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NEWS from the Australian Fatherhood Research Network

CHANGES TO THE FATHERHOOD RESEARCH BULLETIN

The Bulletin began after an ARACY sponsored meeting in Newcastle to set up the Australian Fatherhood Research Network. Since then it has been produced as a joint project of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle and ARACY. While activities of the AFRN, such as the FR Blog and webinars have been hosted by ARACY through their website the membership list has been hosted at The University of Newcastle. We now wish to bring the Fatherhood Research Bulletin subscribers into the ARACY community. This will mean that subscribers will need to join ARACY as individuals (there is no cost) in order to keep receiving the Bulletin.

In the next issue of the Bulletin we will details of the steps to join ARACY and advise everyone of the changeover.

If you would like to know more about what being a member of ARACY offers please go to <http://www.aracy.org.au/membership-information/why-join>

The Paternal Perinatal Depression Initiative (PPDI)

The primary aim of the PPDI is to increase new fathers' mental wellbeing. This will be achieved by developing the essential components of a national program to detect and address mental health problems and by building commitment among all related bodies to the value of the PPDI. Specifically we aim to:

Engage fathers around the time of the birth in SMS4DADS - a text-based information, telephone and internet support initiative to facilitate their adaptation to fathering demands and detect mental health problems

Increase the father-engagement skills and competencies among midwives and child and family health nurses to enable routine recruitment of fathers to SMS4DADS

Increase workplace managers' awareness of fathers' mental health risks and willingness to develop program responses including recruitment to SMS4DADS

Develop an interactive new fathers' web portal to offer new fathers self-assessment tools and access to state of the art online treatment for mental health problems.

Engage established perinatal services and organizations, including state and federal representatives, in the development of each project from the start to maximize the sustainability of SMS4DADS.

Would you like to be an advisor to the PPDI project?

The team currently preparing the PPDI proposal are: Dr Elaine Bennett Director, Services & Research, NGALA, WA | Ann Brassil CEO, Family Planning NSW | Prof Natasha Cabrera Director, Family Involvement Laboratory, University of Maryland, USA | Warren Cann CEO, Parenting Research Centre, VIC | Dr Deborah Da Costa, Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, McGill University, CANADA | Natasha Donnelly Project Officer, NPESU, NSW | Prof Chris Doran, University of Newcastle & HRMI, NSW | Dr Eileen Dowse, Lecturer, School of Nursing & Midwifery, The University of Newcastle, NSW | Dr Jennifer Duffecy Assistant Professor in Preventative Medicine, Northwestern University, USA | Dr Lance Emerson, CEO, ARACY, ACT | Jennifer Erickson Perinatal Mental Health and Training, Austin Health, VIC | Dr Richard Fletcher Senior Lecturer, FAC, University of Newcastle, NSW | Prof Maralyn Foureur Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Health, UTS, NSW | prof Catherine Fowler Tresillian Chair in Child & Family Health, NSW | Anne Galloway Coordinator of Clinical Services, New England Medicare Local Southern Network, NSW | Dr Pauline Hall Clinical Psychologist, Perinatal Support Team, SA Health, SA | Libby Hargreaves Project Manager, Baby Makes 3 Program, Whitehorse Community Health Service, VIC | Prof Yvonne Hauck Faculty of Health Sciences, Curtin University, WA | Dr Nicole Highet Executive Director, COPE, VIC | Dr Nick Hopwood Senior Lecturer, Centre for Research in Learning & Change, UTS, NSW | Belinda Horton CEO of PAN-DA, Post and Antenatal Depression Australia, VIC | Dr Carole James Researcher, Faculty of Health, University of Newcastle, NSW | Dr Francis Kay-Lambkin Post Doctoral Research Fellow, National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, NSW | Prof Brian Kelly Chair in Psychiatry, University of Newcastle, NSW | Dr Nick Kowalenko Senior Lecturer, University of Sydney, NSW | Dr Fiona Little Metal Health Academic Leader, UNDRH, University of Newcastle, NSW |

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NEWS from the Australian Fatherhood Research Network

Dr Pamela Massoudi Researcher, Unit for Research and Development, Kronoberg City Council, SWEDEN | Dr Stephen Matthey Senior Clinical Psychologist, Infant, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service, Liverpool Hospital, NSW | Chris May PhD Student, FAC, University of Newcastle, NSW | Prof Bruce Maycock Head of School of Public Health, Curtin University, WA | Prof Jeanette Milgrom Director of Clinical and Health Psychology, Austin Health, VIC | Robert Mills CEO, Tresillian Family Care Centres, NSW | Karen Morris Consultant for Family Service Programs | Prof Louise Newman Director, Monash University Centre for Developmental Psychiatry & Psychology, VIC | Randal Newton-John Executive General Manager, On the Line, VIC | Alanna Philipson Early Years Community Development Worker, Centre for Childrens Health & Wellbeing, QLD Health, QLD | Dr Paul Ramchandani Reader, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Imperial College, UK | Dr Julie Redfern Head, Cardiovascular Health Services & Public Health Program, The George Institute for Global Health, NSW | Ashley Reid CEO, NGALA, WA | Dr Graeme Russell Researcher & Author on Fathers and Families, NSW | Helen Skouteris Associate Professor, School of Psychology, Deakin University, VIC | Carla Stover Assistant Professor, School of Medicine, Yale University, USA | Matt Stubbs Acting Clinical Services Director, Interrelate, NSW | Dr Anne Sved Williams Director, Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Services, Women and Children's Network, SA Health, SA |

The Advisory Group

We have a growing list of advisors who are researchers (many outside of Australia) with particular expertise. We also have advisors who are clinicians who engage with young families, or practitioners who work with families often from particular communities such as CALD, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, those with mental illness, rural and remote, homeless, etc.

Researcher advisors will be asked to contribute to the research agenda of the PPDl as it being developed. The role of clinician and practitioner advisors is to provide a real-world perspective on the proposed PPDl initiative as it develops.

If you are interested in being an Advisor send an email to richard.fletcher@newcastle.edu.au

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

The Best dad I've ever had

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE
FOR DADSLINK'S PUBLIC EVENT

The BEST Dad I've Ever Had
CELEBRATING FATHERHOOD TODAY

1ST MAY 2014 • 5:30 – 8PM
FITZROY TOWN HALL

YMCA Keynote address by Rob Moodie on the changing roles of Fathers today

DadsLink Information | Support | Activities

Relationships Australia VICTORIA

Life to Foundation

Continued on next page

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Guest Speaker: [Rob Moodie](#).

Professor of Public Health at the Melbourne School of Population Health
Former CEO, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) 1998-2007
Rob Moodie will share insights on the important roles of Fathers today.

RSVP <http://www.victoria.ymca.org.au/discover/community-programs/dadslink/events/rsvp-to-the-event-.html> by 23rd April 2014

Dad's Stories collection

The aim of the booklet is quite simple; it is to give a more public voice to a range of stories about fathers and fatherhood. The themes explored are about relationships, father to child, child to father and as partners. The stories reflect on a whole range of experiences from the perspective of fathers who describe aspects of their lives and tease out the emotions in different situations. The goal of this booklet, is that readers will relate to these stories, perhaps identifying in some cases with the storytellers, their insights or perspectives, and feel encouraged and supported in their own lives.

<http://www.victoria.ymca.org.au/discover/community-programs/dadslink/order-dads-stories-booklets.html>

Generations

Dad

by Michael R.

When I was a child, I did not appreciate or understand because it was always about my world and growing up.

I never knew what I wanted. I was embarrassed about your weight, embarrassed about your abruptness, and I wished you were more involved in my life, but embarrassed to have you around.

It was as I became older I understood your abruptness was not your fault because you didn't have much of an education and your English was what you learnt when you got off the boat (from Greece). When I was young I never considered how it was for you or how brave you were to start your life in a new country at the age of 17. I never realised how hard it was to battle weight gain.

When I was young I never considered how it was for you or how brave you were to start your life in a new country at the age of 17.

At five years old you let me help to build a chicken coop. I remember whining about having to change the chickens' water every day and you telling me you like clean water every day, but I do remember how excited I was to fetch the fresh eggs so that you could cook them for me.

As the years went on, I never appreciated that you worked all day and would come home and tend to the garden every evening and I took it for granted that most of the year I could pick the firmest tomatoes and the crispiest cucumbers, but I remember the smile on your face when you would watch me pick a tomato and eat it like an apple and enjoy cucumbers like lolly sticks.

You taught me how to cook on a BBQ with coals – from chops to whole lamb on the spit.

I was so focused on my life and wants



that when cancer took you suddenly from this world when you were 67, five months before I became a Dad at the age of 28, I was just in shock.

When my daughter was born, I guess that's when life really changed for me and – as life went on – left me asking the questions at your grave. How did you get through that? How did you get through it all with the four of us kids facing the challenges of life that I am facing now? How much did you sacrifice as I now find myself sacrificing to provide for my kids?

When my daughter was born, I guess that's when life really changed for me ...

I now understand the feeling of building a chicken coop with my kids and seeing how the excitement in their faces makes me feel as they collect the eggs for me to cook for them.

I now know how it feels to work all day, come home and tend to the garden and how proud do I feel when watching the kids picking and eating the fruit of my labour as I watch and smile.

I now know how it feels to work all day, come home and tend to the garden and how proud do I feel when watching the kids picking and eating the fruit of my labour as I watch and smile.

To listen to my kids scream at the TV "my Dad's BBQ rules". I now know how hard it is to shift the extra kilos that I have put on and can't help but wonder how my kids view me, are they embarrassed to have me around and involved?

Dad, every day I wish you were here but it's ok because all along you taught me a lot, how to create and nurture, how to be strong, how to be giving, how to show respect and most important for my kids how to be a Dad.

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Ultimate guide to connecting

FRB comment: To describe this free online publication as “THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CONNECTING WITH YOUR CHILD” from the National Fatherhood Initiative in the USA is more than a little exaggeration. But it may be useful for starting conversations with fathers about connecting. This ‘ebook’ is really 3 one-page worksheets, one for your school age child, one for your teenager and one for you (the dad) to complete. The worksheets are free from this website.

<http://www.fatherhood.org/ultimate-guide-to-connecting-with-your-child>

PART THREE

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR TEEN

Share this worksheet with your child, emphasize that you love him or her. Use it to start a conversation with your child.

It's easier to be confident when interacting with your child once you connect on a real level. Encourage your child to update this sheet once per year.

Name _____

Date _____

Age _____

Birthday (month/date/year) _____

Grade _____

Your favorite:

Actor/Actress _____
 Book _____
 Cereal _____
 Color _____
 Food _____
 Friends _____
 Hobby _____
 Holiday _____
 Memory _____
 Movie _____
 Music _____
 Pizza Topping _____
 Place to Eat _____
 School Subject _____
 Sport _____
 Sports Team _____
 Store _____
 Teacher _____
 TV Show _____
 Vacation Spot _____
 Video Game _____
 Website _____

Sharing More About You:

My dream job or career is...

My worst fear is...

Five things I can't stand are...

Something I want to talk with my dad about is...

Something I would like to do with my dad is...

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

How a Gay Grandparent will Lovingly Raise Black Boys



These could be our boys

Anthony Carter feels his biggest challenge will be protecting their innocence and encouraging others to believe that black children have innocence and it is worth protecting.

Adults have more than a few opinions about my life and about the best way to raise the younguns.

I often have doubts concerning my ability to positively influence these youngsters. My doubts come and go and are centered around how I can best teach and mentor these precious souls.

As a black gay thinking man, I often know, see, and understand too much.

Critical thinking and well -thought-out boldness, self -definition and well-calculated risk taking is both a curse and a blessing.

How do I guide them towards love and brilliance that occurs as a result of self acceptance and striving for personal excellence?

Is there a way for me to encourage and not judge or “fix” perceived flaws or mishaps?

With so many conflicting messages surrounding black maleness, it is going to be difficult making sure that my boys become powerful men of substance. My biggest challenge will be protecting their innocence and encouraging others to believe that black children have innocence and it is worth protecting.

Source: <http://goodmenproject.com/category/families/>

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

The reluctant father



Phillip Toledano, a photographer, has assembled a set of marvellous photos to convey his shift from an uninvolved and uninterested father to an engaged and adoring one.

<http://parenting.kidspot.com.au/see-new-dads-journey-apaty-adoration-pictures/>

MenCare Chile launches “Active Fatherhood” materials at public health centers across the country

CHILE – EME-CulturaSalud, a coordinator of MenCare Chile, recently published an innovative “Active Fatherhood” guide and poster with information for new fathers and male caregivers. Two hundred thousand copies of the first edition will be distributed at public health centers across Chile, which serve 70% of the country’s population.

The goal of the posters and guides is to support new fathers in practicing active fatherhood, beginning with the very first stages of a child’s life. Themes in the guide include: supporting your child in each stage of his/her development; supporting your partner/child’s mother throughout pregnancy and during the postpartum period; services available to support active fatherhood; and tips and advice for being a present, active father.

While previous fatherhood guides had been written for healthcare professionals, this is the first guide geared toward fathers themselves. EME-CulturaSalud developed the Active Fatherhood materials jointly with UNICEF Chile and Chile Crece Contigo.

Contact <http://www.men-care.org/>

PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Asking homeless men about fathering

FRN comment: *Advancing father-inclusive practice means examining current practice to identify where fathers and fathering may be relevant. This report from The Institute of Child Protection Studies at the Australian Catholic University links research on homeless fathers in Melbourne with policy and practice issues.*



Supporting fathers who are homeless

Issue 5 of this series discusses the issues experienced by homeless fathers, the impact of their identity and role as fathers on their experiences of homelessness, and implications for policy and programs to better support fathers who are homeless. It is based upon the findings of a qualitative and quantitative research project implemented by the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS), Hanover Welfare Services (Hanover) and Melbourne Citymission (MCM) which interviewed 40 single fathers who were homeless. The project report was published in 2011: *More than just me: Supporting fathers who are homeless*. More information about the project is provided at the end of the issue.

The role and identity of homeless men as fathers has been a largely ignored aspect of homelessness. This is in part due to our assumptions about homelessness and homeless men in particular. Even within services that work with homeless men, we rarely think of these people as being concerned with anything else aside from their own needs. Homeless men are often thought of as free-floating individuals, almost dysfunctional in their autonomy and separation from family and the community. Rarely do people think of homeless men as being fathers intimately connected to their children, even when they're unable to be with them.

To date, service delivery and policy reforms concerning homelessness have largely excluded single fathers and their children. There is a notable absence in the literature about homeless fathers, the challenges they face and how services may best respond to their needs.

About the Supporting Homeless Fathers Project

This research project was commissioned by the former Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. It identifies the social, emotional and material consequences of the homeless experience for fathers, and their relationship with their children; and examines how their identity and role as fathers impacts on their lives in general and their experience of homelessness. The report also examines how homelessness services currently support single fathers, and identifies policy and service delivery changes that could result in improved outcomes for this largely invisible population

PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

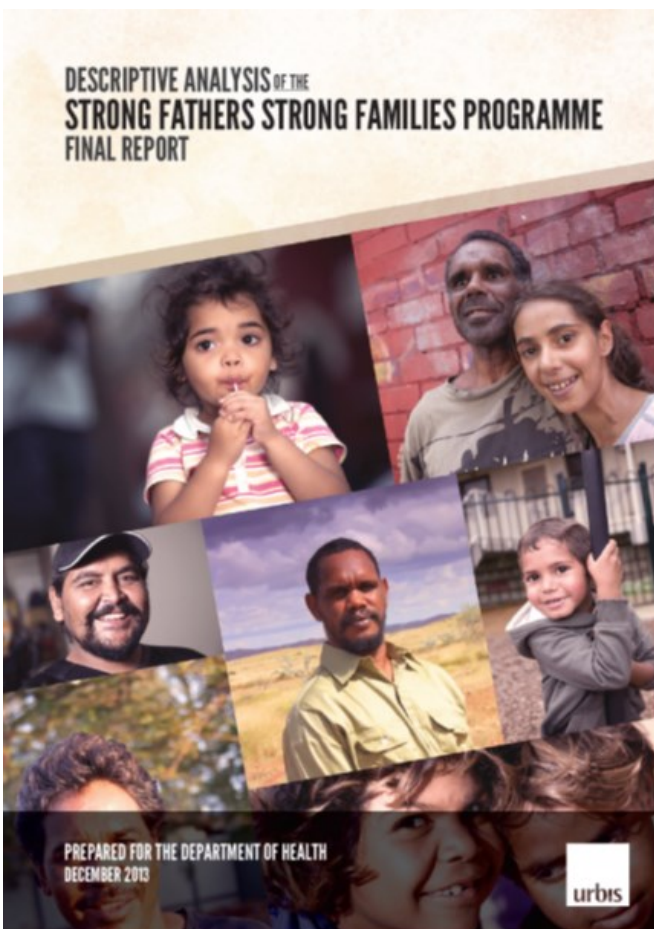
Documenting efforts to build strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers

FRB comment: *The SFSF program, focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers, involved a range of group and one on one events addressing a wide range of fathers and men's issues. The benefits were seen through improved self-esteem, work and educational options along with improved access of services and importantly a willingness to speak out about issues and concerns. Key factors in program success included having a respected and connected facilitator, inter-organisational support and a holistic approach in supporting men through local needs and a program that is hands on. Below is an excerpt of the SFSF report*

Excerpt from the **Strong Fathers Strong Families** report

Implementation of the SFSF programme is broadly similar across most sites. Most organisations reported delivering an effective programme that engaged the community and delivered outcomes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and communities. A few organisations reported difficulties in implementing the programme, mainly because they could not recruit staff and/or participants. Implementation of SFSF in one site was hampered by systemic organisation-wide issues.

SFSF organisations had similar aims, which involved using education initiatives, health services/health promotion, social and cultural opportunities and community events to highlight the important role of men in the lives of children. Specifically, organisations were seeking to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to adopt healthy lifestyles, be an important role model, and play an active role in the physical, social and cultural development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



Most organisations were implementing a range of activities and events as part of the SFSF programme.

The types of events and activities provided include:

Education courses/workshops on topics such as parenting, early childhood development, alcohol and drugs, violence and family relationships

Health services and checks which were followed up where appropriate with referrals to other services

Health promotion through activities such as cooking classes, gym sessions and gardening

Men's groups and yarning sessions **Cultural camps** which incorporated traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and promotion of health messages

Community-wide events such as barbeques and community fun days.

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PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

In addition to group events, many SFSF Coordinators had adopted a case management role which involved providing one-on-one support to men to assist them to overcome a range of issues so they could participate in and benefit from the programme.

The full report [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/881C190F8D21E00ECA257BF0001A8D34/\\$File/Final%20Report%20Strong%20Fathers%20Strong%20Families%20Programme%20Descriptive%20Analysis.PDF](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/881C190F8D21E00ECA257BF0001A8D34/$File/Final%20Report%20Strong%20Fathers%20Strong%20Families%20Programme%20Descriptive%20Analysis.PDF)

Project 18 – the engagement of father figures in child protection work

Steve Lock (Author) is a Senior Practitioner in the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services in Gympie, Queensland. He has 24 years' experience as a child protection social worker. He has worked in various practice leadership roles in the UK, Canberra and Queensland.

Introduction

Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – refers to the responsibilities of both parents to care for their children– and for both parents to be supported to do so. Project 18 is a child-centred approach that emerged from statutory child protection work in Gympie and the North Coast Region of Queensland. It is a growing practice priority that is being promoted at professional conferences and workshops across Queensland. In Australia over 50% of children in state care have no connection with their fathers (CREATE, 2013).

The Project 18 model

Project 18 promotes improved and inclusive practice in the engagement of father figures (fathers) within the context of safe and positive relationships with their children. Child protection practice has traditionally been diminished by under-performance in engaging men (Scourfield, 2012). Project 18 acknowledges the un-fairness of mothers shouldering the sole burden to protect children and asserts that fathers should be invited to take responsibility including in cases where their violence is the problem (Mandel, 2014). Caseworkers are encouraged and supported to be persistent and tenacious in their attempts to involve fathers. Project 18 recognises that children have a right to a relationship with their father and that this relationship has potential to be beneficial to their development and welfare in many ways (Zanoni, 2013)

Project 18 – twin principles

- Children have a right to a safe and positive connection with both parents
- Fathers should be expected and given opportunity to take responsibility for their children

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PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Father figures in child protection work – four discourses

Project 18 recognises four discourses that pervade child protection work:

1. Father as a risk – a perpetrator
2. Father as avoidant – not taking responsibility
3. Worker as avoidant – fearful, not willing or not able to engage fathers
4. Father as a resource – potential benefit to children.

While notions of risk and avoidance in child protection work are legitimate, there is a problem if the discourse – and therefore the thinking, talking and working - is dominated by the nature of these concepts. Essentially the fourth concept (father as a resource/benefit) is overwhelmed by the first three. Hence the Project 18 approach is to take a balanced (non-deficit) and inclusive view of all fathers (King et al, 2005). The potential benefits of involving fathers are given priority alongside the assessment and management of risk; and alongside proper exploration of the meaning of 'avoidance'.

Key theoretical influences

'Strength to Change' (Stanley 2012) - an approach to working with men who have been violent to their partner. The model draws on elements of 'motivational interviewing' and taps into the common desire of fathers to be seen in a positive light by their children.

'Signs of Safety' (Turnell and Edwards 1999) – a model of family work that is centred on strengths, partnership and communication.

'Dads on Board' (Bunston 2013) – based on groupwork with fathers (and their children) that recognizes the critical value of their role as parents – even after child protection issues.

Project 18 – progress report

There are encouraging signs that Project 18 is making a difference across Queensland. Child Safety teams are beginning to collect data that indicates that there are improved levels of engagement with fathers. Most importantly local reviews have shown that engagement of fathers has been related to improved outcomes for children. There are many stories of fathers taking responsibility and making a difference. Project 18 will continue to develop practice guidance in this area of work. This will include raising awareness and providing learning and training opportunities.

Reference list available from author on request.

Contact: Steven Lock Steven.Lock@communities.qld.gov.au

PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Maternal and Child Health Nurses engaging dads.

The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service from Moonee Valley City Council has been trying to engage fathers more specifically in the last two years and has developed several father inclusive practice initiatives. These have included:

- Commencing a dads play group
- Inviting all dads to be present at the first home visit
- Informing and supporting dads with the important role they play in facilitating successful breast feeding
- Welcoming dads to attend the new parent group.

Unfortunately the dad's playgroup ceased due to low participation. Small numbers of dads attend the new parent groups but not on an ongoing basis. A large number of dads are present at the home visit and engage with the nurse and the conversation at this time. There has been an ongoing commitment to strengthen the relationships MCH establishes with dads and so a new practice initiative was born!

Research has shown that dads play an important role in parenting and have the ability to influence their child's life in many positive ways. Furthermore, involved dads can also help to promote family cohesion. Focusing on dads' involvement with their children as early as possible is a positive investment for children and communities.

MCH recognises the validity of these statements yet also recognises there are lots of unintentional barriers that prevent dads from fully participating with the service models. Hours of operation are the most obvious. However it is also important to recognise and consider men's and women's needs and engagement style, which can be quite different.

Men are more likely to attend a child and family service if they are encouraged to do so by their partner.

With this in mind in April 2013 we trialed a new way to engage dads using the new parent groups. As a norm, by week 5 of the new parent group program, the mums have started to form strong connections and social cohesion. This is an ideal time to encourage the women to invite their partners to be a part of the group and further strengthen the dynamics of the group. The session has been held in the evening, commencing at 6pm. The dads have been provided an opportunity to debrief about their transition into fatherhood, and ask questions about early parenting. The mums and bubs do the infant massage class, which is a perfect remedy for the time of evening when babies can be unsettled. This is then followed by pizza and social time.

This has been received beyond expectation with the majority of dads providing positive feedback saying how good it has been to talk to other dads going through the same thing and learning from their experience. About 90% of possible attendees have come along. A strong theme which became evident in the discussions with the dads was around the changing role of the father. Today dads are expected to attend antenatal classes and the birth, be able to change nappies, bond with their newborn, emotionally and physically support their partner with all aspects of home life and living, bring in an income to cover hefty mortgages, be an attentive son to ageing parents, an involved partner and a reliable friend. All this whilst probably working in excess of 38 hours per week.

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PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

This dad is quite different to the dad of the last generation and he does not have the strong role models to frame his expectations. As a consequence some men are struggling with the definition of what it is to be a dad and a man in today's society.

Maternal and Child Health, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Strathmore, facilitated an evening conversation with Adam Hasandedic, a counselor, educator and facilitator who has worked closely with men in a variety of different roles and knows about this confusion first hand. About 30 men turned up to an evening with great conversation and sharing of personal accounts on the journey into fatherhood. The greatest outcome was that the group are very keen to progress these conversations and asked for more opportunities to come together to speak and share. Plans are underway for a playgroup and another forum (Rotary Club of Strathmore is very keen to sponsor).

Our challenge is to support these men maintain their momentum. It is a very exciting time.

Contact : Maria O'Shannessy Coordinator Maternal and Child Health mo'shannessy@mvcc.vic.gov.au

Information Sessions for Fathers and Grandfathers of Children with Autism

The Autism Community Network (ACN) hosts six free information sessions a year for fathers, grandfathers and other male relatives of children with autism, with speakers from the ASD organisation ASPECT and refreshments also provided. Upcoming locations and dates for sessions are as follows:

Burwood - Wednesdays, 6.30pm-9.30pm, Burwood RSL, 13 August

Caringbah - Caringbah RSL, 16 April, 15 October.

Chatswood - Chatswood RSL, 10 June, 10 December

Fathers and Grandfathers Information Evenings had been run by Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) for the last few years, as a means of bringing the male carers in children's lives together. Unlike a typical support group, such as those we run, these meetings are structured as training sessions, with a theme presented by a professional in that area. They have been very successful. Aspect however are moving in a different direction so they asked us if we would like to take them over. We have kept the same format, with Aspect providing the guest speakers once we determine the subject for a meeting. While they only ran them in the north and in Burwood, we have also introduced a meeting for the south.

The agreement is for 12 months but from our view it is a vital service to dads who often feel left out and unsure how they can make a positive contribution to their children on the spectrum. Whether Aspect continue to work with us, and we hope they will, I expect this service will continue into the future.

Contact Steve Drakoulis, ACN Operations Manager steve@autismcommunity.org.au

PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Putting the case for paternity leave

FRB Comment: *Organizations have an important role in supporting fathers to be involved early in their baby's lives. One of the ways that they can do this is to provide paid paternity leave. In the case of CatholicCare in Sydney, an organization providing support to families through a range of programs, the proposal reproduced with permission below was the impetus for the introduction of two paid weeks paternity leave for fathers. Peter is the manager of Parent Line NSW which is operated by CatholicCare.*

Submission for CatholicCare to provide paid paternity leave for male staff

Submission by Peter Carey

Opening statement

I am writing to present a case for CatholicCare to make some provision for paid leave for male staff following the birth or adoption of a child. The impetus for writing this submission has emerged from both personal and professional experiences.

I have over ten years experience working with families, six years of which has been with CatholicCare. During that time it has been re-enforced to me that strong families, in which the mother and father are actively involved, is key to the welfare of children. The role that the various CatholicCare programs, and the agency as a whole, can play in re-enforcing the value of fathers to their families is undoubtedly significant.

From a personal perspective, I became a father in May 2011. Prior to my son's birth I made enquiries about my leave entitlements and was advised that there were no provisions for paid leave for fathers. I was entitled to use my annual leave, family leave or leave without pay, which are also available to other staff to request at any time. It was at this point that I formed the view that the current arrangements are inadequate. I have great pride in working for CatholicCare, but I do feel that the agency could do more in this area.

I understand that at present paid leave can only be accessed by male staff if they are to be the main carer for their child. This is in line with the paid parental leave scheme currently provided by the Australian government. From 1 July 2012, the Australian government will expand its parental leave arrangements to provide two weeks paid leave to fathers following the birth or adoption of a child. Given that the government is initiating a move to improve entitlements for fathers, it could be an ideal time for CatholicCare to match this commitment by also providing paid leave for fathers.

Rationale

It would reflect a clear commitment to extending the CatholicCare mission, vision and values to the staff of CatholicCare. By better providing for the social and emotional well-being of employees' families and promoting the participation of men in the care of their babies it would indicate that CatholicCare wishes to be inclusive of all staff in how it enacts its key values stages.

Continued on next page

PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

It would assist fathers to build a strong attachment with their child. There has been a significant amount of academic discussion recently highlighting the role of fathers in forming an attachment with their child, and how this plays out in the child's development. Some of this has been highlighted in the mainstream media. Research has broadened our knowledge of attachment to be more inclusive of fathers and has highlighted that fathers have a key role to play in the social and emotional development of their children. By enabling fathers to have some additional time to bond with their baby it would be a clear acknowledgment that their value to their family extends far beyond the traditional "breadwinner" role.

It would support fathers to meet their family's emotional and practical support needs. It is widely accepted that the time following the birth of a child is an extremely challenging period for parents. For many fathers there is a feeling of helplessness associated with this. There can be mixed feelings associated with the need to go back to work to provide for the family's financial needs while at the same time acknowledging that this takes them away from their family. Fathers can find this extremely difficult as they can be left feeling that they need to leave their family in a vulnerable state so soon after the birth. This provision would enable fathers to provide their partner, and their children, with an additional two weeks of care and support, thereby alleviating the practical and emotional challenges faced by them in the early stages.

Costs and benefits

Costs

There is potential for this provision to result in some financial burden being placed on programs where a male employee requires paternity leave. However, the financial impact may not be significant, and may not be a significant change from the present arrangements. Having explored this matter, it is apparent that there are few programs where the workload of the staff member on leave would not be absorbed by the existing staff. Therefore, while some juggling of workloads would be required, for the most part there would be no direct financial burden to the program. At present, fathers are required to rush back to work and it is inevitable that in doing so they will experience more instances of sick leave and will not be working to their full potential for some time. It may even be preferable to each program to cover the staff member's work load for the additional two weeks, in the knowledge that when they do return to work they will be better prepared to do so both physically and emotionally.

Benefits

This would be an opportunity to improve staff morale and foster a sense of staff loyalty to the agency. Under the present arrangements, when fathers are informed that no leave will be made available to them beyond what is available to all staff (annual leave, family leave and the right to request leave without pay), it can be disheartening. As an alternative, giving fathers the message that they will be supported by the agency to support their family and bond with their child would be a very positive move and could foster a deeper sense of loyalty to CatholicCare.

It would enable CatholicCare to provide employment conditions that are more competitive within Australia. For current employees, as well as prospective ones, this would reflect strongly on how CatholicCare values its employees and wishes to enable them to fulfil their family commitments as well as their professional ones.

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PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Recommendation

It is requested that the board considers providing all male employees with two weeks of paid paternity leave following the birth or adoption of a child. This provision would reflect that CatholicCare wishes to support male employees to provide a role to their family that extends beyond meeting their financial needs to also meeting their practical and emotional needs at a critical time in the family's journey. It would appear inevitable that CatholicCare will need to address this issue at some point. I would appreciate your feedback on this submission and would welcome the opportunity to discuss it further with you. If required, I am happy to be involved in a committee to investigate further how this could be managed within existing budget constraints.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this matter.

Postscript: Following this submission CatholicCare introduced Paternity Leave of two weeks at full pay; this leave is in addition to the Australian Government Paid Parental Leave.

Contact Peter Carey peter.carey@catholiccare.org

CONFRENCES

Warrior Whispering - Qld Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum 2014



Welcome to the 10th Annual Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum: *Warrior Whispering!* The forum will be held on Wednesday May 7 and Thursday May 8, 2014 at the Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre, Alfred Street, Mackay. Last year's Hard Yarns session was very popular, demonstrating that the audience, as well as the designated speakers, had a lot to contribute to our forum. Once again we have spaced our program so participants can have their say about each area of discussion.

Day one of the forum will commence with a keynote address, followed by a panel discussion. The panel will present ways of working with men, and will feature Queensland and interstate approaches. Later, there will be a series of Yarning Circles, which will

provide an opportunity for you to learn more about a range of issues, including family abuse and adolescent to parent abuse, and share your insights. There will be another keynote speaker prior to the Hard Yarns session after lunch.

Continued on next page

CONFRENCES

Day two of the forum will focus on showcasing three Queensland programs and there will be time for conversations and questions about each of these. You will get the chance to find out “what’s working” and how you might be able to include some new ideas into your area of work.

See program at <http://www.noviolence.com.au/forum2014/programprint.pdf>

ONGOING RESEARCH

Fathers’ relationships with their children: A group-based parenting program for fathers in recovery from addictions

The study aims to explore the benefits of a parenting program on a sample of men in recovery from substance and other addictions. To date there has been limited research into the efficacy of parenting programs as part of the treatment for addictions. One of the few such programs (Plasse, 1995) showed positive results.

Substance abuse has been found to be associated with other underlying mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety disorders (Fletcher, 2008). Such issues may be related to insecure attachment to the sufferers’ parents (Flores, 2001). It is for this reason that an attachment-based program has been chosen. The present study has employed a modified version of the Havighurst et al (2004) program, *Tuning in to Kids (TiK)*, specifically targeted at the needs of men with addictions.

The participants were volunteer fathers of pre-school and primary school-age children, consistent with the ages of children in previous *TiK* studies. The *TiK* program is an Australian attachment-based parenting program that involves skills including emotion coaching (Gottman, 1998) of one’s children as well as attention to one’s own strong emotions. The fathers were recruited from rehabilitation facilities to participate in the eight-week program.

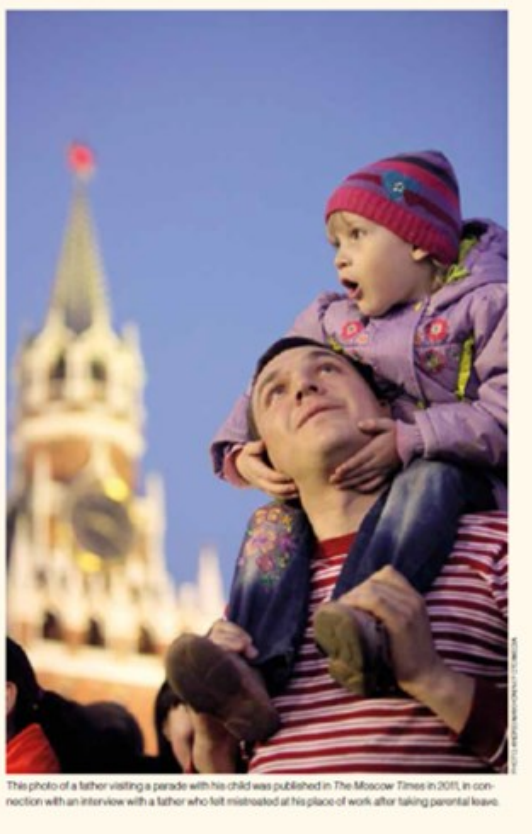
Each man received an interview and pre-test questionnaire before the group program; follow-up questionnaires and interviews were then given at the conclusion of the program and again after a further three months. The questionnaires have been validated on another sample of Australian fathers, including those within and outside rehabilitation facilities. The intervention phase (the group program) of the study concluded in November 2013.

I am still looking for fathers of children 2-12 years old to complete an online questionnaire so that we have enough valid data for this study. I would be most grateful if anyone would be interested in completing the questionnaire, which takes 20-30 minutes to complete, and can be found at:

https://qasiatrial.asia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0fxjCpBPj9O3iXW

RESEARCH

FRB comment: *If we wish to gain some perspective on western fatherhood then the experience of Russian fathers under a state socialist regime provides a fascinating lesson. In their peer-reviewed essay Rodin and Aberg describe the marginalization of the very idea of fatherhood through the evolution of the Soviet State. Their account should resonate with those struggling to focus on fathers' connection with children in a period when working conditions are being eroded and working style is being intensified.*



This photo of a father visiting a parade with his child was published in the Moscow Times 2011, in connection with an interview with a father who felt misunderstood at his place of work after taking parental leave

Excerpt from **Fatherhood Across Space and Time: Russia in Perspective**

The first period in the Soviet gender contract, from the 1917 revolution until the beginning of the 1930s, involved Bolshevik-style emancipation. The bourgeois family structure that enslaved women in the kitchens was to be combated. At the same time, women, especially peasant women in the countryside, were perceived as politically backwards and in need of ideological support. This was a view that legitimized and facilitated state intervention in the private sphere, which some claim was the main incentive, as opposed to genuine feminist concerns. Soviet emancipation policy, which aimed to undermine the traditional family, led to a significantly higher degree of participation by women in working life. In fact, the “working mother” was a pillar of the Soviet gender contract. Work would both liberate women from oppression in the private sphere and integrate them in society. To this end, the domestic functions of child-care and childrearing had to be transferred to the public sphere.

Continued on next page

RESEARCH

The state was now the main parent. As a result, public childcare institutions increased dramatically. Thus the Soviet state and the woman/mother entered into an alliance, while the man/father was pushed out into the public sphere as the defender of the fatherland and worker. This development persisted during the second period, which will be described below. The bourgeois family was also attacked in other ways. Marriage based on religious foundations through the church was abolished, and simple procedures for divorce were introduced. Abortion was legalized. And, importantly, the right to private property, which in most contexts has given the man a certain power over the woman, was abolished. The man was no longer the natural main breadwinner. Moreover, legal provisions regarding the determination of fatherhood in extramarital relations were extremely vague, which both worsened the father's chances of being officially recognized and gave him the opportunity to escape responsibility if he so desired. In case of divorce, the father's responsibility was limited to paying alimony. Hence, the father's role during early Soviet times was severely weakened.

The article is free at <http://balticworlds.com/across-space-and-time/>

Addressing fathers in the domestic violence area

FRN comment: *While there has been increased attention to the impact of domestic violence (also known as intimate partner violence) in children, a large part of our approach to father's role in situations of family violence focuses on removing the father from his children. This program, in the initial stages of development, provides an example of tackling the issue of fathers' connection to their children while addressing the violent behaviour.*

Legal and social service systems rarely acknowledge the status of men as fathers in the conceptualization and delivery of interventions for intimate partner violence (IPV). Large percentages of men who are arrested and mandated to intervention programs for IPV are fathers who continue to live with or have consistent contact with their young children despite aggression and substance use. There are currently no evidence-based treatments that address co-morbid substance abuse and domestic violence perpetration with emphasis on paternal parenting for fathers. This article will describe the components of a new intervention, Fathers for Change, which addresses the co-morbidity of substance abuse, domestic violence, and poor parenting in fathers of young children. Fathers for Change is unique in its focus on the paternal role throughout treatment. A case example and initial feasibility of the intervention will be described to provide an understanding of the key ingredients and the gap this intervention could fill in the field once tested in efficacy trials.

Stover, C. S. (2013). Fathers for Change: A New Approach to Working With Fathers Who Perpetrate Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online*, 41(1), 65-71.

Understanding Fathers' connection to infants before and after birth

FRB comment: *Midwives have been pointing out instances when newborns appear to respond to their fathers' voices and this has been used to encourage fathers' involvement and engagement from the birth of their infant. Since infant hearing is well developed before birth fathers are being encouraged to talk to their unborn baby. Now Canadian researchers Lee and Kiselevsky have demonstrated an effect for fathers reading a story to their baby in the womb. The second paper by Gustaffson and colleagues using a sample of French mothers and fathers provides convincing evidence that fathers should spend as much time as possible interacting with their new baby so that they can get to know them.*

RESEARCH

Fetuses respond to fathers voice but prefer mothers

Fetal and newborn responding to audio-recordings of their father's versus mother's reading a story were examined. At home, fathers read a different story to the fetus each day for 7 days. Subsequently, in the laboratory, continuous fetal heart rate was recorded during a 9 min protocol, including three, 3 min periods: baseline no-sound, voice (mother or father), postvoice no-sound. Following a 20 min delay, the opposite voice was delivered. Newborn head-turning was observed on 20 s trials: three no-sound, three voice (mother or father), three opposite voice, three no-sound trials with the same segment of each parent's recording. Fetuses showed a heart rate increase to both voices which was sustained over the voice period. Consistent with prior reports, newborns showed a preference for their mother's but not their father's voice. The characteristics of voice stimuli that capture fetal attention and elicit a response are yet to be identified.

Lee, G. Y., & Kisilevsky, B. S. (2014). Fetuses respond to father's voice but prefer mother's voice after birth. *Developmental psychobiology*, 56(1), 1-11.

Fathers are just as good as mothers at recognizing the cries of their baby

Previous investigations of parents' abilities to recognize the cries of their own babies have identified substantial and significant sex differences, with mothers showing greater correct recognition rates than fathers. Such sex differences in parenting abilities are common in nonhuman mammals and usually attributed to differential evolutionary pressures on male and female parental investment. However, in humans the traditional concept of 'maternal instinct' has received little empirical support and is incongruous given our evolutionary past as cooperative breeders. Here we use a controlled experimental design to show that both fathers and mothers can reliably and equally recognize their own baby from their cries, and that the only crucial factor affecting this ability is the amount of time spent by the parent with their own baby. These results highlight the importance of exposure and learning in the development of this ability, which may rely on shared auditory and cognitive abilities rather than sex-specific innate predispositions.

Gustafsson, E., Levréro, F., Reby, D., & Mathevon, N. (2013). Fathers are just as good as mothers at recognizing the cries of their baby. *Nature communications*, 4, 1698.

Strengthening Indigenous parents' relationship quality

FRB comment: *The way that parents support each other in their fathering and mothering is an important determinant of children's wellbeing. One of the effects of the focus on mother-infant attachment has been to overlook this obvious truth. This analysis of US data has important lesson for Closing the Gap between the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children and non-Indigenous children.*

RESEARCH

Strengthening American Indian Couples' Relationship Quality to Improve Parenting

Using Fragile Families data, this study examined the impact that relationship quality has on American Indian parenting and its consequences on children. Results indicated that the more support American Indian parents received from one another, the more positive interactions they had with their child. Additionally, while engagement increased and spanking decreased with more support received for unmarried American Indian mothers, support from the father impacted their engagement more so than those who were married. Therefore, implementation of culturally appropriate relationship enhancing and premarital programs could be beneficial to strengthening American Indian families and have a positive impact on parenting.

Limb, G. E., White, C., & Holgate, M. (2014). Strengthening American Indian Couples' Relationship Quality to Improve Parenting. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 24(2), 92-104. doi: 10.1080/10911359.2014.848672

Consensus statement on fathers' overnight care

FRB comment: *The issue of fathers' overnight care when families separate and young infants are with the mother is a 'hot topic'. Researchers have widely divergent interpretations of the research evidence, some seeing support of fathers' overnight care and others seeing danger and damage for the infant's secure attachment. Research on this topic has appeared in previous Bulletins, "The Effect of Overnight Care With Fathers When Families Separate" in Bulletin 19 p9 and "Stretching the science: Overnight care of young infants" in Bulletin 22p 15. In the paper reported below by Warshak One hundred and ten researchers and practitioners have put their names to a consensus report explaining why the evidence favours fathers' overnight care of infants in separated families.*

Social Science and Parenting Plans for Young Children: A Consensus Report

Two central issues addressed in this article are the extent to which young children's time should be spent predominantly in the care of the same parent or divided more evenly between both parents, and whether children under the age of 4 should sleep in the same home every night or spend overnights in both parents' homes. A broad consensus of accomplished researchers and practitioners agree that, in normal circumstances, the evidence supports shared residential arrangements for children under 4 years of age whose parents live apart from each other. Because of the well-documented vulnerability of father-child relationships among never-married and divorced parents, the studies that identify overnights as a protective factor associated with increased father commitment to child rearing and reduced incidence of father drop-out, and the absence of studies that demonstrate any net risk of overnights, policymakers and decision makers should recognize that depriving young children of overnights with their fathers could compromise the quality of developing father-child relationships. Sufficient evidence does not exist to support postponing the introduction of regular and frequent involvement, including overnights, of both parents with their babies and toddlers. The theoretical and practical considerations favoring overnights for most young children are more compelling than concerns that overnights might jeopardize children's development.

Warshak, R. A. (2014). Social science and parenting plans for young children: A consensus report. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 20(1), 46.

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Or contact Richard Fletcher:

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

