



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA

# Fatherhood

Research Bulletin

Australian Fatherhood Research Network Bulletin 41 February 2018



PROJECT  
BREASTFEEDING  
"IF I COULD, I WOULD"



BREAST FEEDING CAMPAIGN 2018



The Family Action Centre

The Bulletin is produced by A/Prof Richard Fletcher (editor), Dr Elaine Bennett, Dr Elisabeth Duursma, Dr Jacqui Macdonald, Dr Eileen Dowse, Dr Jennifer StGeorge & Associate Prof Campbell Paul. We acknowledge the support of The Family Action Centre, Faculty of Health and Medicine, The University of Newcastle.

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## NEWS

### Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium Update

In its first year, the Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium (AFRC) has focused on effects of sleep disturbance on paternal wellbeing and on fathers' roles in settling their infants. Four working groups were established at the second Fatherhood Research in Australia Symposium, held in April, 2017.

Since the last Bulletin, the literature review working group has registered a systematic review with Prospero (<https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero>) and has begun screening close to 2000 abstracts in Covidence (<https://www.covidence.org/>). The data analysis group has received funding from Deakin University to support father and infant sleep investigations in three longitudinal cohort studies. The intervention group is finalising protocols, ethics approvals and recruitment for focus groups of fathers in Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria. Finally, the communications group is preparing social media accounts and communication options for disseminating findings from the other working groups.

In addition, preparation is underway of a National Database of Paternal Post-natal, Infant and Toddler Sleep Services. Australian organisations that offer sleep support services to parents (mothers and fathers) will be sent a short survey questionnaire requesting details of the service and information regarding father engagement and perceived need and potential for further father engagement. If you are aware of services should be included in the national survey, we would be grateful for contact information. You can email Meera Johnson at [mljo@deakin.edu.au](mailto:mljo@deakin.edu.au) with the service name along with an email contact and website if available.



### Australian Fatherhood Research Symposium: May 3rd & 4th, Melbourne

#### Registration and Abstract Submission Now Open

The 2018 Australian Fatherhood Research Symposium is fast approaching. Join researchers, practitioners and students from around Australia to explore the year's developments in fatherhood research and explore opportunities for new collaborations.

The program will include updates on the exciting progress of the four Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium (AFRC) working groups in their investigations into postpartum sleep as well as planning sessions to develop new collaborations in additional domains of interest.

In poster sessions, we will share research proposals and outcomes, and descriptions of fatherhood programs and organisations.

The symposium is an inclusive multi-disciplinary event open to individuals at all career stages with a special welcome to students interested in fatherhood.

Abstract submissions for poster presentations are now open. **The deadline for abstract submissions is March 30, 2018.** Prizes will be awarded to the best overall and best student poster. Details are available on the symposium webpage:

<http://mappresearch.org/frs>.

**Registration is via Eventbrite: <https://goo.gl/Z9zeXR>**

To cover costs, we are requesting a small registration fee of \$85 with a concession rate of \$43 for students. We very much hope you can join us and please feel free to share information about the symposium with colleagues and students. If you have any queries, please contact Sam Teague [sam.teague@deakin.edu.au](mailto:sam.teague@deakin.edu.au) or via +613 9246 8440.

*Richard Fletcher, Frances Kay-Lambkin, Jan Nicholson and Jacqui Macdonald*

*2018 Symposium Organising Committee*

## ON THE WEB

### Fathers and pregnancy (Vaders en zwangerschap) in Mozambique

In Mozambique, fixed cultural norms and values prevent men from supporting their wives during pregnancy and their involvement in both contraception, pregnancy, birth and the post-natal period. With the support of the Marleen Temmerman Fund, Anna Galle - a Ghent doctoral student who investigates the role of men during pregnancy and birth in Mozambique - made a short film about this with Mozambican young fathers. For two weeks, ten men from a village in rural areas thought about and discussed how men can take a more positive and active role. The result is a 'participative' video in which these men themselves have defined the message and script of the video. The trailer of the film can already be seen below.

The full version will be ready in January and in 2018 the film will be widely distributed to inspire and encourage other men, both in developing countries and in Belgium, to take an active role during pregnancy, birth and parenthood. This 2 minute clip has brilliant footage and subtitles.

<http://bit.ly/2FaXhNh>



### The Milk Man mobile app intervention.

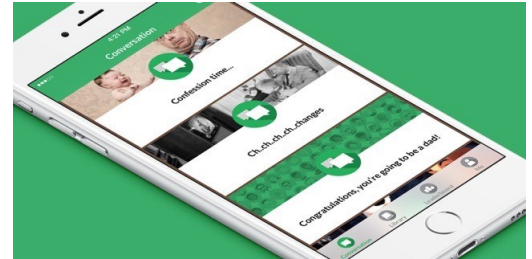
Breastfeeding is internationally recognized as the best first food for babies. Despite recommendations that infants be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life, less than 15% of Australian babies are exclusively breastfed to this time. Paternal support is vital to a woman's decision to initiate and continue breastfeeding, yet fathers can sometimes feel unprepared for their new role and left out of antenatal education.

The Milk Man app intervention which has been developed by PhD candidate Becky White and researchers at Curtin University aimed to engage fathers in information and conversation about breastfeeding, seeking to increase their support for their breastfeeding partner. The Milk Man app intervention was nested within the Parent Infant Feeding Initiative where 1426 Western Australian couples were recruited from Perth maternity hospitals to participate in the study. Fathers randomly assigned to a Milk Man intervention group received the app from recruitment (antenatally) until their baby was 26 weeks old.

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Results up to 6 weeks postpartum include:

- Of the 681 participants who were allocated to a group that had access to Milk Man, 86% (n=586) downloaded the app.
- The two main things fathers reported motivated them to use the app was getting the push notifications and wanting to see what other fathers had posted in the forum.
- Fathers used the app most while their partners were still pregnant and up to 6 weeks after the birth of their baby, with the highest usage being the week of their baby's birth.
- Results about the gamification were varied. However, at 6 weeks after the birth of their babies, about a third of fathers still using the app said that the gamification elements were actively encouraging that use. The ease of use of the app, and the design were important.
- The conversation forum was the central point of the app, with all the most read library articles and external links followed to other organisations being associated with the conversation. Fathers posted comments in the conversation forum 1126 times and voted in polls 3096 times.
- Over half of fathers overall (54%) said the information in the app had led to a discussion with their partner. Importantly, our evaluation sought the views of mothers and many of them told us the app was supporting their partners and helping them feel more supported.



## Conclusion

The process evaluation results of the Milk Man app intervention demonstrate that this is an acceptable approach for parents and suggests the period around the time of their baby's birth may be a key time to reach fathers with information. The app showed encouraging results with facilitating conversation between parents and strategies to prolong app engagement may increase this. The conversation was clearly central and fathers provided good suggestions on how this can be improved.

Further information: Professor Jane Scott [Jane.scott@curtin.edu.au](mailto:Jane.scott@curtin.edu.au) or see [www.pifistudy.net.au](http://www.pifistudy.net.au).

## PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE



Mellow Dads group in Fife

### Mellow Dads – An attachment-based parenting intervention in Scotland

Mellow Parenting (MP) a Scottish based NGO formed in 2006 has a family of attachment-based parenting programmes for parents and their young children. The foundation for these programmes is attachment theory with particular emphasis on the transmission of attachment and relationship styles across generations. Originally the programme was developed with mothers and babies in mind. However, listening to the latest research, practice and most importantly feedback from MP practitioners and the families they work with, a gap in UK service provision for fathers of infants and toddlers was identified.

As a result, Mellow Dads (MD) was born in 2013. Using the same principles as the original MP programmes, MD is designed to engage with fathers and improve father-child relationships. The target group for this programme is fathers experiencing relationship problems with their children due to a range of complex health and social care needs such as; living in low social economic status, poor mental health, domestic abuse, drug & alcohol misuse, social isolation or child protection concerns.

The programme uses a variety of interactive techniques including video feedback and draws on the psychological theories of attachment, social learning theory and cognitive behavioural therapy. An important part of programme is the strength –based video feedback on interactions between the fathers and their child in one-on-one settings.

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This is seen as a valuable part of the programme where fathers are able to explore their interactions with their child alongside receiving positive feedback from the group facilitators and peers in the group.

Results from the original pilot groups (N = 50) revealed fathers who took part in the programme showed significant improvements in their own mental wellbeing and also reported improvements in their child's behaviours. Qualitative data showed that fathers reported feeling closer to their child and appreciate a group which is gender specific, particularly as fathers are often overlooked in traditional children's/parents' services. The relatively low levels of attrition (on average one father will not complete from a group of five) suggest that the MD programme is successfully engaging a group that services have often been unable to engage. Following the MD programme, group facilitators reported increased further service uptake.

Contact: Raquib Ibrahim, Research & Evaluation Officer, [Raquib@mellowparenting.org](mailto:Raquib@mellowparenting.org)

## A personal note about barriers to father involvement

*My husband and I took our son to his first swimming lesson. He is only 3 months old and my husband is very big on swimming, I am quite the opposite but nonetheless support the swimming lessons. We arranged that my husband would take our son to all the swimming lessons but I decided to tag along today because it was the first lesson.*

*Well, he was the only father there. My husband is quite reserved, you can barely get a word out of him at the best of times but he actually said nothing the entire time. Even when he was asked questions from the instructor he would just nod or shake his head. He did whisper to me at one point that he was uncomfortable being the only father. I have quite the opposite view, I feel like it is inspiring to see a father at swimming lessons getting involved.*

*Anyway...my husband doesn't want to go back because he felt uncomfortable that it was more a mother and babies group than a mother/father group. When I said it was a 'parents' group he said that this only means mothers. Also one of the mothers asked during question time, 'Can the fathers come to this, how does that work if they have a job?'. My husband was offended by this because he had taken the day off for this to be with his son. I didn't pick up on this, my husband told me this afterwards.*

## Providing support for fathers in their grief



Red Nose is a not-for-profit organisation, providing a range of bereavement support to any person affected by the sudden and unexpected death of a baby or a child during pregnancy, birth, infancy or childhood.

Red Nose Grief and Loss services offer free clinical counselling, a 24-hour Bereavement Support line (1300 308 307), Peer support provided by people with lived experience and support resources for parents, families and professionals via the Grief and Loss website [www.rednosegriefandloss.com.au](http://www.rednosegriefandloss.com.au). A

range of regular support groups are also available, all with a specific focus, such as stillbirth, subsequent pregnancy, SUDI (sudden unexpected death of a child), termination of pregnancy and Dad's groups. Many bereaved fathers use Red Nose Grief and Loss services both individually and with their partners. Dad's groups are specifically for bereaved fathers to give men an opportunity to support and learn from each other. These groups are held according to need.

### Impact on dads:

When a child dies, it is generally accepted that the mother needs to grieve. What is not yet as widely accepted in society is that the father needs to grieve too. Both parents are suffering and, like the mother, the father has lost the dream –the dream of a baby and the person who would have been, but now will be no more. Both mother and father have to deal with the many feelings that arise when a child dies. These include the initial shock and disbelief, the pain, the guilt, the questioning, the unsureness, the anger, the helplessness, the hurt, the sadness, the loss.

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Fathers are entitled to leave on compassionate grounds. Work environments vary widely in terms of the level of support and understanding they offer bereaved fathers. The desire to return to work also varies. Some fathers choose to return to work after a couple of weeks even if they are offered longer. There is no right or wrong but some fathers want the distraction from their grief and the structure to help them function. Others need more time off.

For each individual, the grieving process is unique. Yet assumptions remain in our society today about how men and women grieve – with men seen as providers and protectors and women as carers and nurturers. How often is the grieving dad asked by well-meaning others: “How is your wife?” with scant acknowledgement of his own feelings of loss.

Contact: **Bereavement Support line** 1300 308 307 or [www.rednosegriefandloss.com.au](http://www.rednosegriefandloss.com.au)

## CONFERENCES WEBINARS COURSES

### Postgraduate Course: Working with Vulnerable Fathers

Enrolments are open for the third Trimester course Working with Vulnerable Fathers. This 10 unit course which is entirely online forms part of the Masters in Family Studies available through the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle. Students from a range of backgrounds including social work, psychology, Early Childhood and School education, child protection, probation and parole and family work have enthusiastically endorsed the learning.

Contact: Link to enrol in a single course, <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/future-students/undergraduate-study/other-pathways-and-study-options/non-award-admission> . Or Master of Family Studies Degree, <https://gradschool.edu.au/programs/overview/master-family-studies-12277>

## RESEARCH

### Exploring the role and influence of fathers on infant feeding decisions and practices

**FRB comment by Prof. Jane Scott, School of Public Health, Curtin University.** In recent times, the concept of the breastfeeding dyad (i.e. mother and infant) has shifted to the breastfeeding triad which also includes the father. Increasingly, infant feeding research is recognising that while mothers may be their infant’s primary caregiver, they do not make decisions about feeding and other aspects of parenting in isolation. As a result, there is a growing volume of research examining how fathers engage in and influence infant feeding. To date, much of the research is qualitative in nature with a small but increasing number of intervention studies targeting fathers as a change agent. **Majee** and colleagues (Majee, Thullen, Davis, & Sethi, 2017) explored the potential inter-personal, organizational, and community-level influences on how coparents collaborate about infant and toddler feeding. **Rempel** and colleagues examined the relationships between types of father breastfeeding support and breastfeeding outcomes. **Bich and Cuong** report on the outcomes of a quasi-experimental study in Vietnam which provided fathers with breastfeeding materials and counselling services. **Abass-Dick and Dennis** present the process evaluation of a coparenting breastfeeding intervention and in a second paper present a Breastfeeding Coparenting Framework which may be of value to policy makers and program providers working to improve breastfeeding outcomes.

### Influences on Infant Feeding: Perceptions of Mother-Father Parent Dyads.



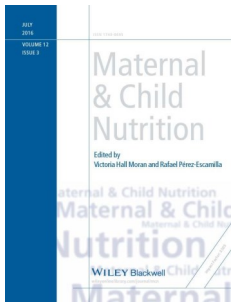
In this study, 24 mother-father dyads with children aged 6 to 36 months were interviewed together using a semi structured interview schedule. At the inter-personal level, dyads identified the challenge of ensuring that grandparents had quality relational time with the infant without negatively influencing the parents’ plan for socialising their child to food. At the organisational level dyads reported both positive and negative experiences. They expressed frustration with what they perceived to be conflicting advice received from paediatricians and other health care workers. At the community-level negative public attitudes to breastfeeding in public not only discourage women from breastfeeding but may also influence the father in how he supports or discourages the mother.

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While the findings of this study are consistent with those of earlier research the dyadic interviews provide more insight into how parent dyads experience and manage the factors in different ways.

Majee, W., Thullen, M. J., Davis, A. N., & Sethi, T. K. (2017). Influences on Infant Feeding: Perceptions of Mother-Father Parent Dyads. *MCN: The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*, 42(5), 289-294. doi:10.1097/nmc.0000000000000357

## Relationships between types of father breastfeeding support and breastfeeding outcomes



Fathers can significantly influence a mother's breastfeeding decisions but previous research has not shown which, if any, supportive actions are actually more likely to result in desired breastfeeding outcomes. Fathers' and mothers' reports of how often fathers engage in the types of support measured by the Partner Breastfeeding Influence Scale (PBIS) were used to predict breastfeeding intentions, satisfaction, and duration. Only responsive behaviours that were sensitive to the mother's needs consistently predicted breastfeeding outcomes. However, paradoxically, when fathers reported being more appreciative and savvy about breastfeeding and more directly involved, mothers reported shorter breastfeeding duration. It is possible that this latter finding is an example of reverse causality and that men increased their helpful behaviour because their partner was having breastfeeding problems and therefore at greater risk of stopping.

Nevertheless, the negative influence of support behaviours on breastfeeding outcome has been reported before. The findings of this study support the idea that effective breastfeeding support is more likely to occur when couples work together as a 'breastfeeding team'.

Rempel, L. A., Rempel, J. K., & Moore, K. C. J. (2017). Relationships between types of father breastfeeding support and breastfeeding outcomes. *Maternal & child nutrition*, 13(3), n/a-n/a. doi:10.1111/mcn.12337

## Changes in knowledge, attitude and involvement of fathers in supporting exclusive breastfeeding: a community-based intervention study in a rural area of Vietnam



In this study a quasi-experimental, pre-test-post-test, non-equivalent control group design was used. At baseline, 251 and 241 pregnant women and their husbands were enrolled into the intervention and control groups, respectively. The 1-year intervention targeting fathers included mass media, game show-style community events, group and individual counselling at health facilities and home visits. Compared to the control group, fathers in the intervention group were more likely to have positive attitudes towards breastfeeding and to report active involvement in supporting mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding (EBF).

Bich, T. H., & Cuong, N. M. (2017). Changes in knowledge, attitude and involvement of fathers in supporting exclusive breastfeeding: a community-based intervention study in a rural area of Vietnam. *International journal of public health*, 62(1), 17-26.

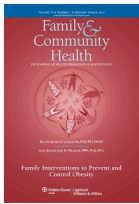
## Maternal and Paternal Experiences and Satisfaction with a Co-parenting Breastfeeding Support Intervention in Canada



Interventions which include fathers have been shown to increase breastfeeding exclusivity and duration rates but the most effective way to include partners in these interventions is unclear. In this paper, Abbass-Dick and Dennis describe parents' experiences and satisfaction with a coparenting breastfeeding support intervention which was delivered as part of a RCT in Ontario, Canada. The paper includes an informative description of the rationale for, and the content of, the intervention which consisted of seven components and included information on both breastfeeding and coparenting. Diverse modes of delivery included in-hospital discussion and booklets, as well as a web-site and DVD. Overall, the intervention was rated highly by parents, who in particular liked receiving information on working as a team to meet parenting goals. Providing information in different ways met the needs of diverse learners

Abbass-Dick, J., & Dennis, C.-L. (2017). Maternal and Paternal Experiences and Satisfaction with a Co-parenting Breastfeeding Support Intervention in Canada. *Midwifery*. doi:10.1016/j.midw.2017.10.005

## Breast-feeding Coparenting Framework: A New Framework to Improve Breast-feeding Duration and Exclusivity



Building on from the findings of their intervention research, Abbass-Dick and Dennis present their Breastfeeding Coparenting Framework which was developed on the basis of diverse coparenting models and research related to father's involvement with breast-feeding. This framework consists of 5 components: joint breastfeeding goal setting, shared breast-feeding responsibility, proactive breastfeeding support, father's/partner's parental-child interactions, and productive communication and problem solving.

Abbas-Dick, J., & Dennis, C. L. (2017). Breast-feeding Coparenting Framework: A New Framework to Improve Breast-feeding Duration and Exclusivity. *Fam Community Health*, 40(1), 28-31. doi:10.1097/FCH.0000000000000137

## The nuances of dads' influences on their children

**FRB comment by Dr Jacqui Macdonald, School of Psychology, Deakin University** Intuitive conclusions about the influences that parents' behaviours have on their children may be simplistic or even misleading if we fail to account for three key variables. New research reveals nuanced effects of parenting practices with different child outcomes dependent on: 1) whether the parenting behaviour is from the father or mother; 2) child gender; and, 3) child developmental stage. For example, a history of depression in fathers and permissive parenting by fathers, but not mothers, assessed when children are three years old predicts children's expressions of shame and guilt when they are aged 6 years (Parisette-Sparks et al., 2017). In older dyads of fathers with daughters in their late teens, the daughters were more likely to be self-critical and have self-perfectionistic standards if they perceived their fathers to be psychologically controlling and when the fathers rated themselves as having perfectionistic expectations of others (Smith et al., 2017). Importantly, there is also evidence of positive intergenerational effects whereby fathers influence their children's prosocial behaviours. Again, in these analyses, the detail reveals different processes of influence that depend on the child's gender and age. One study indicates that fathers' positivity (e.g., acknowledging achievements, showing physical affection) predicts pro-social behaviours in girls, but not boys (aged 6-17 years) and that paternal involvement (e.g., helping children with activities and asking about their day at school) predicts prosocial behaviours in primary-aged children but not adolescents (Gryczkowski et al., 2017). In other nuanced findings, paternal parenting both influences and is influenced by young adult children's prosocial behaviours with some variation depending on cultural background (Padilla-Walker et al., 2017). The take home message is that dads profoundly affect their children's development from early childhood to young adulthood but if you would like to know which children, when, and how, the answer is: "It depends".

## Parental Predictors of Children's Shame and Guilt at Age 6 in a Multimethod, Longitudinal Study



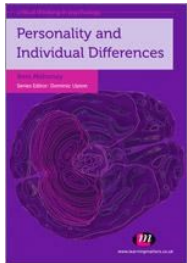
Journal of  
Clinical Child &  
Adolescent Psychology

Shame and guilt are self-conscious emotions that begin to develop early in life and are associated with various forms of psychopathology. However, little is known about the factors that contribute to these emotions in young children. Specifically, no longitudinal studies to date

have examined a range of parent factors that shape the expression of children's shame and guilt. The current multimethod, longitudinal study sought to determine whether parenting style, parental psychopathology, and parents' marital satisfaction assessed when children were age 3 predict expressions of shame and guilt in children at age 6. A large community sample of families (N = 446; 87.4% Caucasian) with 3-year-old children (45.7% female) was recruited through commercial mailing lists. Parent variables were assessed when children were age 3 with mother- and father-report questionnaires and a diagnostic interview. Children's expressions of shame and guilt were observed in the laboratory at age 6. Fathers', but not mothers', history of depression and permissive parenting assessed when children were age 3 predicted children's expressions of shame and guilt when children were age 6; parents' marital dissatisfaction also predicted children's shame and guilt. These findings suggest that parents, and fathers in particular, contribute to expressions of self-conscious emotions in children. These data on emotional development may be useful for better characterizing the risk and developmental pathways of psychopathology.

Parisette-Sparks, A., Bufferd, S.J., & Klein, D.N. (2017). Parental Predictors of Children's Shame and Guilt at Age 6 in a Multimethod, Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 46(5), 721-731.

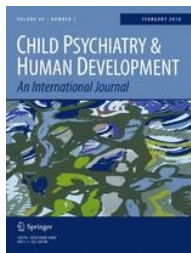
## The intergenerational transmission of perfectionism: Fathers' other-oriented perfectionism and daughters' perceived psychological control uniquely predict daughters' self-critical and personal standards perfectionism



An often theorized but seldom tested possibility is perfectionism is traceable to parents who demanded perfection (other-oriented perfectionism) and parents who used controlling behaviors to dictate a child's thoughts, feelings, and actions (psychological control). In support, perceived parental psychological control correlates positively with self-critical perfectionism and personal standards perfectionism. Nevertheless, there remains much to learn. Does other-oriented perfectionism in fathers influence self-critical perfectionism and personal standards perfectionism in daughters? Alternatively, might the theoretically plausible link between fathers' other-oriented perfectionism and daughters' self-critical and personal standards perfectionism simply be secondary to paternal psychological control? We answered these important questions by studying 159 father-daughter dyads. Fathers completed measures of paternal psychological control and other-oriented perfectionism. Daughters completed measures of perceived paternal psychological control, self-critical perfectionism, and personal standards perfectionism. Structural equation modeling revealed both fathers' other-oriented perfectionism and daughters' reports of fathers' psychological control uniquely predicted daughters' self-critical perfectionism and daughters' personal standards perfectionism. Findings lend credence to longstanding theoretical accounts suggesting controlling fathers who demand perfection are more likely to raise daughters with elevated socially-based and self-generated pressures to be perfect.

Smith, M.M., Sherry, S.B., Gautreau, C.M., Mushquash, A.R., Saklofske, D.H. & Snow, S.L. (2017). The intergenerational transmission of perfectionism: Fathers' other-oriented perfectionism and daughters' perceived psychological control uniquely predict daughters' self-critical and personal standards perfectionism. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 119, 242-248.

## Moderators of the Relations Between Mothers' and Fathers' Parenting Practices and Children's Prosocial Behavior



Using multilevel modeling, we separately examined the relations between mothers' and fathers' parenting practices and children's prosocial behavior, as well as the moderating roles of child sex, age, and ethnicity. Participants included a diverse community sample of 129 cohabiting couples with a child aged 6–17. Results indicated that paternal positivity and corporal punishment were significantly related to girls', but not boys', prosocial behavior, and paternal involvement was related to prosocial behavior in school-aged children but not adolescents. Greater levels of positivity in both parents were related to more prosocial behavior in Caucasian children and less in African American children. Overall, the findings suggest that fathers' parenting is important and may differentially influence children of different sexes and ages, underscoring the importance of examining both mothers' and fathers' parenting in relation to child outcomes and with diverse samples. Findings also highlight the need for culturally appropriate measures of parenting.

Gryczkowski, M., Sytsma Jordan, S., & Mercer, S.H. (2017). Moderators of the Relations Between Mothers' and Fathers' Parenting Practices and Children's Prosocial Behavior. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*. Online First. DOI 10.1007/s10578-017-0759-3.

## Bidirectional Relations Between Parenting and Prosocial Behavior for Asian and European-American Emerging Adults.



The current study examined bidirectional relations between parenting and prosocial behavior for both European- and Asian-American emerging adults. Participants included 297 undergraduate students (Mage = 19.61 at Time 1, 59% European-American) who reported on prosocial behavior toward family members, positive parenting, and negative/controlling parenting at two time points, 1 year apart. Cross-lagged models supported bidirectional relations between parenting and prosocial behavior with particular emphasis on the role of the emerging adults' prosocial behavior on subsequent parenting.

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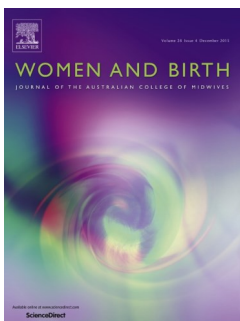
Also, the bidirectional relations between parenting and emerging adults' prosocial behavior were different for mothers and fathers. Results varied slightly as a function of ethnicity. Discussion focuses on the implications for understanding the multifaceted nature of prosocial development in emerging adulthood.

Padilla-Walker, L.M., Nelson, L.J., Fu, X., & McNamara Barry, C. (2017). Bidirectional Relations Between Parenting and Prosocial Behavior for Asian and European-American Emerging Adults. *Journal of Adult Development*. Online First. DOI 10.1007/s10804-017-9272-y

## Engaging fathers in perinatal services

**FRB comment by Dr Eileen Dowse, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Newcastle:** The engagement of fathers in maternity care and during the perinatal period (conception – 12 months postpartum) is known to benefit the father, his partner and new baby. **Eggermont et al.'s article, Needs of fathers during labour and birth: A cross-sectional study**, shows which types of needs fathers have (information, experience needs) and which variables can influence these needs (parity, education level, marital status). The study also highlights whether the needs were met by the midwives or not. For example, 46% of participants who had a need to receive information about how to support their partners emotionally reported they did not receive this information. However, fathers also reported receiving information about topics not perceived as a need; 90% of fathers who did not have a need for information about the birth process received this information from the midwives. This mismatch between midwives recognition of the importance of engaging fathers, and the presence of knowledge gaps which prevent effective engagement was identified in the recent study of Australian midwives by **Rominov et al.** This was the first known study to explore a range of midwives perceptions and experiences of engaging fathers in perinatal services. The majority of midwives (83%) reported they had not had any formal training about working with fathers and all agreed that it was important to receive education about engaging fathers, fathers' perinatal mental health, and fathers' parenting skills. The study also provides support for midwife-led continuity of care as a model that can also benefit fathers, due to the increased opportunities for midwives to build rapport and trust with all members of the family thereby facilitating higher levels of father engagement. The philosophy underpinning midwife-led continuity of care models is for childbearing women to receive their ante, intra and postnatal care from a known and trusted midwife or a small team of midwives that have had contact with the woman throughout the pregnancy, labour, birth and postnatal continuum. Being the first study exploring these issues, Rominov et al. call for further research to add to these findings and to include the experiences of different health professionals that work with fathers in the perinatal period.

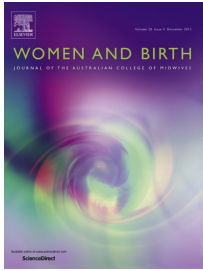
## Needs of fathers during labour and childbirth: A cross-sectional study



Fathers play an important role in the childbearing process, but are sometimes sidelined by midwives. The objectives were: identify fathers' needs during the labor and childbirth process; determine if their needs were met by midwives; and identify variables influencing these needs. The questionnaire was designed based on a systematic literature search and validated by a multistage consensus method. Data were collected during a cross-sectional study in two maternity wards in Belgium, where a medical-led model is used. Fathers present during natural childbirth were recruited via consecutive sampling. Based on multivariate analyses, fathers with a higher education level and multiparous fathers needed less information about the process of birth compared to less educated fathers ( $p < 0.05$ ; OR = 4.08; 95% CI = 1.02–16.31) or first-time fathers ( $p < 0.001$ ; OR = 0.04; 95% CI = 0.01–0.18). For multiparous fathers, a tour of the delivery room was less important than for primiparous fathers ( $p = 0.005$ ; OR = 0.14; 95% CI = 0.03–0.54). Married fathers needed less information on how to support their partners physically ( $p < 0.005$ ; OR = 0.18; 95% CI = 0.06–0.59) and emotionally ( $p = 0.01$ ; OR = 0.24; 95% CI = 0.08–0.72) compared to cohabiting fathers. Information needs are more important to fathers compared to needs focusing on the birth experience or their involvement. Socio-demographic variables like educational level, parity, and marital status were associated with fathers' needs. Midwives need to be aware of fathers' needs during the birth process and to fulfill these needs appropriately.

Eggermont, K., Beeckman, D., Van Hecke, A., Delbaere, I., & Verhaeghe, S. (2017). Needs of fathers during labour and childbirth: A cross-sectional study. *Women and Birth*, 30(4), e188–e197.

## Midwives' perceptions and experiences of engaging fathers in perinatal services



**Background:** The active engagement of fathers in maternity care is associated with long-term benefits for the father, their partner, and their child. Midwives are ideally placed to engage fathers, but few studies have explored midwives' experiences of working with men. Therefore, the aim of this study was to describe midwives' perceptions and experiences of engaging fathers in perinatal services.

**Method:** A multi-method approach was utilised. Registered midwives (N = 106) providing perinatal services to families in Australia participated in an online survey. Of these, 13 also participated in semi-structured telephone interviews. Descriptive analyses summarised the online survey data. The interview data were coded using semantic thematic analysis.

**Results:** Survey results indicated that midwives unanimously agreed that engaging fathers is part of their role and acknowledged the importance of receiving education to develop knowledge and skills about fathers. Analysis of the telephone interviews led to the identification of a range of strategies, facilitators and barriers to engaging fathers in midwifery services. Some of these were related to characteristics of midwives, factors related specifically to fathers, and several external factors relating to organisational policies.

**Conclusions:** Findings from this study could inform maternity health care policies, as well the development of resources, education and ongoing professional training for midwives to promote father- inclusive practice.

Rominov, H., Giallo, R., Pilkington, P. D., & Whelan, T. A. (2017). Midwives' perceptions and experiences of engaging fathers in perinatal services. *Women and Birth*, 30(4), 308-318.

## ONGOING RESEARCH

### The "What About New Dads?" study



This study is a collaborative project launched by the University of Newcastle, the Family Action Centre and FINDLAB clinic. The study will explore the relationship between early post-natal negative thoughts and the father-infant relationship in the first year of fatherhood.

**Who is eligible to participate?**

Fathers of infants aged 4 weeks to 13 months

**What will dads be asked to do?**

A 15-minute online anonymous survey. At completion of the survey, fathers will be invited enter the draw to win a \$100 eGift voucher.

Contact: [www.findlab.net.au/the-wand-study](http://www.findlab.net.au/the-wand-study)

### Support for Fathers Project

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) is implementing Support for Fathers, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services as part of the National Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. This national project aims to support young men and fathers in their role as parents and partners, with the major outcome being an increase of men's involvement in gender equality and reducing violence.

We are very excited to be running a project with a Primary Prevention approach and influencing the behaviours and attitudes of future fathers. To do this, Support for Fathers will develop:

- **Resources** for young men and fathers
- A professionals' **toolkit** for service providers working with young men and fathers

*Continues next page*

Throughout 2018, we will be getting around Australia exploring what is happening in the fathering sector and hopefully getting to meet some of the amazing fathers and workers out there changing the landscape. In 2019, we will be releasing a new website for fathers and workers and getting back out there to deliver the resources to fathers and train professionals in the toolkit. Young men, fathers, professionals and service providers across Australia are invited to join in consultations.

Contact: Dom Alford, Project Coordinator [dalford@rav.org.au](mailto:dalford@rav.org.au) or 0437 305 881

## RESEARCHER PROFILES

### Dr Dawson Cooke (Curtin University, Faculty of Health Sciences)

#### Researching the father-infant relationship

I am a father of three children and began my research interest in fatherhood about the time my youngest child was born – 16 years ago. Becoming a father was life changing, and being involved as a father is the most rewarding investment I've made (a special thanks to my wife for her generosity in sharing the parenting role and supporting my involvement). Now, I am Clinical Psychologist in private practice ([www.familyworks.com.au](http://www.familyworks.com.au)), and as passionate as ever about supporting father-child relationships. I continue fatherhood research at Curtin University (Perth, WA) in a part-time post-doctoral research role (with [www.thefatheringproject.org](http://www.thefatheringproject.org)).

My research has included various aspects of fathering, including: engaging fathers in school based Dads groups, fatherhood strengths, perceptions of family functioning, experience with a partner with PND, antenatal education, and mental health of FIFO fathers & partners. Of primary interest to me has been the quality of the relationship between fathers and their young children. This interest led me to the concept of reflective functioning (or mentalizing) which is the process of making sense of others and ourselves in terms of mental states – such as thoughts, feelings, intentions, desires etc. Reflective functioning is of particular importance in the context of a child beginning to form a sense of self, primarily through the responsiveness of their main caregivers. I imagine that for many fathers (and mothers), relating to their infant in terms of his or her internal subjective mental states is quite a challenge – for a range of reasons. My PhD research was an investigation of parental reflective functioning with fathers and mothers with a 12-month-old child in the Peel Child Health Study. Supervisors for this project were from the schools of Nursing, Education and Psychology.

#### Paternal and maternal reflective functioning in the Western Australian peel child health study

##### INFANT MENTAL HEALTH JOURNAL

While past research on the care of infants has been mostly with mothers, in recent times there has been a renewed attention to the father–infant relationship. This study examined differences between mother and father parental reflective functioning (PRF) or parental mentalizing; that is, the parental capacity to reason about their own and their children's behaviors by taking into consideration intentional mental states. Data were collected from 120 couples with a 1-year-old child who were participants in the West Australian Peel Child Health Study. Parental mentalizing was assessed using the Parental Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (PRFQ; Luyten, Mayes, Nijssens, & Fonagy, 2017). Results showed that mother and father mentalizing with their children was independent and that mothers scored slightly higher levels of mentalizing than did fathers. Paternal mentalizing was weakly associated with family income and father education, and was more strongly associated with family functioning than with maternal mentalizing. Implications for theorizing on PRF and fatherhood more generally are discussed.

Cooke, D., Priddis, L., Luyten, P., Kendall, G., & Cavanagh, R. (2017). Paternal and maternal reflective functioning in the Western Australian Peel child health study. *Infant mental health journal*, 38(5), 561-574.

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

