



Why pathways can matter: Fathering, FDV & Children

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Outline

- Current challenges in running MBC Programs
- FDV and Parenting Programs
- Fathering Programs
- Women's perspectives
- Differing approaches working with men who are fathering in the context of FDV
- Why pathways matter at the moment



MBC Programs Current Challenges

- Co-occurrence of other issues: substance abuse, mental health, child abuse; fit with MBC?
- Contracting requirements
- Complexity of work – inc partner contact
- Workforce issues
- A need for highly self-actualised and skilled practitioners. Shamai & Buchbinder (2010) reported that participants credited change in their behaviours to facilitators
- What to do outside cities and towns in Aus

MBC Programs Current Challenges in relation to men as fathers

- Men's involvement in multiple children's lives
 - Biological children and partners' children
- Data and evidence about men's fathering and contact with children



Issues for fathering in FDV

- What is 'responsible' fathering?
- Difference between this and 'authoritative' fathering?
- Difference between these and 'generative' fathering?
- Quality of fathering vs. quantity?
- What is the focus of fathering programs?



Fathering in MBC programs

- A lack of children's perspectives in these programs
 - 2003: Australian programs for “child witnesses of DV” had very little content about children. Those that did reflected a child-focus rather than a direct focus on the fathering role. (child-focused work is on a continuum that includes child-focused child-centred child-inclusive practices)



Parenting programs

- Often have been ‘mothering’ programs about prescribed ways of being a mother but named as parenting without
 - Drop and drag approach
- Programs for new fathers – short and introductory around adjustment
- May assess for FDV – but then what does that mean?
- Mixed gender parenting groups
- Focus of change is the child(ren) whereas in MBC fathering the focus is the father

Fathering programs

- Relative recent introduction into Australia
- Particularly those examining men, masculinity and the context in which they father
- Driven often from health or early childhood sector
- Early intervention and prevention orientation



Aboriginal MBC and men's programs

- More holistic and comprehensive than group programs for either family violence or fathering.
- Focus on traditional ways of being while addressing both violence behaviours and fathering
- Framework of connection and healing.
- Many also work in 'the shadow of colonisation' and its effects on Indigenous peoples.
- Focus on colonisation, oppression, grief and loss.
- Healing and Harmony

What should we use as measures for success?

- Westmarland & Kelly (2013) reported that women and children may consider ending the violence as the only measure of success;
- They reported that subtle changes leading to greater safety and more harmony were equally important.



What should we use as measures for success? (Westmarland & Kelly)

- improved relationship between men and their partners, based on respect and positive communication;
- both having space to voice concerns, spend social time away from each other and make choices whilst improving their well-being;
- safety and freedom from violence for women and children;
- safe and positive shared parenting (attentiveness to children and greater trust);
- men's self-awareness, awareness of others and the impact of violence on others
- children feeling safer and being healthier (including feeling heard and cared for).



Programming approaches to fathering in the context of FDV

MBC – Children as motivation for change but very little specific content on fathering

2 Programs : MBC followed by

FDV Fathering Program

MBC Program

FDV Fathering module

MBC

Indigenous Programs: FDV Specific, Fathering, Healing, Family and Community

Fathering or Parenting Programs can include perpetrators. Parenting programs may be mixed gender. (Potential for victims and perpetrators in same group). Issues of Risk Assess and content suitability across all these program types



PROGRAM TYPE	RISK	CONTENT
MBC + FATHERING SPECIALIST ASPECT	Y	MBC AND THEN FATHERING
MBC WITH EMBEDDED MODULES	Y	Integrated Fathering module within MBC
FATHERING/ PARENTING	Y & N	PARENTING/FATHERING
INDIGENOUS MBC	Y	MBC WITH CULTURAL SPECIFICITY
INDIGENOUS MEN'S PROGRAM	Y AND NOT KNOWN	TRAUMA COLONISATION FAMILY HARMONY



Changes and why pathways matter

- In Australia pathways matter particularly in relation to court directed MBCs
- Perspective of children: largely not child focused
- Mother's perspective and experiences – informing program
- Family Court compared with State Gov and NGO Responses
- Since commencing the Fathering Challenges project there has been rapid take up of the area in various ways across Aus primarily in CP
- Most holistic approaches are the Aboriginal programs and have been more likely to look at impact on family and community

Moving forward

- Positive initiatives are growing around Australia
- From CP perspective there is more focus on engaging the father
 - Addressing the source of the risk
- Influencing mainstream parenting and fathering programs is critical
- Evaluation is critical as we have not been able to produce the evaluation evidence about MBCs generally to date that we need
- Co-occurrence of issues cannot be addressed by case management so looking at innovative ways to intervene together/collaboratively is important

