



Our
Mission:

MFFN enhances healthy father-child relationships by promoting initiatives that inform public policy and further develop the field of fatherhood practitioners statewide.

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Leading Minnesota's campaign for healthy fatherhood.

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Network Notes

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Research questions value of “magic moment” at birth

Anyone working in the field of fatherhood has certainly heard of the notion of a “magic moment” immediately following the birth of a child when many mothers and fathers have high hopes for their relationship together.

A new report by Ronald Mincy and Hillard Pouncy finds that this “magic moment” is perhaps too short-lived to provide a useful opportunity to engage the family in staying together as a unit. The report contends that the idea of a “magic moment” is short-sighted and may fail to capitalize on developing parental involvement. The report focuses on low-income unmarried parents.

“Instead,” the authors state, “we found a far more promising ‘daddy moment.’ We use this term to refer to the period during which a never-married father is likely to remain involved in the life of his child with the biological mother’s support.”

Mincy and Pouncy purport that the “daddy moment” offers a longer period

of time when both parents “might reflect on how they got to this point; deal with tensions and issues arising from their shared parenting roles; and imagine future partners, relationships, or — possibly — marriage to one another.”

The authors found that mother-father relationships impact father-child relationships. As such, they found that, among parents of 2- and 3-year old children, nearly 3/4 of all “visiting fathers” saw their children on a weekly basis whereas fewer than 4 of 10 “baby fathers” saw their children weekly. (*See definitions on page 2.*)

In addition to the quality of the father-mother relationship, the authors noted other factors that impacted the father-child relationship. For example, fathers with full-time employment were more likely to

Continued on p. 2, “Daddy moment”.

Share your voice: Policy survey seeks input from family practitioners, educators, and fatherhood advocates

MFFN is seeking your input for our first Public Policy Survey. We are asking family service professionals and fatherhood advocates to complete this on-line survey in the month of May. The survey will help MFFN develop our public policy agenda for 2009.

Request a copy of the survey at mfroehle@mnfathers.org.

The survey is part of the larger “Fathers to the Forefront” effort. Fathers to the Forefront is a five-year action plan to strengthen Minnesota families. Copies of the plan are available at www.mnfathers.org.

Thanks to all those who helped develop our policy survey! Results from the survey and an update on the 2008 legislative session will be provided in the August issue of Network Notes.



18th annual Minnesota Festival for Fathers and Families coming to Minneapolis

Join over 20 community agencies who will collaborate to sponsor Minnesota's 18th annual Festival for Fathers & Families.

This family event provides a full afternoon of free activities including free lunch, moonbounce, pony rides, t-shirts for dads, live entertainment, giant slide, and more.

Community-based organizations are invited to set up exhibit tables on the festival grounds to share their services with fathers and families. In 2007, over 1,200 individuals attended the celebration in North Minneapolis.

Agencies are invited to nominate a Father of the Year to receive public recognition at the event!

Festival for Fathers & Families Saturday, August 9, 2008

12:00 noon—4:00 pm
North Commons Park
1801 James Ave. North
Minneapolis

Details, including a promotional flyer, exhibitor registration form, and Father of the Year nomination form, are available online: www.mnfathers.org/festival.html.

Exhibit table information is also available by calling Elias Getabecha at (612) 348-5722.



Research gauges unmarried father involvement

Continued from p. 1, "Daddy moment".

have stayed overnight with their children in the previous year (94% of full-time employed fathers; 89% of part-time employed fathers; 87% of unemployed fathers). Also, the higher the number of "outside children", the lower the likelihood that

fathers had high levels of interaction with their children including playing with and feeding the child, reading stories and putting the child to bed, or visiting together with relatives

the father would see the "inside child".

The report did note that fathers had high levels of interaction with their children including "playing with and feeding the child, reading stories and putting the

child to bed, or visiting together with relatives." This is important to note, as it demonstrates that men are not connecting solely as breadwinners, but are also spending time parenting their children.

The authors cite three conclusions from the study. First, they cite the value of tapping into the "daddy moment" which provides a longer period for engaging men and for providing family strengthening services to couples. During this period, which may last up to two or three years, parents are more open to co-parenting and child-focused services. However, the authors note that a drop-off in father involvement is already occurring by the second year.

Second, the authors raise questions about low rates of mothers tapping into child support services in Louisiana. The report cites child support as a key resource for raising families out of poverty and for maintaining father contact.

Third, the authors discuss the importance of combining relationship education with financial education and career development. Couples cited inadequate financial resources as a barrier to marriage; therefore increased finances will support the development of healthier couple relationships within marriage or fragile families.

The study is based on a 2002 survey of 1,200 never-married low-income mothers in Louisiana and 800 fathers who had children with the identified mothers.

Details: Ronald B. Mincy and Hillard Pouncy. An Essay in the *Future of Black Family Series*. "Baby Fathers and American Family Formation: Low-Income, Never-Married Parents in Louisiana before Katrina." Institute for American Values: New York. 2007.

Terms used by the authors:

Visiting Fathers: men romantically involved with the mother of the child but not living with the mother or the child

Baby Fathers: men who are not in a romantic relationship with the mother of the child

Absent Fathers: men who are no longer in a relationship with the mother and who are no longer involved in the child's life (he may still pay child support)

Inside Child: child that a mother and father had exclusively with one another

Outside Child: child that either the mother or father had with another partner

2009 fatherhood conference to address male socialization

On Monday—Tuesday, January 12—13, 2009, the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network will host its 6th annual winter conference.

The annual conference, geared toward family service practitioners, social service workers, educators, family law professionals, and other fatherhood advocates, will focus on the theme of male socialization.

Submit a proposal for a workshop session! We're accepting proposals through June 20th (visit www.mnfathers.org for details).

Conference sessions will help you to answer the following questions:

How does your work impact healthy father development?

How can you teach boys to grow into responsible men?

What role do women have to support and encourage masculinity?

What do family service workers and educators need to know in order to support healthy development of boys and girls?

Details coming late-summer 2008!

www.mnfathers.org/summit.html

Dads matter for prenatal and maternal health

An April 2008 literature review conducted by Britain's Fatherhood Institute provides a big picture of the impact that fathers make on prenatal development and on the health of birth mothers and infants.

The report, "The Dad Deficit: The Missing Piece in the Maternity Jigsaw," shows that fathers can provide significant benefits for themselves, their newborn children, and mothers.

However, the report finds that — too often — men are left out of prenatal doctor visits and maternity services. The absence of fathers in these early stages can lead to lower levels of father engagement in postnatal care and in early childhood development.

When fathers are actively engaged prenatally, in the maternity ward, and following the birth, men tend to carry out more infant caretaking at home. Men in these situations also show more support to the mothers, which can lead to higher levels of mother-child bonding.

In families where mothers experience depression, the report cites that infants often establish "joyful relationships with their fathers, and infant-father attachments were secure."

The report finds that fathers' negative behaviors, such as smoking and alcohol consumption, can lead to various problems for children. For

example, mothers tend to stop breastfeeding earlier if fathers smoke. Similarly, mothers experience lower levels of attachment to their children if the father has high levels of alcohol consumption.

Engaging fathers early-on does not need to be complicated. The report cites inexpensive and short-term educational opportunities for fathers which lead to benefits for the family.

One study cited in the report found that mothers increased their level of breastfeeding from 41% to 74% after fathers attended a two-hour prenatal class about the importance of breastfeeding and infant care.

Meanwhile, 69% of mothers in another study continued breastfeeding after six months versus only 21% nationally. This increase came after fathers attended two 45-minute parenting classes accompanied by an hour-long coaching session.

And yet another study found that fathers who attended conventional prenatal classes "undertake more housework and are more likely to utilize support" for emotional or parenting concerns.

Details: "The Dad Deficit" and the related literature review are available from the Fatherhood Institute, London, England. April 2008. www.fatherhoodinstitute.org.

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Leading Minnesota's campaign for healthy fatherhood.



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Recent book release: *International Guide to Literature on Masculinity*



The Men's Studies Press recently announced the publication of the *International Guide to Literature on Masculinity*, compiled and edited by Diederik F. Janssen.

This guide lists citations by world region, selected nations, selected American ethnic minorities and two world religions (Christianity, Judaism). It also includes one historical section on the Greco-Roman World. Specific countries covered include Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Canada, United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Specific ethnic minorities covered include American Indians, African-Americans, and Asian Americans.

For details, reviews and ordering information (E-book: \$15.00; print: \$45.00) see www.mensstudies.com/content/M65371/.

Men's Studies Press also offers publications about divorcing men, fatherhood, men in midlife, men's health, and more at www.mensstudies.com.

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Help us to support healthy child development through positive father involvement.

My gift is (please check one):

membership registration (basic membership is \$20 annually).

a gift to MFFN.

an anonymous contribution.

in memory of: _____

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