

ABSTRACTS

1. Relationships

Supporting young people's relationships – Janine Moss, Principal Policy & Research Analyst, Families Commission

Boyfriends, girlfriends, crushes and fling. In a relationship or not, most young people spend a lot of time thinking, dreaming and talking about relationships. The Families Commission has just completed a project to find out what information and support young people need to help them have great boyfriend/girlfriend relationships. In February and March 2009 we held focus groups and interviews with young people, parents, grandparents and whānau, youth workers, school counsellors and school social workers. This paper presents findings from the project. The key roles played by young peoples' parents and whānau, and the school system will be discussed.

I Have My Ups and Downs: Pleasures and pressures for grandparents in New Zealand – Anne Kerlake Hendricks, Principal Policy & Research Analyst, Families Commission

Through nine focus groups, an on-line poll and a nationwide telephone survey of around 1200 grandparents, the Families Commission has explored the experiences of grandparents in New Zealand. This presentation will share what we have learned, focusing on the following areas:

- a) What are the pleasures and pressures for grandparents in New Zealand?
- b) How do grandparents balance their own needs and interests, along with caring and family responsibilities?
- c) What lifestyle changes have been undertaken by grandparents so that they can support their grandchildren?
- d) What support and information would grandparents like, and how and where might this be provided?

Drawing on the research results, the Families Commission intends to advocate for grandparents so that they are well-supported in balancing their grandparenting roles with other aspects of their lives.

Grandparents in Rural Families: Young people's perspectives – Sally Keeling, Kathy Glasgow, and Carolyn Morris, New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing, Victoria University of Wellington

This project explores relationships between grandchildren and their grandparents, using data from a series of classroom based surveys conducted with 98 young people in Years 7 and 8 in five South Island area schools in late 2007. The students describe the relationships they have with the three or four people they refer to as grandparents, including those who had died. Around 40 percent of the students have contact daily or weekly with a grandparent. One third "regularly do things together" with a grandparent, and one fifth say they have a "special relationship" with a grandparent. Fewer than 10 percent mention a grandparent whom they "don't really know". The surveys comment on the fun and enjoyment grandparents and grandchildren share, but also with sadness that these opportunities for mutual sharing can be limited. Declining health and death of a grandparent, or distance in both time and place limit the opportunities for relationships to develop. This work points the way to promising lines of enquiry to extend understanding of variation in

grandparental relationships, considering factors such as geographic proximity, gendered and age-related intergenerational experiences, the significance of blended and emerging family forms and ethnic and cultural diversity.

An Exploration of the Contribution of Fathering to Family Health Generational Change: Building meaningful relationships through fathering – Jeff Gage

This study represents a theoretical explanation of fatherhood and provides insights into men's perceptions of their roles and practice of fathering. Twenty-two men were recruited from the Christchurch Early Start Programme to participate in individual interviews. Data were analysed using Grounded Theory method and a process of constant comparison. '*Generational Change: Building meaningful relationships through fathering*' emerged as the primary social process. To achieve this goal participants' described a process of learning about fatherhood from an early age, 'switching on' to fatherhood at the birth of their children and activation of their 'hearts' and 'heads' in their transformation from becoming to being a father. Findings are discussed in the context of the generative potential of fathers to positively contribute to the health and wellbeing of their families.

Settling In: Parent-adolescent family dynamics in the acculturation process – Jaimie Stuart, Families Commission, Paul Jose and Colleen Ward, Victoria University of Wellington.

The process of shifting to a new culture can have major implications for the functioning of an individual. Adjusting to a new culture can be very stressful, but the negative impact of cultural transition can be reduced with appropriate support systems. This presentation outlines a Blue Skies report which investigates the ways in which the family unit can act to both amplify and reduce the strains caused by acculturation. The major aims and objectives of the report are to:

- document the experiences of migrant and refugee families in New Zealand from the points of view of both the parent and the adolescent
- explore the areas of agreement and disagreement within the family, with a focus on issues of convergence and divergence between parents and children
- document the variety of ways in which families from diverse cultural backgrounds understand and negotiate their acculturation experiences
- explore the changing dynamics in newly arrived families in New Zealand.

Thirty-nine parents and children were interviewed about their experiences of adjustment to New Zealand culture. The challenges posed by familial interaction as well as the support that the family unit offered in the process of cultural transition were considered. This research was carried out in collaboration with the New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils (NZFEC).

We're a Family: A study of how lesbians and gay men are creating and maintaining family in New Zealand – Nicola Surtees and Alex Gunn, University of Canterbury, Christchurch

This project explores the ways lesbians and gay men are creating family in contemporary New Zealand society, what life looks like within these families and their unique rewards, demands and concerns. In particular, the project investigates how the parents concerned formed and maintained family within the limits of the present legislative framework. This presentation will focus on the impact of legislation on

parents' ability to take up parenting and formalise roles and relationships in regard to their children.

2. Worklife balance and family finances

Parents who don't use childcare: who provides the care in working couple families with infants? – Dr Jennifer Baxter and Matthew Gray, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Decisions about paid employment and childcare are inextricably linked, especially when children are very young. However, in Australian couple families, when both parents are employed, a substantial minority manage without the use of non-parental care. This might reflect shift-parenting, such that parents negotiate work schedules to ensure one parent is always available to care for children, or it might reflect that parents work and care for children at the same time.

This paper seeks to determine which of these situations is most likely, and to ascertain whether different job characteristics are associated with a tendency for one of these alternatives over the other. To do this, the authors use data from 4,500 families in the infant cohort of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), as collected in Wave 1 in 2004. Child care details and information on father involvement in childcare were captured for this cohort of children, aged between three and 14 months. The analysis focuses primarily on the 1,632 families in which both parents were employed. The results show that when the mother works outside standard hours, families less often use non-parental care, and fathers are more likely to provide care. These families represent the notion of shift-parenting most commonly associated with these dual-working families. However, many mothers work very short hours or are self-employed in these families with infants and these characteristics are associated with different patterns of care. Families are more likely to manage with only parental care than when the mother works longer hours or works in a permanent job. However, non-parental care in these families is not accompanied by increased involvement of the father in childcare. In these families, it appears, the mother is more likely to remain the primary carer of the infant, so is likely to be combining her work responsibilities with her childcare responsibilities.

Experiences of New Zealand families accessing budgeting services – Janine McCardle, Senior Policy & Research Analyst and Karen Wong Chief Analyst, Families Commission

The Families Commission is interested in learning about what will help New Zealand families to improve their financial wellbeing. The current recession will be particularly challenging for families who are already struggling to make ends meet on a daily basis and manage rising debts. This qualitative research involved interviews with 27 beneficiary families and 13 working families accessing budgeting services for financial support. These families shed light on the background of being in debt and accessing budgeting services, the impact of their financial situation and what they thought could help families get out of problem debt. This presentation of initial findings explores the influence of various factors on their situations. Possible policy and practice implications that may help to improve the financial wellbeing of families will be raised for discussion.

Beyond reasonable debt – Jaimie Legge, Senior Policy & Research Analyst, Families Commission

The Families Commission and Retirement Commission have jointly undertaken a review of literature and data to identify how circumstances, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours interact to create a problem debt situation for some individuals and families.

This review found that some circumstances (notably being young, having children and separation) and some behavioural traits (basing aspirations on comparisons with others or being impulsive) appear to be important in determining who gets into debt. Other circumstances (notably having low income) and behavioural traits (having an external locus of control) appear to be important in determining who gets into *problem* debt. Having an external locus of control means that you believe that your environment, some higher power or other people, control your decisions and your life, rather than believing that you control yourself and your life (internal locus of control). The family and wider culture is also recognised in the literature as having an important role to play in financial decision-making.

Multivariate analysis with the Ministry of Social Development's 2004 Living Standards Data is currently underway to test some of these relationships. Further multivariate analysis with data from the 2009 ANZ Retirement Commission Financial Knowledge Survey is proposed.

The Commissions intend to use the findings from this research to support individuals and families to have a positive experience using debt.

Finding Time: Parents' long working hours and their impact on family life – Dr Lindy Fursman for the Families Commission

This presentation reports on a multi-method project examining the impact of long work hours on family life. Census data indicates that a significant proportion of families in New Zealand have at least one parent working long hours each week. This research aimed to explore some of the experiences of these families, and as such, in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 couples with dependent children, all of whom had at least one parent working 50 or more hours a week. This presentation summarises the findings of the study, and reports on the factors that exacerbated or lessened the impact of long hours on family life.

AIM – Asian Immigrant Families: Enhancing resiliency: promoting a positive transition for Asian immigrant families in New Zealand – Amritha Sobrun-Maharaj and Fiona Rosse, University of Auckland

Using a resiliency focused ecological approach this study explored the way in which families from four Asian ethnic groups experienced immigration and sought to identify the barriers and facilitators to a positive settlement experience. Qualitative methods, focus groups discussions and family interviews were employed. In phase 1 of the study, 16 focus groups were conducted with 104 participants, 52 adults and 52 young people aged 16 to 25 years. In phase 2, interviews were conducted with eight families. Family groups ranged in size from two to six members with a total of 30 family members participating in interviews. Data from the focus groups were analysed and themes derived which were used to develop a schedule for the family interviews. Interviews were conducted in the family home and digitally recorded. Recordings were transcribed and the data analysed using a general inductive

approach. Results showed that the families in this study faced similar challenges to those identified in previous research; however, the impact of these challenges differed across families irrespective of ethnic group. Notions of family resilience were used to explore these differences which in turn suggest that the way in which families meet the challenges associated with immigration is a function of the degree of connectedness within the family and between the family the community and wider society. Finally, the authors examine the extent to which families experiences reflect the New Zealand Settlement Strategy (Department of Labour, 2004a).

The material wellbeing of New Zealand families – Scott Ussher, Senior Research & Policy Analyst, Families Commission

The ability of families to effectively manage their finances and resources and the consequences of not being able to do so has been identified as a concern from previous Families Commission research. The purpose of this research is to review the literature to provide the Commission with a rich and comprehensive source of information about the material wellbeing of New Zealand families by looking at how New Zealand families are currently managing, what types of families are managing better than others and what family characteristics are associated with material wellbeing.

Supporting Fathers?: Fathering in New Zealand today – Carl Davidson for the Families Commission

This research was designed to provide the Families Commission with a basis for advocacy in support of fatherhood. In particular, the research enables the Families Commission to better understand:

- the roles that fathers play
- the way these roles may have changed in recent years
- what helps or hinders fathers fulfilling these roles
- the support needs of fathers.

To answer these questions in a meaningful way, first the literature on fatherhood was reviewed, focusing on the kinds of supports fathers need. This was followed by a telephone survey with fathers from across New Zealand. A total of 1,721 fathers participated in this survey, completed in March and April 2009. The research team took a number of steps to ensure the survey provided results that provide the Families Commission with a robust insight into the attitudes and experiences of fathers in New Zealand today. This presentation, by the leader of the research team, will provide further details about the survey, and its findings.

3. Making a difference for families

Do area based initiatives work in Australia? – Dr Ben Edwards, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

There have been few policy initiatives that have specifically focussed on addressing the needs of children living in disadvantaged areas. One exception is Communities for Children (CfC) which is a major place-based initiative designed to improve the life chances of children. CfC was funded under the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) 2004–2008. It was previously unknown whether an area-based initiative, like CfC, would work in Australia.

This paper discusses the method and the results of the Stronger Families in Australia (SFIA) survey, which was a major component of the CfC evaluation. The survey was a three-wave longitudinal study of 2,202 families living in 10 sites that had a CfC programme and five sites that did not have a CfC programme but were in other ways comparable to the CfC sites (contrast sites). The CfC evaluation is one of the very few comprehensive multi site evaluations of area based early intervention programmes ever undertaken. It therefore has significance not only in Australia but internationally, where these types of interventions are being developed in many countries around the world.

Dr Ben Edwards is a Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. He has published research on the influence of neighbourhoods and communities on children's development using data from observational and experimental studies. He has expertise in the evaluation of community interventions. Dr Edwards has published other research on the impact of drought on families and children, social inclusion, children's school readiness and on families of caring for a person with a disability.

Family violence statistics – Radha Balakrishnan, Principal Policy & Research Analyst, Families Commission

This paper provides information on the Families Commission's upcoming publication *Family Violence Statistics Report*.

As part of the First Programme of Action of the Taskforce, the Families Commission has prepared the *Family Violence Statistics Report* which will improve the accessibility and availability of existing family violence data.

This presentation will highlight key issues and challenges in working with data from a variety of sources. The data is presented in sections from each agency. The data is taken from 2000–2006 (where available). Tables of data are included as an appendix in each section. Each section has a summary of the relevant data.

The report does not attempt to explain the data or causes for the trends outlined.

New Kiwis, Diverse Families: Migrant and former refugee families talk about their early childhood care and education needs – Anne Broome and Sara Kindon for the Families Commission

High quality early childhood care and education (ECE) for pre-schoolers is a key to achieving good outcomes for children and to ensuring parents can balance their family responsibilities and paid work. This presentation discusses the process and outcomes of a Families Commission-funded qualitative research project into the current ECE arrangements, preferences and priorities of new migrant and former refugee families. The project involved focus groups with 43 parents from across New Zealand and ECE experts in Wellington. It contributed important information into the Even Up programme of work, aimed at supporting changes to make life easier for families.

The research identified unmet ECE needs for these families in the context of parents' needs to acquire basic education and English proficiency as a precursor to paid employment, and the lack of adequate and affordable places and services for sufficient hours for children under three years of age to enable parents to undertake paid work or study. The study also identified a need for more targeted information for

new migrant and former refugee parents about current ECE opportunities, the New Zealand approach to ECE and its rationale, and how parents can be actively involved in their children's ECE if they wish. Finally, the research highlighted the need to understand more about the contribution to ECE of older family members and older children within larger families, and the impacts this caring work has on them.

Engaging Māori Whānau – Evaluation of a targeted parenting programme – Gill Pirikahau, Amohia Boulton, Lynley Cvitanovic

Positively influencing youth tobacco uptake and use was the factor motivating inclusion of a pilot parenting programme as part of the wider Ngāti Hauiti initiated He Arorangi Whakamua tobacco control project. Qualitative process and impact evaluation was planned and carried out alongside this pilot.

Programme development and implementation focused on identifying, adapting and delivering an intervention relevant to Māori, in particular Ngāti Hauiti whānau. The pilot, based on the Tips and Ideas on Parenting Skills (TIPS) programme, sought to address an identified whānau need for increased confidence and skill in parenting adolescents, including with respect to tobacco issues. Nine whānau participated in the pilot, run in two hour sessions over eight weeks, with all but two completing the programme.

Effectiveness of programme development and impact of participation on parenting were principal evaluation concerns addressed. Overall evaluation findings highlighted a number of positives including increased whanaungatanga (kinship) along with participant identification and use of programme strategies to deal with their children's challenging behaviours.

Factors identified as integral to effective parenting programmes for whānau included strong facilitator leadership, sound recruitment and retention strategies and seamless integration as part of broader iwi health and social services interventions.

Sent Home: The impact on the family of a child's exclusion from school – Andrew Smith PhD, Academic Dean, Bethlehem Tertiary Institute, Tauranga

While international literature asserts that research interest in suspension and exclusion from school is increasing, studies which consider the impact of exclusion on families or that give voice to parents' views are few.

This project explored the experiences and perceptions of a small group of caregivers in New Zealand, all of whom had had a teenager for whom they were responsible excluded from school during 2007, using a phenomenological methodology.

While the parents communicated as caring and articulate people, they reported significant negative emotional and practical impact. Strong views were expressed concerning both the process and its effect on their family. Their accounts highlight a distinction between exclusion as objective process and as subjective experience.

The caregivers views are discussed in the light of current international literature and New Zealand educational policy, and their suggestions regarding possible changes to the process put forward.

Pathways Through Parental Separation: The experiences of a group of non-resident fathers – David Mitchell and Philip Chapman

This presentation draws on the experiences of twenty 'non-resident' fathers who participated in a research project to suggest ways in which fathers currently moving through separation might best manage this process. However, during the process it became abundantly clear these men had experienced grief of significant proportion. Further, rather than their expressions of grief being recognised as such by others (especially services) they found themselves isolated, distressed and despairing. This created a volatile situation (both personally and interpersonally) at a time when they were least likely to develop or plan effective coping strategies. The study concluded that there is an urgent need for services to recognise this dynamic and better support fathers moving through the process of separation.

Family discipline in context – Julie Lawrence and Anne Smith

Family discipline is a controversial topic which has been debated for centuries, and which is known to have a lifelong effect on the well being of children. This report provides a snapshot of the views, experiences and practices of a sample of 100 New Zealand families, in relation to the discipline of their preschool children.

Parents/caregivers were asked about what they believed about discipline, how they disciplined their children, and the type of support and stress that they experienced with parenting. The study also looked at the effect of child and family characteristics and context over time, on discipline. The study used a multi-method approach, involving semi-structured parent interviews, parent diaries of disciplinary events over three days in a two week period, and a standardised tool, the Parenting Daily Hassles scale. One hundred and seventeen caregivers comprised the national sample – 99 mothers, 18 fathers, one grandfather and two grandmothers. The findings include the following headings: beliefs about discipline; disciplinary practices; the influence of child and family characteristics, stresses, context and support. The findings suggest a more favourable picture of New Zealand parents' disciplinary practice than previous research has, showing that the majority of parents took an authoritative (firm but warm) approach, and suggests that professionals who work with families could benefit from professional development programmes focusing on effective approaches to discipline.