

Broken Homes, Single Moms, and Deadbeat Dads?:
Parents' Experiences in the Child Support System

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Introduction

Chapter 1

Broken Homes as Big Business: Family Court and Child Support Enforcement as a Billion Dollar Industry

This chapter explores the development and organization of the modern child support system. I begin by outlining the massive infrastructure necessary to maintain the system and how that corresponds with its explicit and implicit goals. I examine how the idea of “child support” came to (primarily) represent financial matters, and what this means for society’s conceptualization of childhood, family, and responsibility.

Chapter 2

“I Didn’t Need Help Making Them and I Don’t Need Somebody to Tell Me How to Take Care of Them:” Conceptualizing Parenthood Under Child Support Enforcement

This chapter explores how parents think about their experiences in the system. I examine how involvement in the child support system impacts their identity as parents and individuals. I also discuss the impact of the organization and bureaucratic processes of the child support system on conceptualizations of the ways that custodial and non-custodial parents engage with each other and their children.

Chapter 3

“They Look at You Like You’re Nothing:” Experiences of Shame and Stigma in the Child Support System

This chapter explores how parents are treated in the child support system. I examine the use of shaming and stigmatization and its consequences for social interactions. I examine the ways that these processes are used as social control and a form of punishment. I also discuss the emotional and relational implications of involvement with the system.

Chapter 4

Deadbeat, Dead Broke, and Beat Down: Collateral Consequences of Child Support Involvement

This chapter explores the collateral consequences of involvement with the child support system, specifically criminal justice and economic outcomes. I also discuss the policy implications of the system sitting at the intersection of the welfare and criminal justice systems.