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Non-custodial Minority Fathers Maintaining their Livelihood

by

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MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the
School of Social Work
St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas
Saint Paul, Minnesota

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present their finding. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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There are a growing number of single-parent homes in the United States. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation 34% of households are maintained by a single-parent. Sixty-six percent of African-American households are single parent homes, while 24% of white households are single parent (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). There has been a significant amount of research surrounding the custodial parents and the difficulties that they face. Many face financial struggles related to taking care of the basic needs of their children such as shelter, food and clothing. But many single parent households do receive child-support from the non-custodial parent. About half of custodial households have child support arrangements according to the United States Census Bureau in 2009. Non-custodial parents are typically fathers. About 83% of custodial parents are mothers while 17% are fathers (Grall, 2009).

Custodial parent households have historically been the focus of social service agencies as there was a very strong emphasis placed on developing programs that would contribute to getting children out of poverty. This focus has tended to cast negative light on fathers who were not paying child support at all or who were not paying it consistently. But these fathers who are paying child support, or trying to pay child support, may experience difficulties too. Many face difficulty with unemployment, maintaining adequate housing, and paying bills (May & Roulet, 2005). It is a difficult for some to survive on minimum wage as a single person, much less have a portion of your check taken to pay child support. It may be even more difficult for minority fathers to find adequate employment as unemployment rates have been higher for both Blacks and Hispanics at 16% and 12% respectively (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). According to the National Urban League (2004), African American men were the group most likely to

be unemployed. As a result, many are being sent to prison for non-payment of their child support (Walker, Reid & Logan, 2010). It is estimated that one in five young fathers will be incarcerated by the time they are 30 years old for some type of offense and there is even higher rates for minorities. These men will face even greater challenges once they are out of prison such as finding housing, employment and trying to financially support themselves and their children (Smeeding, Garfinkel & Mincy, 2011).

There have been many changes in the last 50 years in regards to child support enforcement programs. These programs began as early as 1950 and were designed only to target the non-custodial parent in households where the child received AFDC assistance. By the 1970's the numbers on AFDC had increased significantly and the majority of children on AFDC were there not because their fathers had died (as had been a previous trend), but because their parents were divorced or had never been married (Child Support Enforcement Program, 2000). This growing trend caused the government to take a closer look at who should be supporting these children. Should it be the state or should it be the parents? It was decided it was the parent's responsibility regardless of their financial situation. There was then a push from the government to establish paternity for those children born out of wed-lock so that they could stay off public assistance and establish regular child support payments from the non-custodial parent. The state and federal government became involved in order to obtain information on the non-custodial parent and began to implement policies to make sure child support was being paid (Child Support Enforcement Program, 2000).

As the number of single-parent households continued to climb, the government continued to make changes to child support enforcement. The Child Support

Enforcement Amendment of 1984 stated that the state was to recover money if the child had been on any public assistance, including medical assistance. “The attention focused on dead-beat dads has important political undertones. Some argue that focusing on dead beat dads has allowed policy makers to blame a variety of social ills, from poverty to high welfare costs to social pathology, squarely on fathers” (Karger & Stoesz, 2010 p. 116). Fathers have been most clearly impacted by these policies and due to these changes stiff penalties can be invoked if payments are not made. Some of these enforcement techniques include imposing liens on property for overdue support, withholding state tax refunds, withholding or suspending a driver’s license, denying passports, reporting amount of overdue child support to consumer credit bureau (Child Support Enforcement Program, 2000). Many of these policies were designed to hold the non-custodial parent accountable for not helping to financially take care of their child. However, many of them have had a significant negative impact on the non-custodial parent who is trying to make regular payments and cannot due to a variety of circumstances. Many of these consequences can cause long term damage and make it harder to stay current with child support payments.

Historically non-custodial fathers have been looked down upon by society. Many non-custodial fathers are assumed to be “dead beat dads” if they cannot meet their child support requirements. Many non-custodial fathers have not had the access to the same support and services that the custodial parent has, even if they are meeting their child-support requirements. According to Smeeding et al. (2011) fathers only have access to a certain amount of financial help which is generally some form of Food Stamps. This can leave fathers feeling very frustrated and financially struggling to make ends meet.

Marsiglio (as cited in Walker, Reid & Logan, 2010) stated that “most African-American/Black fathers are viewed by the general public as uninvolved fathers who are hyper-masculine and financially irresponsible for their children” (p.49). However, according to Marsiglio’s research this stereotype has been found to be false. Non-custodial African-American fathers who were never married were found to visit their children more than White fathers found by Issacs and Leon(1988) (as cited in Walker, et.al, 2010 p. 50).

According to Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda (2004) (as cited in Berlyn, Wise, and Soriano, 2008) there has been consistent research that fathers who are positively involved with raising their children have good child outcomes in regards to socio-emotional, cognitive, education and behavior. While this information is known, there has not been a push in our society to have involvement from fathers in these areas. Fathers are seen, many times, to be able to only contribute financially to their children as fathers are seen in our society as the “breadwinners” (Leashore, 1979). Knowing they are viewed this way can become self-defeating for fathers. If they cannot contribute financially to their children’s support they should stay away (Walker, et.al, 2010).

This topic is important to social work as social workers are involved with families on many different levels. For social workers working directly with children, having an involved father can be very helpful in the development of the child. The question becomes why fathers are not involved and what hinders them from doing so? For many minority fathers maintaining their own well-being such as a good job, stable housing and necessities is difficult enough. Would having more services for fathers assist in their ability to find adequate jobs and provide for themselves and in turn be able to pay their

child support? If they are paying their child support and can feel better about themselves knowing they are helping to financially take care of their children, would they be more involved in the lives of their children? Social workers, working directly with fathers in child-support cases may be more successful than child support workers who are generally financial workers by background. There may be opportunities for social service agencies to develop programs targeting fathers. These services and supports may be just the assistance these minority non-custodial fathers need to become more stable, both financially and emotionally, and thus participate in the growth and development of their child(ren).

The purpose of the research reported here is to further explore the lack of services and support for minority father's paying child support and how it affects their ability to maintain their livelihood. Some questions to be determined are: Do minority fathers have difficulty finding adequate employment to be able to maintain both their own households and pay their child support? Does the lack of support discourage them from being more involved in the growth and development of their child(ren)? The goal of this research project is to help determine if more services and support targeted towards fathers would assist them in better maintaining their livelihood if they are paying child support and in turn assist them in being more involved in the lives of their children.

Literature Review

There have been a growing number of articles dedicated to the important role a father plays in the lives of their children. Non-custodial fathers have a difficult role to play as they try to work and maintain a household separate from the one their children are primarily being raised in. There were several themes that developed from the literature

review completed for this research project which were the important role fathers play in the lives of their children, why fathers are not involved and how to get fathers more involved in the lives of their children,

The Important Role Fathers Play

Fathers do play an important role in the physical, emotional, and social well-being of their children according to Allen and Daly (2007) (as cited in Walker, et al., 2010). Children's fathers who are uninvolved, such as those who have no contact with their fathers. Children who come from broken homes are twice as likely to attempt suicide than those who do not come from broken homes (Velez-Cohen, 1988). Father involvement has a powerful impact on childhood development. According to Kelley, Smith, Green, Berndt & Rogers (1998) (as cited in Grief, Jones, Worthy, White, Davis, & Pitchford, 2011) "In African-American families, a supportive father-child role has been found to enhance development in very young children" (p.249). This is important to note as many African-American children grow up in a single parent home. Involvement by fathers has also been linked to reduction in irresponsible sexual behavior during teenage years according to Dittus, Jacard and Gordon (as cited it Grief, et al., 2011). Children are influenced by their parents and having positive involvement with their father can have a positive impact on them. With all the research that has been done, there is still difficulty getting fathers more involved.

Why Fathers Are Not Involved

Much of the stigma associated with non-custodial fathers was the attention in the 1970's to the term "illegitimate" children. These were children being born out of wedlock and many social service agencies at this time established policies and practices that

focused on the un-married mother (Leashore, 2001.) The un-married mother has been the target of reducing poverty in families. In order to combat poverty for children, federal policies were put in place to ensure that non-custodial fathers were paying their fair share of cost for their children. Many single mothers were on welfare and much of the financial burden fell to the states. The government stepped in with the legislation of Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act of 1998 with new laws to target fathers who were not up to date with their child support. These new laws would charge fathers with a felony if they failed to pay child support and even would require them to serve prison time (Chung, 2011).

Labeling fathers as “dead-beat dads” has reinforced the stereotype that fathers who have difficulty paying their child support do so because they want their children to be in poverty or don’t care. Mead (2007) (as cited in Chung, 2011) states “low-income men, often the absent fathers of welfare families...seldom work regularly and this helps to keep families poor” (p.74). The media and policy makers have led the public to believe that fathers who have difficulty paying child support are one of the biggest reasons children are in poverty. Chung (2011) poses the question; Does using child support enforcement increase the emphasis on parental responsibilities? Using child support to increase parental responsibility typically does not work according to Chung. It generally fosters resentment by fathers and is considered a form of social control.

Non-custodial fathers may feel defeated before they even begin getting involved with their children. Non-custodial fathers, especially many minority fathers, may be struggling in their own lives to maintain stable employment, housing etc. According to Grief et al., (2011), “Racism, limited job opportunities and assumptions about minority

men can combine to make economic as well as interpersonal success difficult” (p.248).

They may feel that they are only wanted for what financial benefit they can offer.

Unemployment rates exceed rates that would be comparable to rates for men at the time of the Great Depression and the current recession has been the hardest on men with low education (Smeeding, Garfinkel & Mincy, 2011). Many social service agencies have given little attention to non-custodial fathers other than financial attention (Leashore, 2001). Men who struggle with their finances may not know who to ask for help and may not want to ask for help as they do not want to appear weak according to Grief, Finney, Green-Joyner, Minor, & Stit (as cited in Grief et al., 2011). Asking for help may make men feel as if they are not in control and don't know what to do and thus they feel inferior. Gender roles are held by both men and women; men who ask for help may be seen as weak or not intelligent. Women are viewed to be more emotional than men and therefore if they ask for help it is not seen negatively (Berlyn, Wise, & Soriano, 2008). For many minority fathers they must have a “tough guy” attitude or they will not survive on the streets where they live. This attitude then carries over into their relationships with social service agency workers and other professionals (Grief et al., 2011).

Fathers are many times seen as the less important parent. They are often perceived by society as an unnecessary part of childhood development and family life. Many non-custodial fathers lose contact with their children when the romantic relationship with the child's mother dissolves (Grief et al., 2011). According to the National Center for Fatherhood “Forty percent of mothers reported that they had interfered with the non-custodial father's visitation on at least one occasion, to punish the ex-spouse” (National Center for Fatherhood, 2001 p.2). Many fathers want to be more

involved with their children but seem to run into roadblocks financially and emotionally. For many men, arguing with the children's mother about having visitation with their children becomes not worth the fight so they choose to be absent.

Child support and visitation are two separate issues in the eyes of the court. Non-custodial fathers who are taken to court for child support are not granted visitation in the same court hearing. If the non-custodial father wants visitation rights to be set up through the courts, it is his responsibility to petition the court and pay court costs in order to have it established. According to Franck (2001) (as cited in Grief et al., 2011), child support workers in social service agencies have been found to show more favor towards mothers than fathers in regards to placement options. Some fathers feel alienated in the service culture that generally serves women and children (Berlyn, Wise, & Soriano, 2008).

How to get Fathers Involved

How to get non-custodial fathers involved has been a question social service agencies have recently begun asking themselves. As the research continues to mount on the important role father's play, social service agencies are beginning to try to target fathers in an attempt to involve them in policies and programs that affect them and their children. Some non-custodial fathers who are involved with an agency feel that other fathers in similar situations who could use help simply do not know that services exist. Men have voiced that information about services needs to be made more public and that since many men will not actively seek out information that information on beneficial services needs to be better publicized (Berlyn et al., 2008).

Agencies that want to attract men need to become more "father friendly." It was noted in Berlyn et al (2008) that fathers do not see images of themselves such as pictures

on walls, pictures of pertinent information and actual service workers being male themselves. How fathers are treated when they enter the agency is also very important. Feeling judged or criticized was noted to be a major turn off for non-custodial fathers (Grief et al, 2011). Men need to feel welcomed and validated by the social service agencies and workers, and know they are seen doing a good thing by seeking support and assistance. It is noted by Leashore (2001) that some agencies will treat men differently based on their socio-economic status. Men who are from a middle-class background may be treated as if they are the ones who need help and get information about what the agency can do to help them and their family. In contrast, if the father is from a lower socio-economic background he may be treated that the most important thing to be figured out is “how he is going to assume some financial support” (Leashore, 2001 p. 530).

Agencies need to actively recruit and seek out fathers to increase involvement with their children. To do this they may need to target other agencies serving men to recruit. Getting information about programs that support fathers to other agencies that serve men is vital (Berlyn et al., 2008). Agency workers need to take time to acknowledge the non-cash supports that fathers do provide which serves in aiding the wellbeing of the child as well. Service workers need to focus programs on the psychosocial well-being of the child and not simply financial only (Walker et al. 2010).

Research Question

Because agencies may not target support for fathers and society has preconceived views of the importance of father involvement as there has not been a significant amount of research done on this topic. The goal of this research is to explore how, in the view of minority fathers, the lack of services/support for these men paying child-support affects

their ability to maintain their livelihood and how it affects involvement in the lives of their children?

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is an important part of social work research as it helps the reader of the study to understand the theory the researcher used. It gives the reader a lens to look through in regards to ideas or concepts used. It helps the researcher to share their perspectives and to identify any outside influence whether it be in bias or influence from prior research. It can serve as a way for the researcher to explain the lens they are using when examining a particular social problem (Boss et al, 1993). “A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main dimensions to be studied-the key factors, or variables-and the presumed relationships among them” (Miles & Huberman, 1984 p.1).

There are many theories to discuss human behavior and why individuals do the things they do. Human behavior can be explained in many ways by using different perspectives. One of the theories used to discuss human behavior is Systems Theory. This theory says that people act how they act because of the different systems they interact with, whether it be on a daily basis or over their lifetime (Sincero, 2012). One specific part of Systems Theory is Ecological Systems Theory. Information about this theory was first published in 1979. It looks at how people interact with the systems in their lives and it discusses how human development is influenced by the different types of environmental systems. There is specifically a focus on the reciprocal relationship between two things. Each system in one’s life is influenced by their own interactions within that system.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) discusses the Ecological Theory and breaks it into five sections. The first section of this theory is the micro system. This is the setting in which the individual lives. In this case, this is the setting in which the father lives and examining this level provides information about who the father interacts with in his life such as within his family, school, and/or neighborhood. The second section is the Mesosystem which constitutes the relationship between the Microsystem. For example, this is the relationships the father experiences at work or with the court system and the effect that it may have on his family. It may also be his interaction with social service agencies as well. Whether this interaction is positive or negative will affect him differently. The third section is the Exosystem. This section is defined as an experience in a social setting that an individual does not play an active role but influences experiences in an immediate context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The fourth section is the Macrosystem. This section is the large attitudes of a culture in which the person lives. An example of this would be the ethnicity in which the father belongs to and the attitudes towards minority men paying child support. The last section of this theory is the Chronosystem. This section is the pattern of events in the environment that happen over life. This can include the different transitions in life that occur (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). An example of this would be a father who grew up with his parents divorcing in early childhood and the effect it had on him at different stages in his development.

There are several concepts in which systems theory can be applied to this research project. The first is in relation to masculinity. What is masculine? This can be looked at in both a historical context and a contemporary context. This attribute is something men have aspired to have; with the role of media in our current society, men are being

bombarded with images of what it means to be masculine. Help seeking behavior is not generally reinforced as a masculine quality. According to Addis & Mahalik (2007), “help seeking is connected to vulnerability” (as cited in Greif et al., 2011 p.248). Being vulnerable may not be something that men want to identify with. Men want to be seen as strong and independent and being vulnerable is not a desired quality. This idea plays a role in how men interact with the systems in their lives. How they want to be seen and how they view themselves in terms of masculinity can affect their interactions with others such as the courts, their child support workers, their children, the mothers of their children and social service agencies. If they view asking for assistance as weak, they may not seek out assistance, especially not from a social service agency. According to Rasheed & Rasheed (1999), men of all races are taught that they are the breadwinner. Their self-esteem can dramatically drop when they are not able to provide as they believe they should (as cited in Greif et al., 2011).

The economy of today and how the economy affects the father has an influence on his ability to maintain income to support himself and pay his child support. If a father maintains a job, he generally wants to pay child support (T. Webster, personal communication, October 8, 2012). The current unemployment rate for Black men is 13.9 % for September of 2011 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). This has had an effect on minority men being able to maintain their child support and be able to support themselves. When the economy is doing well and unemployment is low things in society on multiple levels are better. Crime is down, poverty is lower, and overall people are happier.

Another concept to relate to systems theory is the role the criminal justice system plays in the role of father's and their child support. Men are told they have to pay x amount of dollars in child support a month and if they cannot they will be put in jail. According to Karen Holmberg, a child support worker in Minnesota, a man must pay his court ordered amount in child support or a warrant will be issued for his arrest and his driver's license will be revoked. A child support worker does not have the authority to reduce a child support payment even if the father has lost a job, been in an accident, or had any other unforeseeable event occur. If one of those events occurs and the father cannot pay his child support it will continue to accrue until he is arrested or it is paid. Men in the state of Minnesota pay their child support ordered, plus half of all day care costs, plus a percentage of medical insurance premiums (K. Holmberg, personal communication, October 25, 2012). This can become unmanageable for many men. How men respond to the laws regarding child support and to the criminal justice system can determine the future for many of them. Men who were never married to the mother of their children are also not automatically granted visitation of their child even if they are paying child support. Men must obtain their own lawyer and petition the court in order to request visitation. When the non-custodial father is brought to court on a child-support order, visitation is not discussed at all. This can become very frustrating to men who cannot afford an attorney and feel that they should be able to see their child as they are financially supporting their child.

Another system that men interact with is through their marriage/partnership breakup. The breakdown of this relationship is one of the reasons why men face the issues they do in regards to paying child support. The current statistic of out of wedlock

births in the United States has reached a record high of 40% among all groups (Ravitz, 2009). With this many number of births outside of marriage, men may face paying child support even if they stay with the mother. Many fathers who end up not being able to work things out with the mother of their child face years of future child support payments. Fathers generally do wish to maintain a relationship with the mother and be financially responsible for their children even if they do not live together according to Allen & Daherty (as cited in Desluriers, Devault, Groulx, & Sevigny, 2012). It may be difficult for the father to interact in a positive way if the mother is angry that they are not together. According to the National Center on Fatherhood, “40% of mothers reported that they had interfered with the non-custodial father’s visitation on at least one occasion, to punish the ex-spouse” (Swallow, 2012).

Another aspect of the system theory that affects men and this issue is issues related to the family of origin of the non-custodial father. If the non-custodial father was raised by a single mother he may or may not see the importance of fighting for visitation or he may have a preconceived idea of what a good father should be. Some men who grow up without a father try harder to be a part of their child’s lives because they knew what it felt like to grow up without a father. This is not always true however. Some fathers feel that they are just “fine” being raised by a single mom and that if the mother and father of a child breakup, the mother should raise the child (Guilty until Proven Innocent, 2010).

A second theory that may also apply to this research project is the Attachment Theory. This theory was developed in the 1960’s by John Bowlby. This theory was developed after Bowlby observed the behavior of children while working in a home for

maladjusted boys (Zucker, 2009). Attachment theory states that in order for humans to develop healthy attachment, infants must develop an attachment to a caregiver in order for positive emotional and social development to occur. Bowlby was fascinated by the relationships these children had with their mothers. He began to study the bonds between the mother and infants concluding that if the attachment bond was severed or strained, there would be both psychological and behavioral issues later in life for these children.

This theory could be applied in several different ways. The attachment bond between a child and his mother could also be applied to a child and his father. If the bond is broken or strained there could be consequences for these children later in life in regards to behavioral disturbances or psychological issues. Many people with anti-social personality disorder are said to have some form of attachment disorder. The same could be directly applied to the father's themselves. Determining what type of bonds they held with their mother and father could explain some of their behavior towards their own children. For example, a man is being raised by a single mom who is addicted to crack. The attachment bond he has to her as an infant is disrupted often because of her addiction. He begins to display the behavioral symptoms described by Bowlby such as crying, anger, and frantically searching for his mother (Zucker, 2009). If these episodes continue to happen the child finally grieves the attachment relationship and basically withdraws from the relationship. As an adult, this man may experience difficulty in many romantic relationships because he is very distrustful. He fathers a child but cannot seem to be a stable person in that child's life because of his fears.

Methods

This qualitative study was conducted in Minnesota and was based on individual interviews of 6 minority men who were the biological father of at least one child and were paying child support for that child. All of the participants were currently working, and had an existing child support order set up through the court system.

Advantages and Disadvantages

There are advantages and disadvantages to every research project that is done. In some cases certain things can be both an advantage and a disadvantage, as in the case of this research project. There has been little research done on this topic directly, which is both a benefit and a loss as there is nothing to compare it to. But because there is no other research to compare it to, it was able to show that there is a need for further research to be done in this area.

A limitation of this study was having a small sample size. Interviewing more fathers, such as 20-30 fathers would have been more beneficial than only interviewing 6 fathers. A larger sample of fathers could further back up the data that was found through the interviews. Another limitation may be that I, the researcher, am white and female. I may have different responses if I had been a male and of minority background.

Qualitative research methods are important because they bring a different kind of understanding to a specific problem or issue due to engaging participants in talking about their personal experiences which have specific emotions associated with them. This data is non-quantifiable however can help change policies and programs to better serve a population. Quantitative research methods many times cannot capture this information which is so important to human life (Berg, 2009). There is also an advantage to using open ended interview questions as this allows the participant to truly express their

emotion and does not try to limit their responses and thus better meets the needs of the participant (Berg, 2009).

Sample

Two of fathers of this research project were identified through a recruitment letter given to the minority participants in a father's support group. Due to the low number of minorities currently participating in this group, the other four participants were identified using a snow ball sample method and were referred to this researcher through the other participants. Each father was asked if they wished to participate in an interview addressing issues involving minority fathers, child support, and services directed towards support and advocacy of fathers. All of the fathers were voluntary participants and could have received support if needed through a father's support group. Each individual interview lasted approximately 1 hour.

Protection of Human Rights

Prior to the interview, participants were given a consent form which was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of St. Thomas (UST) in order to assure informed consent, as well as confidentiality. This consent form discussed the steps that were to be taken to protect the subject's confidentiality. It also discussed the purpose for the study and what type of information they would be asked. Each participant had the choice of where they wished the interview to take place and were told that if they are not comfortable answering a particular question they can refuse. Each participant had an opportunity to ask additional questions regarding this research project and get questions answered prior to agreeing to participate in the interview.

The consent form was approved by the committee chair Dr. Karen Carlson, as well as the IRB at UST. The fathers' names were removed from the transcripts and then coded for themes. The final transcripts and audiotape were then destroyed in May 2013 when the project was completed.

Data Collection

To collect the data, fathers were interviewed in a location of their choice where they felt comfortable and where confidentiality can be maintained. The interviews were audiotaped for accuracy and later transcribed. The same questions were asked of all 6 participants. Each question was designed to be open-ended and address different issues fathers may have/had. The questions also addressed the current relationship they have with their child and how their relationship may be affected due to their current situation. See Appendix A for interview questions.

The information was transcribed word-for-word. Once it had been transcribed it was then coded. The coding looked for common words between the 6 participants. These words were then combined into themes that were then reported in the findings section of this paper. This information was kept in a locked file cabinet in the home of the researcher. The transcribed information was kept on the researcher's password protected computer. Once the information had been transcribed and coded it was then destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, a qualitative coding strategy was used called content analysis. One way to systematically examine and interpret data in a way to identify particular themes is called content analysis. Data was transcribed word-for-word and

coded by themes which identified certain phrases, relationships, or patterns. A theme is established when there are three or more of the same codes. These patterns are then considered and compared to previous research and generalizations may then be established (Berg 2009). After the initial review and identification of themes, the data is reviewed several more times until no additional new code words and themes appear; Berg (2009) refers to this as saturation.

In regards to the population I interviewed, it was important to be aware of both the manifest and latent content. Father involvement and issues of child support are areas that have a lot of emotions associated with them and it was important to look for themes within the latent content as well. This was observed by the researcher during the interviews and notes were taken describing the emotion that the participants were experiencing. It was also evident during the transcription of the audiotape due to the inflection in the participant's voices.

Findings

After analyzing the interview transcripts, several themes emerged as components that these fathers were dealing with in order to pay their child-support, maintain their own livelihood and maintain relationships with their children. The themes were the lack of support and services or fathers/lack of awareness, feelings of being isolated, challenges they face as fathers in maintaining their own livelihood, their perception of the court/criminal justice system being biased, the perception that society had towards fathers, not having a father figure in their lives and how that affected the way they are a father to their child/children, positively impacting their child's life, and the role race has/has not played in their situation.

Six fathers were interviewed in this study. Their ages ranged from 31 to 37 years old. Each father was from a minority background, three were African-American, 2 of mixed Hispanic descent, and one of Cambodian heritage. Five of the six fathers are currently married however, not to the mothers of the children they are paying child support for. The sixth father has been in a long-term relationship for the past 3 years. The income of these fathers ranges from \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year. The number of children the fathers had ranged anywhere from 1-5 children; however they highest number of children that the father pays child support for was four children. Demographic information for these fathers appears in Table 1. All six fathers are involved with their children although their custody level varies.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Study Participants

Father #	Age	Marital Status	Ethnicity	Income	Age of Children
1	31	Married	Hispanic Mix	30,000	7, 2, and 1 month
2	33	Married	African American	20,000	14, 6, 5, and 3
3	31	Married	African American	35,000	3
4	35	Married	African American	30,000	14,12,11,and 7
5	37	Married	Hispanic Mix	50,000	16,16,7,6,4, and 2
6	32	Single	Cambodian	35,000	8

Lack of Support and Services for Fathers/Lack of Awareness

The fathers were asked about their awareness of services for fathers, their perception of these services and how services may impact their lives. Most of the fathers were unaware of services available to help them. A few of the fathers had heard of

services but were unaware of how these services would be a benefit to them. Father # 1 was somewhat aware of a service but found out about it but it wasn't available when he needed it.

I know there is a fathers group through Olmsted County that has formed. They have lots of partners throughout the community. I believe it started a year or two ago and other than that one I don't know of any other. During my class work going through my social work degree I had to interview and find support groups and went to one meeting but it was still in its infancy phase. People were just talking about creating this support group for fathers. I really don't even know if there are other supports available for fathers. I don't feel there is any support, especially when you are going through the courts...the system. I never felt like there was any support for me.

Participant # 2 who pays child support for 2 children and has custody of 2 children was not aware of any services directed towards fathers.

I am not aware of any services available and don't really know if they would be helpful cause probably the only thing they might do is help change your child support to a lesser amount. It would be helpful for the whole thing to work on real time...meaning where I could get things changed and not hold me accountable for all that child support while I am trying to get things fixed.

Participant #4 who pays child support for 4 children expressed some anger when asked about his knowledge about services that were available.

I am not aware of any services available and am not using any services for child support. I feel like support is limited for fathers. When you go to court there are

mostly women there and they are not going to inform you about services that may be out there. They really look at you like you are the scum of the earth.

Participant # 6 had not heard of any services available for fathers. His daughter was 8 years old and he had been unaware of services that served fathers. He went through a difficult time with his child's mother and felt that services would have been very helpful to him during that time.

I don't know of any services available. They would be helpful if they existed.

There are a lot of services for mothers but none for fathers. I had trouble with the court system and if someone would have been there to help me it would have been easier.

Feelings of Being Isolated

Participant #3 pays child support for his daughter but does not see her often. He expressed feelings of sadness about this and feelings of being alone going through this difficult time.

I need emotional support. I need physical support. I need someone to just talk to when I am having a hard time not seeing my child. Certain times when there is no one around to talk to I just break down and cry. I end up praying about it and then somehow I usually get to see her. Then after I see her I will be good for a while. I just feel alone in this struggle a lot of the time.

Participant # 4 who pays child support for 4 children expressed his struggles and frustrations with not seeing his children as much as he would like and feeling like sometimes no one cares.

Just to know someone cares about the struggles that you're going through to pay the child support. Every man knows there is a possibility you could go to jail if you can't pay your child support. You're expected to pay regardless of what. Sometimes I feel like the only one you know. You look around and see other people not struggling to pay their bills and here I am struggling to make ends meet.

Participant # 1 who pays child support for his first child also went through a difficult time in the beginning stages of paying his child support. He too felt alone during this time and felt services would have been helpful just to feel supported during a stressful time.

I don't feel like there is any support. Especially when going through the courts...the system...I never felt like there was any support for me...only for the mother. My perception is that there is not enough services for fathers. If there was something available you know would have been good. I am now to the point in my life I am used to the amount I am paying. I have been paying for 7 years so I feel like I am coasting. If there was a class that taught what percentage of your check you might be paying. A class at the time of the dissolution. I would have loved someone to coach me through it not knowing what would be happening. I felt really alone. It felt scary.

Challenges in Maintaining their own Livelihood

All of the fathers expressed difficulty maintaining their own livelihood such as paying for housing, gas, food, personal items while maintaining regular child support payments. They all stated however that due to being married or having a significant other, they are not struggling as much as they once were. They all voiced that they would

be living in poverty if not for the financial help of their partner. Participant # 1 expressed a feeling of coasting since he has been married and would not be able to feel financially stable without the help from his wife.

If I were single...and I believe that is why I feel like I am coasting...because I am married now and together we make a good living. If I were single and were to be paying on my one child...I would likely require a second job to live outside of someone's basement and I realize that I wouldn't have the nice house and car that I have. I would not like to live in someone's basement just off one child. Right now I don't see the money it just comes straight out of my check. I would be homeless but my child support would be paid.

Participant # 5 expressed that he has had many struggles in the past paying his child support but due to his marriage and finally gaining custody of the child he had the highest payment for, his struggles have gotten better.

Well, paying my child support is not a problem anymore. Early on I had to work 2 or 3 jobs and I would only be bringing home a couple of hundred dollars a month. If I didn't have the family support I wouldn't have made it. I am currently struggling to prepare for the future, contribute to any kind of retirement fund and save money. Paying back my student loans has been an issue.

Participant # 6 expressed that if it wasn't for his significant other he couldn't afford to live on his own. He stated that he would return to living in his father's basement struggling to pay his bills and pay for gas to get to and from work.

If I was to be single and didn't have my girlfriend helping me out it would be really hard for me. If I didn't have my girlfriend I wouldn't be able to live on my own and would have to move back into my dad's basement with him and his girlfriend. Right now I am doing okay but only because of her. If I were by myself I couldn't survive. Gas, food, and stuff I need. I could easily use some of the child support money to buy a different car. But I am so used to paying now it doesn't faze me.

Perception of Bias in the Court/Criminal Justice System

The perception of each of the fathers interviewed was that the court system has bias towards fathers versus mothers. They all expressed frustration when they went through the court system whether it be for custody or child support. Participant #1 felt very discriminated against in terms of his gender.

I feel like it is extremely unfair the way they treat fathers versus mothers. For me the part that irks me the most is these doors are closing on me left and right no matter how much I want to be involved. I see how many kids don't have fathers who want to be involved and I can't. I don't get any special treatment because I am a good role model, have a good job, instead I am treated like a stranger. It kills me what our system is doing. This is from someone who is educated and I can only imagine how others must feel if they have a vindictive ex and they want to be involved in their children's lives. It saddens me.

Participant #4 felt that the courts favor the mother before he would even enter the court room. He expressed going to court several times and this being his experience.

Regarding child support it has been mostly women working and that they don't perceive the men coming in as good people. You get the short end of the stick just

for coming in and your name coming across the desk. You aren't given a fair shot at anything. You are going to feel defeated, angry, and hurt if you're a responsible father you are going to feel bad. It is an ugly place. I feel like the pendulum is directed toward the mother having the higher side. Regardless of why she is taking you to court, whether she is being evil or not you are going to get the short end of the stick from the judge. If the woman is taking you to court just because you don't want to be with her anymore it doesn't matter. I don't see it ever being a win when it comes to a man paying child support.

Participant #2 has custody of two of his children and pays child support for the other two. He expressed frustration with the courts as he has stayed on top of his payments, while he has not seen any money for the child support he is owed from his children's mother.

That is the perfect question. My two kids that I have full custody of I haven't received any money from their mother ever. The people aren't doing anything about it. It has been five years and I have got 20 dollars from her ever and maybe a pair of shoes for the kids. They have never put her in jail and I know she has a job on and off. I have never seen any back child support money for them.

Meanwhile my tax returns are taken every time.

The father's situations were all slightly different but felt the bias of the court due to their gender. They did not hesitate in their responses about the bias and their feelings were felt by the researcher during the interview.

Perception of Society Towards Fathers

The perception that society has towards fathers was a theme that emerged through several questions asked. Participant #1 felt that there were many things society could do differently to help fathers.

I looked back in the history of fathers in our society. At one point the father was the owner of the child and now the mother seems to automatically get the child. I don't think that is right either. It should start out 50/50, unless the child is in harm's way. It really should be 50/50 and that is the biggest thing society could do is change its mindset. The dad would take care of the child if he is with the mother but since he is not he shouldn't have any rights.

Participant # 4 expressed that it is through the perception of society that the courts get its view of fathers.

Honestly the courts could do more investigative work before making a decision about the father. His character should be taken into consideration and base some of their decisions on that. They could also be a little more lenient on fathers who actually want to take care of their kids. Society influences a lot things and it does affect how fathers are seen by the courts. African Americans are already seen in a bad light as far as being uninvolved with their kids.

Participant # 6 voiced his concern about how society sees men and that stereotype is carried out in the decisions of the court system.

The courts should get to know us better besides just judging us about what they hear. They think we are all dead beat dads. I know there are dead beat dads but there are guys like me who are always there for their kids and are trying to be a dad without being given a hard time.

Participant # 3 stated that society needs to change their view of fathers and try not to judge them before they know their whole story.

Well, society could um...I think society is used to fathers not taking care of their kids so even the ones who really want to be in their child's life and take care of them, society is hesitant to trust them.

Motivation for Better Fatherhood

While several of the fathers had father figures in their lives, they were very emotionally absent. Several others had no father figure in their lives which bothered them and they, in turn, vowed to be involved in their children's lives. Participant # 3 shared how his dad passed away when he was only 3 months old. He was primarily raised by his mother and had always longed for a father figure.

I didn't learn how to be a father from anyone because I didn't have one. My dad died when I was 3 months old. Now it's just trial and error. You can't really learn how to be a parent you have to experience it. I always wished I had a dad in my life but it is what it is.

Participant # 1 told about his experience with his own father and how that shaped the kind of father he is to his children.

I took everything I learned from my dad and did the complete opposite. I did not have a good experience with my father because he was never there and I made sure as much as I can I am always there.

Participant #4 told about how his father was physically present but did not spend time with him like he felt like a dad should. Through his religious beliefs and his relationship with his brother he learned how he wanted to act as a dad.

Through my relationship with God is how I learned to be a dad. I wouldn't say so much from my father. He was there and he provided but I learned by the Lord teaching me what a father should do. My brother spending time and money with his kids. Seeing other guys that are good fathers and implementing things they do and what the Bible says a good father should do.

All of the participants expressed wanting to be a good dad to their children and that this was something that was important to them. They all viewed being a good dad was a priority in their life and the role of their father did play a role in their decision to make being a good father important.

Positive Impact

Each of the fathers expressed that they have made a positive impact in the lives of their children no matter how often they see them. Some of the fathers see their children more than others but none the less, feel that there are positive characteristics they have imparted to their children. Participant # 4 talked about the many contributions he has made to his child. Some of those were positive characteristics imparted and others were skills taught.

I have contributed a lot of things to my kids. I contributed finances, encouragement, support, wisdom, belief in Jesus , their spiritual growth, encouraging them in whatever they decide to do, to give it their best whether it is music, cheerleading, baseball, don't be a quitter, stick it out, play hard and go hard.

Participant # 3 expressed that when he spends time with his daughter he can see the impact he has on her life.

When I make her laugh and when I teach her something new. When I tell her how much I love her, be active with her, play basketball, hold her, rock her, be active and play with her and just making her happy. That's when I know I am being a good dad. When she sees me she becomes better because she knows she is going to have a good time. She knows her daddy is going to be nice to her and play with her. She loves spending time with her father.

Participant #1 shared how he feels he has impacted his son's personality through interactions with him and through the expectations he has in his household when his son comes to visit.

I believe that my son was very timid and he is a different kid and that is what the guardian ad litem said. He is a completely different kid when he is with me than when he is with his mom. His mom treats him like he lives in a glass bowl. We hold him to a different expectation than his mom....like cleaning up after himself. He is now blossoming. He is now able to want to go to friend's houses and he has grown to be much more extraverted and I believe it is 100 percent due to being with us and his school just teaching him how to manage through life.

The Role of Race

Only a few of the fathers felt that race has played a role in their situation. Those that did stated that they felt that it played a role in the overall big picture such as lower employment rates for minorities, incarceration rates for minorities and other racial biases in the court system. The other fathers felt that race had not played a role in their situation but that gender bias had played a role. Participant # 2 did not feel that race influenced his case.

It doesn't really matter what color you are. The courts favor the female. I can't just see my daughter anytime I want and I don't have the money to hire a lawyer.

Participant #1 talked about his experience with the courts and how he was unsure about his race influencing his case. He ultimately felt like it was his gender.

Truth be told I don't know if my race influenced anything or not. It seems like what I got was a very cookie cutter schedule and we probably saw 12 different judges throughout all the proceedings. It was so sad the amount of different people we kept seeing on a monthly basis. We had to start telling our story all over again every single time. It was a waste of tax payer dollars which had nothing to do with my skin color. It is hard for me to know as we bounced around from judge to judge, they may have taken my skin color into consideration. The guardian ad litem even said that it was in my son's best interest to spend more time with his father and the judge did not take that into consideration. The judge still decided to make a cookie cutter ruling. Don't know if it was because of my race but probably because I am a male.

Participant # 6 did not feel his ethnicity had anything to do with his interaction with the court system.

I don't think being a minority had anything to do with how I got treated it's just because I am a male. I got locked up because I hadn't paid my child support. They took away my license and everything. They expected me to find a job while being locked up and I had to look for a job on three or four hours a day. I couldn't find a job so my girlfriend had to look for one for me. I went to the judge and the prosecutor called me a dead beat dad and they don't know me at all.

Discussion

During the interviews the participants shared their experiences being a non-custodial minority father who pays child support. They expressed their struggles with paying their child support, trying to pay their own bills, their experiences with the court system, and knowledge of services available to help fathers going through these types of situations. For many of these fathers, the road has not been an easy one, and yet they have shown much resiliency in continuing to want to be part of their children's lives despite the hurdles they have had to jump through to do so. They acknowledged their frustrations and despite those feelings, still feel they are making a difference in the lives of their children. They all expressed the need for services for fathers and an awareness of these services for other fathers going through similar situations.

Through the literature review, it was discussed that fathers do play an important role in the lives of their children. "In African-American families, a supportive father-child role has been found to enhance development in very young children" according to Kelly, Smith, Green, Berndt & Rogers (1998) (as cited in Grief et al., 2011 p.249). The fathers interviewed felt that they had an important role to play in the lives of their children and had impacted their development in a positive way. The literature discussed how involvement by fathers has been linked to a reduction in irresponsible sexual behavior during teenage years according to Dittus, Jacard, and Gordon (as cited in Grief, et al., 2011).

The fathers interviewed all expressed that being involved in the lives of their children was very important to them. They thought that even though they struggled to pay their child support or had difficulty with their child's mother, that being an involved

parent was important. The literature reported that many non-custodial fathers feel defeated before even getting involved in the lives of their children and that many feel they are only wanted for what financial benefit they can offer (Grief et al., 2011). This was not expressed by the sample population specifically. This could be related perhaps to the fathers in this sample understanding of the important role they play.

Most of the fathers sampled were unaware of services available specifically for them. Many social service agencies have historically given little attention to non-custodial fathers other than financial attention (Leashore, 2001). The fathers interviewed all voiced that services and support would be helpful and that there was a greater need for awareness of the services that do exist. Services to provide education, vocational training and advocacy are available but knowledge of these services is not always easily accessible.

Implications for Policy

There are many implications for policy that can be taken from these interviews and this paper. The first is that child support payment amounts need to be looked at more closely. For low income fathers it is difficult enough to survive on minimum wage without having money taken out of your paycheck for child support. These fathers understand the implications for not paying their child support which is jail time, loss of driver's license and garnishment. All of the fathers voiced wanting to take care of their children financially, however it becomes difficult when they are unable to pay their own bills. This at times becomes a balancing act. The child's needs are certainly important and fathers should be financially responsible for their children. The amount at which they are responsible should be reviewed however by the states. There has been research

done on the struggles faced by those who maintain minimum wage jobs. There needs to be further research completed on the effects that maintaining regular child support payments has on the father earning minimum wage. In turn, there should be further research done on the effects this has on children.

Providing programs that could assist in job training, education, and other skill-building would be a huge benefit to fathers who need more lucrative employment. More programs are needed to help support fathers to better provide for their families and in turn be more involved in the lives of their children. Programs are also needed to help guide fathers through the court system. Attorney's that would work pro-bono or provide education classes regarding how to navigate the system would be a huge benefit to fathers who are just beginning their court proceedings. The Father Project of Minnesota is a program that assists with some of those needs. They are involved in providing advocacy such as access to lawyers that work pro bono, education and job training, and case management. All these services are designed to support and encourage fathers, while encouraging them to have strong bonds with their children. Their motto is "Good Dads Make Great Kids."

Implications for Research

More research is needed in regards to father involvement and the lack of support and services that are available for fathers. There is a significant amount of research in regards to mothers and many programs designed to provide support and assistance to mothers who are struggling, but what about fathers? This is a growing topic as the fatherhood movement gains momentum. More research is needed to show the

importance of fathers and how providing stronger support to them benefits society as a whole.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The greatest implication for social work practice is the idea that advocating for this group of men is important. The fathers voiced feeling isolated during a difficult time in their lives and voiced that they wished someone would have come alongside them to help guide them through the process. They voiced feeling like the support is very skewed towards mothers and that there is a need for fathers to feel supported as well. As the research shows, children who have fathers that are more actively involved in the lives of their children have a decreased risk of suicide, gang involvement, lower rate of teen pregnancy and generally do better in school (Soriano, 2008).

Social workers are to be advocates for those who do not have a voice. Many of these fathers feel that they do not have a voice when it comes to their children. Mothers are automatically given rights to their children, while many times fathers have to fight for their rights. Social workers need to be aware of the benefits of father involvement and advocate, refer, and provide resources to men who are struggling to make ends meet and remain positively involved in the lives of their children. Social workers need to be aware of resources that are available to fathers and make referrals to these programs. If there are brochures available, social workers need access to them to hand out as appropriate. If there are not programs available in the area, social workers can help to create them.

Strengths and Limitations

There were several strengths and limitations to this study. The first strength was the detailed experiences of the fathers interviewed. They were able to share their

experiences and perspectives on a topic that is very important to them because it affects their everyday lives. The questions were designed to cover several topic areas and to see how each area affected the other.

Certain topic areas seemed to evoke more emotion than others, and it was important for this researcher to be aware of the latent content when interviewing the participant. Each of the fathers talked about their difficulty in paying their child support while trying to maintain they own households. All expressed that this would be nearly impossible without the help of a significant other. This research was also an opportunity for these men to express their thoughts and feelings on a topic that is very important to them. It was important to allow them time to express their emotions as well.

There were several limitations to this study however. The first limitation was the sample size of the study. Due to time constraints of this study, the number of participants interviewed became smaller. A larger sample population may have helped to reinforce the themes or concepts found. This sample group was a minority population and to better represent their thoughts or feelings a larger sample size would have been beneficial.

The fathers interviewed were either from a known group or referred through the participants of this group, which is a snowball sample. The information given may have been skewed due to all being actively involved in their children's lives. This researcher may have received different information from fathers who were not involved in the lives of their children.

There is always bias in research to some degree. It was important that no assumptions were made as to what the answers would be. This researcher tried to eliminate bias through the recruitment process and keeping an open mind with responses

participants might give. Questions were shaped to avoid bias and tried to remain as open ended as possible.

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Appendix A

Demographics—Age_____ Marital Status_____

Ethnicity_____Income_____

Age of your children_____

Introductory Statement: This study addresses your ideas about a possible lack of services or support for minority fathers who pay child support and how it may affect their ability to maintain their own livelihood. (The term livelihood specifically refers to paying your own bills and maintaining your own households). This researcher will be asking questions pertaining to your experience as a minority father paying child support. This researcher will be interviewing 8-10 participants, transcribing the interviews and looking for themes or commonalities amongst responses.

- 1) What services are you aware of that are available to fathers? Do you use these services?
- 2) How do you perceive the support or services for fathers? How do you feel about services for fathers if you receive them or were to receive them? Helpful?
- 3) Are there support/services that would be helpful to you, that are not available? How would they be helpful?
- 4) Can you describe any challenges you have in paying your child support and supporting yourself? If so, in what ways?
- 5) If you are not currently having difficulty in paying your child support, have you in the past and why?
- 6) What has been your experience with the criminal justice system?
- 7) How do you feel the current system treats fathers vs. mothers?
- 8) Who actually has physical custody of your child(ren) ? Who has legal custody?
- 9) How often do you see your child(ren)?
- 10) Do you think your ethnicity has influenced your case in regards to being a father to your child? If so, how? (Prompt – visitation and relationship)
- 11) If you are currently struggling to make ends meet, in what specific areas and how does this affect your child support?
- 12) What could society do differently to help fathers?
- 13) What kind of support do you need to be the kind of father you want to be?
- 14) How has the economy affected your situation?
- 15) What is the biggest challenge you have had to face as a father?
- 16) How did you learn to be a father?
- 17) What things have worked well for you in your relationship with your child?
- 18) What successes have you seen in your situation?
- 19) In what ways do feel you have impacted your child(ren)'s life?

Appendix B

Consent Form

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Project Name

Services and Support for Minority Fathers

General Information Statement about the study:

This study is to address if there is a lack of services or support for minority fathers who pay child support and how it may affect their ability to maintain their own livelihood specifically being how it may affect paying your own bills and maintaining your own households. This researcher will be asking questions pertaining to your experience as a minority father paying child support and asking questions surrounding your experiences with this topic. This researcher will be interviewing 8-10 participants, transcribing the interviews and looking for themes or commonalities amongst responses. This information will hopefully demonstrate there is a need for more services and support for fathers, specifically minority fathers paying child support.

You are invited to participate in this research.

You were selected as a possible participant for this study because:

You are currently paying child support for your child/children and you are a male parent of a minority background.

Study is being conducted by:

Erin Taylor 507-696-8386

Research Advisor (if applicable):

Karen Carlson 651-962-5867

Department Affiliation:

Social Work 1-651-962-5800

The purpose of the study is: To determine if there is a lack of services or support for minority fathers paying child support and does it affect their ability to maintain their own lives and how it affects their relationships with their children.

Procedures

You will be asked to complete about a one hour interview answering questions pertaining to this topic. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. They will be kept confidential on a password protected computer and then destroyed following completion of the project.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study

The risks involved for participating in the study are: No immediate risks noted.

The direct benefits you will receive from participating in the study are: No direct benefits noted.

Compensation: No compensation

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report published, information will not be provided that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records, who will have access to records and when they will be destroyed as a result of this study include:

All interview transcripts will be kept confidential and destroyed when project is complete. No one will have access to transcripts other than this researcher. Once information is transcribed information will be kept on password protected computer which researcher will only have access to.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with any cooperating agencies or institutions or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until the date\time specified in the study.

You are also free to skip any questions that may be asked unless there is an exception(s) to this rule listed below with its rationale for the exception(s).

No exception. You may skip a question if you do not wish to answer it.

Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will be used in the study

Contacts and Questions

You may contact any of the resources listed below with questions or concerns about the study.

Researcher name

Erin Taylor

Researcher email

simm1200@stthomas.edu

Researcher phone

507-696-8386

Research Advisor name

Dr. Karen Carlson

Research Advisor email

carl1307@stthomas.edu

Research Advisor phone
6519625867

UST IRB Office
651.962.5341

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I am at least 18 years old. I consent to participate in the study. By checking the electronic signature box, I am stating that I understand what is being asked of me and I give my full consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Study Participant

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

Erin E. Taylor LSW
Graduate Student
St. Thomas University—St. Paul MN
Simm1200@stthomas.edu

Information about Possible Participation in a Study of Minority Fathers

I am a graduate social work student working on completing a clinical research project exploring the possibility of a lack of support or services for minority fathers paying court ordered child support and the difficulty they may face maintaining their own households such as paying their bills, paying for adequate housing, etc. and if this may have an impact on the relationship with their child.

I am looking for minority fathers who pay court ordered child support to complete a one hour interview discussing this issue and questions pertaining to this topic. Your identity will be kept completely anonymous. If you decide you would like to participate we will meet and you will have an opportunity to ask me questions about all aspects of this study, and we can discuss further how I plan to ensure confidentiality.

If you are interested in participating in this project or have further questions please feel free to email me at simm1200@stthomas.edu or call me at *****. Thank you for your time. It is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Erin Taylor