**Fathers, Mothers, and Evidence-Based Parenting Programs**

Although there is a large body of evidence that parenting programs are helpful, their development and subsequent assessments of their efficacy have been based nearly entirely on research involving samples of mothers (Flethcher, Freeman, & Matthey, 2011). Parenting research has increasingly highlighted the importance of fathers’ parenting to the child’s development. Children of involved fathers have increased numbers of positive interactions with parents and siblings, higher levels of academic achievement, better interpersonal relationships, and lower levels of delinquency and substance abuse (Flouri, 2005). This study was designed to examine mothers’ and fathers’ satisfaction with parenting programs, perceptions of barriers to participation, and opinions of delivery features.

**Research Questions**

- Do fathers and mothers have different preferences for how parenting programs are delivered?
- How do mothers and fathers differ in terms of perceived barriers to participation in parenting programs?
- How satisfied are mothers and fathers with the parenting supports they receive?
- Which program features are most likely to influence fathers’ and mothers’ decisions to participate in parenting programs?

**Method**

**Data Collection**

- International Parenting Survey – Canada (IPS-C)
- Online survey of caregivers of children aged 2 to 12
- Developed by researchers in Australia and Germany
- Worked with partner agencies to recruit participants in exchange for data reports (N = 2,340)

**Participants**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>200 (9.3)</td>
<td>2,140 (90.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>39.9 (8.1)</td>
<td>36.4 (6.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Age (Mean SD)</td>
<td>6.1 (3.1)</td>
<td>5.8 (3.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital Status (%)</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (%)</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>89.8</td>
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**Results**

**Perceived usefulness of service delivery formats**

Of the six service delivery formats rated as most useful by fathers and mothers, four were common to both (individually tailored, television, web-based, and seminar format). Despite this commonality, fathers rated each of the six modalities shown above as significantly less useful than did mothers.

**Program features that influence the decision to participate**

The seven (six shown above) features parents listed as being most likely to positively influence their decision to participate in a parenting program were common across both fathers and mothers. However, fathers rated each of those seven features as significantly less useful than did mothers.

**Conclusion**

- Fathers feel less of a need to participate in parenting programs than do mothers. In addition, fathers rated all proposed service modalities to be less useful than did mothers. They also rated the proposed program feature options as less influential in their decision to participate in a parenting program than did mothers.
- Taken together with fathers’ relative satisfaction with level of parents support (vs a vis mothers’ level of satisfaction), the data could be interpreted as indicating that fathers have comparatively less interest in parenting services and how they could be adapted to meet their needs.
- Fathers may see parenting programs as relevant to mothers, but not as relevant to themselves. This could explain their satisfaction with level of service despite finding a range of modalities to be less useful and a range of features to matter less to their decision to participate.

**Future Directions**

- Do fathers believe that parenting programs can assist them in their role or do they perceive such programs to be “for mothers?”
- Parenting programs have traditionally been offered through, or in association with, health care services. Fathers are less engaged in their own and their children’s health care than are mothers. Future research should explore whether program features and modalities related to settings traditionally associated with fathering (e.g., sports settings) will be rated by fathers as more useful or appealing.