



**Final Report to ARACY/ARC NHMRC Network  
Seed Funded Collaboration**

Project title	Fathers and Families – Evaluating Frameworks For Working with Fathers		
Convenor of collaboration	Rae Walter		
Email address	<a href="mailto:raewalter@ngala.com.au">raewalter@ngala.com.au</a>		
Administering organisation	Australian Association of Parenting and Child Health (AAPCH)		
Contact for reporting purposes	Elaine Bennett		
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email	<a href="mailto:ejbennett@ngala.com.au">ejbennett@ngala.com.au</a>	Total grant amount	\$15,000

Major activities undertaken (expand section as necessary)

Activity	Date	Description
Webinar 1	10/02/10	90 minute on-line seminar (65 participants, 30 log-ins)
Webinar 2	18/02/10	90 minute on-line seminar (40 participants, 21 log-ins)
Steering Committee Teleconferences	23/11/09 8/12/09 17/12/09 21/01/10 11/02/10 15/03/10 29/03/10 19/04/10 29/04/10	Regular teleconference meetings to monitor, organize and direct this project
On-line Survey (Monkey survey)	25/02/10 – 25/03/10	28 survey responses received
Webinar Polls	10/02/10 18/02/10	27 and 20 responses respectively (some representing teams)

Benefits arising from the project and how these align to ARACY goals

**Advancing Collaboration Practice:**

**Connections with the Australian Fathers Research Network (AFRN)**

Research questions and themes for this project were in part developed from a Report on a Seminar held in May 2008, to examine priorities for research in Fatherhood. This was funded by the ARACY ARC/NHRMC Research Network and led to the establishment of the **Australian** Fathers Research Network.

(This 2008 seminar, in turn, was an outcome of an ARACY Collaborative Research Workshop held in August 2007).

Many webinar participants were informed about this project through their membership to AFRN.

Richard Fletcher, co-coordinator of the AFRN, was a key presenter and consultant on this project.

A large Collaborative Research project example (the effects of fathers on breastfeeding), involving 7 agencies and organisations, was presented and discussed. This included both the successes and obstacles (histories, staffing, intellectual property rights of material and father "recruitment") to the project, particularly involving **the creation of** such partnerships.

A webinar 1 poll discussed then asked *practitioners* if they were interested in being involved in a collaborative research project (over 80% responded yes or maybe).

The need for practitioner organisations and researchers to work together was a key theme of these discussions, as well as during the consultation and follow-up stages.



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### **Measuring the outcomes of community organisations:**

Richard Fletcher presented ways to evaluate the effectiveness of early parenting programs and services for fathers.

Simple evaluation tools were presented to examine Father Inclusive Practice (FIP) of agencies in terms of language use, promotional material and methodologies. Richard also highlighted the need to know why and what you are measuring (eg. Parenting of Fathering responses). Richard's presentation power point for this project, plus a follow-up website FIP evaluation tool, has been distributed to all participants and associated agencies to provide a framework to measure some aspects of their FIP.

### **ARACY's social change strategy:**

The increased understanding and involvement of fathers in early parenting and child development is a key strategy for social change in raising the priority for the well-being of children and enhancing early interventions where appropriate. Fathers are still significantly under-represented in early parenting services, and as advocates and human resources for these social changes.



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Project outputs			
Grant applications (expand table as needed)			
Granting body	Date of application	Title of application	PIs
Ian Potter Foundation	2010	Becoming a Father: rich stories of fathering	The creation of a book resource or other mediums for the use of practitioners, researchers and fathers. The development of a collaborative research team.
Was application successful?			
Yes Amount granted		No	Pending (give date of notification) by end of 2010 Submission Sept '10
Granting body	Date of application	Title of application	PIs
Australian Research Council	2011 or 2012	The Voice of Fathers: Australian fatherhood experiences	A huge resource of fatherhood stories and experiences is readily available to researchers, practitioners and administrators in the field, as well as to fathers and families. This database has a main focus on early parenting experiences and covers a diverse range of fathers and situations. This resource is available in multiple formats. This database is available for ongoing research.
Was application successful?			
Yes Amount granted		No	Pending (give date of notification) 2012
Granting body	Date of application	Title of application	PIs
Was application successful?			
Yes Amount granted		No	Pending (give date of notification)
Publications (Provide full details and current status - published, in press, under review, etc) (expand table as needed)			
Paper 1			
Unpublished papers placed on ARACY or other websites (expand table as needed)			
Paper 1 "Secret Dad's Business: towards a better understanding and engagement of fathers" presented by Dr Stefan Gruenert and distributed to participants. This has also been made available to interested organisations as a PDF.			



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### Paper 2

"De-constructing Masculinities" presented by Dr Murray Fisher and distributed to participants. This has also been made available to interested organisations as a Power point.

### Paper 3

"Evaluating Parenting Programs for Fathers: who benefits, how do they benefit and how do you tell?" presented by Dr Richard Fletcher and distributed to participants. This has also been made available to interested organisations as a Power point.

### Paper 4

"Engaging Fathers to support Breastfeeding" presented by Prof Bruce Maycock and distributed to participants. This has also been made available to interested organisations as a PDF.

Please comment on the collaboration process, successes and obstacles (expand section as necessary)

This whole project was based on enabling discussions between researchers and workers at the "coal face" in this field. These conversations made apparent the need for the development of partnerships between researchers and practitioner organisations. Whilst these types of collaborations do already occur, they are still tenuous, linked to individuals rather than organisations, involve issues of intellectual property and can become quite territorial.

There is also the practical problem of differing time frames, with researchers needing a longer lead in time to coordinate with their other research initiatives and directions and to align with their funding sources, whilst practitioners are likely to be asking more immediate questions. It is also true that most researchers in early parenting have no particular focus on fathers. For true collaboration to occur, researchers and practitioners/administrators need to develop their research questions together. A major obstacle for this to occur is that researchers usually have their own research agenda well in place and funding bodies use the pre-history of the chief investigator in the field as a major selection criteria for projects, thus limiting new initiatives and changes of direction for researchers.

Another obstacle for this project was the cost and reliability of the technological access. Whilst this methodology is cheaper than flying people to attend a symposium, nearly \$6,000 was still spent on the on-line conferencing. Cheaper conferencing systems are available, though our investigations revealed that the alternatives lacked on-line support and often required extra hardware or technological expertise. It is expected that costs and ease of use of this technology will only improve in the future.

A major success of this project was to establish an interactive forum to discuss these issues. The initial consultation phase specifically targeted researchers, with the hunger of practitioners for this type of gathering and connection immediately obvious from AAPCH members and other service providers. Indeed, several organisations participated in the webinars as small groups and used this process as a springboard for their own internal conversations. A quarter of participants for the on-line survey, and webinar "log-ins", were researchers, but this group did require more pro-active initial recruitment. Feedback received suggests that there is a strong desire, and therefore the opportunity, to continue these types of forums.

We also connected with, and thank, the Australian Fathers Research Network and Richard Fletcher as a key presenter and consultant, and the many participants who joined us from an announcement through this network.

Name:  (Convenor) Date: 27/05/2010



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email	<a href="mailto:ejbennett@ngala.com.au">ejbennett@ngala.com.au</a>	Total grant amount	\$15,000
<b>Expenditure of the ARC Research Network Grant Funds:</b>			
Category	Item	Description / Details	Cost
Project worker salary		Dedicated project officer for this project	\$ 9,041
Telstra Conferencing		Two Webinars, plus set up & training & committee teleconferences	\$ 5,986
Other activities or products		Office support from Ngala	0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>

Name:  (Convenor) Date: 27/05/2010

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