Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education

Tambra Z. Cross

M.Ed. in Secondary Education, May, 2002, University of Missouri-St. Louis
B.A. in Biology, May, 1991, Columbia College

The Impact of the Absentee Father on the Social Development of the African American Male

Date: July 23, 2021
Time: 1:00 pm-3:00 pm
Place: Remote

Abstract
This study focused on the difficulties and challenges experienced by sons who had absent fathers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of sons who grew up with absent fathers and the effects on them as adults at home, in school, in their neighborhoods, and their decision-making processes. The sample consisted of eight sons who grew up with absent fathers. Data were collected using face-to-face structured and semi-structured interviews.

Results indicated that participants' lived experiences of home life were characterized by financial and emotional hardships resulting from not having a father's earnings and care. The meanings or lessons that participants derived from having absent fathers included the importance of being independent, appreciating the people who remained with them, making the best of their situation, and creating a better life for their children. Participants needed their father to be someone to go to for advice, hold them accountable, motivate them, and teach them gender roles. When fathers were unavailable, participants depended on their mothers to meet these needs. Additionally, participants reported that the absence of their fathers impacted their decision-making, relationships, and trusting male authority figures.

Participants were also affected in their decision-making patterns by losing a male perspective and a father's guidance. These results are of significance because by understanding the experiences of sons with absent fathers, healthcare professionals may provide appropriate assistance to help them cope better with their difficulties and struggles. Recommendations for future research include expanding the study to include the perspectives of mothers and school personnel. Interviewing the mothers would bring insight into their view of fatherlessness and its impact on their son's social development. Mothers could share their experiences of raising their sons without a father in the home, giving insight into how best to help.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Dr. E. Paulette Isaac-Savage - Chairperson
Dr. John A. Henschke - Committee Faculty Member
Dr. Mathew J. Taylor - Committee Faculty Member
Dr. Gwendolyn Y. Turner - Committee Faculty Member