation of the current investigation is the lack of comparison of the specific family structure of the Jamaican children. Different findings may have resulted if children were grouped according to their Jamaican family structure, namely nuclear, matrifocal, or quasi-matrifocal, instead of only by father status.

Additionally, factors that focus on process, such as child-rearing behavior which may, in turn, affect children's behavior, and personal characteristics, like child temperament and the personality characteristics of parents, need to be considered within the model to determine their possible influence on children's behavior. As

Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1983) stated, the social address model, on which this study is based, “looks only at the social address - that is, the environmental label - with no attention to what the environment is like, what people are living there, what they are doing, or how the activities taking place could affect the child” (pp.382-3).

In addition, the present study is a cross-sectional one, comparing the behavior of children who, at the time of data collection, either had a father present in their household or did not. There were no measures of the children’s behavior prior to their father’s absence to compare with present behavior or for which to control. Consequently, it is possible that children’s behavior prior to their separation from their fathers is a better predictor of their pre-adolescent behavior than the father’s absence itself. Block, Block, and Gjerde (1986) found in a longitudinal investigation that male children of divorce exhibited undercontrolled and aggressive behavior prior to their parents’ divorce. These authors suggest that it is the conflict between parents prior to separation that affect boys’ behavior and development, more than the separation itself or the subsequent absence of one parent from the child’s primary household.

It should also be noted that despite the significance of some of the results, the effect sizes were quite small, which indicates that, in spite of statistical significance, the practical significance of these findings is questionable. Modest effect sizes were found for the significant interactions between reporter and negative family relations, and the three-way interaction between reporter, gender, and father status. In addition, when considering only father-absent children, there were small effect sizes for reporter differences and also for the between-subject effect for the negative family relations scale.

Implications for future research

In the future, a direct comparison between matched families from the U.S. and Jamaica would be warranted to investigate the influence of process and personal variables, allowing resolution of the possible ambiguity of interpretation of the present results. It would also be warranted to link specific cultural features of Jamaica to the father-absence-child problem relation. Specifically, measures of adherence to matrifocal beliefs, type of family structure, beliefs about the importance of fathers, and the presence of father substitutes may help to elucidate what societal and cultural features contribute to child outcomes in the wake of father absence. In addition to considering cultural features and more process, personal, and exosystem variables, future investigations should examine longitudinal factors such as children's previous behavior problems.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations of the current study, it is notable in that it is the first study to examine the effects of father absence on Jamaican youth. The study also elucidates the importance of the cultural context in which a child lives to the behavior s/he exhibits. Culture can affect the psychological meaning of a child's family structure, the behavioral manifestations associated with a disorder or psychological difficulty, and even the competencies a child exhibits. Though it is important to investigate variables that explore deeper than the social address of cultural context, the present study adds information to the growing body of literature demonstrating the importance of culture in child developmental outcomes. It is important to examine children in differing contexts in order to create a more complete picture of child development. Specifically, it is important to discover what the universal processes of development are and which ones

may be affected by differences in societal and cultural attitudes and norms. Future research on Jamaican children and families should attempt to isolate the specific cultural manifestations, such as matrifocal beliefs and extended family systems, which may affect family environment and child behavior. Clinicians and policymakers need to consider cultural influence in the interpretation of Jamaican children's behavior and treatment of emotional and behavioral problems.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table 1

Percentages of father status and gender groups

Father status	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Father figure present in child's home	51.73	522
Father figure absent from child's home	35.77	361
No father figure	12.50	126
Total	100.00	1,009
Gender	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Male	47.7	481
Female	52.3	528
Total	100.0	1,009

APPENDIX B

Table 2

Percentages of sample at each Smith scale SES level

Employment category	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Casual/unemployed (1)	3.4	1,009
Manual/unskilled (2)	51.3	1,009
Clerical/semi-skilled (3)	34.3	1,009
Skilled/supervisor (4)	9.9	1,009
Top manager/professional (5)	1.2	1,009

APPENDIX C

Table 3

FACES-II items and component loadings for the Jamaican sample

Positive Family Relations Component	
Item	Component Loading (2nd comp. loading)
Our family does things together	.617 (-.03)
Family members talk about problems and feel good about the solutions.	.610 (.01)
Family members like to spend their free time with each other	.552 (.05)
Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems.	.527 (.16)
Each family member has a say in major family decisions.	.522 (.04)
Family members share interests and hobbies (activities you do for fun on a regular basis) with each other.	.519 (-.07)
In our family everyone shares chores.	.483 (.02)
Our family comes together in the same room.	.480 (-.01)
Family members feel very close to each other.	.476 (-.26)
Children have a say in their discipline.	.459 (.34)
Family members know each other's close friends.	.458 (-.13)
In our family, it is easy for everyone to say what they think.	.434 (-.11)
Family members help each other emotionally and in other ways during difficult times.	.430 (-.19)
In solving problems the children's ideas are followed.	.430 (.26)
We shift household chores from person to person.	.423 (.13)

Family members talk to other family members about things they are thinking of doing.	.420 (-.05)
Family members go along with what the family decides to do.	.400 (-.20)
Family members say what they want.	.377 (.06)
When problems come up, we compromise (give a little, take a little).	.364 (-.02)
Discipline is fair in our family.	.362 (-.21)
We feel good about each other's friends.	.337 (-.07)
Eigenvalue: 5.550 (18.5% of variance)	

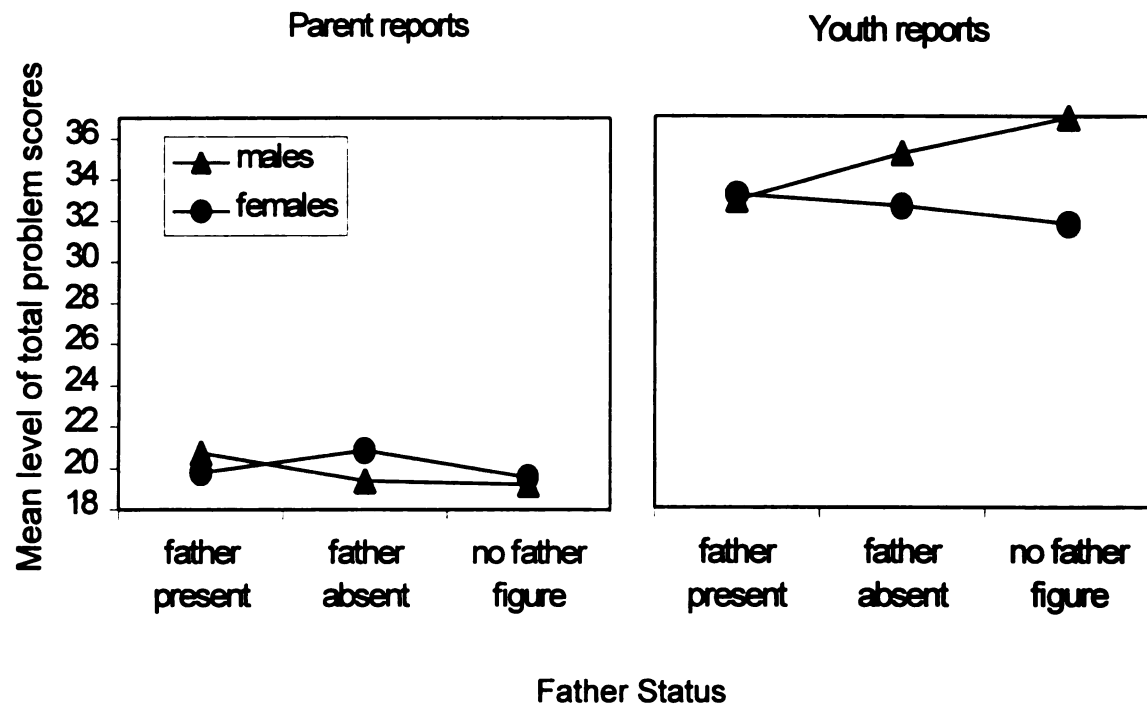
Negative Family Relations Component

Item	Component Loading (2nd Comp. Loading)
Family members feel closer to people outside the family than to other family members.	.620 (-.03)
It is hard to know what the rules are in our family.	.609 (.11)
Family members avoid each other at home.	.599 (.00)
Family members are afraid to say what is on their minds.	.580 (-.01)
It is difficult to get a rule changed in our family.	.557 (.16)
We have difficulty thinking of things to do as a family.	.552 (-.03)
In our family, everyone does his or her own thing.	.551 (-.03)
It is easier to talk about problems with people outside the family than with other family members.	.540 (.01)
Family members do things in twos rather than do things as a total family.	.431 (.00)
Eigenvalue: 2.362 (7.874%)	

APPENDIX D

Figure 1

Total problem scores of each gender for both reporters



APPENDIX E

Table 4

Mean levels for total problem scores for each father status group by gender

Group	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Parent Reports			
Males			
Father figure present	264	20.72	11.99
Father figure absent	158	19.37	11.05
No father figure	59	19.20	11.15
Females			
Father figure present	258	19.77	11.82
Father figure absent	203	20.86	11.71
No father figure	67	19.84	12.04
Youth Reports			
Males			
Father figure present	264	32.93	13.74
Father figure absent	158	35.20	14.96
No father figure	59	36.92	10.62
Females			
Father figure present	258	33.21	12.40
Father figure absent	203	32.63	13.59
No father figure	67	31.73	10.98

APPENDIX F

Table 5

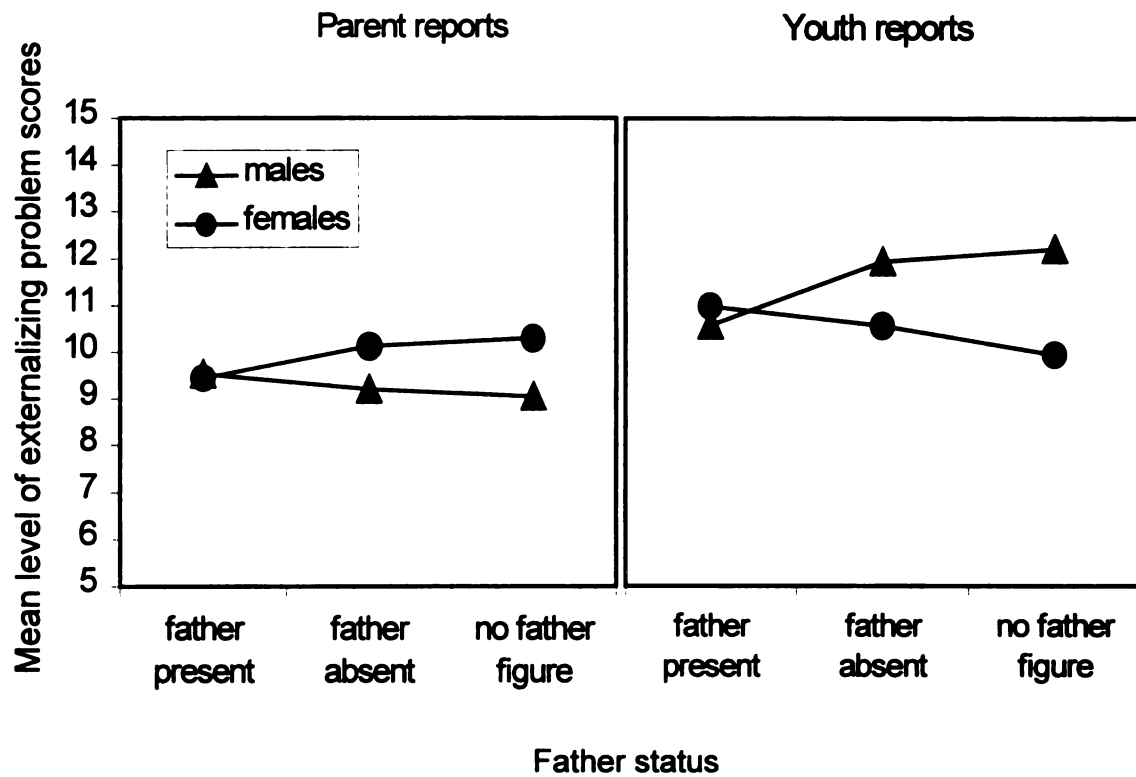
Mean levels for internalizing problem scores for each father status group by gender

Group	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Parent Reports			
Males			
Father figure present	264	9.06	6.20
Father figure absent	158	8.60	5.78
No father figure	59	9.42	6.39
Females			
Father figure present	258	8.40	5.75
Father figure absent	203	9.05	6.05
No father figure	67	7.99	6.16
Youth Reports			
Males			
Father figure present	264	17.67	8.45
Father figure absent	158	18.96	8.01
No father figure	59	18.95	6.07
Females			
Father figure present	258	18.03	7.29
Father figure absent	203	17.96	8.54
No father figure	67	18.10	7.46

APPENDIX G

Figure 2

Externalizing problem scores of each gender for both reporters



APPENDIX H

Table 6

Mean levels for externalizing problem scores for each father status group by gender

Group	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Parent Reports			
Males			
Father figure present	264	9.53	7.27
Father figure absent	158	9.20	6.24
No father figure	59	9.05	6.02
Females			
Father figure present	258	9.44	6.34
Father figure absent	203	10.12	6.62
No father figure	67	10.30	6.71
Youth Reports			
Males			
Father figure present	264	10.57	6.21
Father figure absent	158	11.93	7.45
No father figure	59	12.19	5.25
Females			
Father figure present	258	10.98	5.84
Father figure absent	203	10.55	5.98
No father figure	67	9.93	4.60

APPENDIX I

Table 7

Correlations for parent and youth reports for the three problem scores

Problem type	r	p
<u>N</u> = 1,009		
Total problems	-.020	.514
Internalizing problems	-.041	.180
Externalizing problems	.000	.993

Table 8

Mean differences between youth and parent reports for the three problem types

Problem type	<u>M</u> difference	<u>SD</u>
Total problems	13.30	18.00
Internalizing problems	9.40	10.17
Externalizing problems	1.26	9.11

APPENDIX J

Table 9

Summary of nonsignificant results of interest

Result	F (df)	p	η^2
Total problems			
Father status group difference	.178 (2, 1,002)	.837	.000
Reason for absence group difference	.268 (2, 279)	.765	.002
Internalizing problems			
Father status group difference	.671 (2, 1,002)	.511	.001
Reason for absence group difference	.079 (2, 279)	.924	.001
Externalizing problems			
Father status group difference	.259 (2, 1,002)	.772	.001
Reason for absence group difference	.809 (2, 279)	.446	.006

APPENDIX K

Table 10

Summary of significant results of interest for total sample

Result	F (df)	p	η^2
Total problems			
3-way interaction for reporter, gender, and father status	3.298 (2, 1,002)	.038	.007
2-way interaction for reporter and gender	4.736 (1, 1,002)	.030	.005
2-way interaction for reporter and negative family relations scale	5.786 (1, 1,002)	.016	.006
Main effect for reporter	236.672 (1, 1,002)	.000	.191
Internalizing problems			
Main effect for reporter	315.319 (1, 1,002)	.000	.239
Externalizing problems			
3-way interaction for reporter, gender, and father status	3.287 (2, 1,002)	.038	.007
2-way interaction for reporter and gender	5.798 (1, 1,002)	.016	.006
2-way interaction for reporter and negative family relations scale	8.191 (1, 1,002)	.004	.008
Main effect for reporter	22.715 (1, 1,002)	.000	.022
Social problem syndrome			
3-way interaction for reporter, gender, and father status	3.920 (2, 1002)	.020	.008

2-way interaction for reporter and gender	4.033 (1, 1002)	.045	.004
Attention problem syndrome			
3-way interaction for reporter, gender, and father status	3.749 (2, 1002)	.024	.007
2-way interaction for reporter and negative family relations scale	5.162 (1, 1002)	.023	.005
Aggressive behavior syndrome			
3-way interaction for reporter, gender, and father status	3.617 (2, 1002)	.027	.007
2-way interaction for reporter and gender	7.107 (1, 1002)	.008	.007
2-way interaction for reporter and negative family relations scale	6.154 (1, 1002)	.013	.006

APPENDIX L

Table 11

Summary of significant results of interest for father-absent subjects

Result	F (df)	p	η^2
Total problems			
2-way interaction for reporter and negative family relations scale	5.559 (1, 279)	.019	.020
Main effect for reporter	8.630 (1, 279)	.004	.030
Main effect for negative family relations scale	6.414 (1, 279)	.012	.022
Internalizing problems			
2-way interaction for reporter and negative family relations scale	6.645 (1, 279)	.010	.023
Main effect for reporter	14.845 (1, 279)	.000	.051
Externalizing problems			
2-way interaction for reporter and negative family relations scale	5.103 (1, 279)	.025	.018
Main effect for negative family relations scale	7.265 (1, 279)	.007	.025