

The Bulletin is produced by Richard Fletcher on behalf of the AFRN Steering Group: Prof. Trevor Cairney, University of New South Wales; Dr Richard Fletcher, University of Newcastle; Prof Ilan Katz, University of New South Wales; Samantha Page, Early Childhood Australia; Prof Bruce Maycock, Curtin University of Technology; Steve Hackett, Family Relationship Services Australia; A/Prof Campbell Paul, Royal Children's Hospital, Vic.



Please view in HTML. If HTML is not accessible or you are having trouble viewing the links go to <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/centre/fac/research>

Contact

Richard.fletcher@newcastle.edu.au



Fatherhood Research Bulletin

Bulletin 20

August 2013

SPECIAL ISSUE ON WORKING WITH MEN IN VULNERABLE FAMILIES

NEWS from the Australian Fatherhood Research Network	2
Would you like to join ARACY?	
RESOURCES ON THE WEB:	3—4
Family Inclusive Child Protection Practice Children Australia - Special Issue	
Online Postgraduate Course - Engaging with fathers in vulnerable families	
Professor of Child Development and Fatherhood	
PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE:	4—6
Programs For Fathers Who Have Been Violent	
Wendy Bunston introductory comments	
‘What about the fathers?’ Bringing ‘Dads on Board™’ with their infants and toddlers following violence	
The Newpin Inside Fathers’ Program in Australia	
CONFERENCES:	6—7
Men and Vulnerable Families Forum: At the National Men’s Health Gathering	
Conference Invitation from ARACY	
RESEARCH:	8—11
Including Fathers In Child Protection Work	
Child Welfare Professionals’ Experiences in Engaging Fathers in Services	
Fathers’ experiences with child welfare services	
Introduction from lead author	
Fathers as ‘core business’ in child welfare practice and research: An interdisciplinary Review	
But what about the violence	
Breaking the Links in Intergenerational Violence: An Emotional Regulation Perspective	
Integrated Cognitive–Behavioural and Psychodynamic Psychotherapy for Intimate Partner Violent Men	
Refugee Fathers’ Vulnerability	
Father-involvement in a refugee sample: relations between posttraumatic stress and caregiving	

NEWS from the Australian Fatherhood Research Network

Would you like to join ARACY?



Since 2003 ARACY, with more than 2700 members, we have been credited with driving collaborative action across many areas of child and youth wellbeing. These include: investing in the early years; supporting social and emotional wellbeing in the middle years; improving the practice of implementation; and advocating for evidence-based policies and programs

Did you know that ARACY membership continues to be free, and you can [apply online](#). ARACY would like you and/or your organisation to become an ARACY member to help us turn 'what works' into practical, preventative action.

Being a member of ARACY means you and/or your organisation will:

- Be a part of action to improve the life chances and wellbeing of Australian children and youth.
- Participate in innovative thinking and programs that link different disciplines and sectors across Australia.
- Create more effective ways for research knowledge to be used and to respond to the needs of service providers and policymakers.
- Expand your access to collaborative national and local networks, informally and formally.
- Increase your opportunities to engage in relevant research and other ARACY programs.
- In addition to your ongoing subscription to [Our News](#) – ARACY's monthly newsletter and the [ARACY eBulletin](#) – a weekly roundup of research and media related to children and youth, the benefits of your free membership include:

- Invitations to free-of-charge events
- Discounts for ARACY events, including [seminars](#) and [conferences](#)
- Access to publications, such as the Report Card: the wellbeing of young Australians
- Promotion by ARACY of your activities (events and publications)
- Voting rights at the Annual General Meeting (Organisational Members only).

You can [apply online](#) in just a few minutes

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

FAMILY INCLUSIVE CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE Children Australia - Special Issue

Children Australia is calling for research, policy and practice papers that address the issue of Family Inclusive Child Protection Practice. Deadline for manuscripts - November 2013.

The website explains: "There is mounting national and international evidence that parents involved with child protection agencies feel excluded from the decision-making process as it affects their children's future. This is in spite of the fact that most child protection agencies claim to be working in partnership with parents.

This Special Issue of Children Australia seeks to give expression to academics, policy makers and practitioners who can demonstrate how families are included in child protection practice and how this benefits children and their family and child protection agencies.

For more information go to:

http://0.journals.cambridge.org/library.newcastle.edu.au/images/fileUpload/documents/2014_Call_for_papers.pdf

ONLINE POSTGRADUATE COURSE - Engaging with fathers in vulnerable families

In September this year a new postgraduate course for those wanting to engage fathers in vulnerable families will be launched at the University of Newcastle. The course, which is part of the Masters in Family Studies, is only available online.

The online postgraduate course HLSC6126 Working with Fathers in Vulnerable Families will commence September 9th. Fathers in families under pressure can be both a risk and a resource. Engaging with these fathers requires knowledge and skill to invite reflection on damaging behaviours while maintaining respect and belief in the father. Students will be equipped to engage with difficult fathers (and father figures) by keeping a focus on their fathering and on their potential to make a positive contribution while being ready to open up discussion of hurtful or abusive behaviours. Personal, professional and organizational aspects of father-inclusive practice with vulnerable families are addressed. It is suitable for anyone working with families in difficulty.



For information and enrolment inquiries go to www.GradSchool.com.au and Search for 'fathers'. For further information about the course contact Richard.fletcher@newcastle.edu.au

PROFESSOR BY SPECIAL APPOINTMENT in Child Development, in particular the role and developmental significance of fatherhood at the University of Amsterdam

See <http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/werken-bij-de-uva/vacatures/item/13-264.html>

Continues over the page

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

One of the main tasks of the professor by special appointment will be to conduct academic research focusing on the unique contribution to parenting that fathers make in the social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural development of children and adolescents. The professor will also be expected to secure research grants from indirect government funding sources (e.g. NWO, ZonMw).

The professor by special appointment will also teach subjects relating to the relevant area of research within the Bachelor's and Master's programmes in Pedagogical Sciences and the Research Master in Child Development and Education (in close consultation with other department professors). The teaching role also includes the supervision of BA and MA theses in this field.

Finally, the professor by special appointment will also be expected to make an active contribution to the public debate on the emancipation of fathers, and to provide research-based advice on the issue of 'father-inclusive policy' to civil-society organisations and government authorities.

Requirements

The professor by special appointment is expected to have the following credentials:

- excellent research credentials, evidenced by an academic thesis and publications in leading international academic journals;
- wide-ranging and demonstrable expertise in the research areas defined above;
- outstanding teaching credentials and broad experience in teaching and coordinating teaching (individual supervision, as well as lectures and tutorials) at university level;
- an ability to generate indirectly-funded research, demonstrated by research grants previously secured at the level of training research assistants (AIOs) and/or postdocs;
- good organisational and administrative skills;
- good personal, communication and networking skills;

the candidate must be able to contribute with authority to, and have had experience in the participation of, educational and political debates relating to the issues of involved fatherhood and shared parenthood.

Appointment

The five-year appointment (0.2 FTE) will be with the Father Knowledge Centre (Vader Kennis Centrum). It will be based in the Child Development and Education department (programme group Childhood education and Family Support) of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. This special appointment is made possible with support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the Vader Kennis Centrum.

You should send your letter of application, including a detailed curriculum vitae before 14 September 2013 to UvA/FMG, Child Development and Education Department, Ms W.A. Torensma, PO Box 94208, 1090 GE Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Please quote vacancy number 13-264 in the subject-line. Applications may also be sent by email: vacatures-powl-fmg@uva.nl

PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

PROGRAMS FOR FATHERS WHO HAVE BEEN VIOLENT

FRB comment: *programs addressing fathers' parenting are rarely fully described and evaluated, especially from the field of child protection. Wendy Bunston's program (which has been defunded since this article was completed – not through any criticism of the program but due to changed priorities in the host organisation) offers a special insight into how fathers who have used violence in their families may be assisted to heal their relationships with their infants and children. Andrew King provides a detailed description of the NEWPIN 'Inside fathers' program being conducted in NSW prisons. It is important to note that the motivations for including fathers in child protection services may not start from a father-focus at all. Wendy's description of how she came to develop Bringing 'Dads on Board™' is described in her introduction for FRB below.*

PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Introductory comments from Wendy Bunston

Wendy was interviewed for the 'Working with Men in Vulnerable Families' postgraduate course (see above). In the interview she was asked how she came to be working with fathers in the first place. This is her response.

The question, 'Why work with fathers?' is probably one that was answered for me when I first ran a program called PARKAS, which was Parents Accepting Responsibility Kids Are Safe, and that was a program we ran some years ago with children and their mums. In the very first group that we ran we were, as the facilitators, talking I think in fairly, stereotypical terms around men and women. Because it was a group for women and children around family violence, we talked about the father as perpetrators and we talked about the mums as the victims.

What we found through the course of that group was that we began to shut down the children's freedom to talk about things, because not all the kids in that group thought that their father was the perpetrator, or thought that their father was this, or their mother was that. So, we learnt fairly quickly that when we engaged in those sorts of stereotypes, which are the stereotypes that I think are rife around the sector and the literature, we shut down the kids. This was as opposed to what we were wanting to do, which was to provide them with a safe space for them to tell us about what it was like.

And it made it really difficult because in the first group, I think it was predominantly boys, it was like, 'What did that mean for them or how they experienced their dads?', particularly when, for some of them, they were really angry with their mums, because from their point of view it was the mum's fault that dad wasn't at home anymore and in the group a couple of the Mum's had actually been violent towards the dad which was the precipitant to the relationship finishing. And you can have lots of... lots of robust discussions around if the mum was violent towards the dad, it was probably because it was at the end of a long, you know, line of her having experienced violence in the father... all sorts of things. But you move all the stuff away... you've got a kid there who's trying to make sense of their world, and trying to make sense of their dads, and for some of these kids they love their dad, they wanted the violence to stop, they love their dads.

It's probably more my experience with step-fathers where kids are a lot clearer about, 'I don't want anything to do with them', than it is when it's with violence with your father. But dads are very important parts of these kid's lives so we needed to really revolutionise the way that we thought. We needed to really just go back to the drawing board, so we can't assume anything; we can't speak in an assumptive way, we need to just leave open spaces for these kids to tell us their experience. And then, it's how they want to integrate that experience for themselves in a way that takes a healthy look at their world, as opposed to, 'I can't talk about this at home', 'I can't do this'... 'I can't talk about this in the group, because if I talk about my Dad in the group, I know that the facilitators are gonna go, "Ewww there's a bad man" and that is just not good enough.

So, I think it's the work with the children that taught me about what needed to be included or not included. So, did I have a thought, 'Yeah, I gotta work with men' or 'Yeah, I gotta work with women'? No... I think I just went out to learn, 'What do I have to do?' and... the children taught me.

'What about the fathers?' Bringing 'Dads on Board™' with their infants and toddlers following violence

This paper examines a group work intervention developed for fathers who had successfully participated in a men's behaviour change program and who wished to undertake further work to strengthen and improve the bond between themselves and their infant/toddler (up to age 4). It focuses on two groups run in 2010 – 2011, uses material directly taken from each program and explores in detail how this intervention was developed, how the program was structured, the profile of the fathers involved and the subsequent inclusion of their partners within both groups. It also includes a small evaluation. Pivotal to this intervention was the implementation of an 'infant-led' approach.

Bunston, W. (2013). 'What about the fathers?' Bringing 'Dads on Board™' with their infants and toddlers following violence. *Journal of Family Studies*, 19(1), 70 – 79.

PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

The Newpin Inside Fathers ' Program in Australia

This paper explores the use of fathering programs in an Australian Correctional Centre. Most programs delivered in New South Wales (NSW) Correctional Centres target offending behaviours. Intensive fathering programs have a different focus. Instead of directly targeting offending behaviours to support change, intensive fathering programs elevate the inmate's role and responsibility as the father to his children to mediate change. While this paper does not follow the reduction in recidivism, it does explore what the men reported as the impact of the program. All participants were able to identify changes in their insight and also their behaviour in the group, in the Correctional Centre and with their children (when contact was permitted). The paper identifies key change factors for the Newpin Inside Program and how Mutual Aid Programs can be delivered in a challenging environment.

King, A. (2013). The Newpin Inside Fathers ' Program in Australia. *Developing Practice*, 34, 67 – 80.

CONFERENCES



<http://www.amhf.org.au/conferences/>

The National Men's Health Gathering in Brisbane will encompass three events;

The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Male Health Convention, 22 - 23 October 2013

The National Men's Health Conference, 23 - 25 October 2013

Men & Vulnerable Families Forum, 24 - 25 October 2013

The National Men's Health Conference in Brisbane will be the 10th held over the last twenty years. Together with the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Male Health Convention (the 7th)

The Men & Vulnerable Families Forum, these events are the major source of revenue for the AMHF (it does not receive any direct government funding).

Successful Gatherings since 2009 have allowed AMHF to employ a part-time administrator and to assist in the establishment of state men's health associations in Victoria and NSW.

A scholarship fund has also been established to help indigenous men undertake studies to qualify as male health workers in their communities.

Men & Vulnerable Families Forum, 24 - 25 October 2013

The Men and Vulnerable Families Forum shares and learns together about how community service programs engage men's potential for building resilience in fragile families. The Forum also explores the knowledge, skills and behaviour that workers use to engage effectively with men and the outcomes it achieves.

Continues over the page

CONFERENCES

Themes for the 2013 Forum are:

- Building the evidence base for engaging fathers.
- Effective approaches to engaging men in vulnerable communities.
- Outcome benefits for engaging men in family based programs.
- Engaging dads in school communities.
- Opportunities for shared parenting with changing work arrangements within families.
- Partnership opportunities when implementing whole-of-family approaches.
- Training, recruitment and induction of professionals in the sector to work with men.
- Team Parenting approaches.

Conference Invitation from ARACY

Infant and Early Childhood Social and Emotional Wellbeing conference 2013

Canberra | Australia
30 October to 02 November 2013



The *Infant & Early Childhood Social & Emotional Wellbeing Conference* is being held in Canberra 30 October to 02 November 2013.

The Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY) along with the Australian Association for Infant Mental Health (AAIMHI) are running this conference later in the year with the aim to close the gap between what we know about healthy child development and what we do to ensure that children thrive. The conference will aim to have improved policies for infants and young children, supporting parents as caregivers and developing and enhancing the skills of the people who work with infants and their families.

Around 400 people are expected to attend, and this will include; policy-makers, researchers, education staff, social workers, mental health professionals, maternal health nurses, midwives, paediatricians and others working with Australia's infants and their families.

The Conference will include two papers specifically addressing fathers: *Investigating reflective functioning measurement with mothers and fathers* and *Investing in fathers' mental health for infants' wellbeing*. A workshop *Who are my parents? how does parenting affect the socioemotional development of infants* will also investigate fathers' influence over the lifespan.

You can find out more details here www.iecsewc2013.net.au. Early bird registrations are closing 8 September, and ARACY members receive a further \$100 off the full rate.

RESEARCH

INCLUDING FATHERS IN CHILD PROTECTION WORK

FRB Comment: There seems to be little doubt that child protection and child welfare services are noticing fathers more often and taking steps to include them. Deciding whether to celebrate the small gains in father-inclusive practice or to deride the lack of progress to date may end up being a 'glass half full or half empty' decision. The researchers attempting to address this question have a difficult task. Not only are there multiple levels that need to change, the organization, the protocols, and the staff; but there is also a variety of services and programs. In the papers reported below the focus is on social workers and child protection. Both the papers reported here address the topic at the level of personal interaction. Saleh, from the US, offers a generally positive view of the skills and attitudes of child welfare professionals. The report also points to unique regional influences such as legalised gambling and prostitution which may affect fathers' roles and their ability to engage. Coady and colleagues from Canada start at the opposite end, asking fathers for their views of child welfare services. Although the results from Canada are similar, that is, the dads describe good and bad experiences with workers, the overall impression is less positive.

Child protection workers reading these accounts might like to consider how they, and how the fathers in their client group, would rate their skills. The third paper presents an overview of the literature on child welfare practice with fathers. Although the literature is international the starting point of this paper was here in Australia; it was when the researcher interviewed fathers in a NSW program that she began to question the lack of attention to father's perspectives in child welfare (her account of this process is set out in the lead author's introduction below).

Child Welfare Professionals' Experiences in Engaging Fathers in Services

The purpose of this exploratory focus group study was to examine child welfare professionals' (n = 22) experiences with and perspectives towards working with fathers. The six themes that emerged from the thematic analysis contrasted sharply with earlier research findings and indicated that child welfare professionals skillfully engage fathers and that some fathers trust the system and are motivated to be involved. The findings revealed insights about foster fathers and working with foster parents. Unique regional issues also emerged as a factor that affect fathers and families. Recommendations for designing training, especially in areas with limited fatherhood specific services are provided.

Saleh, M. F. (2013). Child Welfare Professionals' Experiences in Engaging Fathers in Services. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 30, 119 – 137.

Fathers' experiences with child welfare services

The lack of engagement of fathers by child welfare services is well documented in the literature as a serious problem. Towards addressing this problem, this paper reports the findings of interviews with 18 fathers about their involvement with child welfare services in

Ontario, Canada. Qualitative analysis of the interviews yielded themes about what men saw as the positive and negative aspects of their involvement with child welfare. Positive aspects of service involvement for fathers included understanding and supportive workers, useful assistance from workers, being connected to useful resources and being given a 'wake-up call'. Negative aspects of service involvement included uncaring, unhelpful and unprofessional workers; prejudice against fathers; and experiencing the child welfare system as unresponsive, uncaring and rigid. Implications for practice are discussed with a view to improving the engagement of men in, and their experiences with, child welfare services.

Coady, N., Hoy, S. L. & Cameron, G. (2013). Fathers' experiences with child welfare services. *Child and Family Social Work*, 18, 275 – 284.

RESEARCH

Fathers as 'core business' in child welfare practice and research: An interdisciplinary review

Introductory comments to FRB from the lead author

As part of my research on fathers attending a particular fathers' parenting intervention program in Sydney, I had the privilege of interviewing 34 inspiring men. This particular fathers' program facilitates the restoration of children from out-of-home care to their father's care. In addition, it previously supported single dads who accepted full-time caring responsibilities to prevent their children from entering out-of-home care. Although my interviews consisted of a set of demographic and structured psychological assessment measures, many of the men also voluntarily shared their stories with me. As background reading for this research, I familiarized myself with the fathering literature and father-child attachment research. However, from listening to the men's stories, I could see that they faced issues and difficulties that were distinct from those of the mothers attending the equivalent mothers' programs, and different from fathers in general. I therefore searched for all the information and research I could find on fathers in child welfare families. I was intrigued to discover that most of the themes that emerged from the life stories of the fathers attending the program in Sydney corresponded with the findings reported in the research literature from various countries in the Western world. The common themes were that fathers were frequently and routinely ignored by service providers, assumed to be violent, and assumed to be uninvolved and inadequate parents. From all the research findings from various disciplines that I had read over the past year, there appeared to be indisputable and overwhelming evidence that fathers need to be included in child welfare practice in the same manner as mothers, and that these common assumptions require challenging. Hence I wrote this paper in the hope that it will inform and inspire complete father-inclusion in both child welfare practice and future research.

This literature review draws from a wide array of interdisciplinary research to argue that fathers need to be included in child welfare practice and research to the same extent as mothers. Social work and child maltreatment literatures highlight that fathers are often overlooked and viewed more negatively than mothers in child welfare practice. There are noteworthy theoretical and practical reasons for this poor engagement of fathers in practice. However, advances in attachment theory and recent research findings from developmental and fathering literature indicate that fathers influence their children independently from mothers and equally strongly. Further research demonstrates that fathers and father figures can be both potential risk factors and protective factors in the lives of vulnerable children. Therefore, children are placed at increased risk if dangerous fathers are not engaged, and are also significantly disadvantaged if supportive fathers are not engaged. The review concludes with practical implications for child welfare practice and research.

Zanoni, L., Warburton, W., Bussey, K. & McMaugh, A., (2013)
Fathers as 'core business' in child welfare practice and research: An interdisciplinary review, *Children and Youth Services Review*.

RESEARCH

BUT WHAT ABOUT VIOLENCE?

FRB comment: *One of the most vexed questions for child welfare services wanting to include fathers is the possibility of violence. In Australia, as in other countries, the recognition of violence to women has only come about through feminist agitation and action. A foundational belief from this period, men as perpetrators and women as victims, has been built into the definition of domestic violence. Later, as the effect of witnessing family violence on children became clear, children were added to the picture as victims of men's violence. As well, an influential US model for early domestic violence services in Australia was the Duluth approach focusing on jail sentences and mandatory educational programs addressing male power. Not surprisingly then, family services adopted an approach to violence in the family which saw all women as potential victims and all men, including all fathers, as potential abusers. From this perspective, addressing violence in families meant removing fathers (or father figures) from the home to jail and mandating behaviour change programs focused on male power. In the decades since violence occurring in the family home was first publically acknowledged, the limitations of the sole focus on male power has become apparent and, in parallel, there has been a readiness to include fathers in child welfare services.*

The two papers described below exemplify the efforts of researchers to articulate a broader framework for judging interventions to reduce domestic violence (termed Intimate Partner Violence in the USA). Siegel suggests adopting an emotional regulation framework which has been used with other disorders, such as PTSD which are often also found in populations that engage in domestic violence. Lawson and colleagues also seek to broaden the framework beyond the standard feminist approach, by combining psychodynamic therapy and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. See also the two descriptions of programs in

Breaking the Links in Intergenerational Violence: An Emotional Regulation Perspective

The replication of family violence from one generation to another is a subject of great concern. Although factors such as genetics, social learning, and culturally reinforced beliefs have been identified as potential moderators in perpetuating the cycle (Busby, Holman, & Walker, 2008; Tolman & Bennett, 1990), research contributions from neurobiology suggest that, like other kinds of trauma, family violence may be related to disturbances in emotional regulation. From this perspective, batterers with impairments in emotional regulation would be viewed as lacking the ability to notice, comprehend, and manage escalating emotions, as well as the skills required to resolve differences and problems in constructive, nonviolent ways. Although interventions that strengthen emotional regulation are used in the treatment of PTSD, addiction, and other disorders that are comorbid in populations with family violence, an emotional regulation approach is not typically used in the treatment of batterers, victims, and children who witness parental violence (WPV).

This study explores the potential link between disturbances in emotional regulation created by childhood exposure to a family environment that includes witnessing parental violence and the repetition of partner violence in adult intimacy.

Siegel, J. P. (2013). Breaking the Links in Intergenerational Violence: An Emotional Regulation Perspective. *Family Process*, 52(2), 163 – 178.

RESEARCH

Integrated Cognitive–Behavioural and Psychodynamic Psychotherapy for Intimate Partner Violent Men

Intimate partner violence (IPV) continue to have widespread negative effects on victims, children who witness IPV, and perpetrators. Current treatments have proven to be only marginally effective in stopping or reducing IPV by men. The two most prominent treatment approaches are feminist sociocultural and cognitive–behavioral therapy (CBT). The feminist sociocultural approach has been criticized for failing to adequately consider the therapeutic alliance, personality factors, and sole focus on patriarchy as the cause for IPV, whereas CBT has been criticized for failing to attend to motivation issues in treatment protocols. This article reviews the effectiveness of current treatments for partner-violent men, examines relationship and personality variables related to IPV and its treatment, and presents an emerging IPV treatment model that combines CBT and psychodynamic therapy. The article addresses how psychodynamic therapy is integrated into the more content-based elements of CBT.

Lawson, D. M., Kellam, M., Quinn, J., & Malnar, S. G. (2012). Integrated cognitive-behavioural and psychodynamic psychotherapy for intimate partner violent men. *Psychotherapy, 49*(2) p. 190 – 201.

REFUGEE FATHERS' VULNERABILITY

FRB comment: Discussion of policies for refugees seeking to come to Australia rarely mention fathers. This report from The Netherlands investigates how refugee fathers' history of trauma may impact on their parenting. Human services wishing to protect children may need to sharpen their advocacy for these families while providing father-targeted support for refugee fathers.

Father-involvement in a refugee sample: relations between posttraumatic stress and caregiving

Despite increased attention to the role of fathers within families, there is still a dearth of studies on the impact of trauma on father-involvement. This study investigates the quantity of father involvement and the influence of posttraumatic stress on the quality of involvement in a refugee and asylum seeker population. Eighty refugees and asylum seekers and their young children (aged 18–42 months) were recruited. Measures included assessment of parental trauma (Harvard Trauma Questionnaire), quantity and quality of involvement (quantity of caregiving and Emotional Availability Scales), and perception of the father–child relationship (interview). The results show that fathers were less involved in caregiving tasks and play activities than mothers. No parental gender differences were found on each of the Emotional Availability Scales. Traumatic stress symptoms negatively affected the perception and the actual quality of parent–child interaction (sensitivity, structuring, non-hostility). Nevertheless, almost all fathers described their relationship with their child as good and their child as very important to them. As the quality of father involvement is of importance to the development of the child, traumatized fathers are as much in need of clinical intervention as mothers. Despite the impact of posttraumatic stress, refugee fathers clearly are involved in the lives of their children. Mechanisms such as a deliberate withdrawal when stressed and compensation might enable affected fathers to step into the interaction when needed, raise the quality of involvement with their child, and diminish the negative impact of stress resulting from trauma and migration.

Van Ee, E., Sleijpen, M., Kleber, R. J. & Jongmans, M. J. (2013) Father-involvement in a Refugee Sample: Relations between Posttraumatic Stress and Caregiving. *Family Process*, doi: 10.1111/famp.12045

Don't worry

Now that you have read this entire Bulletin you still have something to look forward to:
The next Bulletin will focus on

Father-inclusive practice

Please view in HTML. If HTML is not accessible or you are having trouble viewing the links go to

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/centre/fac/research>

Or contact Richard Fletcher:

richard.fletcher@newcastle.edu.au

This edition of the Fatherhood Research Bulletin was produced with assistance from Katrien Pickles, Senior Project Officer.
Simon Fowler, Bachelor of Social, Science Student UoN, on behalf Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle

