

BARRIERS TO FATHERHOOD INVOLVEMENT:

A SECONDARY ANALYSIS

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By
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wonderful and supportive parents, Lorena and Ismael Chavez for all of the love and support you have given me. Not only have you been there during these last 3 years but throughout my whole life. Thank you for being there for me through all of the late nights and early mornings when I juggled school and work. I truly appreciate all of your help. Everything I do is for you both, to make you proud. I love you both very much. Gracias por todos los esfuerzos que han hecho por nosotras, sus hijas. Les agradezo todo y les dedico esto a ustedes. Los quiero mucho!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this secondary analysis research was to provide some insight on barriers that impede a father's ability to be an active parent. The study found that co-parenting, perception of fathers, and gender bias were all factors that affected father involvement in some way. The original data were collected through the use of self-administered surveys as well as participation in focus groups. Overall, there were 37 fathers who participated in the study, all of whom were also mandated participants in a parenting class. In the survey portion of the study, half of the participants, 54.5% defined co-parenting as equally dividing responsibilities with the mother of their children. Other major findings of this study indicated that court involvement has a strong influence on how fathers co-parent and remain involved in their children's lives. Another result discussed a difference in the treatment of fathers as opposed to mothers by the courts due to the perceptions about men and their role as fathers. Despite the differential treatment by the court system, fathers in this study did not feel they were treated any differently by female social workers compared to male social workers. According to the participants, the gender of the worker did not appear to matter in terms of case management outcomes.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Fathers are held to significantly lower standards than mothers (O'Donnell, 2001; Bloomer, Sipe, & Ruedt, 2002). These men are often viewed as a less important parent and not of value when compared to the mother (O'Donnell, 2001; Grief et al., 2011; Coakley, 2013). Historically, socially, and culturally men have not been held to the same standards as women when it comes to parenting. Women are commonly regarded as having the obligation of a nurturer while men are nurturers and caretakers by choice (Silverstein, 1996 as cited in Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003; Mintz & McNeil, 2013). This notion is in concert with society's unequal view of mothers and fathers having respective and separate roles (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999; O'Donnell, 2001; English, Brummel, & Martens, 2009). Ethnic background also ties into this imbalanced perspective, especially as it relates to fathers.

Men of color are often viewed through a lens of existing prejudices associated with poverty, crime, and lack of education (Hines, Lemon, Wyatt, & Merdinger, 2004). Fathers of ethnic minority backgrounds are frequently considered less capable of caring for their children due to these prejudices. "Men of color continue to be ignored and institutionally discriminated against, and more barriers exist for the successful engagement and retention of men of color in treatment and prevention efforts" (Carrillo & Tello, 2008, xvii). Racial stereotypes, social class, and

differences in educational background can result in disparate decision making on the part of child welfare workers based largely on a lack of knowledge or overgeneralization when working with persons of color (McRoy, 2008; Curtis & Denby, 2011; Lefkowitz, 2011; Goldberg, 2000). The aforementioned factors can impede minority fathers' ability to be a part of their children's lives.

Perceived Barriers for Fathers of Color

There is evidence suggesting a causal effect between co-parenting and father involvement (McLanahan & Beck, 2010). Additionally, "distrust of the opposite sex" and "the acceptance of single motherhood" contributes to low-quality relationships between the parents and family instability (McLanahan & Beck, 2010, p. 17). This type of gender distrust (McLanahan & Beck, 2010) also had ramifications in social work case management practices. Brodie, Paddock, Countee, & Chavez (in press) explored a combination of 3 potential barriers experienced by fathers of color involved in the social service system. The obstacles identified were co-parenting, public perception of fathers, and gender bias.

Co-parenting. The ability to co-parent with the mother of their children is crucial to a father's level of commitment to his parenting obligations (Brodie et al., in press; Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, & Pruett, 2007). The relationship a father has with the mother of his children can determine the relationship he will ultimately have with his children. "Discord between parents can cause a negative relationship between father and child" (Thomas, Krampe, & Newton, 2008, p. 531). If the mother and the father do not get along, she can dictate – to a certain extent – how much the father will be

involved in their children's lives (Bloomer, Sipe, & Reudt, 2002). In the case of an estranged parental relationship, a father's chance at obtaining visitation with his children can be impacted based on the mother's demeanor toward him. If fathers have a harder time obtaining visitation or if they cannot visit with their children, there can be negative effects with the children's welfare and overall well-being (Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007; English et al., 2009; and Grief et al., 2011). A child's healthy development can be in jeopardy if both parents are not involved. (Choi, 2009).

Public perception of fathers. When parents cannot come to a consensus about child visitation, for example, one next step might be to involve family court to make the decisions and negotiate arrangements. Situations can worsen when family court systems become involved, especially for fathers of ethnic minority backgrounds (Insabella, Williams, & Pruett, 2003). Involvement becomes more of a challenge for fathers of ethnic minority backgrounds due to the existing negative stereotypes they are associated with, which are typically thoughts about them being criminals, poor, or not educated (Hines, Lemon, Wyatt, & Merdinger, 2004). Men have to constantly prove themselves to be seen as a good father or having a positive influence. A caseworker in a study stated that "In order for a man to get his kids through [the public child welfare agency]...he has to jump through so many hoops" (O'Donnell, Johnson Jr., D'Aunno, & Thornton, 2005, p. 398). The process of proving themselves can add to the difficulties for fathers who want to be active participants in their children's lives. Many fathers have expressed that being involved with their children

feels like an insurmountable challenge filled with societal roadblocks, discriminatory racial undertones, and unfair legal policies in order to simply maintain regular access to their own children (Humphreys, Atkarf, & Baldwin, 1999). The personal biases of case workers is another contributor among the list of barriers faced by father (Harris & Hackett, 2008).

Gender bias. The nature of social work practice can be challenging and leave room for unintentional bias, which poses an additional threat to fathers. Gender bias should be considered as a relevant factor in disparity as the visible exchange of services tends to remain primarily between female case workers and mothers, particularly in child welfare (O'Donnell, 2001; Risely-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003). A review of the literature unveiled that men continue to remain invisible in child welfare as a common practice perpetuated by child protective service workers – who are mostly women (Risely-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003; Center for Workforce Studies, 2004). There is a minimal amount of research which delves into this particular subject, however, there is awareness about the gender of social workers influencing the interaction with fathers in child welfare at some level (O'Donnell, Johnson Jr., D'Aunno, & Thornton, 2005). Issues of transference and counter-transference of the social workers can largely contribute to worker bias, namely gender bias. Based on the work of Risely-Curtiss & Heffernan (2003), this writer is asserting that unresolved relational issues between female workers and their own fathers, or the outcomes of personal male-female relationships could impact a worker's ability to operate in the best interest of the child. It is known that personal biases can greatly

impact professional case management (Hines, Lemon, Wyatt, & Merdinger, 2004; Goldberg, 2000). Unintentional bias against fathers can inadvertently affect the level of paternal involvement due to the difference in service provisions that are offered as a result of the parent's gender (Brodie et al., in press; McRoy, 2008).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research was to give a voice to fathers and allowed them to share their experiences when attempting to be more involved with their children while simultaneously addressing court sanctions (e.g., adhering to restraining orders, visitation orders; and participating in mandated batterers' groups and parenting classes, etc.). This study provided fathers with validation in knowing that people are interested in hearing their stories and the extent of their experiences. This research also offered other fathers a sense of community in understanding and realizing that they were not alone in their struggles. Most importantly, this research attempted to shed insight into the barriers of co-parenting, perception of fathers, and gender bias which conceivably impedes a father's ability to be a more active participant in his children's lives.

The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Fathers shared experiences about what obstacles they have come across in their mission to engage and connect with their children within the context of social service system. The study attempted to articulate some of the common issues encountered by fathers who had an open case with a service provider (i.e., mental health clinician, child welfare worker, group treatment counselor, community-based/family support worker, etc.). This

specific topic of study was not one that was very well informed. This exploratory and descriptive study highlighted the needs of fathers from ethnic minority backgrounds – clearly an underrepresented population.

The research question guiding this study was: What types of barriers or challenges do fathers face when attempting to have more involvement with their children? It is important to better understand what prevents fathers from being consistently present in the lives of their children.

Significance of the Study

The implication of this research is that it will expand upon the topics of co-parenting, public perception of fathers, and gender bias, collectively. The social work profession, as well as other fields of study, should remain committed to learning new ideas and perspectives of fathers, especially those of color. Fathers of color are represented disproportionately across systems and focusing attention to this area can better inform practice methods. Providing more information about the intersection of co-parenting, public perception of fathers, and the gender bias of workers can strengthen the platform that enables both parents to be treated equally and respected.

Investigating a father's perspective on factors that can bridge a better relationship with their children is necessary. One of the best ways this information can be discovered is by directly speaking to fathers who face these difficulties and allowing them to share using their own words. As social workers and other service providers enhance their understanding of the complexity of barriers for fathers, changes in practice modalities and policy revisions can begin to occur. Though a

daunting task, social workers are in prime position to help transform some of the negative societal views of fathers and promote co-parenting models, paternal engagement, and reduce/eliminate female biases in case management.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The following literature review supports the need for more expansive research on the topic of barriers to father involvement from the father's perspective. This chapter will attempt to expand on various major points related to challenges associated with father involvement. There will be a discussion about fathers' experiences with the court system- both family and criminal court. The family court and justice systems are pertinent to the overall treatment of fathers and its lasting effects. This literature review includes interventions that have been put into place to combat identified barriers to father involvement. Lastly, a section describing relevant theoretical frameworks will be addressed. The two theories that will be discussed are family systems and empowerment.

Fathers and Court Involvement

Fathers are involved with an array of court systems to assist in the decision making of divorce, child visitations, as well as criminal cases of domestic violence or any other crime committed. Some articles that were found describe the unfair treatment of fathers in family court from the father's perspective. Articles regarding criminal court also go into the unfair treatment of individuals based on ethnicity. Experiences about court interactions serve to explain some of the challenges that can be a factor in active father involvement.

Family Court

The court system can become an impeding factor in a father's ability to be an active parent in his child's life. Courts sometimes become involved with parents if they can no longer resolve disputes on their own (Baker, 2006; Brotherson et al., 2005; Cartwright, 1993; Corcoran, 2005; Darnell, 1997, 1998; Dudley, 1991; Gardner, 2002; Harper, & Fine, 2006; Henley & Pasley, 2005; Maldonado, 2006; Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001; Wineburgh, 2000). Involvement of the courts can interfere with the relationship between father and child. According to Berk (2012, p. 2), "Court interventions may weaken parent-child bonds by keeping the child enmeshed in turmoil because of court delays." Court delays can prevent important decisions from being made and keeps the child in the middle of two parents at odds, which is not healthy for the child. The courts may also add to an unnecessary delay of the presence of a father, especially if it pertains to child visitations or custody (Mitcham-Smith & Henry, 2007 as cited in Berk, 2012).

According to Hallman, Dienhart, & Beaton (2007), research continues to indicate that the court system typically grants custody to mothers in most custody cases (as cited in Berk, 2012). This may be an implication of gender bias on behalf of the courts due to favoring the mother. The number of fathers petitioning for child custody has grown according to Berk (2012). This legal battle is often accompanied by stressors that can burden fathers. Some fathers have claimed "that court interventions have systematically estranged them from their children" and even "diminished their role in their children's life" (Bogle, 2005; Charlow, 1986-1987;

Siegel & Langford, 1998). Fathers feel like they are treated particularly different compared to mothers.

In a qualitative research study by Berk (2012), eight participants were interviewed regarding their experiences in the family court system. The participants had to meet certain criteria. They were divorced men who felt that they were “alienated” throughout the divorce and custody litigations. Alienation in this context meant “the feelings expressed by post-divorced fathers who felt estranged from their children” (Berk, 2012, p.13). The fathers from this study were currently participating in a support groups. Fathers expressed frustrations regarding many categories of the divorce and custody process. One of the topics discussed the unfair treatment they faced from the court system.

Many fathers perceived the courts as being more favorable to mothers while treating them unfairly. These men explain how they believed men do not even get a fair chance in court to stay actively involved in their children’s lives:

““The judge seemed to take the woman’s side.” “The system believes that basically the children belong with the mother.” “I didn’t feel like men got a shot at custody because they always seemed to favor the women. It felt unfair.” “I felt they took her side and everything’.” (Berk, 2012, p. 90).

These fathers also described how the courts took part in diminishing their role as fathers.

They were not given much weight in the courtroom compared to mothers. The men explained how visitation with their children was affected due to feeling like did

not have a voice in court. The men commonly said that courts more readily accepted what mothers had to say. Fathers who were interviewed provided some more powerful quotes to describe their experiences:

“I was hurt, and they just pushed my information away, and accepted hers.”

“The judge decided what he wanted to do and it didn’t matter what I had to say.” “I thought the court would say that I am the father and as the father I knew what was best for my children and the children should spend time with me because that is what is best for the children. Instead I was given one dinner date and one weekend a month. I saw them more before I went to court.” “I would tell the judge one thing and she would tell the judge another thing, and she would deny it, and she would tell the judge that she was a good mother, she took good care of her children, and that her children loved her. And the judge would get angry with me, and she would win, and I would lose.” “The most frustrating part about the whole thing was that it didn’t matter what I had to say’.” (Berk, 2012, p. 121).

These men constantly expressed these feelings of alienation and insignificance as fathers by the very system that has been setup to aid with co-parenting. The court system can become an enemy to fathers in some cases.

Criminal Court

It was quite difficult to find empirical data on fathers with direct involvement in criminal courts. The research that was discovered, however, discussed both men and women’s experiences with criminal court, as well as the racial component that

comes with interacting with such a macro-level system. More research studies need to be conducted about men as fathers and the differentiation of parental status from those who are not fathers. Although men's criminal court involvement and unfair treatment related to race is a crucial piece to this particular research study, there is a lack of sound empirical data which needs to be further investigated. The downfall of these articles regarding race and the criminal justice system is that there is no discussion of men's roles in the context of parent fathers.

Neely (2004) and Dunnville (2000) provided data on individual experiences and perceptions of the justice system in regard to race. Study participants expressed various concerns and experiences about White and minority treatment in the judicial system. They also expressed the belief that unfair treatment begins at the very moment individuals have contact with a police officer (Neely, 2004; Dunnville, 2000). Minorities, especially immigrants, seemed to be targeted more often compared to Whites. Numerous participants believed that judges set higher bonds for minorities than White people (Neely, 2004).

Dunnville's (2000) survey revealed that minorities, especially African Americans, were displeased with our country's judicial system. In Neely's (2004) study, one man shared his perspective about the African American population in his county. He stated that in Nebraska, with roughly a 4% Black population, has about 60-75% of incarcerated individuals who are Black (Neely, 2004). He went on to pose a question to the general public inquiring if they, in fact, believed that more than half of the Black population in Nebraska was "bad" (Neely, 2004, p.27). The author

merely points out that for each crime that is committed by both a Black and a White person, the Black person is most likely to obtain a sentence while the White person does not. The unfair treatment of individuals while going through the court process is another serious aspect to investigate.

Another aspect noted by Neely (2004) and Kirby, Long, and Raja's (2010) research was the Latino experience with the lack of an adequate Spanish interpreter. Many individuals expressed great dissatisfaction with the quality of interpreters involved in their cases (Neely, 2004). In most of these cases, the interpreters were not even certified. And many times individuals reported that they had to settle for people who did not speak Spanish correctly and did not know what they were doing. Other times they even resorted to using their own family members who were typically children who spoke Spanish but had no knowledge about court terminology (Neely, 2004; Kirby, Long, & Raja, 2010). These examples of poor communication unfair practice related to an individual's race. The lack of satisfactory communication on behalf of the courts is a great concern because important information is not being conveyed to minorities who do not speak English or who do not understand the language very well. The courts then become a common factor, among other barriers, in the constant battle that fathers face to be able to have an active relationship with their children.

Barriers to Active Fatherhood Involvement

This thesis focuses on three particular areas which are identified as barriers to father involvement (as described by the fathers). The three highlighted areas of

challenge are co-parenting, public perception of fathers, and gender bias. Co-parenting refers to both mother and father being able to come to consensus about issues concerning their child. Common issues related to visitation, discipline, health, and education. In cases where both parents could not co-parent effectively, the family court system became involved to mediate or make decisions. A father's level of involvement may be affected by the public's perception about the role of a father. Fathers are not naturally perceived as nurturers but instead may be viewed as simply providers (Mintz & McNeil, 2013). Gender bias is more complex in that there are multiple facets which comprise the term. There is some awareness of the impact that gender bias has on father involvement: 1. The gender of a social worker involved in working with a father may involve unintended bias, and 2. The presence of gender bias has previously been identified in terms of differential treatment of men versus women in the judicial system (custody typically granted to mothers, alienation of fathers, unfair treatment in court, etc.). Nonetheless, all of these barriers present challenging circumstances for fathers.

Combating Barriers

Public awareness is just barely being spread about barriers that fathers face and the awareness is slowly proving some promising changes. Fatherhood initiatives have been established to ensure best practices and programs when it comes to father involvement (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2010; Laakso & Adams, 2006). Research indicates that "including the biological father is a child welfare mandate, but endeavors to regularly solicit their participation many times is near the bottom of

the long list of case management priorities” (English, Brummel, & Martens, 2009; Greif et al., 2011). This is a problem because it shows that although it is a requirement to involve fathers; adequate measures to involve fathers are still not being met.

According to Brotherson and White (2001, p. 16), “Fatherhood is on the public agenda.” Issues regarding lack of fatherhood involvement are being recognized and have been brought forth to government agencies to create public policy initiatives to assist children and families by promoting responsible fatherhood (Laakso & Adams, 2006). This concern was even forwarded to the attention of President Bill Clinton during his time in office and he created an executive order addressing all federal agencies “that pertain[s] to families to ensure” that those programs “seek to engage and meaningfully include fathers” (Clinton, 1995 as cited in Brotherson & White, 2001, p.16). There appears to have been some policy advances since then. In the year 2000, “the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funded twenty three, three-year fatherhood demonstration projects within Early Head Start sites around the country” (Brotherson & White, 2001, p.21). This project, although not permanent, seemed to aide fathers who perhaps did not know how to interact with their children prior to their participation in the project. On the contrary, father involvement in the child welfare realm is a little different.

Latest federal initiative. In recent years, there has been an increase in initiatives regarding fathers in the child welfare system. However, policies and practices regarding father and child visitations are still in the early stages of

development (National Family Preservation Network, 2012). This was one of the reasons why it was difficult to access empirical support on the topic. One such movement that was created by the Federal Children's Bureau in 2006 was the National Quality Improvement Center for Non-Resident Fathers or QIC NRF (National Family Preservation Network, 2012). The purpose of this movement was "to promote meaningful engagement between the child welfare system and non-resident fathers" (National Family Preservation Network, 2012, p. 2). The underlining idea behind this initiative was that mothers and fathers should have equal opportunities to sustain healthy relationships with their children. The QIC NRF promotes involvement of fathers throughout the child welfare process. Child protective service workers are to include fathers a best practice which means that workers should be:

Inclusive of non-resident fathers by considering the father and his family as a potential placement resource, offering fathers' services linked directly to their needs, inviting fathers to participate in the case plan, and allowing fathers frequent visits with their children. Children benefit by having both parents involved in their lives to the greatest extent possible (National Family Preservation Network, 2012, p.2).

The article further discusses best policies that workers can try in order to ensure they are being as inclusive and respectful as possible during father's visitation with children. A way social service workers can improve their practice is by including both parents.

In 2010, the Obama administration renewed funding to the responsible-fatherhood programs under the Fatherhood Marriage, and Family Innovation Fund (Cowan, Cowan, & Knox, 2010). The mission and major part of this initiative requires that fathers remain “child support compliant” (Cowan, Cowan, & Knox, 2010, p. 207). Although, this is an important aspect of the initiative, it also should be noted that it promotes fatherhood by making services available to fathers. Fathers should have access to mentorship, counseling, marriage education, enhancing relationship skills, parenting, and self-sustainability programs through the responsible-fatherhood initiative (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). While this initiative sounds beneficial for fathers, the question of whether they are aware of such services arises. This initiative could have the potential to become more well-known nationwide and offer a wide array of interventions to help fathers remain as active as possible in their children’s lives.

Theoretical Frameworks

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory is one that applies to the topic of fatherhood. This theory views the family as an emotional and interconnected unit (Franck & Buehler, 2007). Each member of the family has an important and specific role within the unit and maintains different relationships with each member of the family. Every relationship within family members is important to take into consideration. Franck and Buehler (2007), discuss the relationships between mother and child, father and child, and mother and father and how the interaction within those relationships can

affect the larger structural family functions. A father's role within the family is imperative to forming and sustaining the structure of the family unit (Brodie, Paddock, Countee, & Chavez, 2014). Typically, this is a father's common role to preserve and provide for the family. Yet certain situations arise among parents and the roles are forced to shift.

Family systems theory also focuses on the significance of co-parenting. Lum (2004) alludes to the model of a shared cooperative family structure as being central to family system relationships (p.286). The family will function better if parents share in the tasks of parenting. A co-parenting relationship is one where both parents "can effectively work together in rearing their common child" (Carlson, MacLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008, p.462). Parents are not required to live together in order to co-parent effectively. Parents can work together amicably as long as both maintain respectable communication with one another. As cited in Brodie et al., (2004), fathers contribute to their children's psychological and emotional growth when they are accessible, responsible, and invested in the well-being of their children. The absence of the father in the family can have an effect on the way that the family, especially the children, functions and develops.

Empowerment Theory

Active fatherhood can be viewed more positively and obtained actively through the application of empowerment theory. The concept of empowerment is one that connects individual strengths, helping systems, and social/political change (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Lee, 1996). This perspective allows for workers

involved with fathers to build on father's strengths in order to "work in partnership rather than in conflict with fathers" (Connolly & McKenzie, 1999 as cited in Brodie et al., 2014). Empowerment relies on the encouragement of the worker as well as the drive and motivation for change for the client- the fathers. The process of empowerment focuses on the person rather than the helper (Turner, 1996). The individual that is being helped by someone (social worker, case worker, therapist, etc.) must have a drive to seek power and determination for themselves.

Empowerment perspective means enabling clients to gain the ability to interact with the environment in various way that enhance resources to: 1.) meet their needs, 2.) contribute to their well-being and potential, 3.) give their life satisfaction, and 4.) provide as much control over their lives as possible (Hepworth, Rooney, & Larsen, 2002). Practitioners should remember that their roles are to help clients develop the ability to change their situations by providing the tools to do so. Social workers or practitioners with fathers who face troubles with child involvement should be conscientious about the fact that fathers generally hold less power than mothers do. Empowerment is the process by which fathers learn to act on exercising their rights.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this study was to acknowledge fathers and allow them to share their experiences when attempting to be more involved in their children's lives as they are simultaneously challenged by court sanctions. The research provided fathers with a voice to share their stories and the extent of their experiences. This study was guided by one research question: What types of barriers or challenges do fathers face when attempting to have more involvement with their children? It addressed the barriers of co-parenting, public perception of fathers, and gender bias which conceivably impedes a father's ability to be a more active participant in his children's lives. This study was a secondary analysis which refers to "a form of research in which the data collected and processed in one study are re-analyzed in a subsequent study" (Rubin & Babbie, 2011, p. 408). The study was also exploratory in nature although it analyzed three specific commonly identified barriers for fathers. However, these three factors have not previously been explored together.

Research Design

Qualitative Design

The research designs employed for this secondary analysis study were both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative studies are utilized in order to provide richer details about participants' experiences. This type of information is not translated into

numbers because of its complexity and variety (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). This design is useful because the study aimed to gather deeper perspectives and attitudes of fathers which cannot be fully captured from a survey. Qualitative research is personal to participants, which is one of the strengths of the design (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). It provides more information to explore from various points of view. On the other hand, this type of design has its weakness. The in-depth and personal responses can vary so much and rarely produce accurate statements about a large population (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). This flaw can reduce reliability of the study due to the subjectivity of results. A way to enhance this design is by employing mixed methods. Utilization of a quantitative design will allow for analysis of raw data from surveys that may augment the qualitative data.

Quantitative Design

The quantitative approach is utilized to convert participant data into a numerical form to then statistically analyze it (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). The data is yielded typically into percentages that can generalize answers to a larger population thus serving as possible explanations to unanswered questions. Quantitative research is normally conducted through surveys whether they be mailed to participants, by telephone, and given to them in person to complete on their own as a self-administered survey (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). In this case, the surveys were self-administered. Surveys were presented as close-ended questions which can be a downfall because they do not allow for participants to expand on certain questions.

However, combining quantitative and qualitative measures, as with this study, enhanced the reliability and validity of the study.

Sampling Plan

For this study, a nonprobability purposive or judgmental sampling method was employed. This sampling method refers to participants who are not chosen at random. Specifically, purposive or judgmental sampling is utilized by researchers when it is assumed that the participants chosen are most beneficial and representative to the research (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). Although using nonprobability purposive sampling seems to be the most advantageous method, it does have its downfall. In a sense, researchers have the opportunity to hand select the participants for their study in this method and this allows for researcher bias. Unlike probability sampling where the participants are chosen more randomly and are more preventative of bias (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). Purposive sampling helps to alleviate the issue of not having a representative sample while at the same time possibly informing the research in a nonrandom and biased manner.

Participants met specific criteria in order to be considered for the research study. They were men who are over the age of 18, had children, and at the time were currently participating in mandated parenting groups. In this study, participants were selected from four different parenting classes from a community-based organization in Oakland, California. This particular location was chosen for its ethnic diversity of participants. It was expected that about eight to ten men would be willing to participate from each class. Participants were asked to complete a survey followed by

a participation in a focus group. . In actuality, thirty-three participants completed the survey and thirty-seven participated in the focus groups.

Data Collection

The surveys were distributed by the researchers to male participants who attend weekly parenting classes. The researchers were granted permission from the organization's director to spend some time during the beginning of the parenting session to explain and distribute the informed consent form and to answer any questions that may arise regarding the males' participation in this study. It was emphasized by the researchers that participation was entirely voluntary and would have no bearing on with their status in the mandated weekly parenting classes, nor any influence on their child welfare or criminal case. Participants were given the option to choose to withdraw their involvement in that study at any time.

Once the informed consent forms were signed and retrieved from the participants, the questionnaires were disseminated. At that time, the researchers allowed participants about ten to fifteen minutes to complete the survey. The surveys were collected on-site and placed in a large brown envelope. The surveys were then kept in a locked file drawer accessible to only principal investigator and co-principal investigators. The data were collected from about eight to ten participant four times within one year. Various dates were offered to increase participant involvement. Focus group sessions were followed by the surveys.

Focus group sessions occurred for the remainder of the class period which was about 30 to 45 minutes. Researchers facilitated the focus groups by prompting

specific questions to the group (see Appendix A). Researchers took notes of any significant observations or comments to ensure accuracy of responses during the facilitation of the focus groups.

There are some pros and cons to utilizing this method for data collection. In this case, focus groups can serve a useful purpose by providing first-hand insight and elaboration by the participants. This allowed researchers to ask for clarification of responses to survey questions. Participants asked clarifying questions to researchers. Focus groups can also complicate the data collection process. There is a possibility that some participants may not have been completely truthful or omitted parts of the truth for various reasons.

Instrumentation

Survey

There were nine questions on the self-administered survey which focused on three primary areas: personal perspectives on fathering and co-parenting, societal and familial views of fatherhood, and awareness of race/gender bias in social services case management (see Appendix B). A self-administered survey portion allowed the men the ability to express themselves honestly and anonymously.

Focus Group

The focus group was guided by a set of questions that aimed to divulge at more personal experiences (see Appendix A). It also served as sort of a debriefing session where the men clarified and went into more detail about answers to some of the survey questions. One section of the focus group questions asked about the self-

perception the men had about their fathering style as well as experiences with co-parenting. Another section aided in the discussion about perceptions of what society depicts of fatherhood. Lastly, they were asked about experiences regarding social services case management which included questions about racial and gender bias. The questions were asked in a semi-structured interview style. This guide allowed for slight adjustments or additions to questions already prepared (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). This style gave room for a more flexible and easygoing focus group. Researchers took notes during the focus group sessions to increase clarity and understanding.

Plan for Data Analysis

All collected data was input into SPSS for statistical analysis. These data was initially analyzed using univariate descriptive statistics to better understand and interpret the findings. Comparisons were made among the demographic information collected. Results along with tables will display the statistical results of the survey.

Data from the focus group sessions were analyzed for common themes using Neuman's (2013) five-step approach to qualitative data analysis. The first step of the approach is known as sorting and classifying. This step requires the data to be organized according to the focus group questions. Narrative and observational notes from focus groups were recorded and then organized. Step two, open coding, relies on the ability to categorize and assign codes to similar themes from the responses. In step three, axial coding, the researcher must re-examine the existing codes to identify any additional themes after the initial codes. This step also allows for condensing of themes. The next step, selective coding requires the researcher to analyze the themes

to make comparisons and contrast of the data. Finally, the researcher summarizes the collective data and offers a conclusion regarding fatherhood and experiences with child welfare workers.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researchers took the time before each focus group commenced and explained the reason for the study to the participants. During that time, participants were allowed to ask questions regarding the study itself, the survey, or focus group. They were told that participation in the focus group is completely voluntary as was their decision to complete the questionnaire. All information obtained from the participants was treated confidentially and materials kept in a locked file.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe fathers' experiences about barriers they face when attempting to be active parents. These challenges typically occur within the social services and court systems. The research question guiding this study is: What types of barriers or challenges do fathers face when attempting to have more involvement with their children? The common identified barriers involve issues of co-parenting, perception of fathers, and gender bias.

Initially, this chapter will address the demographics of respondents who participated in the study. Subsequently, the quantitative portion will be analyzed followed by the results from the focus groups. Aspects of co-parenting, perception of fathers, and gender bias are emergent within results of both the quantitative and qualitative sections.

Demographics

Chapter IV details the data collected from participants through surveys and focus groups. The study was conducted during a two-year span. Data were collected from fathers in a mandated parenting class located in Oakland, California. This chapter encompasses the most important recurring topics gathered from both the surveys and focus groups. There were 33 men who participated in the survey portion of the study, and 37 participated in the focus group, all of whom were of an ethnic minority background. The largest group of minorities in the sample was African

Americans at 72%. There were also 11% Asians, 6% Latinos, 6% Latino and African American, and 6% who chose the “other” option. All of the men were over the age of 18. The largest age group was between 20-30 years old, constituting 47%. Twenty-one percent of the participants were between the ages of 36 to 40 years old. The men ranged between having 1 and 9 children. Half of the participants stated they had children with only one woman.

Quantitative Findings

The first part of the study required participants to complete a survey. This questionnaire touched on topics of co-parenting, father involvement and how the fathers perceived themselves, and gender bias. Participants were asked about co-parenting and what it meant to them. Table 1 indicates that most of the participants said that co-parenting meant “all parenting responsibilities were divided in half”.

Co-Parenting

Table 1

What Does Co-Parenting Mean to You

Meaning of co-parenting	Percent	Frequency
All responsibilities divided in half (50/50)	54.5	18
Agree 100%	18.2	6
Joint legal and physical custody	9.1	3
Both parents sign AND joint custody	6.1	2
All responsibilities 50/50 and must agree 100%	3.0	1
All responsibilities 50/50 AND both parents sign legal paperwork	3.0	1
All responsibilities 50/50 AND joint legal & physical custody	6.1	2
Total	100.0	33

It is clear that almost half of the fathers (54.5%) defined their meaning of co-parenting as parenting responsibilities being equally divided with the mother of their children. It is unclear whether participants fully understood and read the question. The question asked the participant to check all options that mirrored their personal definition of what co-parenting means. There is a possibility that participants did not fully understand this question or they did not feel that any of the above options

fulfilled their ideas of what co-parenting meant for them. Another survey question related to co-parenting is shown in table 2.

Table 2

Important Joint Decisions Regarding Children

Frequency of decision-making:	All of the Time	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Very Rarely	Never
	39%	18%	18%	9%	12%

This table indicates percentages of how often both parents are consulting one another to make important decisions about their children. It was interesting to see that 57% of fathers stated that they made important decisions with mothers “all of the time” and “most of the time”. It seemed to indicate that the participants have a good co-parenting relationship with one another and that they communicate effectively about significant decisions regarding the well-being of their children.

Participants were also asked about how often they had conflicts with the mother of their children regarding various issues. Most participants claimed that they never experienced any conflict. The following table 3 shows the concerns participants were asked about.

Table 3

Areas of Conflict with Children's Mother

Never any conflict with:	Percent	Frequency
Where the child(ren) live	30.3	10
How you spend money on the child(ren)	24.2	8
How <i>she</i> spends money on the child(ren)	24.2	8
Visitation	39.4	13
Child Support	51.5	17

Participants claimed that they never experienced disputes with the mother of their children when it came to discussing the matters listed above. Only 18% reported they had conflict “all of the time” or “most of the time” when it came to where the children live. The rest of the 30% stated they “never” had any conflict. In regards to how the participants spent money on their children, a total of 24% claimed to “never” having conflict, while another 33% claimed “very rarely” having conflict. Similar response was given when asked about the issue of how the mother spends money on children, 24% stated that there was no conflict. Another 30% percent expressed “very rarely” experiencing conflict. Visitation is typically thought of as conflict among parents but the participants in this study claimed that 39% “never” had conflict with mothers in this area. Another 21% stated “very rarely” having conflict. Lastly, the issue of child support showed that 51% claimed that it “never” was a problem with mothers.

Perception of Fathers

In this section of the survey, questions were geared toward asking participants about their self-perception as fathers as well as society's perception about their role as fathers. Table 4 shows results regarding how the participants feel about what society thinks of them.

Table 4

Societal Expectations of You as an Active Father

Society's Expectation	Percent	Frequency
Yes	69.7	23
No	15.2	5
Not Sure	9.1	3

There were two participants who did not answer this question, but more than half did indicate that "yes" society expected them to be involved in their children's lives. Only 3 of the participants chose "not sure" as their answer.

Next, participants were surveyed about how they perceived themselves as fathers. Table 5 (below) shows the results of the survey question which asked participants how involved they are in their children's lives. Similar to the men's previous responses, they described themselves as being active fathers. This could be connected to their self-perception of having good communication with the mothers of their children.

Table 5

Involved Your Child(ren)'s Lives

Father Involvement	Always involved	Involved most of the time	Not very involved	Not involved at all
Percent	64%	27%	3%	3%

A large percentage (91%) claimed to be “always involved” or “involved most of the time” in their children’s lives. A very small percentage 6% said they were “not very involved” or “not involved at all”. There was one participant who did not answer this question. It was also unclear as to what the participant’s definition of involvement was.

Gender Bias

Questions in this section of the survey related to issues surrounding interactions with social workers. Many of the participants did not answer questions related to this section because they indicated that they have not worked with social workers. Table 6 demonstrates how participants felt they were treated by female social workers they interfaced with.

Table 6

Felt Treated with Respect by My Female Social Worker(s)

Respected by female SW	All of the Time	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Very Rarely	Never
Percent	9.1	15.2	3.0	6.1	24.2
Frequency	3	5	1	2	8

Three of the participants (9%) stated that their female social workers treated them with respect most of the time. There were 27% of participants who felt respected by their female social workers. Interestingly, eight participants (24%) of them “never” felt respected by their female social workers.

Participants were also questioned about how they believed that female social workers viewed them. They were asked if they agreed with the possibility that their female social worker saw their primary role to be that of providing financial support. Table 7 indicates the participants’ responses. There were 16 participants who did not answer this question.

Table 7

My Primary Role was to Provide Financial Support

	All of the Time	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Very Rarely	Never
Percent	12.1	9.1	6.1	3.0	21.2
Frequency	4	3	2	1	7

Twenty-one percent of the participants stated that they “never” believed that their female social workers thought of them as only financial supporters. However, when including the options of “all of the time”, “most of the time”, and “some of the time”, a total of 51% of participants felt that their female social workers believed these fathers’ primary role was that of financial providers for their children. Participants were also questioned if whether they felt that having a male social worker would

make their experiences different. Table 8 (below) indicates the results of this question.

Table 8

Experiences with Male Social Workers

Male SW	Some Difference	Not much difference	No difference at all	Not sure
Percent	3%	3%	6%	12%
Frequency	1	1	2	4

A significant amount of participants, n=25 (76%), did not answer this question. Of those who responded, 12% were “not sure” whether the gender of a social worker mattered in their interaction.

Qualitative Findings

The survey alone could not answer all the questions regarding the men’s experiences in depth. Focus groups were intended to open up a discussion about specific testimonies that the participants may have wanted to share. The focus groups addressed the topics of co-parenting, perception of fathers, and gender bias as a way to elaborate on the survey questions. The responses to questions about these topics resulted in three particular themes.

Co-parenting

The first theme that emerged was the nature of co-parenting relationships. Although the results of the survey questions showed that the men appeared to have cooperative co-parenting relationships with the mothers of their children, the focus

group discussion on this topic alluded to other scenarios which did not coincide with the survey results. Many participants shared experiences about being in dysfunctional relationships with the mothers of their children. They mentioned that they had on-again/off-again relationships which included a great deal of arguing. Some of the participants had more than one “BM” or “baby’s mama” which made it more complicated for the men to have cooperative relationships with each one of them, especially if they had current relationships. Another theme that came up during the discussions for the participants was the perception about their role as a father.

Perception of Fathers

The overarching topic of discussion was mostly related to the court system. The foundation of frustration by some of the participants was the label of “presumed” or “alleged” father. They felt that the label already puts them in a bad position of not being a real father. They also shared their feelings about the court reports. One participant stated “the reports paint a picture to make you look like you’re crazy”. Focus group members felt that court reports were inaccurate in depictions of them as fathers. The respondents in this study also expressed their frustration with the courts making decisions for their families and children. One participant expressed that “the courts make it hard to have a traditional family because the law comes in and dictates what’s acceptable and what’s not”. These men seemed to express feelings of powerlessness. Another participant commented about the court not taking his efforts into account, “with everything you do and show to the courts...and they still don’t see me as a fit father”. The participants also discussed issues of child support. One

participant made a comment about child support being a ploy to “financially hurt a man because a man cannot hurt emotionally”. This goes back to the public perception of father not being active or emotionally connected with his children. Negative public perceptions as such discount the role of a man as a father.

Gender Bias

Lastly, the theme of gender bias among men and women developed. The men in the study discussed some of the interactions they had with female social workers. They were very adamant and frustrated by their experiences. Although many of the participants believed they never had an interaction with a social worker (according to the surveys that were completed), they did allude to the possibility of having contact with a social worker at some point. This became clear as the men discussed their *counselor, worker, etc.* and scenarios where someone with a degree in social work would likely be their service provider. Yet these same participants did not refer to their counselor or worker as being a “social worker”. One participant expressed that “social workers have an agenda no matter what gender they are.” He, among other participants, shared instances when they felt social workers were not on their side. Another participant shared an experience when he did not know the foster placement of his children. He claimed that the social worker did not share that information with him even though he felt it was his right to know. Not only did men discuss gender bias issues in relation to their female social workers, but they mostly talked about the differential treatment of men versus women, or what they called “woman’s privilege”.

Many of the participants reiterated several times that “the courts are biased”. One of the ways many of them came to this conclusion was through their sentiments of a woman’s voice being valued more than theirs. They expressed feelings of being devalued, coupled with an awareness of others’ assumptions that men are not naturally inclined to raise a child the way a woman can. A participant expressed his frustration with “everything having ‘woman’ connected to the name”, he was referring to how case files are listed and documented. Additional comments discussed that there are really no programs similar (to what a mother would be offered) that are targeted toward fathers.

Summary

Conducting both quantitative and qualitative research proved to be quite enriching and all inclusive. The survey showed statistics about various questions regarding the three emerging topics of co-parenting, perceptions of fathers, and gender bias. However, the survey cannot account for why participants answer a certain way. This is where the qualitative piece (focus groups) played its role. During these discussions, follow-up questions from the survey were asked. This portion of the research showed different and more in-depth responses compared to that of the survey questions.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to attempt to explain and describe experiences fathers face when they try to have a part in their children's lives. This research strived to allow fathers to express themselves in regards to their experiences with courts and how they interfere or influence their attempts to remain an active part of their children's lives. The question to be answered by this study was: What types of barriers or challenges do fathers face when attempting to have more involvement with their children? Furthermore, the research highlights specific barriers to father involvement. The barriers discussed were co-parenting, public perception of fathers, and gender bias. This chapter will highlight major findings within already existing research and how it relates to this specific study, implications for social work practice and policy, limitations to the study, and considerations for future research.

Major Findings

One of the major findings of this study deals with the influence court involvement has on father-child visitation. Only when parents cannot come to a consensus about various issues related to their children, one of them being child visitation is when the courts become involved. Research indicates that fathers are increasingly seeking child visitation through the court system (Berk, 2012; Bogle, 2005; Charlow, 1986-1987; Siegel & Langford, 1998). By the same token, fathers in this study as well as in other studies felt that court sanctions had a lot to do with

estranged relationships with their children. This was because the men were not granted visitation with their children and in turn did not have regular contact with them. On the contrary, of the fathers who participated in the survey portion of the study, 39% of them indicated that they did not have conflict with the mother of their children in regards to visitation. This percentage seemed rather high because visitation has always been a primary issue. Interestingly, in the qualitative portion of the study, fathers expressed feelings of powerlessness when they attempt to prove themselves as “fit fathers” to the courts. These types of comments were cues of participants being involved with the courts for visitation issues.

Another major finding that emerged related to the notion of gender bias. Previous research suggested that fathers are treated unfairly by the court system (Berk, 2012). Research also indicates that women are typically the parent who is primarily considered the immediate contact person for a child (Risely-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003). Even if the child does not reside with the mother, she is automatically listed in court paper work. Fathers who participated in the research for this thesis shared similar experiences of this type of gender bias. They had strong perceptions of the court system being biased and in favor of women because, in their opinion, the woman’s word is valued more than theirs. Sometimes fathers are treated unfairly by the very social workers they interact with. Research indicates the presence of “unintentional bias” on behalf of social workers due to issues of countertransference, racial stereotypes, or educational background (Brodie et al., 2014). However, findings of this thesis were that fathers did not claim to have

significant differences in services depending on the gender of their social workers. In actuality, most of the participants did not believe they had any interaction with a social worker in regards to their case. Those who did interact with social workers stated that they believed all social workers had some type of agenda against their favor regardless of gender.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

As previously mentioned, there has been a long standing history about how fathers are viewed by social agencies. Part of the task of implication is to begin to change the culture of how fathers are perceived. This culture stems from the initial paper work that is filed where the mother is automatically listed as the primary parent. It also stems from various programs that are widely promoted while only aimed at providing services for women and children. The catalyst for implication is for the social work field (as well as other professionals that are vested in this population) to continue to seek fathers and understand their experiences about the struggles they face with regards to their children. Attaining more information from fathers can help implement more widely recognized programs targeted towards the efforts of fathers and their children.

In this study, fathers shared information about their experiences with the court systems. They expressed frustration about how they were treated by court personnel in their attempts to be more active fathers. Fathers felt that women received special treatment in court while they were disregarded. Perhaps a program where not only will fathers have an attorney to represent them, but also have a court advocate in their

child custody or visitation hearings as an extra supporter. Many fathers may benefit from this type of services for various reasons. They may have a difficult time understanding what is going on in court and would benefit from extra one on one time to debrief about court proceedings regarding visitation. The idea of simply having another voice in court to advocate would be uplifting for fathers.

Court employees should receive some type of training on issues of gender bias. These types of trainings should be utilized as a way to bring awareness to court employees about the hurdles that fathers feel they face when involved in court hearings. The training should include ways in which different employees could view men in the role of fathers and to work on trying to involve them as much as possible with their children. Providing employees with some education on the psychological benefits of father involvement with their children could be crucial information to initiate change.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study tell the researchers what could have been done differently if the research were to be recreated. One of the limitations of this study was that not all respondents fully participated in the whole survey. This took away from the resulting data in that a full scope of the results was not obtained. Participants skipped certain questions related to having a social worker because they felt that did not pertain to their situation. Perhaps if the definition of a social worker would have been provided for the respondents, it would have cleared any uncertainty regarding those particular questions.

Another limitation of the study was related to the geographical location of the participants. Although, the participants who responded to the survey and focus group were of ethnically diverse, it would have been interesting to obtain data from a location closer than Oakland, California. It would have been more significant to obtain data from a city in the central valley in order to see if the data would compare or contrast. It would have been interesting to see if ethnic diversity would also change from location to location. Most importantly, it would have been significant to discover any similarities in experiences fathers faced with the various issues discussed.

Lastly, another limitation that researchers faced when dealing with the participants was language. In the survey and focus group questions, participants were asked about “mothers of their children”. Respondents seemed to have a difficult time acknowledging that term. Instead, they like to refer to the mothers of their children as “baby’s momma” or “B.M.’s”. It seemed that participants responded differently with this term and appeared to open up more about the topic because it was in a language they were comfortable using. Researchers should prepare by investigating terminology that participants feel more comfortable using.

Future Research

The basis of this research was exceptional in that this type of study had not really been conducted in the past. More research similar to this should be conducted in order to compare barriers that fathers define for themselves. Results of this type of research would have to better self the population of fathers who make vast attempts to

remain active in their children's lives. Snowballing research should be actual implementation of certain programs that will benefit the needs of fathers. The study should also involve evaluation of the program to identify the positive and negative outcomes.

Conclusion

The topic of father involvement is a challenging area to penetrate due to the long standing beliefs of woman being considered the sole caretaker of children. But now with the cultural changes of today's society, all of the public workers who are involved in cases where fathers are actively seeking parenthood, everyone should begin to pay more attention. A child's opportunity to have both parents involved in his or her life is truly a gift that will pay off for the greater human good. Healthy parental relationships are crucial for a child to thrive and possibly become productive members of society.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your definition of co-parenting?
2. Do your children reside with you or your children's mother(s)?
3. Do you have more than one mother of your children?
If so, how many?
4. Do you have any conflict with mother(s) of children about child support?
If so, what is the extent of the conflict?
5. Do you feel like you are living up to society's expectation of being an active father?
6. What do you consider to be an "active" father?
7. Do you think the mother of your children see you as an active father?
8. How did the social worker view your role as the father?
Was there a difference in treatment from a male social worker?
9. Do you feel that your race impacts how you are treated by social workers?

APPENDIX B

MALE GROUPS SURVEY

FATHERING & CO-PARENTING**1. What does co-parenting mean to you?** *(Check all that apply)*

<input type="checkbox"/> All responsibilities divided in half (50/50)	<input type="checkbox"/> My child's mother and I must agree 100% when it comes to our child(ren)	<input type="checkbox"/> Both parents need to sign legal paperwork (for school, medical care, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Joint legal and physical custody	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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How much conflict do you and your child(ren)'s mother have with each of the following issues:

2. Where the child(ren) live.

<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict all of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never any conflict
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3. How you spend money on the child(ren).

<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict all of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never any conflict
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4. How *she* spends money on the child(ren).

<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict all of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never any conflict
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5. Visitation.

<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict all of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never any conflict
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6. Child support.

<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict all of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never any conflict
---	--	--	---	---

7. How often do you and the mother of your child(ren) make important decisions together regarding your children?

<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
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8. How often do you and the mother of your child(ren) discuss your child(ren)'s progress in school?

<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
--	---	---	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------

9. How often do you and the mother of your child(ren) discuss matters of discipline?

<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
--	---	---	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------

10. Can you and your child(ren)'s mother raise your child(ren) together even though you may not live in the same house?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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FATHERHOOD INVOLVEMENT

11. Does society expect you to be an active father?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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12. Fathers should share 50% of the daily responsibilities of raising their children.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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13. How involved are you in your children's lives?

<input type="checkbox"/> Always involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Involved most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Not involved at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
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14. How involved is your side of the family in your child's life?

<input type="checkbox"/> Always involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Involved most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Not involved at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
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15. Does your side of the family support your child(ren)'s social events (birthday parties, school activities, sporting events, etc.)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Always	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very often	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
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16. Fathers can be "replaced" by mothers or by other male figures.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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GENDER BIAS & SOCIAL WORKERS

17. As a man, I felt like I was treated with respect by my female social worker(s).

<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
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18. As a man, I felt what I had to say was valued by my female social worker(s).

<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
--	---	---	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------

19. Female social workers saw me as an important factor in my child(ren)'s life.

<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
--	---	---	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------

20. Female social workers believed my primary role was to provide financial support (pay child support).

<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
--	---	---	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------

21. Female social workers treated me the same as my child(ren)'s mother.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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22. Female social workers made me feel included in the case plan.

<input type="checkbox"/> All of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the time	<input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely	<input type="checkbox"/> Never
--	---	---	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------

23. Female social workers did not want my input regarding my child(ren)'s case.

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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24. Have you ever had a male social worker (or CPS worker)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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Answer the next question only if you have ever had a male social worker:

24a. Was your experience with male social workers any different from working with female social workers?

<input type="checkbox"/> Very different	<input type="checkbox"/> Some difference	<input type="checkbox"/> Not much different	<input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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Answer the next question only if you responded "No" to Question #24:

24b. If you have never had a male social worker, do you think it would have made any difference?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

25. Sex/Gender

If you do *not* identify as "male", please specify your sex or gender

26. What is your ethnicity/race?

White/Anglo/Caucasian Asian Latino African American
 Middle Eastern American Indian/Native American
 Other _____

27. What is your age range?

20 – 25 26 – 30 31 – 35 36 – 40
 41 – 45 46 – 50 51 and over

28. How many children do you have? _____

29. Do you have children with only one woman? Yes No
If you have children by more than one woman, how many different women?

30. Have you ever lived with the mother of your child(ren)? Yes
No
Additional response (if needed) _____

31. Have you ever been married to the mother of your child(ren)? Yes
No
Additional response (if needed) _____

32. Have you ever been involved with child welfare (CPS – child protective services)?
Currently In the past Never Not sure

33. How long have you been participating in this parenting program?
1 – 3 months 3 – 6 months 6 – 9 months
9 months – 1 year 12 – 18 months 18 months or longer