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# Fatherhood Research Bulletin

Bulletin 18

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## NEWS from the Australian Fatherhood Research Network



Samantha Page is the CEO of Early Childhood Australia. ECA was established in 1938 and works with Government, early childhood professionals, parents, other carers of young children, and various lobby groups to advocate to ensure quality, social justice and equity in all issues relating to the education and care of children from birth to eight years. ECA is a not-for-profit membership based organisation. It also has a successful retail and publishing arm, producing a number of very well regarded subscription based publications including the Australian Journal of Early Childhood.

Sam also serves on the Board of the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare and the Australian Council of Social Service as well as being a member of the ACT Child & Young Person Death Review Committee.

Sam holds a Masters Degree in Management and a Bachelors Degree in Psychology and has worked in the non-government sector for 20 years across roles encompassing executive management, management consulting, social policy analysis, advocacy and the delivery of human services. She brings extensive experience in the development and implementation of sector development projects funded by Federal and State Government agencies. She has overseen workforce development and scholarship programs, training initiatives as well as consultation and evaluation projects that have involved working effectively across government and non-government partners to support effective service delivery.

Immediately prior to joining ECA Sam was the Executive Director at Family & Relationship Services Australia, building on previous roles with the Federal Government, ACT Government, ACT Legislative Assembly, ACT Council of Social Service, major disability support services and two management consultancy firms.

Sam has seen a change over the last decade in family services where there has been greater recognition of fathers and the nature of relationships they have with children, particularly young children. Services are more responsive to fathers needs, especially in the post separation phase. There are quite a number of terrific and innovative programs available which provide support to fathers but there is still a way to go as there is still the tendency for services to engage with mothers primarily. Building competency for services and staff to work with dads is really important. Sam highlights the main strength of the Bulletin as providing both researchers and practitioners with information about what work is being done, and what new findings can be taken from the research field. This strength can be built upon by continuing to provide a platform for improved collaboration between researchers and practitioners.

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## RESOURCES ON THE WEB

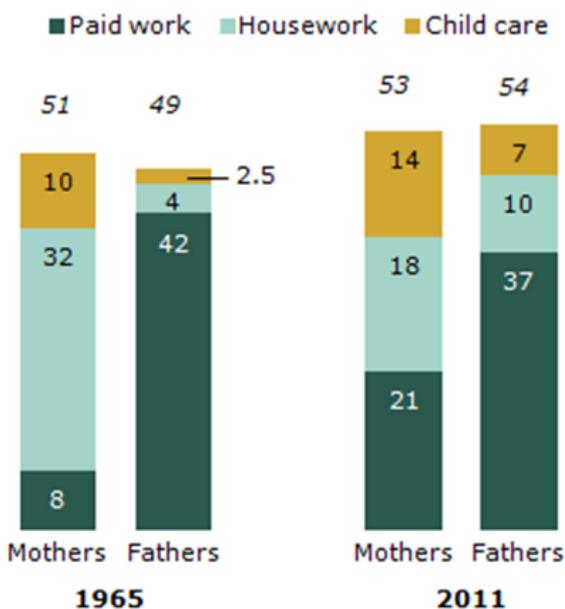
### Changing mother and father roles in the USA

**FRB comment:** While surveys measuring time spent by mothers and fathers on broad activities such as housework or childcare capture only one aspect of family life, they do provide a way to document change. The PEW Research Centre, and independent subsidiary of PEW Charitable Trusts conducts large scale surveys of US families and reports on significant changes using this data and time use surveys from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Their latest report, *Modern Parenthood : Roles of Moms and Dads Converge as They Balance Work and Family*, compares results from a 2012 survey with figures from as far back as 1965.

### Moms and Dads, 1965-2011: Roles Converge, but Gaps Remain

Average number of hours per week spent on ...



Note: Based on adults ages 18-64 with own child(ren) under age 18 living in the household. Total figures (at the top of each bar) may not add to component parts due to rounding.

Source: 1965 data from Table 5A.1-2 in Bianchi, et al. (2006). 2011 data from Pew Research analysis of the American Time Use Survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The report is available to download at no cost from  
<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/03/14/modern-parenthood-roles-of-moms-and-dads-converge-asthey-balance-work-and-family/>

## RESOURCES ON THE WEB

### Support for new dads

**FRB comment:** *There is room for a variety of service delivery systems to support new fathers and their families. In this description provided by Sally McKay and Cath Cook they describe the genesis and work of their DadSkills program.*

DadSkills was created by Sally McKay and Cath Cook, two doulas trained in childbirth support, experienced in supporting men and women through this amazing and intense period in their lives.



It was through our work supporting couples that it became glaringly evident that the focus during pregnancy, birth and early parenthood is almost solely on the mother and baby. Of course the focus on mother and baby is important, but fathers are often sidelined and their experiences not recognised or acknowledged.

DadSkills' vision is to help men start off fatherhood in a positive way and prepare them for an active, caring role at the birth and in parenting. DadSkills aims to bring awareness to expecting parents and the birthing community about the importance of the role of the father both during the birth and after.

Including a blog and free downloads as well as Facebook and Twitter pages, DadSkills aims to include men in the birth process, encourage them to have an active parenting role and help provide the tools to assist them to do this. An important part of this is by facilitating the sharing of men's stories.

The materials can be accessed at [www.DadSkills.com](http://www.DadSkills.com)

## RESOURCES ON THE WEB

### **How it is - Young Mums & Dads Parenting Together DVD/booklet**

In 2009 the Salvation Army Ingle Farm in collaboration with Relationships Australia and Centacare put together a youth friendly booklet/ DVD as a C4C initiative targeting young mums and the question was asked - What about the dads? At that time our child & family hub had identified a need for support for young mums & dads struggling with parenting together.

In response we developed a resource that focuses on involving dads in the parenting process, looks at potential conflict with mums and hopefully how they might work at it together.

A key part of the project was filming a dad's group at our child and family centre which started out by attempting to communicate the impact parenting has on brain development and then looked at some other key issues around being a dad. We also included interviews with some young parents and a parenting group session. Five topical 5-10 minute vignettes were produced and a relatively easy to read booklet was developed to accompany the DVD.

Karl Brettig, Manager Salisbury Communities for Children [www.salisburyc4c.org.au](http://www.salisburyc4c.org.au)



## PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

### **Males as workers in family services**

**FRB comment:** *At a seminar on father-inclusive practice for the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation in Hobart recently the following introductory remarks were made by Paul Prichard, Training and Development Manager, Murdoch Children's Research Institute.*

Father inclusive practice is a notion that we are becoming more familiar with these days. It is no secret that more and more men are performing the primary role in parenting babies and young children for a variety of different reasons.

This change, and others, present a great challenge to our service system in relation to how we plan, implement and run services designed to support parents and their children. Worker selection and training, service environments, hours and modes of service delivery, worker attitudes and values, and service policies are amongst the issues that need to be addressed in moving towards a more respectful and inclusive way of working for many groups of parents; teen parents, Aboriginal parents, dads, and parents experiencing complex needs.

Here in Tasmania, we have many challenges to do with inclusive practices that deserve attention. Whilst I don't necessarily think that a more male inclusive workplace will be reflected in increased ratios of male workers, it is interesting to note that:

There are no male Child Health and Parenting nurses

There is only 1 male student nurse studying paediatric/neo-natal nursing (out of around 70 students)

There are very few male students studying early years education at UTAS (out of 260 students)

There are no male students in the south studying at either cert or diploma level at the Polytechnic in children's services, and only 2 out of 120 studying as a teacher's aide.

Whilst a truly male inclusive service is not necessarily reflected in an increased ratio of male workers, it is worth reflecting on the effect of a local early years service system that has so few males involved in its function.

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## PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

### Groups for fathers of babies and young children

**FRB comment:** *If we made a state by state comparison of the range of groups that are offered to fathers with young children (that is, they are targeted directly at fathers) how would your state rate? The Parenting WA course guide for Term 1 in 2013 is produced by the Western Australian government. It lists groups and programs for parenting in the early years. The range and number of groups for fathers is impressive. In total, there are 21 groups, and not just in Perth; their locations span the whole state. You can see that there is a range of offerings from the titles:*

- ◆ Baby Rhyme Time for Fathers @ Your Library
  - ◆ C'mon Dad' Supported Play Time
  - ◆ Circle of Security Parenting Course for Dads
  - ◆ Dad 2 Dad Preparation for Childbirth Workshop
  - ◆ Dad's Group
  - ◆ Dads at the Parenting Place
  - ◆ Dads Playgroup
  - ◆ Fair Dinkum Dads
  - ◆ Fathering Project Seminar
  - ◆ Fathers Attending Playgroups
  - ◆ Fathers Empowering Sons
  - ◆ Fathers on the Move: a Toolbox Approach to Fathering in the 21st Century
  - ◆ Grandparents and Fathers Attending Playgroup
  - ◆ Male Carers Group
  - ◆ Meerilinga Playdads
  - ◆ Ngala Dads Playgroup
  - ◆ The Nuts and Bolts of Being a Dad
  - ◆ Raising Girls – a Workshop for Dads
  - ◆ Raising Teenage Girls – a Workshop for Dads
  - ◆ Saturday Stories with Dad
  - ◆ Young Dad's Group
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## RESEARCH

### FATHERHOOD IN ASIA

**FRB comment:** *In any discussion of Australian fathers' involvement with children you can almost be sure that mothers going out to work will be brought up. The increase in mothers' employment is often seen as the main reason that fathers are, or at least should be, caring for children. The trouble with this explanation is that it limits the options for making a better society. For policy makers or those working with families such a one dimensional view of social change is unhelpful. Seeing the range of factors that might influence father-child relationships can open the door to more effective policy and improved practice. One way to broaden our view is to consider how fathering and mothering are changing in societies outside of Australia. The special issue on Asian Fatherhood of the Journal of Family Issues includes research highlighting multiple influences on fathers' involvement in children's care. The usefulness of these papers is that while reporting from a very different social setting the issues resemble those affecting families here in Australia. The discussion of FIFO workers in the Australian media for example has hardly mentioned the impact on fathering. The paper by Harper and Martin on Filipino families where the father works overseas ( usually in the industrial or construction sectors) documents the effects on mothers raising the children and the children's behaviours. The account describing middle-class Indian father's concern for their children's educational success also resonates with discussions in Australia. While governments penalize parents for children's non-attendance media commentary vilifies 'helicopter parents'. There are also interesting differences in the factors influencing these families such as the increase in nuclear families for example and the strong influence of Confucianism. Previous Bulletins have reported on e-discussions among professionals from various countries in the Asia-Pacific Region on promoting father involvement (see Father Involvement in Asia and the Pacific in Bulletin 14) and on specific fathering programs in Singapore and Bangladesh (see Bulletin 15). The papers in this special issue are an important addition to the research evidence on fathers.*

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#### **Fathering to Ensure Child's Success: What Urban Indian Fathers Do?**

In a globalizing urban India, middle-class parents are extremely anxious about their child's success and future in a competitive world. In this context, the present article attempts to capture middle-class educated Indian fathers' thoughts, feelings, and contributions in ensuring children's success, through primary research conducted in the city of Baroda in western India using qualitative and quantitative methods. Descriptive data and fathers' voices highlight their notions of achievement, the nature and extent of their involvement in different areas of their children's lives, namely, providing, guiding and mentoring, practical and emotional support, communication, education, and extracurricular activities. Fathers' vision of a successful child, nature of involvement and their reasoning are in consonance with their desire for involvement in promoting the child's cognitive and social competence, and passing on *sanskar*, a unique aspect of Hindu culture.

Sriram, R. & Sandhu, G. K. (2013). Fathering to ensure child's success: What urban Indian fathers do?. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(2), 159-181.

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## RESEARCH

### **Hoping for a Phoenix: Shanghai Fathers and Their Daughters**

Intergenerational relationships and gender roles in China are in transition because of ideational and structural changes resulting from social movements and policies in the past half a century. Using a mixed-methods design, we examine Shanghai fathers' involvement in their adolescent daughters' lives. In contrast to traditional stereotypes, Shanghai fathers are nurturing and highly involved in multiple domains of their daughters' lives. They also have very high aspirations for their daughters, regardless of their own socioeconomic background. Shanghai fathers see providing emotional and financial support, and helping their daughters to achieve success in education as their most important roles. The behavior of Shanghai fathers can be best understood in the unique Chinese contexts of one-child policy, transition to market economy, and increasing globalization.

Xu, Q. & Yeung, W-J. J. (2013). Hoping for a phoenix: Shanghai fathers and their daughters. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(2), 182-207.

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### **Father Involvement Among Malay Muslims in Malaysia**

This article reports on findings from a study of 989 fathers of school-going children aged 10 through 16 from intact families in rural and urban areas in Selangor, Malaysia. The study aims to explore the factors that affect father involvement among Malay Muslims. Results indicate that fathers' education, marital quality, and number of children are significantly related to their involvement in children's lives. Fathers' perceptions of their own fathers' involvement when they were young is also positively associated with their involvement with children, supporting the concept of intergenerational fathering in social learning theory. Muslim fathers see financial provisioning, moral teaching, praying, reciting the Quran, and fasting together with children as their religious duties that God entrusts to them to fulfil both world and after-life purposes. However, they cite lack of time and a common wish to be more involved in their children's life.

Juhari, R., Yaacob, S. N., & Talib, M. A. (2013). Father involvement among Malay Muslims in Malaysia. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(2), 208-227.

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### **Social Change and Fathering: Change or Continuity in Vietnam?**

Dramatic social changes have restructured virtually all aspects of Vietnam society. Although the economic consequences of these changes are well documented, little is known about how family roles and relationships have been affected. Because social and cultural contexts powerfully shape conceptions of parenting, the accelerated rate of social change in Vietnam may have reconfigured notions of fatherhood and fathering. Through increased globalization, Western notions of the modern, involved father and these more egalitarian views of household relationships may indicate a more involved father in Vietnam today. However, Vietnam's strong Confucian heritage, its kinship structure, and its unique history could limit the adoption of fathers as equal co-parents. This article examines changes over time in attitudes toward the father role and the extent of father involvement.

Jayakody, R. & Phuong, P. T. T. (2013). Social change and fathering: Change or continuity in Vietnam?. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(2), 228-249.

## RESEARCH

### **Work Environment and Japanese Fathers' Involvement in Child Care**

Previous studies mainly examined individual and family factors affecting Japanese fathers' involvement in child care. Along with these factors, we examine how work-related factors such as father-friendly environment at work, workplace's accommodation of parental needs, job stress, and autonomy are associated with Japanese men's participation in child care. Using 2010 data collected from Japanese fathers with preschool children ( $N = 1,317$ ), a theoretical model is tested on men who work for large or small/medium companies. We find that company's accommodation of parental needs and job autonomy increase child care involvement of fathers in medium/small companies, and job stress reduces such involvement among men in large companies. Implications of these findings are discussed in light of recent public attention on child caring fathers in Japan.

Ishii-Kuntz, M. (2013). Work environment and Japanese fathers' involvement in child care. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(2), 250-269.

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### **Transnational Migratory Labor and Filipino Fathers: How Families Are Affected When Men Work Abroad**

Transnational migratory labor remains a primary method many Filipinos use in an effort to gain financial security for their families. Based on data collected from an urban Southern Visayan province during the summer of 2007, this study examined a sample of 116 OFW (Overseas Filipino Workers) families and a sample of 99 traditional two-parent households. Comparative analyses revealed that mothers from OFW families demonstrated lower levels of warmth when compared with mothers from two-parent homes. Children from OFW families were reported to demonstrate greater internalizing and externalizing problems when compared with children from homes in which both parents lived in the home. Subsequent regression analyses showed that fathers who worked abroad may contribute to mother behaviors and child outcomes in certain direct and indirect paths.

Harper, S. E. & Martin, A. M. (2013) Transnational migratory labor and Filipino fathers: How families are affected when men work abroad. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(2), 270-290.



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