



Developing video Interventions for Dads: to improve involvement with children and reduce common childhood risks

PhD project. Co-Supervisors: Dr Garth Kendall, Dr Dawson Cooke (+ others)
Curtin University, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine
thefatheringproject.org
dawson.cooke@curtin.edu.au

Rationale for the research

Engaging parents in early intervention or prevention programs is challenging (AIFS, 2004), and programs have tended to target or attract mostly mothers. Engaging with fathers presents specific challenges as they tend to not be considered the “primary” caregiver and resources are typically designed by women and for a female audience. Yet the role of fathers has been found to have significant impacts on many aspects of children’s development and wellbeing, including their response to risk and challenging situations. Increasingly, fathers are expected to be involved with care of their children and yet the services and resources available to support father involvement is limited in comparison to those available for supporting mothers. Novel and accessible means of communicating effective parenting strategies to fathers are required. Video has been identified as a preferred means of communicating messages to fathers and is cost effective due to its scalability and minimal resources or skills required to facilitate its delivery. Engaging with fathers through their child’s school community provides a strategy to reach large number of fathers across socio-economic strata and targeting issues relevant to children at different developmental stages.

Proposed research project

Evaluate the development of videos to promote understanding and positive behaviours for fathers - in order to prevent and reduce common health risks for children. Areas of concern addressed in the videos would include alcohol and other drugs (AOD), bullying (including cyber bullying), and poor nutrition and inactivity.

This intervention will add value to an existing and growing network of Fathering Project School Groups (FPSG) in the Perth metro area, which have been developed to improve men’s parenting and father-child relationships. Therefore, the videos will be developed to be used in the context of a group gathering of fathers who mostly know each other and could engage with discussion and activities prompted by the video. The project will consist of a formative evaluation, iterative process of video development, and process evaluation of a pilot delivery. All costs of the video production will be covered by The Fathering Project.

List the proposed research objectives

Overall Objective: To evaluate the development of videos that inform and inspire fathers across a range of socio-economic levels, in ways that reduce the risk of their children having difficulties in areas such as: AOD use, bullying and nutrition/activity.

1. To identify the level of understanding and needs of fathers regarding the common health risks for children.
2. Identify the opinions and preferences of fathers regarding use of video in a group setting to support fathering, including responses to existing high quality parenting video that includes fathers.
3. To use literature, expert consultation and findings to inform the development of a script for videos supporting father involvement in specific issues of risk for children.
4. To identify the relevance and value of the content of proposed video scripts addressing specific topics – to inform script improvements.
5. To identify relevance and value of drafts of videos - to inform the editing process.
6. To evaluate father satisfaction and engagement with the finished videos, and evaluation of the immediate impact after viewing in a group setting.

Briefly describe the research methods

Formative evaluation of video intervention

Note: production of videos will be independently funded by The Fathering Project

Focus groups with fathers from varying socio-economic strata (accessed through The Fathering Project; Parkerville; the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) WA; the WA Government Department of Corrective Services) will provide qualitative data to inform the development of several videos.

- 1) Focus groups – To identify existing knowledge and most appropriate video format/style/content
 - Use existing literature, expert consultation and results from the first focus group to inform the development of a script for videos supporting father involvement in specific issues of risk for children.
- 2) Focus groups – To review script for content and engagement
 - Use feedback to inform modifications to the scripts, which will then be used for the independently funded production of several videos.
- 3) Focus groups – To review early drafts of videos and inform the process of editing prior to final production
 - Pilot final video within school dads groups at multiple locations - selected to represent a range of socio-economic strata.
- 4) Focus groups & questionnaires — to evaluate pilot presentations of videos for process and immediate impact

Briefly describe the research outcomes and WA community benefits

The development of these videos will provide a valuable resource to support the role of fathers in their children's lives, with a particular focus on some of the major risks to child health and wellbeing. Such a product can be easily and rapidly implemented with thousands of fathers through an existing programs, such as The Fathering Project. Fathers currently have few parenting resources that are specifically designed for them and that address issues that are of concern to the whole WA community. When fathers are involved in parenting responsibilities, there is likely to be less demand and stress on mothers and better outcomes for children.