

DoCS Research to Practice **Update**

A regular update for staff on the latest national and international research

Issue 19 Nov.— Dec. 2007

Research Publications – What's New!

Research to practice

The Research to Practice Program provides an essential link between the latest research and DoCS staff.

As part of this important initiative, the Research to Practice Update encompasses a broad range of research publications and resources to reflect the diversity of DoCS staff.

If you have any comments or suggestions about how we could improve this Update to make it more useful or relevant to your work, please email the Research to Practice Team at:

- researchtopractice@community.nsw.gov.au, or
- 'Research to Practice' on the internal email.

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DoCS

Early intervention strategies for children and young people 8-14 years: literature review

Tully, L. (2007). DoCS Centre for Parenting and Research, 102pp.

The review summarises the evidence for a diverse range of parent-focused, child-focussed and multi-component interventions. The paper draws heavily on published reviews, including narrative reviews, systematic reviews and meta-analysis. However, it should be noted that there are two main limitations in relying on the findings from this review. Firstly, many published reviews include a prevalence to use research from the USA, which may not be applicable to the Australian context. To address this limitation, this review will describe findings from Australian studies, where available, in addition to well-evaluated international studies. Secondly, many published literature reviews include studies with children aged 6 to 18, so the findings will not necessarily be specific to the 8 to 14 age group that is targeted in this review.

www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/research_ei_strategies_review.pdf

Risk, protection and resilience in children

DoCS Centre for Parenting and Research (2007) *Research to Practice Note* November 2007, 8pp.

This Research to Practice Note aims to improve understanding of risk, protection and resilience in working with children and families and provide a brief overview of the relevant literature in this area. It aims to also answer four main questions.

- What are risk and protective factors?
- What is resilience?
- What are the important risk and protective factors for child abuse and neglect?

www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/researchnotes_resilience.pdf

Early Intervention

The Helping Relationship and Program Participation in Early Childhood Home Visiting

Korfmacher, J., Green, B., Spellmann, M. and Thornburg, K.R. (2007) *Infant Mental Health Journal* 28(5), pp.459-480.

As researchers have focussed on better understanding those circumstances under which home visiting can lead to positive effects on parent and child outcomes, there has been growing interest in examining variation in the experiences of families within these programs, including the quality of the helping relationships between home visitors and parents. The current study examined how participating mothers perceive the helping relationship, using information collected from the Early Head Start National Research and Evaluation Project. Results suggest that although maternal report of the helping relationship is biased towards positive ratings, it remains a significant predictor of program participation, over and above general program satisfaction.

www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/116312637/issue

Research to Practice Seminar Series

Copies of most seminar presentations and background readings are also available on DoCS Online under Resources on the Research to Practice Page.

Seminar Program

A program of upcoming seminars will shortly be posted on the Research to Practice Page.

Accessing journal articles

Journal articles can also be requested from the Library by completing an Article Copy Request Form located on the Library Services Intranet page.

Completed forms can be sent to:

- DOCS.Library@community.nsw.gov.au or,
- Fax (02) 9716 2085.

Evaluating Area-based Interventions: The Case of 'Communities for Children'

Cortis, N. (2007) *Children & Society (Online Early Articles)*, published 24 September 2007.

Increasingly, governments in wealthy countries are designing early intervention initiatives around principles of 'community regeneration' or 'place management'. Because these initiatives are multi-site, aimed at long-term systemic change, and implemented amidst a range of other initiatives, assessing their quality and outcomes demands departure from conventional programme evaluation approaches. This article analyses the challenges of evaluating area-based interventions in the child welfare field, and shows how the National Evaluation of Australia's 'Communities for Children' initiative seeks to overcome these through its mixed method design and the longitudinal Stronger Families in Australia study.

[Copy of article can be ordered through DoCS Library.](#)

The influence of race/ethnicity on disadvantaged mothers' child care arrangements

Radey, M. and Brewster, K.L. (2007) *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 22, pp.379-393.

This US study uses data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study to describe primary child care arrangements of employed, predominantly low-income mothers of 1-year olds, and to quantify their child care calculus in the post-welfare reform era. The sorting of children across arrangement types differs by mother's race/ethnicity: Hispanic children are most likely to be cared for by maternal kin, Black children in organized centres, and White children by their fathers. Multinomial regression reveals that the association between race/ethnicity and arrangement type is

largely - but not entirely - accounted for by mothers' socioeconomic, household, job, and cultural characteristics; interaction tests show that the associations between arrangement type and both poverty status and marital status are contingent on race/ethnicity. These findings indicate that disadvantage does not translate into child care arrangements similarly across racial/ethnic groups and child care policy must take into account structural and cultural differences associated with parents' race/ethnicity.

www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/08852006

Child Protection

How neighbourhoods influence child maltreatment: A review of the literature and alternative pathways

Coulton, C.J., Crampton, D.S., Spilsbury, M.J. and Korbin, J.E. (2007) *Child Abuse & Neglect* 31, pp.1117-1142.

Numerous studies demonstrate that child maltreatment cases are concentrated in disadvantaged areas. A number of socio-economic characteristics of neighbourhoods have been shown to correlate with child maltreatment rates as measured by official reports to child protective service agencies. Only a few studies examine direct measures of parenting behaviours associated with maltreatment, and these show a weaker relationship with neighbourhood disadvantage. Moreover, the processes that link neighbourhood conditions to either maltreatment reports or parenting behaviours are not yet confirmed by the research literature.

www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01452134

Father absence in the context of child welfare: a review of the literature

Fleming, J. (2007) *Children Australia*, 32(3), pp.13-20.

This paper looks at the area of father absence in child welfare, which is a growing topic of interest in Australia and elsewhere. The literature highlights some of the main concerns emerging from recent research and scholarly studies, and calls for more analysis to explore the issues that face those working with fathers and father figures today. The literature also shows that in spite of progress on research on gender, fathers and family life, significant gaps still exist in practice. The author argues that while there is some discussion about how fathers can be included in child and family welfare services, the extent to which this is manifest in practice is less clear and requires further analysis.

Copy of article can be ordered through DoCS Library.

Re-engaging separated fathers with their children after contact has broken down

King, A. and Fletcher, R. (2007) *Children Australia*, 32(3), pp.21-28.

This paper explores how separated fathers, who may have limited or no contact with their children, can be understood from a non-deficit perspective. It describes how the generative fathering framework is used as a model to assist separated fathers to rebuild their connection with their children. The paper also examines parent/child contact time from a child focused perspective. A number of steps and strategies have been identified that may assist in

restoring positive contact between separated fathers and their children.

Copy of article can be ordered through DoCS Library.

Domestic violence and child protection: exploring the role of perpetrator risk assessments

Humphreys, C. (2007) *Child & Family Social Work* 12(4) pp.360-369.

This article explores the issue of severity in relation to domestic violence and provides a number of reasons for the necessary engagement by workers with such a contentious issue. A range of factors are identified that heighten the risks of increased violence. The ways in which perpetrator risk assessment can be used to inform the filtering of referrals to the statutory child care agency, enhance multi-agency working, provide a structure for the assessment of the perpetrator, enhance partnership-working with survivors (usually women) and inform the protection strategies for workers are explored.

Copy of article can be ordered through DoCS Library.

'Thoughtful' practice: child care social work and the role of case discussion

Ruch, G. (2007) *Child and Family Social Work* 12(4), pp.370-379.

This paper explores the tensions between 'doing' and 'thinking' in contemporary practice and draws on psychodynamic concepts to inform our understanding of why individuals and organizations behave in repetitiously compulsive ways. A case discussion model is outlined and its potential for addressing the psychodynamic demands facing practitioners and front-line managers is considered. Copy of article can be ordered through DoCS Library.

For the sake of the children? Children, domestic violence and public policy

Murray, S. and Powell, A. (2007) *Children Australia*, 32(3), pp.6-12.

More attention than ever before is being paid to children in Australian public policy concerned with domestic violence. In family law and in the areas of child protection, policing and in the provision of specialist services, there is recognition that children are affected by domestic violence. Yet the 'discovery' of the impact of domestic violence on children and the development of public policy responses have not been straightforward processes of problem identification and solution. Rather, there are a number of competing discourses which underlie various policy approaches. Drawing on Bacchi's (1999) "what's the problem represented to be?" approach, the paper examines the discursive constructions of children's experiences of domestic violence and the responses to them as evident in Australian public policy. The authors aim to contribute to the debate on the future directions of domestic violence policy concerned with children, such as in the provision of SAAP-funded services, family law and child protection.

Copy of article can be ordered through DoCS Library.

Listen to me! Children's experiences of domestic violence

Buckley, H., Whelan, S., Holt, S. (2006) *Child Abuse Review*, 16, pp.296-310.

This paper reports on a study undertaken in the Republic of Ireland during 2005 and is based on the experiences of children and young people who have lived with domestic violence. The objectives of the study were to explore the impact of domestic violence on children, identify their needs and recommend appropriate

interventions to be brokered through a centrally based women's support service. Data were gathered from 70 participants, including 37 service providers/ volunteers, 11 mothers and 22 children and young people who had lived in violent environments. The data indicated that children respond in unique ways to living with domestic violence, and that services to meet their needs must be tailored to suit their individual situations. The impact of domestic violence on their lives manifested itself with regard to their sense of fear and anxiety in relation to themselves, their siblings and their mothers; their self-esteem and sense of being 'different'; their relationships (including ambivalent relationships with their fathers); their experiences of education and their sense of a lost childhood.

www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/116325333/PDFSTART?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0

Out-of-Home Care

Report review: Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders: a pilot study

Townsend, M. (2007) *Children Australia*, 32(3), pp.4-5.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) recently released a report on the educational outcomes for children and young people in guardianship or custody orders. In the report, the educational performance of these children is compared with all children sitting these tests, and differences in academic performance between particular subgroups of children on guardianship/custody orders are also examined. The review of this report focuses on the findings of the AIHW report and highlights the limitations of the

study. The report highlighted a number of critical areas which need immediate action for children in care. Some of these include that Indigenous children in care need additional educational input; numeracy requires a greater focus for children on orders and literacy remains a significant issue for many children on orders. The failure of students in care to meet national reading and numeracy benchmarks indicates that these students will have difficulties progressing through the education system. The author notes that a lack of an effective response will have a cumulative effect on these children.

Copy of article can be ordered through DoCS Library.

Out-of-Home Placement of Children Exposed to Violence

Harpaz-Rotem, I., Berkowitz, S., Marans, S., Murphy, R.A., and Rosenhec, R.A. (2007) *Children & Society (Online Early Access)*, published on line 22 February 2007.

This study examines risk factors for out-of-home placement among a large pool of children and adolescents who were referred for general clinical assessment following exposure to violence and/or psychological trauma in their communities or homes in the US. Children with greater familial and environmental support and children exposed to incidents involving a non-parental personal threat were associated with a significantly lower risk of out-of-home placement. A greater likelihood of being placed out of home was associated with older age (adolescents), history of mental health service use, involvement with law enforcement agencies, higher clinical ratings of depression or impaired thought processes, lower clinical functioning and greater exposure to traumatic events. Evidence of maltreatment and a threat to life was associated with 13.6 times greater likelihood of being placed out of the home.

Copy of article can be ordered

through DoCS Library.

Adopted foster youths' psychosocial functioning: a longitudinal perspective

Simmel, C., Barth, R.P., and Brooks, D. (2007) *Child & Family Social Work* 12(4), pp.336-348.

The central goal of this US study was to ascertain the prevalence of behavioral problems in adopted foster youth compared with adopted non-foster youth and to chart the longitudinal course of their behavioral problems. Participants included adopted foster youth (n = 293) and adopted non-foster youth (n = 312) from a statewide sample of adopted youth, aged 2-18 years. Data were collected from the adoptive parents at approximately 2, 4 and 8 years after adoption. Adoptive parents rated youths' functioning with the Behavior Problems Inventory. According to parental report, a striking number of the foster youth displayed behavior problems, although the non-foster care group of children also displayed noteworthy levels of problem behaviors. The rates of behavior problems in both groups far exceed what is observed in the general population of children.

Copy of article can be ordered through DoCS Library.

Reports

Parents as prisoners: maintaining the parent-child relationship

Sheehan, R. and Levine, G. (2007) Final Report for the Criminology Research Council.

This report describes the study undertaken in the Melbourne Children's Court from June to December 2006, that set out to identify the extent to which children involved in child protection proceedings had parents who were currently or previously in prison, or were awaiting sentencing. It sought also to examine the impact of

parental imprisonment on these children, to examine their care histories to discover what factors impact on their stability of care, and to propose ways the court and welfare systems should respond to these children's special circumstances. There were 156 children identified by magistrates as meeting these criteria during the study period. Data was gathered about the child protection proceedings, parental involvement with the criminal justice system, the child's age and family composition, care arrangements, information about their health and education and about any support services and interventions involved with the child and family.

Full copy of report available from

www.aic.gov.au/crc/reports/200506-39.pdf

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Books

Getting Started on Research

Boden, R., Kenway, J. and Epstein, D. (2005) Sage Publications, London.

This book gives a step by step guide to getting started in research projects such as how to plan to do your research, how to frame questions, and undertake the various tasks required such as data collection and analysis.

This book is available for loan from the DoCS Library.

Resources

Step by Step Baby Care: a new parenting DVD for parents with learning difficulties

Parenting Research Centre and O'Connell Family Centre (2007).

The DVD is an interactive resource for parents with a learning difficulty or intellectual disability. The DVD shows parents demonstrating critical baby care tasks related to nutrition and daily care, such as washing babies and other skills selected from parents' feedback. The Step by Step Care uses best practice teaching strategies which have been shown to be effective in teaching new skills to parents with a learning difficulty. The tasks on the DVD are broken down into simple easy-to-follow steps that parents can watch at home in their own time.

Further inquiries

www.parentinggrc.org.au

Child maltreatment and alcohol: fact sheet

World Health Organisation (2006). WHO facts on alcohol and violence.

Strong links have been found between child maltreatment and alcohol use, especially when

drinking is harmful or hazardous. A number of studies have established that alcohol is a significant contributory factor to child maltreatment, and many show that being maltreated as a child is associated with marked increases in the risk of hazardous or harmful drinking in later life. This fact sheet details the role of harmful alcohol consumption in child maltreatment; its lifelong impact on alcohol use patterns in people who were maltreated as children, and the role of public health in prevention.

www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/fs_child.pdf

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