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**BLACK MEN VILLAINS OR MARTYRS: WHAT PSYCHOLOGICAL  
EFFECTS DO ABSENT FATHERS HAVE ON THEIR BLACK SONS?**

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**What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

Black men and black fathers have become the social villains of society today, living under public scrutiny and generalisations. Despite the new emergence of inclusion, representation and push for understanding of race relations, these seem to be concepts that are often sparingly shared when talking about black men and fathers. It is important to understand black British fatherhood and how these relationships or lack of contribute to the development of black men. The absent black father storyline is pushed and told often in today's society however the is little known about the real psychological effects that these absent fathers have on their black sons and whether the effects contribute to the caricature of black men we see today. This study aims to explores the psychological effects of absent fathers on their black sons from a Black British perspective in hopes to form a better understanding of the black father and black man in order to shed. light on this issue that is so often commented on but rarely understood or explored. From this study, hopefully a new found understanding will come to the forefront allowing for support to be put in place for those affected.

**ABSTRACT**

This study critically explores the societal concern pertaining to the absent black father rhetoric and the effects this has on the psychological well-being of their black sons. Participants were eight black British men living in London. All of whom responded to semi structured vital interviews on absent black fathers. Thematic analysis of the data collected revealed that the participants considered the father absence was part of vicious cycle created as bi product of historical and systematic factors relating back to racism which leaves many young black men lacking direction and falling into the hands of negative black stereotypes. Participants indirectly expressed similar perceptions in regards to the psychosocial effects of absent fathers, all being able to acknowledge there was negative effects however communicating a sense of default hardship put upon them as black men by society effecting them more so than the father absence. Overall, the findings suggest a need to explore the factors contributing to why black British men have a tougher experience in Britain appose to pathologizing them as a result of father absence.

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### INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon revolving absent fathers is a customary occurrence in 21st century homes, especially within the black household (Wilson, Henriksen, Bustamante and Irby; 2016). Black fathers are typically presented as absent from parenting and unwilling to take any responsibility for their children (Reynolds, 2009). This social phenomenon is often exhausted and the effects observed through the critique of black men and their presentation within western society. When using the term 'black fathers' it is making reference to men of African or Afro Caribbean lineage, without ignoring 'the heterogenous nature of this group, whose experiences are differentiated by their histories, cultures, ethnicities and social circumstances' (Bernard and Gupta, 2008).

Absenteeism is an ideology commonly associated with black men and fatherhood however the differentiation between a resident and non-resident black fathers is often ignored or interpreted incorrectly. When making reference to a 'resident black father' we are referring to that of a father who lives in the same household as his children compared to that of a 'non-resident black father' who does not. These categories alone are examples of 'racialised constructions' (Reynolds, 2008) of fatherhood which are created culturally and products of cultural practices. The creation of these categories has essentialised the role of the non-resident black father by making them commodities therefore deviating the traditional role of a father to now being seen more so as a financial commodity to the contribution of a child's upbringing. The role and responsibilities of the father have been found to be negotiated, contextual, interactional and relational (Burghes, Clarke and Ronin, 1997; Clarke and Roberts, 2001; Doucet 2001, 2006a). Broader cultural and historical factors have an impact also on a non-resident father and understanding their perspective of fatherhood and their relationship with their children. In conjunction it is important to understand that the definitions of normative family roles and practices are not only subjective to culture but overall have shifted in importance over more recent years. Parenting experiences are seen to be bi-product of not only historical and cultural factors, but also of race, social class, prejudice and gender.

The absent father phenomenon can arguably be linked to elements in micro systems such as poverty, crime and institutional racism which have long lasting negative effects on children (Fagan, 1999; Wilson, 2006; Richter et al., 2010). Research has indicated that black children more so than any other race are more likely to be without their biological or any father figure during their early years (Richter 2006; Richter and Smith 2006; Khewu and Adu, 2015; Mashiya et al., 2015). The lack of and or absent involvement from fathers during childhood has been observed to have lifelong negative impacts on children including on black men's mental health and well-being. Referencing data collected from the 2011 census it can be noted that only 29.9% of black households were made up of couples who were married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting (with or without dependent children) (Gov.uk, 2020). Thus, further highlighting an invisible presence of the black father within the Black British household bringing forth the question as to why this is the case and what psychological effects does it have?

A longitudinal study showed that youths in father-absent families (mother only and relatives/other) had significantly higher odds of incarceration than those from mother-father families. As well as it being recorded adolescents from father absent families also showed significantly higher levels of delinquency. (Cynthia C. Harper, Sara S. McLanahan 2004). Results from this study found that youths who never had a father in the household had the highest incarceration odds. Making potent the correlation between father absence and incarceration rates. This research also brought forth the statistics in which supported the common background factors hypothesis showing that minority race/ ethnicity, residence in urban area, regional residence and residence in countries with a high percentage of female-headed households (Cynthia C. Harper, Sara S. McLanahan 2004) were all also contributing factors to the high incarceration rate. All factors in which are subsequently linked to the social issue of the absent black father and of which are factors linked to poor mental well-being and development of psychological disorders amongst adolescent children (Pinto, Luna & Sivla 2014).

Given the omnipresent stereotyping of black men as criminal or threatening specifically within the media (Russell, 1995); it is important to acknowledge that popular media outlets such as news broadcast and British new papers are presented and constructed by a majority white cast. This portrayal plays an important role in creating and sustaining the stereotype of black men as 'criminal' and bad (Oliver, M. B. 2003). Whilst ignoring the effects these stereotypes have and the bigger issue contributing to why black men are more likely to be incarcerated and the social issues that play a part in why in they turn to crime.

Anecdotal evidence shows that fear of being perceived as potential threats to their children prevents some men from participating in their children's early childhood years (Richter et al. 2004). Highlighting that is arguably society's cultural elements of micro systems such as negative stereotypes can contribute to black men's lack of interest in early childhood development .

Our national history is a veritable treasure trove of heroes and villains (Van Deburg, W.L. 2004) with black people, specifically black men being cast as the villains. As seen daily through our different avenues of social media. Heroes have an unrealistic ability to always beat the odds, come out victorious and be in the spotlight. Unlike villains who receive less positive spotlight and celebratory proclamations. They are often subjected to 'whispered slurs and bad press'. However, many of us fail to make the connection between heroes and villains outside of the obvious, underestimating the contribution of each to one and other. This can be said for black people and their history specifically looking at black men. Regardless of over seventy years of black history month celebrations, an overall societal understanding of the Black British historical experience, challenges and uniqueness are still proving to be problematic.

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Despite the topic of absent black fathers often being spoken about within the context of the African American man and is acknowledged as a social issue within the black community; there is little research on the matter specifically from a black British perspective. This project will explore the effects of absent fathers on the psychological wellbeing of their black sons through the analysis of black fatherhood and the social villainization of the black man through a Black British lens, whilst touching on other factors in which may contribute to the social epidemic of absent black fathers. In doing so probing deeper into the historical factors of racism and how it contributes to multiple conjoining factors that paint a bigger picture and understanding of the black family household as well as the specific presence of the black father and their importance within the family structure.

## **METHOD**

### **Nature of the study**

Previous research has explored fatherhood and Black fathers alongside their experience and lack off, in black America (Connor & White 2006). However, there is still extremely limited research on the subject of black fatherhood as well as that of absent black fathers from a Black British lens therefore allowing for generalisability to be applied when trying to understand the black father in Britain and the black British family. Unlike other races, the black family has more layers of complexity (Hill, 1998) to understand due to the capacious history of the race from a social, economic, historical and political stance all of which contribute to the development of the black man and the black family unit. (Parsons,1956) nuclear family suggests that the nuclear family consists of a straight married couple and around two to five children. This being a social construct created by a white cis American man and used as the foundation of how a family should be never the less the person and demographic of whom this ideology was created by and reflective of is not considerate of other cultures or people. Dysfunctionality is a common theme referred to during conversations surrounding the black family never the less this is based off the understanding of what the nuclear family is; a model created within the narrative of the white American. Moreover, this study aims to use qualitative methods to explore the experience and effects of absent black British fatherhood.

A qualitative approach using open data gathering techniques such as interviews to gain in depth data allowing for in depth discussions consisting of subjective opinions and experiences (Holt et al 2015). This approach was considered to be the best method, due to the lack of research conducted on the topic, as it can be used in instances when the research does not have a specific or predetermined hypotheses (Yauch & Steudel, 2013). Using semi structured were used to allow the interviewer to guide the direction of the interview in order to gain the useful information needed whilst providing flexibility for participants to

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individually give in depth responses and identify topics which relevant to them and their experiences ( Jackson, et al 2007) . Conversations of this nature have been described as informal and differing from regular everyday conversation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) therefore making it the easier for participants to talk about their individual experiences in a calmer and more relaxed setting whilst still allowing for interviewer to indirectly get substantial information. A thematic analysis was then used to analyse all the transcribed interviews which then allows for the researcher to identify themes and dissect through the data. A primary reason for the use of a thematic analysis was its tensity makes it a lot more favourable for qualitative researchers that have minimal experience ( Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2007).

### **Participants**

A purposive opportunity sample was used to recruit participants for this study. This was conducted by posting a brief advert on both Instagram and twitter advertising what would be investigated, the need for participants and what the participant requirements are. The inclusion criteria included : black male of African or Caribbean descent, between the ages of 21-35, working, currently living in London and was raised in London during their adolescent years (10 to 19 years old).

Impressionability is a key theme when investigating the effects of absent fathers, and usually most relevant when looking specifically investigating the adolescent and young adult population (Gwon and Jeong, 2018). Impressionability is a concept used by researchers to explore vulnerability and sensitivity to an environment (Gwon and Jeong, 2018). Social learning theory shows that individuals form attitudes and behaviours under the influence of other people around them (Bandura and McClelland, 1977).

Using participants between the ages of 21-35 avoids ethical consideration in relation to informed consent as all participants are of an age are they can give their own consent to take part In the research. Arguably those under the age of 21 can be considered as vulnerable. Due to the potential sensitivity surrounding the topic area participants 21 and above are better suited. Despite vulnerability to participant, not age specific it can be argued that young people specifically those under the age of 21 are more susceptible to trauma and can be easier triggered by sensitive topics. Never the less a sensitive approach was taken when exploring this topic and participants were reminded and reassured that they can refuse to answer any question and have the rights to withdraw at any given point without having to provide a reason. The distress protocol created by London Metropolitan University (see Appendix B) will be followed during the duration of each interview to ensure each participant is comfortable and any form of distress is best avoided and well managed.

Vulnerable people were not considered for this research project due to the potential to elicit trauma or harm. The exclusion criteria for those considered to be vulnerable include; those not working, under the age of 21 and diagnosed with mental illness. After each interview has been conducted participants were debriefed on the aims of the study, what will

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happen with the data collected, the appropriate details of the all the researchers involved in this study alongside the details of support lines and emails if they would like access to further support once the study is over. This information was also stated in the debrief form which was electronically sent to all the participants.

Data was pseudonymised and anonymised guaranteeing participants complete anonymity and stored in a password protected device. This was the same for recordings. Participants have not been referred to by name during the recording or within any of the interview transcripts following the British Psychology Society (2014) code of conduct.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Pseudonyms	Gender	Ethnicity
Man Q	Male	Black British African
Man T	Male	Black British African
Man U	Male	Black British Caribbean
Man V	Male	Black British African
Man W	Male	Black British African
Man X	Male	Black British Caribbean
Man Y	Male	Black British Caribbean
Man Z	Male	Black British Caribbean

### **Materials**

The materials needed for this study included a phone recorder which was used to record the interviews with all the participants in order for all interviews to be transcribed later on. Specifically using a recorder on an Apple iPhone 13 pro max. This particular recording device is suitable because the recordings taken are protected by the Apple database and are not further shared. Also, it gives the researcher easier access to the recordings for when they need to be transcribed. Pre-Prepared interview questions were also created in preparation for the interview all relative to the research question. These questions were carefully thought out in order to get the most in depth conversations from all the participants. For example, questions such as “what does it mean to be a father”, “how would define an absent father” and “what are your opinions on women single handily rising their black sons”

### **Procedure**

Each participant was electronically sent consent forms to fill out via email before the interviews.



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Before the interviews commence each participant was reminded of their rights to withdraw reiterated alongside being briefed on what the study is about, what will be done with the data collected and how to contact the researcher (myself) after the interviews have been done for a follow up if needs be. Once this was done the interviews were started. Each interview took place virtually via zoom link which was sent to each participant via email an hour before the meeting was scheduled to start.

### **Interview Procedure**

Eight participants took part in semi structured interviews lasting up to an hour each. These interviews consisted of a number of open ended questions allowing each participant to direct the conversation. Within these conversations participants were encouraged to expand their responses as much as possible with prompts. Each interview was audio recorded, pseudonymized, transcribed verbatim and stored on a password encrypted device.

Reviewing other qualitative research investigating a similar topic area, highlighted the use of 8-12 participants ( Reynolds, 2009). Using a small sample conducive to the depth of case-oriented analysis which is fundamental to qualitative research. In addition to this, qualitative samples are purposive. Participants are selected by virtue of their capacity to provide strongly textured information with relevance to the particular phenomenon that is being investigated (Vasileious, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S. et al, 2018). Large samples risk providing repetitive data that although arguably can support the strength and validity of a theme, it however does not allow for larger exploration of other themes or topics.

Alongside time restraints, the use 8 participants arguably are best suited for this research project. It was concluded that semi structured interviews more beneficial to this particular project appose to unstructured or structured interviews; as the navigation of conversation is passively controlled and allows for the themes and topics needed to answer the research question to be addressed. There are specific areas that need to be covered, however the participants' individual experience is also needed. Open ended questions such as “what does it mean to be a father”, “how would define an absent father” and “what are your opinions on women single handily rising their black sons” were carefully thought out and prepared prior to the interviews and the same questions will be asked to all the participants. This in conjunction with the semi structure of the interviews allows for in depth responses and themes to be identified from all the participants interviews. Therefore, following the format of a brief opening statement with approximately 10 questions alongside additional probing questions (Rabionet, 2011).

Objectivity potentially could have been highlighted a be an issue when using semi structured interviews however in this instance epistemological privilege is a key factor that can be argued as the research question being investigated and the participants used are coherent.

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Participants will also be debriefed once the interviews have been conducted and yet again, they will be reminded of their right to withdraw within a period of 7 days if they please. They will be offered the opportunity to discuss the study and will be given the details of the researcher and necessary people if they wish to seek support after the study has been conducted.

## **RESULTS**

### **Qualitative Findings**

Audio recording of the eight interviews conducted for this study were all individually transcribed verbatim and pseudonymised. Due to the nature of the topic and type of study style it was later decided that Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was the best way to analyse the data collected allowing for an in depth analyse and identification themes to be highlighted and further explored. Braun and Clarke's process of thematically analysing data was followed through the revision of the each of the eight transcribed interviews and note taking made in order to identify the different codes, themes and patterns within the eight different transcripts. Once this stage of the analytical process was done for each of the eight transcripts, there were noticeable overlapping and correlating themes and codes identified amongst all the transcripts highlighting commonalities and relationships (Appendix E). From the onset the researcher had thought of potential themes in which may be present amongst the transcripts prior to the interviews being conducted, however the themes in which were identified all linked back or had some form of correlation to the research topic and interview questions. Final evaluation of each stage of the process allowed for further sub themes to be identified which then allowed for appropriate subordinate themes to be created the analysis of the transcripts identified three main themes and

Table 1. Theme Table

Theme:	Sub-Theme:	Example Quote:
<b>Predominance of women's roles in bringing up Black children</b>	Conceptualising the idea of single motherhood	'There's more single women raising children than single mothers. Being a single woman and a single mother is two different things. And especially within the black community women love to throw this single mother narrative around' -Man

<p><b>Theorising the impact of institutional racism on black fatherhood</b></p>	<p>Contributing factors bitter baby mums have in the fatherless presence in the black home</p>	<p>‘bitter baby mothers are not talked about enough in this conversation about absent black fathers. Bitter baby mothers contribute to this issue so much.’- Man Z</p>
	<p>The effects that Black Womanhood have on how black women raise their black sons</p>	<p>‘black womanhood has always been to carry the black community, so automatically they feel like they can do things by themselves there’s not enough efforts to co parent its always ‘I can raise my children’. They’re too quick to deny help because of pride and then want to be upset about the stresses of doing things alone’- Man T</p>
	<p>Conceptualising what ‘the System’ means to black men and fathers</p>	<p>‘The black father is so replaceable. Black people love money too much. The system has made it that the black man can be replaced, the minute me as a black can’t provide enough I can literally get kicked to the corner because my baby mother can go to the government and get p’-Man X</p>
<p><b>Understanding the impact negative stereotypes have on black men</b></p>	<p>The Racial Agenda regarding police/stop and search on Black British men</p>	<p>‘Black boys get stopped and searched more than anyone else. Does that not sound mad?’- Man Y</p>
	<p>The use of propaganda in media to destroy the image of the black man</p>	<p>‘there’s many a black families with both mother and father don’t let the media fool you. They only want to show you that narrative to keep black families as the most dysfunctional unit’- Man V</p>
	<p>The correlation between masculinity with the father figure</p>	<p>‘So, to be a father is to be the first teacher, the first idea the first blueprint of what manhood should be. Whether this is the case or not is a different story. But if were talking about the nuclear father. He should represent the what it means to be a man. Especially given that your father is meant to be a positive role model. Everything in which a boy learns from small is normally reflective of what his father taught him. Hence why we have the cliches in films and stuff of fathers being the ones to teach their boys to ride a bike, play a sport, shave etc’- Man X</p>

### ***Predominance of women's role in bringing up black children***

Mother's exert a greater degree of control over their children ( Scaglioni & Galimberti 2008) this is particularly the case within black families and the black household.

#### ***Conceptualising the idea of single motherhood:***

Participants often made reference to the sub theme of single mothers when speaking about their own personal experiences and opinions on the absent black father narrative. Man X specifically Often spoke about how he would define a single mother and how many black men would agree that the single mother rhetoric is often both over used and misused. Misused from the perspective that they believe that the term 'single mother' and 'single woman' is often used interchangeable when they are not the same thing. Speaking to all the participants, there is a common notion that the idea that there are many single black mothers is over exaggerated and miscommunicated for single black women with children. This term of single motherhood having negative implications resulting in the misrepresenting of the black father presence. This misrepresentation being very distressing for those black fathers who do play an active role in their children's lives despite not being resident in their homes. Never the less, in conjunction to this it was also identified and praised the efforts in which those of whom the participants qualified to be classed as a 'single mother' the great jobs they done and the immense efforts in which they made with their children.

*'There's more single women raising children than single mothers. Being a single woman and a single mother is two different things. And especially within the black community women love to throw this single mother narrative around' – (Man X 57, 58,59)*

*'A single mother is someone who has a child and the father is not about to any capacity physically, emotional, financially none of that. So, she is actually single handily raising her child as the only parent'- (Man X 62, 63, 64)*

Highlighting the specific relationship black mothers have with their black sons in comparison to their black daughters and how this somewhat contributed to the over femininity within the black household arguably contributing to the hypermasculinity within black men. Research has also found the black mothers tend to be firmer with their daughters than with their sons (Sharp, E. A., & Isapa, J. M. (2009). The softness from these single mothers towards their son and the high pedestal in which their sons are put on within their household controversially contributes to the large ego in which is often spoken about regarding black boys. Reviewing other literature there is an emphasis on the negative impact that black single parent households can have on boys more so than girls. Studies have found that economic hardship has an indirect link to harsher parenting styles imposed by single black mothers due to the depressive symptoms attributed to being a black woman as well as parenting stress. Both have been related to harsher parenting.

Reviewing other literature pertaining to the black mother role in accordance to the conversations had with the eight participants, black mothers are almost always portrayed as strong women who are invulnerable, always taking care of and protecting others (White, 1999; hooks;1981; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Ladner, 1971; Madhubuti, 1990; Mullings, 2000; Roberts, 1997). Black womanhood as an isolated topic has its own psychological issues and strains which are often subconsciously reflected when black women raise children. Specifically, when they raise their black sons single handily. Sharp and Isapa (2009) urban city black mothers communicated a sense of fatalism in regards to their black sons therefore raising their black daughters to be strong women in preparation to deal with a plethora of responsibilities in which men will not assume. This idea alone has been found to have a negative impact on black men's view and sense of self. As well as having a negative sub conscious effect on their mental well-being.

***Contributing factors that bitter baby mums have to the fatherless presence in the black home:***

Also repeatedly mentioned throughout the interviews was the idea of what all the participants referred to as 'the bitter baby mums' and the contribution they have towards the

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issue of absent black fathers situation. During the interviews various definitions of what a bitter baby mother was and the common theme was it's a black woman who intentional does not allow their children's father to see them or have contact with them to spite him; often as a result of an issue she has with him. Better the eight participants there was a lot of anger and irritation expressed to the little attention that the issue of bitter baby mothers got. Explaining how there are black men who do try to be in their children's lives but are not allowed due to the mother choosing to be spiteful and using the children as a pawn to spite and elicit negative emotions from the father. Often to paint him in a negative and aggressive light to others and the children involved. This emotional manipulation is something that a lot of black fathers who have poor relationships with the children's mothers have to do deal with. Further highlighting the power dynamic between black mother and fathers putting black fathers in the weaker position when it comes to parenting. There's research on the issue of black fathers who are not around for their children due to multiple reasons, generally abandonment, doing time in prison, involvement in drugs or other things in which keeps them away from their children based of a personal choice they have made, however the there is nothing pertaining to the those of whom want to be in their children's lives but are not allowed to due to the spite of their children's mother. This factor contributing to the absence of a father presence is not only damaging to the father but also to the children who do not understand the situation and are fed a narrative about the inactiveness of their fathers from their mother. As well as the negative effects on the father.

*'bitter baby mothers are not talked about enough in this conversation about absent black fathers.*

*Bitter baby mothers contribute to this issue so much.'* - (Man Z, 103)

*'a bitter baby mother is a woman who keeps the children away from a man to spite him because of the personal issues that she has with him but will run and say she gets no support or that her baby father is a bum more time she is doing everything in her power to keep the kids away from him because of her own issues with him.'* - (Man Y, 140,141)

This issue is particularly has a negative impact on young black boys growing up in single mother households as they are often constantly hearing and being told a negative rhetoric about their fathers and about black men as a whole. The constant negative talk about black men and black fathers can be damaging due to the formation of a negative outlook and understanding of what they may become and those in which look like them. Their

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understanding and development of self-concept is more likely to be negative due to the enforced negative view of other black men. Those in which they identify with have a negative stereotype cultivated within the home from their black mothers, who are put on a high pedestal within their homes and community. Therefore, reinforcing this narrative due to the credibility of the black mother as well as the fact that the black mother is the primary or in the case of the bitter baby mum the only parent around.

***The effects that Black Womanhood have on how black women raise their black sons:***

The independent black woman has been a common social term in which has been used a lot within society and when speaking to all the participants. This ideology never the less is arguably some-what problematic in retrospect of the parental dynamic and upbringing of black child. Black girls are being raised to be independent and self-sufficient by their single black mothers and the push for competence and self-reliance in daughters seems to be motivated by the felt need to prepare them to shoulder most of the responsibility for taking care of themselves and nurturing their future families (Collins 1987; McAdoo 1988; Staples & Johnson 1993). This method of upbringing in-directly nullifies the black man's role as father within the family therefore reducing the black man and making him a commodity.

There was clear distinction made about black women, their experiences and how their unique experiences within society contribute to how they raise their daughters in comparison to their sons. Man T explains how the role of being a black woman alongside the pressures from both the black community and society has made the black woman become over independent and in doing so making it difficult for them to identify when they need help. Consequently in his opinion making that black woman have made being overly-independent a personality trait and normalising struggling and avoiding help. Also making potent the conflict of emotions due to innate hyper-independence with the stress that comes with not accepting help from others. Therefore creating an air of frustration within black men due to their efforts being dismissed but also being blamed for lot of problems that come as a result of black women trying to raise their children alone. The psychological manipulation and gaslighting of this is detrimental to both black fathers and black sons due to their constant dismal and under representation due to an over exaggerated narrative.

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*'black womanhood has always been to carry the black community, so automatically they feel like they can do things by themselves there's not enough efforts to co parent its always 'I can raise my children'. They're too quick to deny help because of pride and then want to be upset about the stresses of doing things alone'- (Man T 164,165,166)*

*'black women are so strong and beautiful. The black woman is literally God personified. But with that being said they have this thing where they think they are don't need help'-(Man Q, 416)*

With this being said it could also be acknowledged here by Man W, that black women are put on a high pedestal within the black community despite flaws and other factors that arguably contributed to a larger issue in relation to their relationships with their children fathers as well as the issue in regards to the allowance of non-resident fathers to have a healthy relationship with their children. Making prominent the idea that alongside the societal issues against black men and father, there's issues closer to home within the black community also contributing to the issue of absent black fathers that is not acknowledged or explored enough. Also highlighting a bigger issue within the black community in relation to the accountability of black mothers and the role in which they play in why their black sons are being raised without their fathers.

*'I'm a big supporter of the independent and strong black woman a big big supporter. However, I feel this narrative also contributes to certain issues in the sense black women feel they can do everything on their own. They almost pride themselves on being single mothers or doing the whole parenting thing alone'-( Man W, 301,302)*

Exploring the concept of black parenting, the idea of entitlement displayed by black mothers in regards to the children. This ties in to the conversation relating to the concept of bitter baby mother and mothers taking centre stage when it comes to the children.

*"When it comes to parenting they have this issue of entitlement. Like because they are the mothers they have more of a right or a say where the kids are involved. There's no balance. They are the head*



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*hunchos and everyone else meaning the black father especially if he isn't with her or in the house is less than her. She has the final say.” –(Man U 403,404)*

There is no balance between mother and father role within the black family structure, specifically within the dynamic of non-resident black fathers and black mothers. Man U discuss the issue of entitlement highlighting how this entitlement occasionally is to the detriment of the children. Black boys are who grow up in single parent households with their mothers or in households where their fathers still play active roles within their lives however are not resident in their homes are often experience one of two extremes either being mollycoddled by their mothers or having too much responsibility put on them to compensate for their fathers not being around and having to take up the 'man of the house' role from very early on in their lives both of which are damaging to a young boy. In one instance not being able to grow up to the constant and over protection and the other having significant psychological damage to the strain on growing up and having to provide as an adult instead of enjoying childhood. The strain of feeling it is there job to look after and provide for the household is very taxing on a young black boy and often is a contributing factor as to why young black boys turn to fast methods of making money which typically are crime related.

Across social-economic classes, descriptions of Black femininity have involved images of strong mothers who are invulnerable and always taking care of and protecting others (Sharp & Ispa et al 2009). This is an idea that was often spoken on throughout all the interviews with all the participants. All of whom acknowledged the historic context as to why black mothers take the over protective stance they do with their children and specifically their sons. These images have been linked to traditions built during slavery and the ongoing need to compensate for men's economic and psychological difficulties that result from multilevel structural conditions rooted in societal racism (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007; Collins 2004; Sharp and Ispa 2006a; Springer 2002). Participants put a lot of emphasis on the idea that the black family is heavily governed by the black woman and due to this there's and ownership that black mothers have over their children that is often impenetrable from anyone outside of her.

***Theorising the impact The Government have on the black  
community***

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The government has been a big factor mentioned amongst participants pertaining issues effecting black men, black fathers and the black community as a whole. Never the less when speaking about the government all the participants used the term ‘the system’ to make reference to it. Making prominent the idea that within the black community there is a common notion that the government is an organisation of people largely made up of a white cohort in which has enforced policies and legislations in do not support or provoke improvement within the black community. The implications of these policies and social constructs drastically impacting the black community

### ***Conceptualising what ‘the System’ means amongst black people***

The history of systematic racism implicated from the British government has been an ongoing battle the black British community alongside other people of colour, have continuously tried to fight and lost. The misuse of power from authority figures highlights the negative effects of the agenda they try to push which typically only effects those in which do not look like them. The effects of systematic racism can be observed not only in social policies but also within the education system, the healthcare system and the police. All government based institutions in which are meant to help people. In this subordinate theme participants discuss the negative repercussions and how they affect them not only as black men but the relationships between black men and women and black people as a whole. Expressing how the system has not done anything to benefit black people in Britain other than to divide them and cause riff amongst them as a community specifically between black men and women.

*“So back to what I was saying about how the system is one of the biggest destroys and contributors to the whole single mum narrative, absent black father narrative is a result of this system we have brought into thinking that its beneficial for us. Even though it’s the same system that was literally built on the exploitation and slavery of black people. So how we think that the system at any point will benefit us I do not know.”-(man X 79,80,81,82,83,84)*

Man X expresses the stark dislike towards the government and how him alongside other black men believe it is the government of whom play a vital role in black children growing up in single parent households. Putting specific emphasis on how it has caused black women

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to not need black men due to the ability women have to claim benefits from the government especially when they are single mothers. Due to single women getting more help from the system

‘The system has made it so that the black woman doesn’t need the black man. Deep it you get more money from the government if you are a quote on quote single mother. And seeing as the black man’s position as a father only seems to be put down to whether or not he can provide. Unfortunately, within our community providing as a man is about money and as a father how much you can provide’-( Man X, 87,88,89,90,91,92)

He goes on to further talk about how replaceable the black man has become due to the ability women have to go to the government for money if the black man is not providing or not providing enough. Explaining how he believes that the accessibility black women have to receiving financial aid from the government is a part of a bigger agenda to destroy the black family which is believed to be key in destroying and keeping the black community at a lower place in society.

‘The black father is so replaceable. Black people love money too much. The system has made it that the black man can be replaced, the minute me as a black can’t provide enough I can literally get kicked to the corner because my baby mother can go to the government and get p’-(man x 93,94,95,96)

### ***The Racial Agenda regarding Police/ Stop and Search on Black British men***

In accordance with the conversations relating to the government conjoining theme and one of the biggest and most spoken about themes is in relation to the relationship between the metropolitan police and black British men. Man V highlights the fact that black men are stopped and searched more often than any other race and continues to stress how these stops and searches are sometimes unprovoked and are a bi product of racial profiling and prejudice.

With man V explicitly saying:

## **What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?**

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*'take the time to think about it. Black boys are stopped more by the police than anyone. Normally of the back we LOOK a type of way. Even without doing anything. We just need to exist and we are the villains and criminals in British society.'* - (Man V, 270,271)

*'Being a black man in Britain is hard, being a black man in London is even harder because it's a large urban city. Higher crime rates and all that stuff the news will tell you. But who is always the villain? Who's always the protagonist? Black men. The police are clearly in love with us because they are on us like a dog on heat blud'* - (Man W, 340,341,342)

A recurrent idea mentioned by the participants is the villanisation of black men as a result of both the government and the police. Both Man V and W speak on the issue of social villanisation that black men have to deal with and how they feel they as black men are unfairly targeted due to a racial agenda. Meaning no matter what they do they are under the watchful eye of the police whether or not they are doing anything to warrant negative police attention. A lot of stress, anger and frustration being conveyed by all eight participants when talking about their opinions and experiences with the police from when they were young boys to now being grown men.

### ***Understanding the psychological impact negative stereotypes have on black men***

#### ***The use of propaganda in media to destroy the image of the black man***

*'I don't understand this obsession of always representing the black family as a fatherless unit in films, books, the media. They have this sick fascination of always pushing this in our face.'* - (Man V, 203, 204)

Man V commented on this constant negative representation of the black father and the black family seen within mainstream media referring to it as an 'obsession.' The use of the word obsession brings to our attention the toxic fixation that media has diminish the value of black men and fathers has become the holy grail. Data shows that media representation both reinforce and complicate common media stereotypes which foster a further stigma and perception which can contribute to the development of an individual forming a negative self-perception of themselves (Fennell, Dana & Boyd, 2014); consequently, effecting how a person values and sees themselves.

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*'there's many a black families with both mother and father don't let the media fool you. They only want to show you that narrative to keep black families as the most dysfunctional unit' (Man W,300, 301)*

The constant negative portrayal of black men and father plays a big role in the development of self-image amongst black boys. Like everyone there is a need for positive role models and seeing those in which look like you and represent you, your culture and background. Especially as young black boys, where there is already so many things against them in society having positive role models is very important. The impact that positive role models have are the same as the impact that having negative role models. This is something in which Man U speaks about, saying how:

*'young black boys need positive role models everyone does. But if it's always going to be a thing of you only ever see people who look like you in a negative or aggressive light what do you think that's going to do? Its basic common sense.'* - (Man U, 546,547)

In support of what the Man U had mentioned in regards to the impact that these negative stereotype of black men have on them and the contribution that media portrayal has to the social issues surrounding both black men and black fatherhood. Large amounts of research has been done exploring manhood and masculinity and the impact that the media including television, music, film and written material has. (Boyd Franklin, Franklin, & Toussaint, 2001; Comstock & Paik, 1991; Cones & White, 1998; Dines Humez, 1995; Stroman, 1991; Winbush)

Man Z also made reference to how impressionable young black men are especially those who unfortunately don't have a father figure or an active one. Divulging into the ripple effect of what these constant negative stereotypes indoctrinate within the minds of young black men by setting such a low standard for them. The issue of absent black fathers has been highlighted as a social issue never the less the negative portrayal of black men is further pushing this narrative and contributing to the negative effects that young black boys face as a result to being held to such a low standard. This low standard is a window for young black boys to arguably feed into this narrative due to the displacement of accountability as a result of having this narrative created about them and the sense of living up to it because it is expected of them.

## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

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*'impressionability is mad when you're young. If we're going to speak on absent fathers cool. You're a young black boy with no father, and all you see on socials, the news, films everywhere is black men as criminals, bums, people who abandon their families, just all around villains and crawsis people. Don't you think subconsciously young black boys are going to feed into that. You already don't hold us to any kind of standard to I might as well kind of thing.'* – (Man Z, 560,561,562)

### ***The correlation between masculinity and manhood with the father figure***

Man X explains the importance of the father figure and how distinct that role is for a man to fill. Going on to discuss how the father is the blueprint that a young boy has to understanding manhood as well as being the first example and understanding of masculinity. The father is the framework in which a young boy uses to understand himself and then develop into being a man. Without the active father figures young boys, young black boys specifically often have to teach themselves and gain their own understanding of what manhood is without the guidance of understanding positive masculinity. The projective of black men are typically hyper masculine and toxic. Media portrayals in film and music normally present the black man as a violent, thuggish, criminal, abusive and womanisers. The presence of the father is meant to be an example of what to be and in other cases what not to be. The absence of this often is what leading many young black men down the wrong path. They become byproducts of what they see of themselves as black men and their understanding of what it means to be a man from outside sources such as the media which present them negatively.

*'So, to be a father is to be the first teacher, the first idea the first blueprint of what manhood should be. Whether this is the case or not is a different story. But if were talking about the nuclear father. He should represent the what it means to be a man. Especially given that your father is meant to be a positive role model. Everything in which a boy learns from small is normally reflective of what his father taught him. Hence why we have the cliches in films and stuff of fathers being the ones to teach their boys to ride a bike, play a sport, shave etc'* - (Man X, 10,11,12,13,14,15,16)

There are numerous amounts of literature in which both acknowledges and addresses the multiple different variables that contribute to the construction of manhood and masculinity including the roles in which family plays (Billingsley, 1992; Boyd- Franklin, Franklin, & Toussaint, 2001; Cones & White, 1998; Franklin, 1984; Freud, 1976; Ju 1991; Sigel, 1984)

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and this was further emphasised during the conversation with all eight of the participants. Masculinity and hyper masculinity was repeatedly mentioned and strong correlations between father presence and masculinity were often spoken about as seen with Man X.

## **DISCUSSION**

This qualitative study aims to broaden our understanding of the effect that absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing of their Black sons by examining its relationship to Black mothers, institutional racism, and negative stereotypes. While there's a breadth of research in this area from US-centric perspectives, similar discourses in the UK are manifestly absent. Despite these experiences being similar due to the contributing factors, Black British and Black American experiences are not the same, and must be looked at in context. Results indicated that there are more than one factor contributing why Black men might be absent from fatherhood – specifically highlighting the impact of institutional racism and the racist discrimination Black men in Britain and how these experiences link to the lack of self-esteem. This has a rippling effect on their ability to be positive or present father figures. Mossakowski (2003), Williams and colleagues (2003) and Carter (2007) support these ideas by bringing forth positive correlations between experiences of discrimination and negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, emotional reactivity and lowered self-esteem. Black men's experience as fathers being built on the structural idea within Black communities of fathers being reduced to financial commodities alongside the effects that Black mothers have in contributing to this narrative – emphasises the largely neglected wider sociopolitical context pertaining to the structural inequalities resulting from Black fathers' racial-ethnic identity and racial divisions in society (Reynolds, 2009) and how they have negative psychological effects on Black men, creating a cycle of psychological discourse pertaining to Black sons.

The extent to which psychological reactions to institutional racism, racial and ethnic discrimination might be associated with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) still remains unclear. However, given the thoroughly documented history of racial oppression and ethnic discrimination (Feagin, 2001; Marger, 2008) it can be argued that people whose heritage derives from the Global South, in this instance Black men; might have higher and more frequent experiences of stress that can lead to traumatic stress reactions (Allen, 1996; Butts, 2002; Carter, 2007). Joy DeGruy's *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*

## **What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?**

(2005) highlights the effects of historical trauma in which Black people have endured and how this trauma is reflective in mannerisms, behaviours and self-concepts within BritishBlack communities today, specifically concerning the Black father.

Results from the eight interviews highlighted the theme of institutional racism as the epicentre of the absent Black father narrative. Within speaking to the participants it can also clearly be identified that the two other major themes are derivative of the issue pertaining to institutional racism and the historical factors and traumas in correspondence of it.

The presentation of the Black man and father within the media plays an equally damaging role to their development of self-concept. With the media being the lens in which people view themselves. Research by Davidson, and colleagues (1979) further to Donnerstein and Linz (1989) concluded that stereotyped or negative content can negatively effect and harm individuals. This in accordance with DeGruy's (2005) argument relating to the innate vacant esteem carried by black people and through the media, black men in particular not only recognise their own impotence but also their communities lack of power and efficacy has a negative and damaging effect on a black mans' mental health and psyche. Stating 'when faced with racial prejudice and hypocrisy from a hostile dominant society, and when social inequality and powerlessness come to define ones' life, it can have a seriously adverse impact on what we come to believe ourselves to be'( Degruy & Robinson, 2005)

### **Limitations and Further Research**

Semi-structured interviews are often typically useful for qualitative studies in which the goals within the study is to explore, discover and interpret complex social events or phenomena (Morris 1984; Fantasia 1988; McAdam 1988; Staggenborg 1991; Whittier 1995 Robnett 1996; Ray 1999) . They allow for the collection of greater breadth and depth of information alongside the opportunity for exploration into a participants experience, thoughts and memories in the most authentic form in comparison to the words of researcher looking in on a situation, event, person or culture. In this particular study, understanding and gaining insight to personal experiences and opinions was considered 'primitive' and allowed for themes to be identified. The open-ended questions allowed for participants to generate, challenge, clarify, elaborate and recontextualise understanding of the topic (Blee & Taylor,



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2002). In conjunction to this, they allow for the identification of themes to be made creating room for further understanding and analysis to be made. The topic of absent fathers in relation to Black men is incredibly niche and the use of qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews allows for seldom studied aspects of society to be understood. Nonetheless the room for exploration and in-depth conversation meant that during all interviews with the participants, there was little time to ask all the questions originally planned in the schedule. Despite being able to collect in-depth data from the questions there are still gaps due to the time constraints.

Questions included:

- ‘What are your thoughts on the father role being filled by men who are not biologically related’
- ‘In your opinion how can other older black men within the community help with positively navigating younger black boys who do not have a father figure present?’

Contemporary research has found that Black boys coming from single parent households occasionally sought guidance and mentorship from older Black men in which they deemed respectable within their community in replacement of not having a father figure or in accordance to father figures who were not as active or positive (Earl & Lohmann, 1978) is there more recent literature?

In conjunction to this, the most potent limitation of this study was the lack of psychological literature pertaining to the effects of absent fathers. The lack of literature highlights the minimal understanding we have of the psychological constraints surrounding both the black family and the black man within a black British context. The generalisations subjected onto the Black British men is not reflective of their truth.

This however, allows for future research to take place to follow on from this study potentially exploring the question in which were not asked as well as exploring the themes in which were identified in this research and exploring whether there are any further correlations or themes pertaining to the effects that absent fathers have on their Black sons. More research needs to be conducted in this area, so academics and non-academics alike can more fully understand the depths of the problem, and thus be implemented in support

## **What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?**

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strategies for those effected, including Black fathers and sons, as well as wider Black communities.

### **Reflexivity**

In attempts to disassociate my own feelings surrounding the topic of absent black fathers and the circumjacent factors contributing; involved mental preparation to determine my suitability to conduct this phenomenological study. This involved evaluating my personal beliefs as well as any personal biases pertaining to me being black, a woman and having a black brother. This evoked consideration of employing the idea of conscious ignorance surrounding the topic area. Never the less being a black researcher as well as a being a black woman on this study provided many advantages pertaining to the quality of responses in semi structures. This is due to a comfortability from the participants to speak on such a sensitive with someone that they believe understands and relates to them in some spaces of the conversation supporting the idea of epistemological privileged as a research exploring this topic. Due to the heavy references to racism and the Black British experience throughout this study it is questionable the depth in which could be obtained if the research was conducted by a researcher who was disconnected from the issue; specifically topics pertaining to black people or a black experience due to interpersonal integrity as well as racial solidarity making it easier for black participants to feel comfortable and express themselves and experiences in the most authentic way. Whilst there are potential implications that could have arouse from the same-race dyads between researcher and participants; it was also a predominate strength

It is clear that the absent father rhetoric plays a role in the development of self-concept for black men. A correlation between absent fathers and young black men being lower achievers in school has been made. However looking at the results from this study it can be concluded that absent fathers was not the predominate cause of poor psychological well-being amongst black men nor was it a psychological issue. The results from this study indicate that the absent father is more of a social and culture issue than a psychological issue. Also highlighting the issues contributing to the absent father issue are more damaging to black men's psychological well-being appose to having absent fathers.

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Never the less, being able to explore the topic of absent black fathers and the effects they have on their black sons was beneficial as it has mad potent the areas in which need further study and has shed let on the thoughts and personal experiences in which a lot of Black British men share which therefore allows for help and support to be put in place for Black sons based on the results collected. The black man is a complex subject to explore due the numerous contributing factors pertaining to their experiences, traumas, mannerisms and behaviours. The exploration of the absent father phenomena has further highlighted the complexity of the black male experience as well as making potent the fact that these experiences all contribute to each other. As research on this particular experience from a Black British perspective is limited as well as their being limited psychological research on the effects of absent fathers, the findings from this study may fill a gap in the literature. Understanding how institutional racism effects the black men is primitive to understanding their absence to fatherhood as well as the effects it has on them as sons and men.

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**APPENDIX A**



## Review Submission History: PC6P01 Psychology Project - Project Outline and Ethics Application Form (1 March 2022)

Assignment Instructions	
1 / 14	100.00 / 100
<p><b>MARK</b> LAST MARKED ATTEMPT</p>	
<p><b>100.00</b> / 100</p>	
<p><b>ATTEMPT</b> 06/02/22 22:32</p>	
<p>Submission  <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Final Edited Ethics Proposal submission one.doc</a></p>	
<p>Comments</p> <p><b>Feedback to Learner</b> 21/02/22 13:28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please keep your references APA formatted.</li> <li>- I would be careful RE epistemological privilege, as this could be argued to make your study deductive rather than inductive. Consider how your ontological position may impact on your analysis, and consider the use of a critical friend.</li> <li>- "Using participants aged 21-.35 avoids ethical consideration" - this isn't true - there is just as much chance for them to become quite distressed considering the topic. There needs to be a sensitive approach to this</li> </ul>	
<p>Save As Artefact <b>OK</b></p>	



## Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 1

**Course:** Psychology

**Project module:** Psychology Project

**Module code:** PC6P01

**Student surname:** de-Landè

**Student forename(s):** Shayne

**Student ID:** 19025246

**Title of project:** What effect do absent black fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons

**Supervisor:** Karyofyllis Zervoulis (Lakis)

**Date:**

Where possible, this form adopts the same sequence of sections as that of the final project report. You must be direct, accurate and complete when filling in the sections of this form. If your proposal is too vague to allow evaluation you will be asked to submit a more detailed proposal. You must complete **all** sections.

**APPENDIX B**


**Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 1**


<b>Course:</b>	<u>Psychology</u>
<b>Project module:</b>	<u>Psychology Project</u>
<b>Module code:</b>	<u>PC6P01</u>
<b>Student surname:</b>	<u>de-Landè</u>
<b>Student forename(s):</b>	<u>Shayne</u>
<b>Student ID:</b>	<u>19025246</u>
<b>Title of project:</b>	<u>Black Men Villains or Martyrs: what psychological effects do absent fathers have on their black sons?</u>
<b>Supervisor:</b>	<u>Karyofyllis Zervoulis (Lakis)</u>
<b>Date:</b>	<u></u>

Where possible, this form adopts the same sequence of sections as that of the final project report. You must be direct, accurate and complete when filling in the sections of this form. If your proposal is too vague to allow evaluation you will be asked to submit a more detailed proposal. You must complete **all** sections.

If you first write on a different document and then transfer the written text to the Project Outline and Ethics Application Form, make sure you use *Merge Formatting*, which is available in MS Word 2010 and following version, in such a way that the old formatting of your document will not interfere with that of the Project Outline and Ethics Application Form (e.g., <https://cybertext.wordpress.com/2012/11/21/word-2010-keyboard-shortcut-to-paste-unformatted-text/>).

If you use an older version of MS Word or another text processor, you are advised to first copy and paste your text in Notepad (or other basic text processor), and then copy your text from Notepad and paste it in the Project Outline and Ethics Application Form.

Delete either **NO** or **YES** to the following statement:

**Is this a revised project?** **NO** **YES**

If you answered **YES** to the above question, **highlight all the changes** you have made to the Project Outline and Ethics Application Form, and **explain below** how you have addressed in your revision the ethical concern(s) raised by the referee of your previous submission (no word limit).

## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

### Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 2

#### 1. INTRODUCTION (AND RESEARCH QUESTION(S) AND/OR RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS(ES))

Give a brief description of the problem to be investigated, outlining the background to the problem including the key background sources and previous research within the subject area, and end this section by stating clearly the research question(s) and/or research hypothesis(es). If you propose a complex model involving several variables you should insert a path diagram of the model as a single figure in JPEG format (total number of words: Min 500 words, Max 1000 words, including listed references; a figure counts as 0 words; number of listed references: Min 3, Max 5).

The phenomenon revolving absent fathers is a customary occurrence in 21<sup>st</sup> century homes, especially within the black household (Wilson, Henriksen, Bustamante and Irby; 2016). Black fathers are typically presented as absent from parenting and unwilling to take any responsibility for their children (Reynolds, 2009). This social phenomenon is often exhausted and the effects observed through the critique of black men and their presentation within western society.

When using the term 'black fathers' it is making reference to men of African or Afro Caribbean lineage, without ignoring 'the heterogenous nature of this group, whose experiences are differentiated by their histories, cultures, ethnicities and social circumstances' (Bernard and Gupta, 2008).

Absenteeism is an ideology commonly associated with black men and fatherhood however the differentiation between a resident and non-resident black fathers is often ignored or interpreted incorrectly. When making reference to a 'resident black father' we are referring to that of a father who lives in the same household as his children compared to that of a 'non-resident black father' who does not. These categories alone are examples of 'racialised constructions' (Reynolds, 2008) of fatherhood which are created culturally and products of cultural practices. The creation of these categories has essentialised the role of the non-resident black father by making them commodities therefore deviating the traditional role of a father to now being seen more so as a financial commodity to the contribution of a child's upbringing. The role and responsibilities of the father have been found to be negotiated, contextual, interactional and relational (Burghes, Clarke and Ronin, 1997; Clarke and Roberts, 2001; Doucet 2001, 2006a). Broader cultural and historical factors have an impact also on a non-resident father and understanding their perspective of fatherhood and their relationship with their children. In conjunction it is important to understand that the definitions of normative family roles and practices are not only subjective to culture but overall have shifted in importance over more recent years. Parenting experiences are seen to be bi-product of not only historical and cultural factors, but also of race, social class, prejudice and gender.

The absent father phenomenon can arguably be linked to elements in micro systems such as poverty, crime and institutional racism which have long lasting negative effects on children (Fagan, 1999; Wilson, 2006; Richter et al., 2010). Research has indicated that black children more so than any other race are more likely to be without their biological or any father figure during their early years ( Richter 2006; Richter and Smith 2006; Khewu and Adu, 2015; Mashiya et al., 2015). The lack of and or absent involvement from fathers during childhood has been observed to have lifelong negative impacts on children including on black men's mental health and well-being. Referencing data collected from the 2011 census it can be noted that '29.9% of black households were made up of couples who were married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting (with or without dependent children) (Gov.uk, 2020)

A longitudinal study showed that youths in father-absent families (mother only and relatives/other) had significantly higher odds of incarceration than those from mother-father

### Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 3

families. As well as it being recorded adolescents from father absent families also showed significantly higher levels of delinquency. (Cynthia C. Harper, Sara S. McLanahan 2004)

Given the omnipresent stereotyping of black men as criminal or threatening specifically within the media (Russell, 1995); it is important to acknowledge that popular media outlets such as news broadcast and British newspapers are presented and constructed by a majority white cast. This portrayal plays an important role in creating and sustaining the stereotype of black men as 'criminal' and bad (Oliver, M. B. 2003). Whilst ignoring the effects these stereotypes have and the bigger issue contributing to why black men are more likely to be incarcerated and the social issues that play apart in why they turn to crime.

Anecdotal evidence shows that fear of being perceived as potential threats to their children prevents some men from participating in their children's early childhood years (Richter et al. 2004). Highlighting that is arguably society's cultural elements of micro systems such as negative stereotypes can contribute to black men's lack of interest in early childhood development .

Our national history is a veritable treasure trove of heroes and villains (Van Deburg, W.L. 2004) with black people, specifically black men being cast as the villains. As seen daily through our different avenues of social media. Heroes have an unrealistic ability to always ability to beat the odds, come out victorious and be in the spotlight. Unlike villains who receive less positive spotlight and celebratory proclamations. They are often subjected to 'whispered slurs and bad press'. However, many of us fail to make the connection between heroes and villains outside of the obvious, underestimating the contribution of each to one and other. This can be said for black people and their history specifically looking at black men. Regardless of over seventy years of black history month celebrations, an overall societal understanding of the Black British historical experience, challenges and uniqueness are still proving to be problematic.

Even though the topic of absent black fathers is often spoken about within the context of the African American man and is acknowledged as social issue within the black community, there is little research on the matter specifically from a black British perspective. This project will explore the effects of absent fathers on the psychological wellbeing of black men through the analysis of black fatherhood and the social villainization of the black man through a black British lens.

#### References

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## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

### Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 4

Wilson, A., Henriksen, R., Bustamante, R. and Irby, B., 2016. Successful Black Men From Absent-Father Homes and Their Resilient Single Mothers: A Phenomenological Study. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 44(3), pp.189-208.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Study design

Outline the proposed design of the study. If an experimental design, state the variables you plan to measure, specifying which ones are the dependent variables, the independent variables, and the control variables (if any), and whether it is a between-participants, within-participants, or mixed design; moreover, add a flowchart of the stimulus sequence. If a correlational study, state the variables you plan to measure, specifying which ones are the criterion variables, the predictor variables, the control variables (if any), the mediator variables (if any), and the moderator variables (if any). If another study design is proposed, describe accurately the nature of the study. No matter which study design you propose, here you have to convince the reader that the proposed design will allow to assess empirically the research question(s) and/or research hypothesis(es) that you stated in the Introduction section of this form (no word limit).

Eight participants will take part in semi structured interviews lasting up to an hour each. These interviews will consist of eight open ended questions allowing each participant to direct the conversation. Within these conversations participants will be encouraged to expand their responses as much as possible with prompts. Each interview will be audio recorded, pseudonymized, transcribed verbatim and stored on a password encrypted device.

Reviewing other qualitative research investigating a similar topic area, highlighted the use of 8-12 participants ( Reynolds, 2009). Using a small sample is conducive to the depth of case-oriented analysis which is fundamental to qualitative research. In addition to this, qualitative samples are purposive. Participants are selected by virtue of their capacity to provide strongly textured information with relevance to the particular phenomenon that is being investigated (Vasileious, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S. et al, 2018). Large samples risk providing repetitive data.

Alongside time restraints the use 8 participants arguably are best suited for this research project.

Semi structured interviews are more beneficial to this particular project appose to unstructured or structured interviews; as the navigation of conversation is passively controlled and allows for the themes and topics needed to answer the research question to be addressed. There are specific areas that need to be covered, however the participants' individual experience is also needed. Open ended questions will be prepared prior to the interviews and the same questions will be asked to all the participants. This in conjunction with the semi structure of the interviews allows for in depth responses and themes to be identified from all the participants interviews. Therefore, following the format of a brief opening statement with approximately 10 questions alongside additional probing questions (Rabionet, 2011).

Objectivity is an issue when using semi structured interviews however in this instance epistemological privilege is a key factor that can be argued as the research question being investigated and the participants used are coherent.

## Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 5

### 2.2 Participants

Specify the population from which you will draw your participants, how they will be accessed, and how many you will need and why. Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria that will be applied. If you intend to sample from special populations (e.g., school children, elderly, or other vulnerable participants) specify the number of participants per age group or diagnosis and indicate what arrangements you have made (or will be making) to gain access to the participants (no word limit).

A purposive opportunity sample will be used to recruit participants for this study. This will be done by posting a brief advert on both my Instagram story and twitter page advertising what will be investigated, the need for participants and what the participant requirements are. The inclusion criteria are: black male of African or Caribbean descent, between the ages of 21-35, working, currently living in London and was raised in London during their adolescent years (10 to 19 years old).

Impressionability is a key theme when investigating the effects of absent fathers, and usually limited to the adolescent and young adult population (Gwon and Jeong, 2018). Impressionability is a concept used by researchers to mean vulnerability and sensitivity to an environment (Gwon and Jeong, 2018). Social learning theory shows that individuals form attitudes and behaviours under the influence of other people around them (Bandura and McClelland, 1977).

Using participants between the ages of 21-35 avoids ethical consideration needed as all participants are of an age where they can give their own consent to take part in the research. Arguably those under the age of 21 can be considered as vulnerable. Due to the potential sensitivity surrounding the topic area participants 21 and above are better suited. Despite vulnerability not age specific it can be argued that young people specifically those under the age of 21 are more susceptible to trauma and can be triggered easily by sensitive topics

Vulnerable people will not be considered for this research project due to the potential to elicit trauma or harm. The exclusion criteria for those considered to be vulnerable include; those not working, under the age of 21 and diagnosed with mental illness.

Data will be pseudonymised and anonymised guaranteeing participants complete anonymity and store in a password protected device. This will be the same for recordings. Participants will not be referred to by name during the recording nor when all recordings are transcribed.

### 2.3 Materials

Specify all the materials you intend to use in your study. This should include any stimulus materials as well as data collection methods. Say whether these materials are pre-existing (e.g., standard psychometric tests, scales, or interview schedule/questions) or whether you plan to produce your own. If pre-existing, you **must** give the exact name of each test or scale and provide a reference to the published study that first validated that measurement instrument (do **not** attach these tests or scales to this form). If produced on your own, you **must** give the verbatim (i.e., the exact wording) of the instructions to participants and of each of the individual items of your scales. **List all equipment, test material, computer programs, accommodation, and technical help<sup>1</sup>** that you may require, and the approximate length of time for which these are needed (no word limit).

The materials needed for this study include a phone recorder which will be used to record the interviews with all the participants so that all interviews can be transcribed later on.



## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

### Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 6

Specifically using a recorder on an Apple iPhone 13 pro max. This particular recording device is suitable because the recordings taken are protected by the Apple database and are not further shared. Also it gives the researcher easier access to the recordings for when they need to be transcribed.

Pre prepared Interview questions will be made prior to the interviews.

#### Fatherhood

- 1 what does it mean to be a father?
- 2 what qualities are typically attributed to the father role?
- 3 how would you describe the specific importance of a father figure for boys?
- 4 is there anything that a father can bring to a household that a mother cannot?
- 5 how significant would you describe the relationship between father absence from the home and the self-concept of black adolescent boys? (Alston and Williams, 1982)

(participants will be prompted to talk about their own experiences)

#### Parental Role importance

- 6 what are your views on mothers single handedly raising boys? does a parent play more of
  - 7 a significant role to a child of whom they are the same gender as?
  - 8 According to Owen 2006 many black children are being raised by single mothers; what are your views on this?
- (as a prompt they will be referring to their own experiences )

#### **2.4 Procedure**

Explain the procedure through which you plan to collect your data. Explain how you intend to approach potential study participants, how you will brief them about the study, how you will obtain informed consent from them and debrief them after participation.

The advert that will be posted on both Instagram and twitter to recruit participants will be:

'Hi everyone, I am in my final year of my degree and am currently working on my dissertation which focuses on the effects that fathers or their absence may have on the psychological well-being of black men. I need 8 black men of African or Caribbean descent , between the ages of 21-35, who are working, currently living in London, were raised in London during their adolescent years (10 to 19 years old) and have no medical diagnosis of a mental illness. If you are interested in participating in my study please message me.'

Each participant's will be electronically sent consent forms to fill out via email before the interviews.

Before the interview commence each participant will have their rights to withdraw reiterated alongside being briefed on what the study is about, what will be done with the data collected and how to contact the researcher (myself) after the interviews have been done for a follow up if needs be.

Once this is done the interviews will begin.

Participants will also be debriefed once the interviews have been conducted and yet again, they will be reminded of their right to withdraw within a period of 14 days if they please. They will be offered the opportunity to discuss the study and will be given the details of the researcher and necessary people if they wish to seek support after the study has been conducted.



## Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 7

### 2.5 Briefing-Consent Form

You **must** give the verbatim (i.e., the exact wording) in the Briefing-Consent form. This is the "contract" between you and your study participants. In the Briefing section of the form you should explain in simple words the topic of the research (but you do not need to state the research question/s) and procedures to the participants, including what you expect them to do (e.g., filling in a set of questionnaires on a topic – describe the topic) and how long their participation will take (e.g., how many questions they will have to answer and how long it will take to answer them). In the Consent section of the form, you should explain how you are going to protect participants' confidentiality. Moreover, you should state participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to them, and explain how they can exert such right in practice. Finally, you should promise a debrief, and explain how and when you will deliver it to the participants (no word limit).



### PARTICIPANT BRIEFING-CONSENT FORM

**Title of study:** What effect do fathers or their absence may have on the psychological well being of black men.

**Name of investigator:** Shayne de-Landè

**Name of supervisor:** Karovyllis Zervoulis (Lakis)

### BRIEFING

The aim of this study is to explore the social phenomena of absent fathers specifically in relation to their black sons and their psychological well being.

The exploration of this study will be orchestrated via semi structured interviews up to an hour with 8, working, black men of Caribbean or African descent, between the ages of 21 to 35 all living in London, having been raised in London during their adolescent years with no diagnosed mental illnesses.

### STUDY PARTICIPANT'S STATEMENT

I have been informed of and understand the purpose of this study and its procedures and I agree to take part in the following research project.

I understand that agreeing to take part means that I consent to:

All participants will be given a study brief prior to the interviews outlining the title of the study, the aims and state that each participant will take part in a semi structured interview lasting up to an hour. All participant data will be pseudonymised and anonymised keeping participants' identity anonymous throughout and after the study. Participants can withdraw at any point during the study and have a 14 day window after the study if they decide after taking part that they no longer want their data involved in this study.

Once each interviews have come to an end they will be emailed an electronic debriefing form within 24 hours reiterating the aims of the study, their rights to withdraw, the contact details of all investigators involved in this study and the contact details of further support.

Print name

Signature

Date

## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

### Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 8

#### INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I have informed the above named participants of the nature and purpose of this study and have sought to answer their questions to the best of my ability. I have read, understood, and agree to abide by the British Psychological Society's Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines for conducting research with human participants.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2.6 Debrief Form

You **must** give the verbatim (i.e., the exact wording) in the Debrief form. You should explain in simple words the nature of the study, your research hypotheses, and the potential usefulness of the study. Moreover, you should provide non-technical references (ideally, these will be freely available on the Internet – give the hyperlinks) to the topic of your research and, depending on whether the study may lead participants to realize that they have a problem, to support centres (e.g., Alcoholic Anonymous for a study on alcohol consumption). Finally, you should state that you and your supervisor are available to provide further explanations about the study, and provide the names and email addresses of both. All of this **must be explained in a clear, friendly, layperson, non-technical language** (no word limit).



#### PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF FORM

**Title of study:** Black Fathers Villains or Martyrs. What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing of black men.

<b>Name of investigator:</b> Shayne de-Landé	<b>Email of investigator:</b> shd019@my.londonmet.ac.uk
<b>Name of supervisor:</b> Karvovyllis Zervoullis	<b>Email of supervisor:</b> k.zervoullis@londonmet.ac.uk

Thank you for taking part as a research participant in the present study concerning the effects of fathers or their absence on the psychological wellbeing of black men. Even though the topic of absent black fathers is often spoken about within the context of the African American man and is acknowledged as social issue within the black community, there is little research on the matter specifically from a black British perspective. This study has hopefully been an opportunity to bring light to the experience of black British fatherhood.

There is a 14 day window allowing you the right to withdraw from this study if you no longer want your data to be used. Following the conclusion of this study if you have any further questions you would like ask please feel free to email the named investigator and or supervisor stated above.

If you are in need of any further support you can contact Mind which is a mental health support charity which provides a webchat service or you can contact SHOUT by texting 85258 for free which is a confidential text services. Samaritans which is another mental health support charity with a free 24/7 confidential support helpline.

Contact Mind on [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk) you can visit their online website at [www.mindsupport.uk](http://www.mindsupport.uk) or call

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their Infoline on 0300 123 3393

Contact Samaritans by calling 116 123 or sending an email to [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) which provides a 24 hours response time.

## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

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### Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 10

#### 2.7 Proposed data analysis technique(s)

List the techniques you plan to use (e.g., ANOVA, correlations, discourse analysis, IPA) outlining how you are going to apply them to examine each of the research question(s) and/or research hypothesis(es) stated in the Introduction section of this form (no word limit).

A thematic analysis will be used to analyse the transcripts of each participant's interviews as it is demonstrably the best suited analytical method for this research project. This is due to the importance of theme development and exploration which allows for key patterns and themes to be identified within participants' responses. It is a quicker alternative to highlighting key themes linking back to the literature in comparison to Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) which is better suited to longitudinal studies as it is a research method used more in understanding social processes; or IPA which has its own analytical steps and can be time consuming.

Thematic analysis is a technique used to analyse textual data and elucidate themes. (Vaismoradi, 2016). Alongside thematic analysis being a more time efficient and straightforward method; a key characteristic of this method is the systematic process involving coding, examining of meaning and provision of a description of the social reality through the creation of themes. The identification of themes is important for this study as each theme may have potential subthemes which allow us to obtain a comprehensive view of the data and uncover patterns from the participants.

#### 2.8 Optional appendixes

Normally, no appendix to this document is needed. If you, however, need to attach one or more appendixes<sup>2</sup>, list the attached appendix(es) (no word limit).

<sup>2</sup> For example, a letter or email message from an organisation (e.g., a school, business, or association) that authorises you to advertise the study and recruit participants through their social network.



## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

### Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 11

#### 3. CHECKLIST

Delete either **NO** or **YES** to the following statements:

- |  |           |            |
|--|-----------|------------|
| 1. Will the participants be required to experience unpleasant stimuli or unpleasant situations above the normal level of unpleasantness expected in everyday life? <sup>3</sup>        | <b>NO</b> | <b>YES</b> |
| 2. Will any relevant information about the nature, process or outcome of the experiment or study be withheld from participants? <sup>4</sup>   | <b>NO</b> | <b>YES</b> |
| 3. Will participants be actively misled or deceived as to the purpose of the study? <sup>5</sup>   | <b>NO</b> | <b>YES</b> |
| 4. Will participants receive any inducement or payment to take part in the study?  | <b>NO</b> | <b>YES</b> |
| 5. Does the research involve identifiable participants or the possibility that anonymised individuals may become identifiable?   | <b>NO</b> | <b>YES</b> |
| 6. Will any participants be unable to provide informed consent?  | <b>NO</b> | <b>YES</b> |
| 7. Might the study carry a risk – above the normal risk expected in everyday life – of being harmful to the physical or mental well-being of participants?                             |           | <b>YES</b> |
| 8. Might the study carry a risk – above the normal risk expected in everyday life – of being harmful to the physical or mental well-being of the researcher in carrying out the study? | <b>NO</b> | <b>YES</b> |

If you answered **YES** to one or more of the above questions, explain how you will address the corresponding ethical concern(s) in the study protocol (no word limit).

There is potential that this study could cause harm to participants by triggering/eliciting certain traumas. Therefore, causing potential distress to participants. Participants will be fully debriefed and given the opportunity to contact the researcher after the study if they wish. They will also be given the numbers and emails of helplines for mind and Samaritans if they require additional support.

<sup>3</sup> If required to experience unpleasant stimuli or unpleasant situations, participants should be informed beforehand and possibly screened for suitability. Finally, depending on the level of unpleasantness, it may be appropriate to use the distress protocol immediately after data collection.

<sup>4</sup> If information is withheld, the participants will need to be debriefed after the data collection. In addition, a second informed consent to use the data should be obtained after debriefing the participants (attach the second consent form as an appendix to this document). Finally, the distress protocol should be used immediately after data collection.

<sup>5</sup> If the participants are actively misled or deceived, they need to be debriefed after the data collection. In addition, a second informed consent to use the data should be obtained after debriefing the participants (attach the second consent form as an appendix to this document). Finally, the distress protocol should be used immediately after data collection.

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**Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form 13**
**4. SUBMISSION**

You must submit your Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form in **electronic form** (only) as follows:

1. Print the form, **sign it**, and **make your supervisor sign it**;
2. Scan the printed and signed version of the form, and all attached material (if any), into a **single PDF file**, for example using one of the University's Ricoh printer/copiers;
3. **Rename the single PDF file** using the following convention and format:  
Ethics\_ Module Code\_ Student Surname\_ Student ID number
4. e.g., Ethics\_PC6P01\_Bond\_0000007
5. Submit the single and renamed PDF file via [Weblearn](#) on *Psychology Research Ethics Community* (visible under *My Organisations*), using the **module-specific submission link**.

**The Psychology Project Proposal and Ethics Form must be complete and signed. Incomplete and/or unsigned forms will not be assessed and will require resubmission at the next opportunity.**

**Submission deadline is the first day of every month (or the Friday before if on a weekend/bank holiday).**

**The researcher must inform the supervisor of any changes to the proposed research that may alter the answers given to the questions in this form or any related research ethics applications. The supervisor will then either approve the changes or ask the student to resubmit the Project Proposal and Ethics Application Form.**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Student</b>	Shayne de-Landè	Shayne R de-Landè	10/01/22
<b>Supervisor</b>	Karyofyllis, Zervoulis (Lakis)	Karyofyllis, Zervoulis	10/01/22

**APPENDIX C****Instagram Social Media Post**

‘Hi everyone, I am in my final year of my degree and am currently working on my dissertation which focuses on the effects that fathers or their absence may have on the psychological well-being of black men. I need 8 black men of African or Caribbean descent , between the ages of 21-35, who are working, currently living in London, were was raised in London during their adolescent years (10 to 19 years old) and have no medical diagnosis of a mental illness. If you are interested in participating in my study please message me.’



**APPENDIX D****Interview Schedule****Fatherhood**

- 1 what does it mean to be a father?
- 2 what qualities are typically attributed to the father role?
- 3 how would you describe the specific importance of a father figure for boys?
- 4 is there anything that a father can bring to a household that a mother cannot?
- 5 how significant would you describe the relationship between father absence from the home and the self-concept of black adolescent boys? (Alston and Williams, 1982)

**(participants will be prompted to talk about their own experiences)**

**Parental Role importance**

- 6 what are your views on mothers single handily raising boys? does a parent play more of
- 7 a significant role to a child of whom they are the same gender as?
- 8 According to Owen 2006 many black children are being raised by single mothers; what are your views on this?

**(as a prompt they will be referring to their own experiences )**

**APPENDIX E**

Man X- Interview Transcript with colour coding.

Quotes  
about black  
fathers and  
men

Interview with Man X

1  
2 **Interviewer:** Hey, are we all ready to start?  
3 **Man X:** Yep, when you're ready.  
4 **Interviewer:** Perfect. So, my first question is what does it mean to be a father? How  
5 would you define a father?  
6 **Man X:** hmmm. Does it mean to be a father? I say to be a father means to be a protector, a  
7 provider and the blueprint of manhood and masculinity found in the home. And the reason  
8 why I say this is because talking from the perspective of a guy when you're a child the first  
9 man you should know is the man in your home. Which should be your father. The first  
10 woman you know is the woman in your home which is your mother. So, to be a father is to be  
11 the first teach, the first idea the first blueprint of what manhood should be. Whether this is the  
12 case or not is a different story. But if we were talking about the nuclear father. He should  
13 represent the what it means to be a man. Especially given that your father is meant to be a  
14 positive role model. Everything in which a boy learns from small is normally reflective of  
15 what his father taught him. Hence why we have the cliches in films and stuff of fathers being  
16 the ones to teach their boys to ride a bike, play a sport, shave etc. All the things in which we  
17 would typically associated with being a guy kind of thing. Now to be a black father means to  
18 be a protector to the highest degree and not only on a physical 'I'm your dad I'm meant to  
19 protect you from the dangers of the world kind of thing.' But a protector in the sense of as a  
20 black man we go through so much and we have to face so much. We all have had our  
21 experiences with being a black man and living in London. Now as a father it's basically our  
22 jobs to best prepare our children particulaury our sons for what they will most probably face.  
23 That's how the father and mother role differs. Especially within the black household. The  
24 black mother knows the reality of the world and does her best to protect her children from the  
25 harsh realities. However, as a black man and a black father we know that there's no  
26 protecting from the inevitable no matter how doom and gloom I may sound, I'm keeping it a  
27 100% a buck with you. Hence why the black father role is different. They're not there to  
28 protect you in that sense they're meant to prepare you as best they can for the life experiences  
29 you will have. Because at the end of the day, as a black man your chances of being stopped  
30 and searched are extremely high and end of the day no one can actually stop that from  
31 happening. What someone can do is best teach you how to deal with it if it was to ever  
32 happen to you. That's what fathers teach you. Your mum will say all the things she will as a  
33 mother but the advice in which a father gives you as a young black boy comes from a place  
34 of experience. And like I said these are experience specific to the black man. So, the  
35 preparation you get from the advice and conversations you have with your father is the  
36 protection. If that makes any sense. Please stop me if I'm waffling.  
37 **Interviewer:** no no you're fine, I most definitely get what you mean. Mothers and fathers  
38 have different roles.  
39 **Man X:** exactly that. This new age stuff where people think mothers can replace the role of  
40 the father or that women can be fathers is rubbish. In fact, it's almost insulting because if now  
41 we were to say that men could fill the mother role then there would be outrage. The father  
42 role is meant to be filled by a men. The father role is about masculinity. Not the toxic shit.  
43 Pardon my language, but more than masculine energy in which a young boy can resonate  
44 with. I know I'm waffling but like I said earlier there's a different type of weight that comes  
45 with the words your father will say to you when you're a boy. Like your mum can tell you  
46 certain things that will fly over your head if your father said it. Same way there's certain  
47 things in which your father will tell you that will hold a lot more weight coming from your  
48 father. This is a balance that I needed in my opinion. And it's the lack of balance that causes  
49 these little yutes to move mad out ah road. When you grow up with no other bigger and older  
50 masculine energy to keep you at bay. As a boy you take this role upon yourself and not

Quotes about black mothers  
and women

## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

51 always in the best and least detrimental way to yourself or anyone round you to be quite  
 52 honest.

53 **Interviewer:** that being said what's your take on single mothers raising their sons  
 54 alone?

55 **Man X:** so, I commend all the actual single mothers who are trying their best to raise young  
 56 boys. But in reality, there aren't as many single mothers as there is portrayed to be.

57 **Interviewer:** why would you say that?

58 **Man X:** because it's true. There's more single women raising children than single mothers.  
 59 Being a single woman and a single mother is two different things. And especially within the  
 60 black community women love to throw this single mother narrative around when their baby  
 61 father is with a different woman or when they just don't like or have had personal issues with  
 62 their baby father. The whole single mother thing is a way at dismissing a black man's role or  
 63 efforts at being a father. A single mother is someone who has a child and the father is not  
 64 about to any capacity physically, emotional, financially none of that. So, she is actually single  
 65 handily raising her child as the only parent. And even with that there's the whole argument  
 66 that single parenthood doesn't exist because it take more than just the parents to raise a child.  
 67 That whole it takes a village saying. Your baby father doesn't have to be with you in order to  
 68 be a father nor does he have to live with you or even like you to be a father let alone a good  
 69 one.

70 **Interviewer:** so, you think the whole single mother narrative is not true?

71 **Man X:** it's not that it's not true, it's that its over used and extremely misused. Typically  
 72 misused by bitter baby mums. Not only that on the topic of single mothers let me tell you  
 73 something. The system brought this single mother ideology and narrative into the black  
 74 community. The best way to destroy us is to destroy our homes. That starts with turning the  
 75 black woman against the black man and vice versa. Everything starts at home and by that, I  
 76 mean everything starts within the family. Literally everything. Your first idea of self comes  
 77 from your how you see yourself and that is a byproduct of what your parents feed you. If your  
 78 parents tell you you're the best you're going to believe exactly that. We cultivate ideas about  
 79 ourselves our initial understanding of life and the world come from within our family unit.  
 80 Our initial set of morals and what not are formed based of the ones we are raised on. So back  
 81 to what I was saying about how the system is one of the biggest destroys and contributors to  
 82 the whole single mum narrative, absent black father narrative is a result of this system we  
 83 have brought into thinking that its beneficial for us. Even though it's the same system that  
 84 was literally built on the exploitation and slavery of black people. So how we think that the  
 85 system at any point will benefit us I do not know.

86 **Interviewer:** when you say the system, what do you mean?

87 **Man x:** sorry when I say the system I mean the western world, the government. The system  
 88 is a way of saying all those things in one. So, what I'm saying about the system is that the  
 89 government. The system has made it so that the black woman doesn't need the black man.  
 90 Deep it you get more money from the government if you are a quote on quote single mother.  
 91 And seeing as the black man's position as a father only seems to be put down to whether or  
 92 not he can provide. Unfortunately, within our community providing as a man is about money  
 93 and as a father how much you can provide. Due to the fact the role of a man and a provider is  
 94 so strongly linked to money and how much money. The black father is so replaceable. Black  
 95 people love money too much. The system has made it that the black man can be replaced, the  
 96 minute me as a black can't provide enough I can literally get kicked to the corner because my  
 97 baby mother can go to the government and get p. Where black people have always had to  
 98 fight even harder for basic things money being one of those things, their love and need for  
 99 money is at a different level. Deep it the root of a lot of rubbish is money. So as a mum for  
 100 the sake of the conversation if you're not with your baby father and he isn't providing enough

Quotes about  
the  
government

Quotes pertaining to the

black community and how the  
government affect them and their  
relationships with each other

101 in your opinion you can literally kick him to one side and go to the government. Even with  
102 housing the whole build with your partner thing we don't have that because its known that  
103 once upon a time it was a lot easier especially as a woman a single mother to go to the  
104 council and get housing. All that waiting around and saving with your man to get a flat ting  
105 was long. Lef him and do it by yourself with the so called support or help from the system.  
106 There's no longer much emphasis on the building of a solid family unit. Plus, deep it fathers  
107 have next to no say in anything the system has control over everything. If the police come  
108 and kick in your door and take your child, what can you do? Nothing. If your baby mother  
109 takes you to the court the system can now tell you when and where you can see you kid.  
110 That's mad. Like deep it. I can't even remember the statistic but it was something mad about  
111 how women, mothers are always more likely to get custody of the child over the father.  
112 Especially within the black community. Its rigged blud. We actually have such an unfair  
113 disadvantage. So back to your original question on single mothers raising their sons, like I  
114 said hats off to those who are doing it and giving their all to doing the best by their sons,  
115 however it's unfortunate because boys especially black boys need that father figure in their  
116 life. They need that grounding and old male presence to direct them which in my opinion you  
117 can only get from a father figure which cannot be filled by a woman.

118 **Interviewer: I hear what you're saying so of the back of what you was saying in regards**  
119 **to the whole single mother narrative being both over used and miss used; how would**  
120 **you define an absent father. So, to better word it what does it mean to you to be an**  
121 **absent father?**

122 **Man X:** umm to be an absent father is to be a man who is not physically, emotionally,  
123 mentally or financially present for their child. And the reason why I said all of those things  
124 alongside not being physically present is because people like to scream absent fathers in  
125 regards to men who don't live with their kids and I don't think that's correct or fair. There's  
126 many a reasons as to why a man not live with his child. Doesn't necessarily mean that he's an  
127 absent father. There's fathers in which live in the same house as their children and their baby  
128 mothers and are absent mentally and emotionally but they wouldn't be classed as absent  
129 fathers but they are pretty much just dead weights in the house. They don't fulfil the role of a  
130 father but because they live in the same house the qualify? That doesn't make sense. To be a  
131 father is more than just physically being present. That literally just about scrapes the surface  
132 of fatherhood. I know guys who would tell you themselves from their own experiences about  
133 their dads who yes cool they lived with them but it wouldn't have made a difference if they  
134 didn't because they didn't do shit for them or their families living there. They were literally  
135 just dead weights in the yard. Being absent and being a father who just doesn't live with the  
136 kids but still sees his yutes on a weekly basis, still provides where he can, still does the  
137 parents evenings when and where he's allowed, comes to the sports days, takes his boys to 5  
138 aside football on the weekends that's still a great dad. But people seem to equate being a  
139 good father to money and living in the same house as their children. When that's not it. I  
140 know bare man who don't live in the same house as their kids but go above and beyond.  
141 Haven't missed nothing, no birthday, no parents evening, no sports day, no nativity play but  
142 they don't live with their kids and their baby mums will chat this crap about being a single  
143 mum. That kind of stuff gets me so vex.

144 **Interviewer: so, there's more to fatherhood than just being present?**

145 **Man X:** yeah man. Like me for example. My dad was in pen till I was like 12/13 and it was  
146 just my mum. He would try and call and what not, send. Change when he could. But  
147 obviously for a while my own mum was another black mum who was bitter for a while and  
148 tried to make it harder for him to get in contact with me and my sister. Given as an adult I  
149 understand part of her logic as to why she wanted to keep him away from us. Like even  
150 initially when he came out my mum used to move mad. Like she actually would not let my



## What effect do absent fathers have on the psychological wellbeing their black sons?

151 man see us at all blud. It was peak and even for me I was getting to an age where I was just  
 152 angry innit. Like no dad, missed a lot of things I would have wanted him at and now mans  
 153 coming back around on this daddy ting. I wasn't trying to hear it either. But that's different.  
 154 End of the day I was a child. But my mum yeah she was not on it at all. Now as an adult like I  
 155 said I understand parts of why she moved like that. She didn't want him and his lifestyle  
 156 around us to influence us or to put us in harm's way. I get it but at the same time it's one of  
 157 them ones where me as a man can say she didn't have any right to keep his children from him  
 158 because he has just as much a birth right to us as she did. But anyway, yeah when he came  
 159 out of pen he did try to be in our lives, like he came round and gave as much as he could  
 160 financially but even that, unfortunately with how many black mothers are now if you're not  
 161 giving enough you're not good enough which was the case for my dad for a while. Especially  
 162 given for the 8 years my dad was in pen it was just my mum and grandma who were raising  
 163 me and fitting the bill for everything. So, I get it and there's by no means that I'm defending  
 164 anyone. However, I'm still a man and a man whose also now a father too and a father who  
 165 made mistakes that my father also made. That in itself is a thing. Even though I understand  
 166 the logic as to why my mum didn't want my dad around us when he initially came out but it's  
 167 one of them ones where its peak because I didn't really get in proper contact with him until I  
 168 was like 18/19 and that was when I was adult enough to do my own thing. And in truth I  
 169 only went to him for money when my mum wouldn't give it to me.

170 **Interviewer: do you think you would have got in contact with him otherwise?**

171 **Man X:** nope. All I really knew of him was to be someone to get money off. And that's the  
 172 case for bare of us. When your mum doesn't have the p or won't give it to you the first thing  
 173 she will say is 'call you dad' or it's the 'where's your dad. Ask him. What's he there for.' So,  
 174 like I was saying the father role is reduced down to money especially within the black  
 175 community in my opinion. You're only allowed to contact them or even have relations with  
 176 them when they're giving money. And that's even coming from my own experience with my  
 177 own baby mum but that's a whole other thing. Which links to what I was saying about  
 178 understanding my mums logic as to why she didn't want him around us but especially me as  
 179 guy would have benefited a lot having him there. Like for example. Cut me if I'm talking too  
 180 much...

181 **Interviewer:** na you're good. Go on.

182 **Man X:** as a man, a boy, a guy however you want to put it. As a male there's advice in which  
 183 my father should have given me that would have been listened to and acknowledged  
 184 differently that I got from my mum that I ignored due to my own ignorance of 'yeah but  
 185 you're a woman you don't get it' that if my father had given me I wouldn't have got myself  
 186 in the shit that I did. The same shit that he got himself into. The same mistakes I went onto  
 187 make because I was a young black boy in London that thought I knew everything and was  
 188 bigger and badder than everyone around me. There was no father figure no significant male  
 189 figure to advice or say anything to even attempt to deter me from making the mistakes I did. I  
 190 just had to make those mistakes and learn from them. Which looking back is annoying  
 191 because especially as a father now myself it's one of them ones where because I've made  
 192 them mistakes I'm going to do my best to advice deter whatever it is so that my little boy  
 193 doesn't make the same ones. A lot of the time as a black boy you need to hear how it went  
 194 south for someone else in order to make sure it doesn't go south for you. You need to hear  
 195 others bad experience so you don't have to have one. And by others it's your fathers mistakes  
 196 and experiences that equate for a lot when it comes to being a deterrent. But as I keep saying  
 197 this is just my opinion both as a father, a black man and as someone who once contributed to  
 198 the negative stereotype perpetuated by society and the media about black guys. So yeah.

199 **Interviewer:** going of the fact in your opinion you believe having your father around  
 200 potentially would have deterred you from getting involved in whatever you go involved |

Quotes about the Black British male experience.

201 in when you was younger. My next questions is how significant would you describe the  
 202 relationship between father absence to the self-concept of black adolescent boys?  
 203 Man X: there is a massive correlation between the two. Is that even a question? Like I was  
 204 initially saying. I keep referring back to myself. The first idea you have of manhood is from  
 205 you father. Your first idea and understanding of who you are as a man is from your father.  
 206 Your idea of what it means to be a man comes from your relationship with your father  
 207 whether that's good or bad but that's where it all starts. Not even just men or boys but people  
 208 as a whole are influenced by others and this is a fact. When you are younger the people  
 209 around you play a big role in how you learn to navigate around life, your morals are built of  
 210 what you are taught from other people. You're literally a product of your parents and its  
 211 blatantly obvious that we will more observant of the behaviours displayed by the parents that  
 212 are of the same gender as us no? We hear the same story all the time little boys saying they  
 213 want to be like their dads when they grow up but obviously this is typically only the case  
 214 when their fathers are seen in a positive light by the child. But in the same breather we hear  
 215 young boys who do not have a good perception of their fathers say they don't want to be like  
 216 their dads when they're older. At the end of the day we know what type of man we want and  
 217 don't to be based of our relationships and perceptions of our fathers. In fact as a black boy  
 218 without a father its even more sticky because there's no one to aspire to be or anyone to  
 219 aspire not to be so we look to outside and outside when your black in London is not easy at  
 220 all. There's so many things and ways in which things can go wrong. There's so many things  
 221 that look appealing because at the end of the day a lot of us come from working class  
 222 backgrounds, outside looks like it can give you what you couldn't have growing up. When  
 223 there's no father figure to let you know in advance that the grass is not greener. So in short  
 224 the answer to your question how significant is the relationship between father absence and  
 225 self-concept of black boys, it's very significant.  
 226 Interviewer: okay, I hear you. Makes a lot of sense to be honest. It's like what you said earlier  
 227 the experiences in which your dad goes through hold different weight so not having someone  
 228 to advice you based of their experiences can be long for young black boys because they're  
 229 almost forced to find out one way or another.  
 230 Man X: exactly that. It is literally exactly that.  
 231 Interviewer: okay we are really going over time. So I'm going to wrap up here thank you so  
 232 much for this. It's been great speaking to you. Im going to email you over the debriefing form  
 233 and if you have any further questions or feel you want any kind of support after this study all  
 234 the details to contact me and the necessary helplines are going to be on the email and debrief  
 235 form.  
 236 Man X: haha im good man. I don't need any white person telling me about my daddy issues.  
 237 But I hear you. Thank you sis it's been a pleasure. Thank you for giving us a voice man.  
 238 Were spoken about but no one actually comes to speak to us and hear us out. So thank you  
 239 honestly.  
 240 Interviewer: you are more than welcome. Ill speak to you later.  
 241 Man: alright, easy.

### Colour code

Pink: Black women and mothers

Blue: Black fathers

Green: The Government effects

Yellow: The Black community cultural and social responses to the government/ institutional racism

Khaki: The Black British Experience