INVESTIGATION OF PARENTING CAPACITY FOLLOWING SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In Australia, approximately 50,000 children and their families transition through divorce each year. A critically important issue for children’s wellbeing following parental separation is the quality of parenting and parent-child relationships. However, to date, there has been very little research in Australia that has explored parents’ views about the ways in which separation impacts upon their capacity to parent – to support their children, maintain positive relationships and manage the transition process - during an often intensely stressful time in their own lives.

The aim of this study was to examine parents’ views about the impact of separation and divorce on their children and to identify the issues that help and/or hinder parents’ capacity to effectively support them through this transition. The project was conducted in two phases: Phase 1- In-depth qualitative interviews with fifteen parents; Phase 2- Following analysis of data from phase 1, an on-line survey was developed, which was completed by 178 parents.

One of the most interesting findings was that most parents didn’t perceive that what they experienced intrapersonally (sadness, anger, mental health issues, happiness, relief etc) influenced their parenting approach (the interpersonal) to any great extent. This finding stands in contrast to a significant body of international research in this area. It suggests that further consideration needs to be given to how the interpersonal and the intrapersonal are addressed in programs and services designed to support parents following separation. Such findings are informing Interrelate’s continued planning and commitment to ensuring its support programs and services are evidence-based and reflect the lived experience, needs, interests and concerns of parents, children and families.

PROJECT TIMEFRAME

May 2010 – May 2012

PROJECT PARTNER

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RESEARCH TEAM

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