

ABSTRACT
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AFRICAN-AMERICAN FATHERS TRUST/DISTRUST OF CHILD WELFARE
AGENCIES

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The proposed study contributes to the knowledge about African-American fathers and child welfare services. Unchallenged stereotypes about African-American fathers are addressed and their perception of previous unfair treatment by past governmental interventions is examined. The impact of psycho-social growth, racial discrimination and risk of harm on African-American families are reviewed via the research review.

The research problem examines the relationship between African-American fathers' trust/distrust of governmental agencies and the fathers involvement with a child welfare agency (CWA). The design of the research includes a questionnaire that was designed to collect data from a sample of 50 African-American fathers that have children in foster homes of CWAs in the Atlanta area. The instrument of measurement was designed to allow for an analysis that compares the variables and reports significant relationships. A five point Likert Scale was used to operationalize several types of potential risk of harm that could be associated with involvement with CWAs. A questionnaire was also created to measure caseworkers perception of involvement. The findings from an eventual sample of 20 appear to clearly indicate that those fathers that trust the child welfare agency have higher involvement in recommended services than those fathers that

do not trust the agency. The study also appears to validate the theory that those fathers with highest distrust perceive involvement with CWAs inherent with risk of financial loss.

The findings have practice and policy implications for child welfare professionals who are increasingly being held more accountable to service and utilize the resources of African-American fathers. This study demonstrates the need for additional study that addresses the questions posed from the perspective of the African-American father and specific ways to engage them.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN FATHERS TRUST/DISTRUST
OF CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Problem.....	1
Significance of Study.....	2
Outline of Chapters.....	4
CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
Introduction.....	6
Psycho-social Growth and the Father.....	6
Racial Discrimination.....	9
Economic Status.....	13
Summary.....	15
CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY.....	17
Setting.....	17
Sample.....	17
Instruments.....	19
Procedures.....	21
Data Analysis.....	22
CHAPTER IV - FINDINGS.....	23
Summary of Results.....	27
CHAPTER V – CONCLUSIONS.....	28
Limitations.....	29
CHAPTER VI - IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE.....	31
APPENDICES	
A: Father's Questionnaire.....	33
B: Informed Consent.....	35
C: Caseworker's Questionnaire.....	36

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	37
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LIST OF TABLES

	PAGE
TABLE	
1. Gary Study Demographics.....	11
2. Demographics.....	23
3. Trust.....	24
4. Fathers Who Trust The CWA And Involvement In Recommended Services...	25
5. Fathers Who Trust The CWA And Involvement In Mandated Services.....	26
6. Fathers Concern About Some Harm And Involvement In Recommended Services.....	26
7. Fathers Concern Of Financial Loss and Involvement In Recommended Services.	27

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

There has been little research on the factors that effect African-American fathers involvement with services from a child welfare agency (CWA) that serves their children. These agencies continue to be effected by state and federal policies that require them to document attempts to engage these fathers in service delivery and treatment planning decisions. In addition, there is a small body of research that focuses on the importance and impact of African-American fathers to their children (Fagan, 1996; Christmon, 1990 and Laseter, 1994).

Foster care programs have grown across the country and provide a growing number of services to African-American families in the child welfare system. (Hacsi, 1995). These agencies have found it increasingly difficult to implement policies that emphasize the importance of identifying family resources and incorporating them in service delivery and treatment planning.

Stereotypes abound that African-American fathers are uninterested and uninvolved in their children's care and development (Fagan, 1996). Robert Laseter in his dissertation "Young Inner-City-African-American Men: Work and Family Life" found that even

though marriage rates are low, father involvement in children's lives is often higher than perceived by the general public. This is one of the reasons information on the factors that influence African-American fathers involvement with CWAs is needed.

Significance of Study

The lack of research regarding the perceptions of African-American fathers on the factors that effect their participation in child welfare services has significant implications for administrators and practitioners responsible for engaging these fathers. Program design and evaluation as well as policy formation are impacted by the absence of research on potential barriers to ensuring parental rights and responsibilities are actualized. The training of new child welfare professionals is also hampered by the missing data on which approaches might best enhance the relationship between the CWA and the African-American father from his perspective. In his dissertation "Casework with Fathers in Kinship Care" John O'Donnell (1995) summarizes his review of the literature regarding the father's role in cognitive and psycho-social growth of children. His review indicated that research concerning African-American fathers is needed to clarify the impact of their expectations about services, the impact of the absence of a father on the educational attainment of children in the home, the impact of caseworker expectations and the effect of the race of the caseworker.

Social work research and literature has provided little data on the role of the African-American father. Child welfare research and literature has not focused much attention on ways to engage these fathers in service. The discrimination that has historically occurred in the provision of human services to the African-American

community is well documented. Recent research indicates African-American males believe it still exists, specifically in relation to governmental agencies. This is a potential problem for CWAs charged with engaging African-American fathers. Another potential problem for these agencies is research that implies that income levels effect the contact African-American fathers have with their children. The confrontation of negative stereotypes about African-American males interest in their children is limited without additional research.

The review of foster care in child welfare agencies will be looked at in light of the dramatic rise in this population (Hacsi, 1995). In the middle to late 1900's there were changes made to the Social Security Act regarding Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Titles IV-A, IV-B and XX that contributed to the dramatic rise in the foster care population (Hacsi, 1995). The rise in the foster care population has also been affected by an increasing utilization of kinship care, foster placement with relatives, and the surge of children under age one placed in foster care in urban areas (Hacsi, 1995). Knowledge about African-American fathers willingness to participate in services targeted for their child or other family members is lacking. This knowledge could potentially reduce the number African-American children in foster care.

The factors that effect African-American fathers involvement with their children in the child welfare systems have not been adequately studied. The research question proposed by this study is as follows:

Is there a relationship between African-American fathers' degree of trust/distrust of child welfare agencies and their degree of involvement with child welfare agencies? The

null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between African-American fathers trust/distrust and their degree of involvement with child welfare agencies.

For the purpose of this study, trust of CWAs is defined as presenting African-American fathers with no concern about risk of harm. Distrust is the perception that there is risk of harm. The assumption regarding agencies is that there is a popular belief that CWAs are either governmental agencies (Municipal, State or Federal) or strongly affiliated.

Involvement is defined as participation in services as described by the child welfare agency case worker. The degree of this involvement will be measured in one month intervals beginning with zero. The expectation for this involvement will vary depending on whether it is court mandated for the fathers or recommended by child welfare professionals. The independent variables are trust/distrust. The dependent variable is involvement.

Outline of Chapters

The study is designed to gather information that contributes to an understanding of the factors that contribute to African-American father's involvement with the child welfare agency. The literature review in Chapter Two details the previous attempts to explore the factors that are relative to an examination of African-American fathers. Psycho-social growth, perceptions of racial discrimination, and economic status are factors reviewed via this literature. In Chapter Three the methodology is presented, while the findings of the study are outlined in Chapter Four. The conclusions including study limitations are

discussed in Chapter Five. The implications for micro and macro social work practice are presented in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following concepts will be discussed in the context of how they may impact African-American fathers involvement with children in foster care.

1. Stereotypes about African-American father's impact on and involvement in the psycho-social growth of their children.
2. Perceptions of racial discrimination by African-American men and discriminatory attitudes of child welfare agency staff can result in distrust of child welfare agencies.
3. Income level can be related to African-American father's involvement with child welfare agencies.

Psycho-social Growth and the Father

John O'Donnell (1995) provided a literature review of father's impact on children's developmental outcomes. The review states that in many cases, the father effects their child's self-identity and the degree of comfort he or she has with their self-concept. This is dependent on the father's attitude toward broad or narrow definitions of appropriate gender behaviors. In regard to cognitive development the O'Donnell review suggests that

the time the father spends with a male child affects analytic skills acquisition. It also suggested that the absence of a father negatively effects education attainment of children in the home.

In regard to social competence, children's social competence appears to be related to father's support, the amount of time fathers spend in child-centered activities and fathers participation in effectively arousing physical play (Fagan, 1995). The studies reviewed all have limitations that include variables such as race and socio-economic status. However, even given these limitations, there appears to be evidence that fathers can significantly influence children's psycho-social development.

A study conducted by Jay Fagan (1996) attempts to address stereotypes that African-American fathers spend little time with and do not care about their children. The literature review conducted by Fagan indicated that middle-class African-American fathers are more involved in household tasks and child care than are European American fathers. Other findings showed that noncustodial African-American fathers have slightly more daily contact with their children than do noncustodial White, Mexican American or Puerto Rican fathers. But showing the need for more research, the majority of African-American noncustodial fathers reportedly visit their children monthly or have no contact with their children. Also, low-income African-American fathers are less involved than middle class fathers according to the research reviewed by Fagan (1996).

The participants in the study were a part of a larger investigation evaluating the effect of a father-involvement programs on fathers at a Head Start Center. Thirty-three fathers participated, sixteen were married and thirteen were never married. After completing survey questionnaires, the father and his child were videotaped and the

Parent/Caregiver Involvement Scale was used to measure play interaction between fathers and their children. The findings point to self-esteem as the best predictor of play interactions. In a recent study of African-American fathers Hossain and Roopnarine found that mothers devoted thirty-eight percent of their involvement time to play in contrast to fifty-four percent for fathers (Parke, 1996).

Also reported findings did not suggest an association between father's residence in relation to the child and his play interactions. Even with the limitations presented by a small sample size regarding generalizability and thorough analysis of multiple variables there are implications for practitioners and policy makers. Programs aimed at improving African-American fathers self-esteem may have a significant impact on their ability to interact with children (Fagan, 1996). Another limitation is that possibly other variables should have been included, such as the father's experience with his own father.

Kenneth Christmon (1990) found that self-image positively correlates moderately to the willingness of adolescent fathers to assume parental behavior. Adolescent father's feelings about their family of origin was found to significantly influence their parental behavior. Other results showed that fathers who were involved with their children had a well-functioning coping system. In other words if adolescent fathers were able to cope well in their environment, they were better able to handle the stress of fatherhood and were more likely to be involved in parenting responsibilities.

Christmon utilized a self-image scale and a scale developed to assess parental responsibility to come to his conclusion that a significant predictor of an adolescent father's participation in his child's life is his relationship with his family of origin. He suggests that these fathers family of origin need the ability to provide an environment in

which males can learn the responsibilities and duties associated with fatherhood. The degree to which these young fathers have these skills impacts their involvement with their children. Limitations of this study to consider are the generalizability of the findings to adolescent fathers who were not already receiving services. It is unknown if these findings can be generalized to fathers that are older.

Racial Discrimination

Distrust of governmental agencies or those affiliated is suspected to be related to a lack of involvement by fathers in part because of past experience of racial discrimination. In addition to being treated fairly, the definition of trust being utilized here includes the belief that benevolence, sincerity and truthfulness can be relied upon. Michael Gurtman (1992) utilizes a similar definition in his study of interpersonal problems.

The perceptions of African-Americans about racism has an inevitable effect on their sense of well-being and how they cognitively structure their social reality. The majority of the research reviewed were survey studies with large samples (Gary 1995). In his study, "African-American Men's Perceptions of Racial Discrimination: A Sociocultural Analysis," Gary reviews previous research that indicates African-Americans perceived considerable racism in the criminal justice system. This review also indicates the African-American males are particularly suspicious of family planning clinics in the African-American community. An experience with social welfare workers that were not trusted appears connected to this suspicion.

There is also research in this review that suggests that African-Americans differed in their social interactions with white people based on their use of racial identity labels. For

example, aspects of communication such as emotional expressiveness, understanding and acceptance were found to be more dissatisfying to African-Americans who identify themselves as black American and Afro-American than among those who identified themselves as black. This suggests race and perceptions based on communication style effects African-American response to attempts to provide services.

The studies reviewed tend to focus on a limited range of variables such as gender, age and socioeconomic status. The study by Gary (1995) takes a sociocultural approach and focuses on the adaptive aspects of human relationships and their environments. The characteristics of ecological theory are utilized as the study is concerned with the growth, development and potentiality of African-American males and with the characteristics of their environments (Gary, 1995). According to Gary, a number of scholars have used an ecological framework for examining and organizing research on African-American men. It allows for a framework to evaluate the internal family and external systems.

The Gary study incorporated a stratified random sampling strategy that studied 537 African-American men. Data were collected through face to face interviews by trained observers and census data from the major Mid-Atlantic East Coast city studies confirmed that the sample was a cross-section of African-American men living in the community with respect to age, education, income, marital and employment status:

Table 1.

Gary Study Demographics (N=537)

Variables	Mean	Frequency
Age	18-44	57.9%
Education	Less than a high school education	41%
Marital Status	Married	45.3%
Employment Status	Employed	70%
Income	Household income \$25,000 or more	28.1%

Demographic, sociocultural and stressor were the categories of independent variables obtained. The perception of discrimination, the dependent variable, was measured by asking respondents whether they had experienced racial discrimination within the past year at work, from the police, at the bank, from waiters or waitresses or from government agencies.

As a result of their answers to a question about incidents of racial discrimination during the past year the results indicated that approximately twenty-nine percent of the respondents reported one racially discriminatory experience. Approximately eleven percent reported two or more such experiences. The workplace setting was cited the most (18.4 percent) and governmental agencies was the second most frequently (6.7 percent). Slightly more than six percent (6.3) of the respondents experienced racial discrimination by the police.

The results presented by this study may help reveal which factors affect African-American fathers interaction with service delivery at CWAs. They imply racial discrimination might exist despite the efforts of policy makers and legislators. Strategies to engage involvement need to be innovative enough to address this perception. In regard to the potential for a discriminatory attitude on the part of caseworkers, O'Donnell (1995) worked with child welfare kinship foster care caseworkers and did not indicate a racial discrimination finding specifically in his work. His study did indicate that caseworkers made few efforts to engage the fathers in the sample which was composed primarily of African-American fathers. He also found that the agency supervisors apparently set few expectations regarding casework with fathers. The O'Donnell study indicated no difference between white and African-American caseworkers on the three measures of casework practice with fathers. This is also true regarding male and female caseworkers although it is noted that there were too few male caseworkers to rule out conclusively sex-based differences. In regards to the fathers perception of a discriminatory attitude of the caseworker, this was not addressed by the O'Donnell study.

Pierce and Pierce (1984) have observed the need to consider race in research and practice with sexually abused children and their families. In their chapter in the book "Violence in the Black Family, " they point out that treatment strategies designed to engage black families have focused on the black woman and their children and not included black men. They indicate that black males scare white clinicians, especially white female clinicians, and are misunderstood and rarely studied. Boyd-Franklin (1989) states that there has been an assumption in social science literature that the Black man is peripheral to the lives of his children. She clarifies this by informing the reader that the

image is not accurate since it was based on a study of families on welfare, an economic situation in which the role of fathers could not be acknowledged due to the potential for jeopardizing welfare payments. These factors have contributed to the resistance by many African-Americans to become involved with government supported agencies (Boyd-Franklin, 1989). These findings suggest that the lack of involvement by African-American fathers include a systematic denial of their importance.

Economic Status

Robert Laseter (1994) submitted a dissertation the faculty of the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration titled "Young Inner City African-American Men: Work and Family Life." The component that explored the connection between economic status and fatherhood is particularly relevant to the question of which factors effect African-American fathers interest and involvement with their children. This study did not specifically indicate if these men had children in foster care, but there are some similarities with the sample from the O'Donnell (1995) kinship care study. The majority of participants in both samples are urban, single African-American men with limited economic resources. Although there were significant missing data about the fathers in the O'Donnell study, one can surmise that the poverty in their home communities is similar to the North Lawndale and Austin communities of the Laseter study. Some differences include the sample size, the Laseter study was much smaller, and the unit of analysis. In the O'Donnell study the caseworker was the primary focus of the analysis not the African-American male.

In the Laseter study, responses to questions regarding fatherhood included ambivalence to the birth of children, attempts to avoid the father role and stress due to limited resources. Respondents indicated that in some cases their already unstable relationship with the child's mother was further stressed by the father's inability to provide additional financial resources. In some cases, access to the child was limited by the mother due to lack of money from the fathers. The access to economic resources and the quality of the relationship were indicated by many respondents as key to their ability to be involved in decision-making regarding their child. When they were unable or unwilling to provide financial support they had no control in regards to child rearing and time spent with the child.

The factors that effect African-American father's ability to provide financial support appear also to impact their interest and involvement with their children. Job availability and preparedness are two factors reflected on in the Laseter study. Often simplistic policies and programs that do not account for the diversity in the African-American male population and dynamics of social processes have little potential for engaging African-American fathers (Laseter, 1994). In her book "Don't Believe The Hype" Farai Chideya (1995) relates the findings of Robert Griwald who says that men who cannot find work lose self-worth, become less involved with their children, and do not form stable families. The possibility that concern about loss of income is an explanation for the level of involvement of African-American fathers with CWAs needs further research. It is clear that joblessness among young African-American men has increased dramatically since 1970 (Jencks, 1988).

Summary

To review the concepts discussed, we first revealed that African-American fathers are a resource for children that has not been appropriately utilized or analyzed by social work or child welfare professionals. Developmentally children have benefited from having the involvement of their father per the research reviewed and may suffer when they are not available. The research findings presented in this study will assist child welfare professionals in using interventions that maximize the involvement of the father.

Second, racial discrimination is a real and active force in how African-Americans see their world. African-American men identified the workplace and government agencies as places where they have experienced discrimination. The idea that this experience makes them suspect future harm of some type will be examined. The attitudes, perceptions and knowledge of social work and child welfare professionals regarding African-American men's past experiences warrants future research on how this impacts servicing these men. Policies and programs planning for engaging African-American fathers does not appear to adequately incorporate the perceptions of this population. The research findings presented here can help in the development of policies and programs that can improve professionals ability to engage these fathers.

Thirdly, the economic status of African-American males is a factor in their family relationships. The cash flow of African-American fathers has an impact, per them, on how involved they are with their children. The research findings presented in this study present a clearer picture of how gaps in services for African-American men can be filled via incorporation of information on how income effects fathers.

The hypothesis that African-American fathers who distrust the child welfare agencies are less involved in services than those who trust those agencies will be examined. The findings reveal that African-American fathers have several concerns about harm but, their reduced or lack of involvement with services is particularly evident when the issue is income.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Setting

The Georgia Association of Services for Homes and Children was approached about collaborating on this research effort by requesting that they fax alert member agencies of the need for African-American fathers to be participants in this study that will examine the relationship between trust/distrust and their involvement with child welfare agencies. Those agencies that have foster care programs were asked to contact African-American fathers about their willingness to participate in the study. A private agency, the Center for New Horizons, in Chicago was also contacted about their participation in this study. The interviews were conducted at the offices of the caseworkers and the homes of the participants.

Sample

A nonrandom sample of fifty African-American fathers with children placed in foster care in the Atlanta area was sought. Obtaining fifty African-American fathers was identified as a particular challenge because African-American fathers historically have not been identified at a high rate. Despite efforts to enhance the likelihood that the targeted

fifty sample size was reached, the actual sample size was twenty. In an attempt to enhance participation and sincere responses all interviewers were African-American.

These fathers were to be identified by the referring private agency. Agencies were asked to identify and contact those fathers which they have had some initial contact. The sample that was utilized for this study was fathers from Georgia and Illinois that have children in foster care. Although the study was designed to utilize fifty fathers from Georgia, the agencies that were contacted in Georgia did not respond with the frequency expected. The fifteen fathers that were identified were drawn from the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) caseload. The Georgia Association of Homes and Services for Children distributed a fax alert to all their member agencies and fifteen fathers from DFCS and their caseworkers responded and completed the questionnaires.

Due to the shortage of responses from Georgia, the investigator utilized a foster care program in Chicago, Illinois at an agency named the Center for New Horizons. Five fathers and their caseworkers responded to the request for participants. The data from the fifteen fathers from Georgia and the five from Illinois were combined to create one sample of twenty fathers for this study.

In most cases, the caseworkers for the fathers completed the survey on the fathers either by asking questions and marking the answers or having the fathers complete the survey. In all cases where the researcher did not administer the instrument, the researcher instructed the caseworker on how to administer the instrument. They were also instructed by the researcher on how to complete the questionnaire designed to get information from the caseworker on the father's involvement.

Attempts were taken to control for differences that may impact the study. All participants had at least one child in the agency's foster homes during the past 30 days. The type of foster care (relative or non-relative) was also noted. All fathers were in nonrelated foster care. These were fathers who had at least one contact with the caseworker during the last 30 days.

Instruments

The trust/distrust variable is operationally defined as whether the participant is concerned that participation in services provided by the child welfare agency is a situation that puts them at risk of harm. A new instrument was created for this purpose. Part I of this instrument is designed to get demographic information about the participants. This section is designed to get information on fathers age, gender, education, income and area. Education is described from one year to twenty. Income is broken out into intervals of ten thousand dollars. Area is described as rural or urban. Nine questions were designed for Part II of the instrument. Part II contains questions that seek information on motivation and concerns about financial, legal or emotional harm. The answers are marked on a five point Likert scale. The range of responses are; 1=always, 2=most of the time, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never (Appendix A).

The first three questions are designed to get information on the fathers motivation to get a closer relationship with their child. Participants that mark one or two on the scale (always or most of the time) for these three questions are considered interested in a closer relationship with their children. Question four asks specifically if the participant trusts the agency. Participants that mark one or two on the scale (always or most of the time) for

this question, are considered to trust the CWA. Questions five through nine ask about the participants concern about possible physical, emotional, financial or any other type of harm if they participate in services of the CWA. Participants that mark one or two on the scale for these questions are considered to have distrust of the CWA based on their concern about harm in indicated area.

Secondly, the involvement variable is defined as participation in services as reported by the agency caseworker. Involvement was measured by analysis of caseworker's responses on a new questionnaire created for this study. This instrument asks about involvement in recommended or mandated psychological or parenting skills services. The case managers for the fathers were given a six question survey. The first two questions were designed to determine if the fathers have been mandated or recommended for psychological and are answered either yes or no. The third question asks if the client has visitation rights and is answered either yes or no. The degree of involvement by the fathers is measured on questions four, five and six. A five point Likert scale is utilized for these three questions. The range of responses are, 1=complete involvement, 2=satisfactory involvement, 3=somewhat involved, 4=unsatisfactory involvement, 5=no involvement (Appendix B).

The two instruments were created specifically for this study. The level of involvement and trust/distrust instruments were created utilizing the guidelines identified in Judd, Smith and Kidder's "Research Methods in Social Relations" and Aiken's "Rating Scales and Checklists." The reliability of these instruments was not addressed prior to validity and is presented later as a limitation (Judd, Smith and Kidder, 1991). A panel of three child welfare professionals who have a combined sixteen years of experience in the

child welfare arena were consulted to test for validity. The face, content and construct validity were visually tested on the two instruments and they all agreed the instruments appeared to have high face, content and construct validity. They all verbally agreed that even without the use of more powerful tests of reliability and validity there should be high confidence in these measures.

Procedures

Interviews were conducted between November 1998 and January 1999 by the researcher and trained interviewers. An average of five interviews were completed each month. Administration of the questionnaire to the participants allowed for them completing it with varying assistance from the interviewer. Some participants read and completed the questionnaire with minimum assistance and others had the instrument read to them and their responses recorded. The interviews were conducted at times convenient to the participants. This included after 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and the weekends. As was anticipated there was difficulty identifying participants, establishing an appointment, and high failure rates. Consequently fewer participants were interviewed each month and overall.

This study was submitted to the Clark/Atlanta University Review Board. This was done to ensure that the study protects human subjects. Cases selected were identified only by case identification numbers. This was to ensure confidentiality.

The individuals interviewed were given information regarding the nature of the study and what it will be used for in writing (Appendix C). They were asked to sign this informed consent. Care was taken to remove, reduce and inform the participant about any

risk of harm. All necessary follow up or in process procedures were taken to correct for any harm caused. Participants and caseworkers were allowed to not participate or withdraw consent without penalty.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by first visually reviewing the spread of the frequency distribution. A descriptive statistic measure of central tendency was utilized to identify the typical value. Utilizing the mean allowed for usage of more of the available information to determine the typical value.

The Chi-Square nonparametric statistic was utilized because it has very few assumptions that constrain its use. SPSS was used to calculate the two times two cross-tabulation times statistical testing of the hypothesis. The small sample size prevented the usage of more powerful statistics.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The summary of the demographics is presented in Table 2. The mean age was approximately thirty-two years of age. All participants were under fifty years of age. The mean income was right around \$10,000 a year and no participants indicated an income of over \$20,000 per year. The mean years of education was eleven. No participants indicated they had over thirteen years of education. Ninety percent of the participants were from urban areas. Seven participants had been mandated to participate in services offered by the CWA. Thirteen participants had been recommended to participate in services offered by the CWA.

Table 2.

Demographics (N=20)

VARIABLE	MEAN
Age	32
Income	\$10,000
Years of education	11
Participants from urban areas	90%
Participants mandated to services	7

The connection between trust and the involvement of African-American fathers with the services provided by the agencies that have their children in foster care is the central question. Table 3 displays the response to question four, which asks specifically about trust. The responses "sometimes" are considered neutral and not considered indicative of trust or distrust. The responses "always" and "most of the time" are considered indicative of trust. Overall five out of the twenty participants indicated they trusted the CWA. Table 3 also shows that eight out of the twenty participants indicated they distrusted the CWA. This is reflected by their response of "rarely" or "never".

Table 3.

Trust (N=20)

	Frequency	Percent
Always	2	10
Most Of The Time	3	15
Sometimes	7	35
Rarely	6	30
Never	2	10
Total	20	100

As indicated the central research question is whether a dichotomous variable, namely, trust is related to a continuous involvement with child welfare agency. To answer this question, the two variables were cross tabulated and focus was directed on the percentage of fathers that were involved in recommended services provided by the child welfare agency. Three out of four fathers that indicated that they trusted the CWA had "complete" or "satisfactory involvement". When those fathers responses indicating distrust were reviewed, only two out of seven responses indicated "complete" or "satisfactory involvement".

Table 4.

Fathers Who Trust The CWA And Involvement In Recommended Services(N=13)

	Complete/ Satisfactory Involvement	Somewhat Involved	Unsatisfactory/ No Involvement	Total
Always/Most Of The Time	3	0	1	4
Sometimes	0	0	2	2
Rarely/ Never	2	3	2	7
Total	5	3	5	13

The results from those three fathers that trusted the agency and were mandated showed that those fathers that trusted the child welfare agency were "completely involved" with services. It was also observed that the *three* fathers that indicated that they distrusted the CWA were also "completely involved" with mandated services. The one father with a neutral response was also "completely involved" with services. The results show that regardless of trust or distrust participants mandated to participate in the services of the CWA were completely involved.

The issue distrust was examined by also asking the fathers about their concern about harm as a result of their involvement with CWA s. The results from participants recommended for services shows more variance than results from mandated participants. When asked about a nonspecific type of harm the recommended fathers did not indicate much concern. The response of "always" or "most of the time" is considered indicative of concern about harm. The results indicate, one out of the thirteen fathers who were recommended for services indicated they had concern. The response of "rarely" or "never" is considered indicative no concern about harm. The results were, four out of the

thirteen fathers indicated no concern about harm. These five fathers all had "satisfactory" or "complete involvement" with recommended services.

Table 5.

Fathers Who Trust The CWA And Involvement In Mandated Services (N=7)

	Complete/ Satisfactory Involvement	Somewhat Involved	Unsatisfactory Involvement	Total
Always/Most Of The Time	3	0	0	3
Sometimes	1	0	0	1
Rarely/Never	3	0	0	3
Total	7	0	0	7

Table 6.

Fathers Concern About Some Harm And Involvement In Recommended Services(N=13)

	Complete/ Satisfactory Involvement	Somewhat Involved	Unsatisfactory Involvement	Total
Always/Most Of The Time	1	0	1	2
Sometimes	0	0	0	0
Rarely/Never	4	3	4	11
Total	5	3	5	13

In considering concern about other types of harm that may impact the level of client involvement with recommended services, neither concern about criminal charges, physical nor emotional harm was consistently found. No more than one or two fathers in each of these areas of indicated concern.

The results from the data on concern about financial harm indicate these fathers did have concern that was different than indicated in the other areas. Six out of thirteen

fathers indicated concern about financial lost. Three out of those six had "unsatisfactory" or "no involvement" in recommended services.

Table 7.

Fathers Concern Of Financial Loss And Involvement In Recommended Services (N=13)

	Complete/ Satisfactory Involvement	Somewhat Involved	Unsatisfactory Involvement	Total
Always/Most Of The Time	2	1	3	6
Sometimes	1	1	1	3
Rarely/Never	2	1	1	4
Total	5	3	5	13

Summary of Results

The findings in this study present support of a rejection of the null hypothesis. The results show there is tendency for African-American fathers that don't trust CWAs to be less involved with services provided by these agencies. All those participants who indicated they trusted the agency were more involved in the recommended services provided by the agency. Those that indicated a desire to establish a closer relationship with their children were slightly more involved only if they trusted the CWA. The results indicate few of the fathers were concerned about any harm other than financial as result of being involved with recommended services provided by child welfare agencies.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

In regards to the African- American fathers who were mandated, while none indicated that they "always" trusted the child welfare, all those that trusted the agency "most of the time " were "completely involved " according to their caseworker. The fathers that indicated that they never trusted the child welfare agency also were denoted with "complete involvement". The fathers mandated to participate in services consistently showed more involvement than fathers recommended for services. It appears that the mandated status contributes to more involvement of these fathers.

With fathers that are not mandated, these results appear to indicate that those fathers that trust the CWA have higher involvement in recommended services than those fathers that do not trust the agency. None of the participants that indicated they do not trust the agency were denoted with "complete involvement". It would appear that trust of the CWA for those fathers that are recommended for services increases the involvement of these fathers. This appears to be in consistent with the results of Gary who noted a tendency of African -Americans to distrust government agencies (Gary, 1989).

The risk of financial lost appears to be a significant factor for these African-American fathers in this study. Those fathers who indicated concern about financial lost showed less

involvement with CWAs. This appears to be consistent with the work of Boyd-Franklin in her work with African-American families who indicate a distrust of government systems (Boyd-Franklin, 1989). Robert Laseter also talks about the significance of the financial factors in work with young African-American fathers (Laseter, 1994). Economic risk is considered to be a significant factor when examining the degree of involvement African-American fathers have with their children. This study appears to validate the hypothesis that these fathers see involvement with government agencies inherent with risk of financial resources.

Limitations

The sample used in this study creates certain limitations. The sample size of this study effects the generalizability of these results. A larger sample would allow for the usage of more powerful statistical methods.

The fathers were also from different regions of the country. There were likely some cultural differences that effected the results. The different number of interviewers in different locations also could have significantly have effected the administration of the instrument.

The lack of reliability testing of the instruments is a limitation. In some cases the instruments were not administrated by African-American males. As was previously indicated this could impact the quality of the final results.

The lack of attention to the possible other factors that could have impacted the results also are a limitation. This includes characteristics of the caseworkers such as race and gender.

The future exploration of this topic still appears worthy of study. It appears likely that broader research will validate the assumption that trust is a major factor in African-American fathers being involved with child welfare agencies. Strategies that include incentives should strongly be considered in order to get a larger sample size and gain more control over the administration of the instruments. The crucial need to have more of these fathers involved in caring for their children has been well documented and in of itself validates the need for follow up on the interesting results of this study.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The study results indicate a suggested linkage between trust/distrust and participation in services. A responsive analysis would then seek to address both policy and practice-based issues. This study, in its limited sampling is not summarily indicative of the population at large, yet it draws attention to the various contexts in which African-American males are afforded social and child welfare services and are therein encouraged or discouraged to participate in the lives of their children.

As discussed, CWAs have historically operated with a covert premise of the father being either absent or disinterested in the welfare of his children. In this context, adopted perceptions and resulting social work practice may offer a strong bias or minimally, represent a less than sensitive environment for the exchange of information and services. The study's subjects marginal level of familial involvement exhibits a strong correlation to external factors, and suggests a need for further research and accompanying resource allocation.

A presumed imperative would involve agency oversight and self-recognition relative to its limited success in obtaining the involvement and cooperation of this population. As a focused priority, adaptive and culturally sensitive strategies, inclusive of

income level and worker perception, should be considered to counter contraindicated policies and attitudes.

Agency operations indicative of antiquated procedures may also represent an area for oversight and may negatively impact the solicitation and encouragement of the involvement of African-American males. Ongoing training and staff development should also be viewed as key in responding to areas that involve workers' attitudes and perceptions. Strategic based planning efforts should work to emphasize the relative importance of the client's first encounter with an agency and the degree to which a positive exchange would rank as a prime indicator for future and ongoing client investment.

Additionally a more generalized and expanded study would legitimize or call into question the way CWAs have traditionally done business. A more thorough analysis would offer implications for child welfare practice as well as provide a context for review of agency's' missions. To this end, the adoption of an agency mission that is reflective of client participation versus that of mandate and compliance, can be an important area of focus.

Further research addressing theoretical constructs would offer a forum for discussion which would highlight the area of focus. In so far as this study did not attempt to address issues involving the transference of attitudes and information from father to father, or from within the family of origin, further exploration is indicated to support or refute the impact of the father's adopted feelings and attitudes and the resulting level of his familial involvement.

APPENDIX A: FATHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I

DIRECTIONS: The questions in Part I are to help the research understand the characteristics of the individuals participating in this study. It will not be shared in a way that identifies you. Please answer as honestly as possible.

Age _____

Sex _____

Please circle the number of years of education you have completed.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 16 17 18 19 20+

Please check the line next to your annual income range.

___ \$0-10,000 ___ \$10,000-\$20,000 ___ \$21,000-\$30,000 ___ \$31,000-\$40,000 ___ \$41,000+

Do you live in rural or urban area? ___ rural ___ urban

Part II

DIRECTIONS: The questions in Part II are designed to get information regarding your thoughts about participating in services offered by Child Welfare Agencies. Please answer all questions as honestly as possible. The information will not be shared in a way that identifies you as a participant.

1. I want to establish/maintain a close relationship with all my child(ren).

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

2. I am willing to participate in court ordered services to establish/maintain a close relationship with my child(ren) who are in foster care.

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

3. I am willing to participate in services recommended by the Child Welfare Agency servicing my child(ren) in order to establish/maintain a close relationship with my children who are in foster care.

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

4. I trust the Child Welfare Agency that will provide services that have been court ordered or recommended.

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

5. I am concerned about my or someone else's loss of financial resources if I participate in the services provided by the Child Welfare Agency.

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

6. I am concerned about criminal charges being pressed against me or someone else, or of myself or someone else being incarcerated as a result of my participation in services provided by the Child Welfare Agency.

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

7. I am concerned about physical harm to me or someone else resulting from my participation in services provided by the Child Welfare Agency.

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

8. I am concerned about emotional harm to me or someone resulting from my participation in services provided by the Child Welfare Agency.

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

9. I am concerned about some type of harm to me or someone as result of my participation in services provided by the Child Welfare Agency.

1-always 2-most of the time 3-sometimes 4-rarely 5-never

Please indicate any other concerns you have that were not addressed by the above questions.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT
 Clark/Atlanta University
 School of Social Work
 Agreement to Participate in a Research Study
 "African-American Fathers Involvement with Child Welfare Agencies"

I, _____, state that I am the Father of a foster child, and I agree to volunteer in a research study. I am over twenty one years of age.

The purpose of this study is to learn about parents who have children living with family members or relatives, or non-relatives, instead of their parents, and are involved with a child welfare agency. Participation in this study will involve one meeting, in which questions will be answered on a questionnaire regarding my feelings about the agency and my children. I have read the questions that will be asked or they have been read to me. This meeting has been arranged at my convenience, will last no longer than 30 minutes, and will not be tape recorded. _____ has been chosen for this study from agency listings of all clients.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary. If I refuse to participate, there will be no problems for me as a result. I understand that I may stop participation at any time, if I feel the need to do so. I also understand that the research has the right to stop the interview at any time as well. I know that if I reveal that I am currently abusing or neglecting a child, the research is required by law to report this information to the appropriate government official.

I understand that all the information will be kept confidential with regard to my identity. Our names and addresses will never be revealed publicly. I understand that some of the questions may be upsetting to me.

I am invited to call either my caseworker or the research on this study, if I need help with reaction to any questions that may be asked. I know that participation in this project may contribute to the knowledge that agencies need to have, in order to plan services for parents who have children living with their relatives or non-relatives.

I, _____ acknowledge that the risks involved and the need for the research has been explained and any questions which I may have concerning the procedures to be followed have been answered. I freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I will keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

Parent (Sign & Date)

Print Name

Investigator/Witness

Date

APPENDIX C: CASEWORKER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Caseworker # _____

Months on case _____

Has client been mandated to participate in psychological or parenting skill services provided or coordinated by this agency? Yes__ No__

Has client been recommended to participate in to psychological or parenting skill services provided or coordinated by this agency? Yes__ No__

Does client have visitation rights with their children? Yes__ No__

Please indicate the client's current level of involvement with services or visitation.

1-Complete involvement 2-Satisfactory involvement 3-Somewhat involved 4-
Unsatisfactory involvement 5-No involvement

Mandated psychological or parenting skill services

1 2 3 4 5

Recommended psychological or parenting skill services

1 2 3 4 5

Visits with their children

1 2 3 4 5

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