Janneal Pennant

September 13,2016

English Composition II

The Effect of Father Absence in the Family

“It is much easier to become a father than to be one”- Kent Nerburn

I’m sure a lot of people share this sentiment. Even fathers themselves may sometimes wonder how they can actually improve themselves to become a better father and not just a sperm donor. However, many have completely given up on the role of fatherhood, and have left their duties and responsibilities to the mothers in the family. This essay based on sources such as ‘The Role of Father in Child Development’, ‘The Father’s Role: Cross Cultural Perspective,’ “Life Without a Father,” and ‘*The New York Times, 2,* ‘When Children are better off Fatherless’, will somewhat analyze the effects of father absence in families.

According to ‘The Role of Father in Child Development’, by Michael E. Lamb, (pg.3) “fathers were viewed as all powerful patriarchs who wielded enormous powers over their families”. In time we can now see that this has changed. It was examined by Lamb that perhaps the cause of fathers being absent might have been due to the Great Depression where many men were revealed as poor providers and fathers were portrayed as sex-model. As the changes in the traditional family accelerated toward the end of the twentieth century, a great deal of attention came to focus on fathers, both modern and ancient, (pg.3). Boothlab defines Father Absence as a term used by researchers to indicate that a child has lived for part or all of their childhood in a house without their biological father. This will be because the child’s parents have split up or because they never lived together in the first place. It does not usually apply to children whose fathers have died, as this is a very different kind of psychological event.

Providing that a problem such as father absence exist, one would come to the conclusion that it may or may not affect families that have to deal with the issue. To illustrate, Lamb referred to two of his colleagues who believed that children with divorced parents has poor test grades as compared to children who has married parents with respect to many aspects of psychosocial adjustment and well-being, (pg.5). In other words, it is safe to say that when both parents are present, the social factors of that child or children in the family is more stable than those of divorced parents. In addition, both social and economic resources that are generated by fathers in families will decrease if fathers aren’t there to provide them. ‘The Father’s Role: Cross Cultural Perspective’ by M.E. Lamb (pg. 6), illustrates that “there are numerous ways in which a father may have a substantial impact on their children and their development.” Fathers don’t only generate resources, but also, according to Lamb, they contribute to the emotional health of their children. Hence, if a father is absent, there is indeed a change that their children may suffer from depression, anxiety and/or other problems that relate to emotional health.

As a matter of fact, ‘Impact of Father-absence. HSS Public Access, Author Manuscript, 3 and 5’ Belskey, J. (1991), family stress (including father absence) affects parenting practices (e.g. the more stressed the family, the harder it was for the parents to spend quality time with the children). This also affects how children’s attitude to relationships develop and also their psychological coping practices, which in turn affects their physical development, Belskey (1991). Hence, providing that this issues affects children’s attitude, one can then say that the breakdown in family life may lead to an increased level of crimes and violence, youth incarceration and sexual abuse, among other social maladies.

In contrast, “Life Without a Father,” proves that most fatherless children grow up to be well-adjusted individuals, and only a small percentage become criminals. But almost anything bad that can happen to children occurs with much greater frequency to those from single-parent families. Nor are stepfathers and other surrogate figures generally satisfactory substitutes for biological fathers. Also, children living with biological fathers exhibit the least delinquency, while children with stepfathers had the most disordered behavior, Kevin O. Chang (1999). Additionally, according to *The New York Times, 2,* ‘When Children are better off Fatherless’, Weldon 2013, Weldon stated that she raised her sons as a single mother. And “they were not doomed because of that.” She gave two easy examples of successful men who have grown up without a father: “President Obama and Bill Clinton”, Weldon (2013). Therefore, it is in fact not that big of an issue to be raised by just a mother.

 Given these points, as much as father absence is deemed a very rampant issue and has major effects not only on teenagers but also on mothers or caregivers, it doesn’t affect every child as the reasons for the issue differs in many ways. Literature shows that persons affected are due to the fact that parents have split up or because they never lived together in the first place or abandonment. It does not usually affect children whose fathers have died, as this is a very different kind of psychological event Lamb (pg.9). Where I’m from, in my estimate, approximately 70% of my classmates were raised by their mothers. Based on my observations, they suffered immensely because they were mostly absent from school due to financial issues. In some cases, they would drop out of school because they had to find a job to help out with younger siblings if they had any. For the most part, the essay was focused on the effect of father absence in the family, and as an individual who has been through this issue, I must say that I too believe that “it is much easier to become a father than to be one”-Nerburn. In other words, everyman can think of or aspire to become a father but not every man is capable of portraying the responsibilities of a father.

**Reference**

* Belskey, J. (1991). Impact Of Fater-absence. *HSS Public Access, Author Manuscript*, 3 and 5.,
* Chang, Kevin O. (1999). Life Without a Father. *Jamaica Observer.*
* Lamb, Michael E. (2004). The Role of Father in Child Development 4th Edition.
* Lamb, Michael E. (1987). The Father’s Role: Cross Cultural Perspective.
* Weldon, M. (2013). When Chidren are better off Fatherless. *The New York Times*, 2.