

RESEARCH IMPACT CASE STUDY - ADVANCING SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

CATHY HUMPHREYS

Title of Case Study:

INTEGRATING CHILD PROTECTION AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS TO PROVIDE 'WHOLE FAMILY' RESPONSES WHEN FAMILIES EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Researcher and Institution

Professor Cathy Humphreys, Professor of Social Work and Co-Director of the Safer Families Centre of Research Excellence at University of Melbourne.

Other members of research team

Professor Kelsey Hegarty, Professor Nicki Stanley, Dr Lucy Healey, and others.

1. CONTEXT

There is growing international understanding of domestic and family violence, its impact on children, and the need to integrate child protection and domestic violence responses so that relationships between mothers and children can be strengthened, not further damaged, by interventions. Yet services remain fragmented, fathers are not held responsible for their violence, and mother-blaming is still evident, especially in child protection systems. There is a need for more evidence on the multi-agency, holistic family approaches that can be contextualized for each family; effective interventions with children, and the role and responsibilities of abusive fathers in reparation with children. These are three areas where Prof Humphreys and her colleagues have pursued ground-breaking research.

2. SUMMARY OF IMPACT

Improved professional understanding of a problem leads to new approaches: The research program has been an important element of raising awareness about the effects of domestic violence on children and the need for interventions that enhance family relationships affected by domestic violence. Research has led to the development of policies and practice frameworks that better integrate child protection and DFV assessments, interventions, and models of interagency collaboration.

3. RESEARCH UNDERPINNING IMPACT

Professor Humphreys leads two main programs of research, one focusing on out-of-home care and the other on children and domestic violence. This case study focuses on the latter area, which spans more than 12 years and seven main research projects.

1. Safer Families, 2017- 2022. Funded by NHMRC. This is a large scale, multi-element research project with a number of partners. The aim is to generate new knowledge from evidence—reviews of studies, data from following families over time and trials of health and community programs. This will assist health and family services to identify domestic and family violence early; tailor responses to individual's experiences and to specific communities, develop and evaluate programs customized to mothering and fathering where there is domestic violence; and to better integrate child protection and domestic violence responses.

2. Fathers, domestic violence and intervention challenges, 2013-2017. ARC Linkage grant. Aimed at improving the parenting experience of children whose fathers have used domestic and family violence. It brings together researchers from multiple universities; a consortium of 23 nongovernment organisations, and governments from Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. The project spans the areas inclusive of fathering, men who use violence and Aboriginal healing and time-out programs. Utilising an action research framework, it aims to set standards and guidance for practice in working with men where there is D/FV to improve the parenting experience of children and the safety of women.

A nested PhD study within this project explored children's perspectives on fathering where there was domestic violence. A series of digital stories were made by the young people to be used in men's behaviour change programs and training professionals. Common to all children was a demand that their father make reparations in some way—to try to make amends— whether as a precondition for rebuilding trust, or just so that they could move on with their lives. This led to further work aimed at men taking responsibility, being responsive to the impact on children and being reparative.

3. Safety and resiliency at home: voices of children who live with fear, 2009-2012. ARC Linkage grant. This project involved qualitative interviews with children and their mothers drawn from a sample in primary care. Findings led to the development of policy guidelines for primary health care professionals working with children living with domestic violence. It also highlighted the issues which create both vulnerability and resilience in children living in these challenging circumstances.

4. I-Decide Safety Decision Aid 2013-2016. ARC Discovery Grant. This project was led by Professor Kelsey Hegarty with Humphreys as a CI on the project. In this randomised controlled trial, women who have experienced abuse or fear of a partner in the previous 6 months were randomised to receive either the I-DECIDE website or a comparator website (basic relationship and safety advice). I-DECIDE is a free online program developed by the research team. It uses tailored responses, motivational interviewing and nondirective problem solving tools to help women develop an action plan that meets their needs (see <http://www.idecide.org.au/>). The research found that I-DECIDE assists women to identify abuse and seek out support. The researchers recommended that I-DECIDE could be easily incorporated into the community sector and health care settings, providing an alternative to formal services for women not ready or able to acknowledge abuse and access specialised services.

5. Domestic and family violence and parenting: mixed method insights into impact and support needs, 2015-2017. ANROWS grant. With the aim of providing supportive care for mothers experiencing DFV and their children as an alternative to reporting all DFV to child protection services, this research used a mixed-methods approach to explore the impact of DFV on parenting; the methods and behaviours used by perpetrators to disrupt the mother-child relationship; and interventions used to strengthen and support a healthy mother-child relationship. It recommended that programs are needed with a DFV focus that provide victims of abuse with more intense and targeted therapy, psychotherapeutic interventions with combined mother-child sessions.

6. Pathways and Research In Collaborative Inter-Agency working (PATRICIA project), 2015-2017. ANROWS grant. This research sought to identify models of interagency working to improve support pathways and practice frameworks. It involved five strands (knowledge, pathways, case studies, perpetrator accountability, and action research) across four Australian States with numerous collaborators. It found that while working together towards similar goals for families seems a logical way of improving processes to reduce fragmentation, gaps, overlap, and redundancies in service provision, there is insufficient evidence that these changes improve outcomes for children and families. The PATRICIA Project used the action research process (including extensive file case reading) to generate new knowledge about the child protection-domestic and family violence interface and then translate this knowledge into a framework for practice (https://d2c0iky46o3b1.cloudfront.net/anrows.org.au/Patricia_Compass.pdf). Specifically it found that strong collaborations between organisations need to provide the foundation for multi-agency risk assessment and differentiated referral pathways for children living with DFV, and that families who do not meet the threshold for a child protection investigation can be diverted to a community organisation for assistance.

7. Stacey Project: Safe & Together Addressing Complexity, 2018-2019. DSS grant. The Safe and Together approach to child welfare provides case reading tools and other mechanisms that enable practitioners from statutory and non-statutory backgrounds to reach agreement on how best to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children living with DFV. This project will examine the effectiveness of family violence reforms in Victoria.

4. DETAILS OF IMPACT

Approach to Impact: Prof Humphreys states that the overall question driving her research program is: What do we need to do to make a difference? The research goes beyond understanding the impact of domestic violence on children, to consider what to do about it. The research is applied; it aims to inform policy and advocacy within the sector. In addition to extensive publications in professional and peer review journals, Prof Humphreys has engaged with state governments and service providers in collaborative research projects that provide a platform and an authorizing environment to influence policy and practice. Policy forums, briefings, participation in international, national and regional conferences and workshops, and industry partnerships are all mechanisms that are used to promote different ways of working. Humphreys estimates that she has had more influence within Australia than internationally, through contributing to public discourse about domestic and family violence – but it is difficult to pin down specific changes that have resulted from the research. Prof Humphreys described herself as an ‘activist researcher’, connected to the movement to end violence against women, and motivated to use research to contribute to social change.

Impact on public policy: Examples of inputs to public policy debate are:

- Expert witness for the Luke Batty coronial inquiry. Prof Humphreys stated that the findings of the coronial inquiry was a major catalyst for the establishment of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, Victoria.
- Prepared 10 submissions to the Royal Commission. The Royal Commission used evidence from Prof Humphreys and her team, citing it on 200 occasions through the Report. (http://www.rcfv.com.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Statements/WIT-0006-001-0001_1.pdf).
- To promote the findings of the PATRICIA Project, ANROWS held forums in NT, WA, Qld SA and NSW. These forums were well attended by Ministers, senior public servants and practitioners, prompting agencies to rethink how they record their notes, make assessments, and undertake integrated child protection and DFV practice.
- The Multi-Agency Triage Project in the NE region of Melbourne is an example of where the action research method prompts reflection and immediate action. In this case the data showed a marked increase in the number of women charged with DFV offences by Police, with two-thirds of these women having previously been victims of violence. This led to the establishment of a statewide DFV committee to address the issue of the misidentification of the perpetrator of domestic violence.
- MAEVe Submission to the Australian Children's Commissioner — prepared by Prof Humphreys and research team -- raised the needs of children living with domestic and family violence. June 2015 (<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/18.%20Melbourne%20Alliance%20to%20End%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20and%20their%20Children.pdf>).

Impact on service delivery. The research program has been a major influencer on new practice frameworks that take a whole of family approach—better integrating child protection and DFV assessment and interventions. The research program has evaluated and actively supported the Safe and Together US model (led by David Mandel) as a useful framework for assessment, analysis, and practice for integrated child protection and DFV work, which influenced statutory child protection agencies in Victoria and Qld to implement the model.

Improved understanding of a problem leads to new practices: Prof Humphreys has a long-standing interest in researching and promoting the needs of children in DFV and with her colleagues she has been instrumental in focusing on the impact that violence committed by their fathers has on them. The desire of children for reparation —for fathers to make amends—and take responsibility is a theme that is increasingly being incorporated into DFV practice and therapeutic work with children.

- ANROWS, as a funder that gives priority to translating knowledge into practice has required Prof Humphreys to publish implications for practice and policy in ANROWS reports on the research. These are widely read and used by practitioners.

Impact on quality of life for community members: It is a challenge to determine the impact of this research program in improving the safety and wellbeing of women and their children who experience domestic and family violence. This would require substantial research in its own right. Improvement to well-being are the ultimate aim of the research, especially for children whose views about their fathers have been voiced in the research, and for mothers in strengthening relationships with their children.

5. ENGAGEMENT

A strength of Prof Humphreys' research program is the enduring, committed relationships she and her team have established with a wide range of government agencies and NGOs, demonstrating the value of the research to policy and practice development. These agencies have committed substantial funds and time to the Chair role that Prof Humphreys has held and to ongoing research projects and implementation activities. State and Federal government agencies, and ANROWS, have committed several millions of dollars in research funding, and have demonstrated their interest in implementing research findings through policy change, new service delivery models and practitioner training. These partnerships provide a platform for engaging with industry, as well as relationships with influential industry stakeholders who are in a position to implement or advocate for changes based on the research findings. Building relationships with agencies to engage them as active stakeholders and funders in the research program is a mechanism to gain ‘buy in’ for policy and program change. This enables a rolling program of research, with workshops, training and a solid implementation agenda.

Significant industry appointments, memberships and awards

Prof Humphreys was appointed The Alfred Felton Chair of Child and Family Welfare, established in 2006 and funded for 5 years by the Alfred Felton Trust. It was then taken up as a continuing position from University of Melbourne and part funded for another 3 years by a consortium of 14 community sector organisations through the umbrella of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (The Sector Research Partnership).

Over the past 3 years Prof Humphreys has been a member of 26 advisory groups for government, and is currently a member of 7 advisory groups, 6 of which are informing the recommendations from the Family Violence Royal Commission, Victoria. Appointments to reference and advisory groups recognise the expertise of Prof Humphreys in domestic violence research and provide opportunities to use research findings to influence policy and practice.

- Appointed the National Sector Advisory Group for 1800RESPECT (2018-2019)
- Appointed to the RESPECT Taskforce at University of Melbourne aimed at eliminating sexual violence on campus 2017-2019
- Inducted into The Victorian Women's Honour Roll for engagement with the community in relation to child welfare and domestic and family violence. <http://www.vic.gov.au/news/2016-victorian-honour-roll-of-women.html>

Professional development and training

Prof Humphreys and her research team routinely conduct information-sharing workshops for practitioners, approximately 10-20 presentations per year — 17 presentations in 2016; 19 in 2017; 12 between Jan-April, 2018.

Examples include:

- Implementing and Researching Safe and Together: lessons from Australia. Social Work Scotland. https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Implementing+and+Researching+Safe+and+Together+Lessons+from+Australia/1_7wjpcud. April 2018.
- Health, Parenting and Domestic Violence Forum <https://www.thelookout.org.au/event/non-accredited/health-parenting-and-family-violence-forum>. June 2018
- Fathers and domestic violence. https://familiesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/FINAL-REGISTRATION-FORM-START-TODAY-AGAIN-1-Seminar-March-19-2018_.pdf
- Humphreys, C. Child protection and domestic violence: Challenges for policy and practice, NSW Department of Community Services, Research in Practice Seminar Series. April 2007 (DVD)

Prof. Humphreys is a co-founder of MAEVe, the Research Alliance to End Violence Against Women and Children <http://maeve.unimelb.edu.au/> which hosts workshops and networking to ensure research in the violence against women field is accessible to practitioners and researchers.

Media and public awareness

Prof Humphreys is sought out by media as an expert commentator and she and her team routinely use social media to promote their research. Evidence of her media profile includes:

- Numerous articles in the on-line publication *The Conversation and the Melbourne University on-line newspaper Pursuit (metrics show 21, 926 reads of 5 articles)*

- <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/knowledge-centre/multimedia/podcast/just-say-goodbye-cathy-humphreys-address>
- (28 September, 2015). *Rosie Batty: The Coroner is right about Child Protection and Police Systems* <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/sep/28/rosie-batty-coroner-is-right-about-child-protection-and-police-systems>
- (25 November 2015) Q&A Insight. ABC <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/sep/28/rosie-batty-coroner-is-right-about-child-protection-and-police-systems>
- Interview with Cathy Humphreys. ABC NewsRadio, 15 Jan 2016
- Berry Street Childhood Institute (November 27, 2013). Children Living with Domestic and Family Violence – Professor Cathy Humphreys
- (23 November 2017). Children Living with Domestic and Family Violence. <https://blog.goodchildhood.org.au/2013/11/27/children-living-with-domestic-and-family-violence-professor-cathy-humphreys/>
- 2016. ANROWS Conference Youtube interview Prof Cathy Humphreys. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hbek5eaKaul>

Research reports for industry bodies

- Humphreys, C. & Nicholson, D. (2017) Multi-Agency Triage Project: Final Report. Melbourne, University of Melbourne.
- Humphreys, C., Connolly, M. & Kertesz, M. (2018) Tilting our practice: a theoretical model for family violence. Melbourne, University of Melbourne.
- Humphreys, C. & Healey, L. (2017). PATHways and Research Into Collaborative Inter-Agency practice: Collaborative work across the child protection and specialist domestic and family violence interface – The PATRICIA Program, Research Report. ANROWS Horizons, issue 3/2017. Sydney: ANROWS.
- Connolly, M., Healey, L. & Humphreys, C. (2017). The Collaborative Practice Framework for Child Protection and Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Services – the PATRICIA Project: Key findings and future directions. ANROWS Compass Research to policy and practice, issue 3/2017. Sydney: ANROWS.
- Kaspiew, R., Horsfield, B., Qu, L., Nicholson, J., Humphreys, C., Diemer, K. et al, (2017) Domestic and family violence and parenting: Mixed method insights into impact and support needs: Key findings and future directions. Horizon Report, Sydney, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).
- Ma, J., Shlonsky, A., Jeffreys, C., Eastman, C., Healey, L., Humphreys, C. & Katz, I. (2017). The PATRICIA project: Summary of the Pathways component. Sydney: ANROWS.
- Mandel, D., Healey, L. & Humphreys, C. (2017). The PATRICIA Project: Summary of the Safe and Together case reading to develop domestic and family violence-informed child protection practice. Sydney: ANROWS.
- Macvean, M., Humphreys, C., Healey, L., Mildon, R., Albers, B., Connolly, M., Parolini, A. & Spada-Rinaldis, S. (2015) The PATRICIA project – Pathways and Research in Collaborative Inter-Agency Working: State of Knowledge paper. ANROWS Landscapes Report, Issue 14.
- Diemer, K., Humphreys, C. and Healey, L. (2015) An approach to safety: Evaluation of a model of Safe at Home for women and children experiencing family violence within the Western Integrated Family Violence Partnership, Melbourne Melbourne, University of Melbourne.

Research supervision and teaching

Prof Humphreys led the consortium with Latrobe University and University of Melbourne Social Work Schools to successfully deliver a Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Leadership and the Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice for 5 years funded by the Victoria Department of Human Services.

The Australian Association of Social Work developed accreditation requirements for domestic violence courses which were based on chapter headings from Prof Humphreys' 2013 book.

6. RESEARCH INCOME

Approximately \$8 million worth of funding has been attracted through grants and tenders associated with over 30 different projects of differing scope, size and collaborations. Seven 7 grants totaling \$5,732,000 related to child protection and DFV are listed for this case study.

Category 1 (international and national competitive)

1. Humphreys, C. Centre for Centre for Research Excellence: Safer Families, 2017– 2022. NHMRC \$2,500,000.
2. Humphreys, C. Domestic and family violence and parenting: mixed method insights into impact and support needs, 2015–2017. ANROWS grant \$39,000 of a \$230,000 grant.
3. Hegarty, K. & Humphreys, C. I-Decide Safety Decision Aid, 2013–2016. ARC Discovery Grant \$800,000.
4. Humphreys, C. Pathways and Research In Collaborative Inter-Agency working (PATRICIA project), 2015–2017. ANROWS grant \$720,000.
5. Humphreys, C. Fathers, domestic violence and intervention challenges, 2013–2017. ARC Linkage grant \$1,082,000.
6. Humphreys, C. Safety and resiliency at home: voices of children who live with fear, 2009–2012. ARC Linkage grant \$96,000.

Category 2 (government)

7. Humphreys, C. Stacey Project: Safe & Together Addressing Complexity, 2018–2019. DSS grant \$495,000.

7. RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Between 2015 and 2018, the publication outputs for this program of research was over 23 refereed journal articles, 9 published reports, briefing papers and guidance, and 2 book chapters. Selected academic publications are:

1. Stanley, N. and Humphreys, C. (2015) Domestic Violence and Child Protection: New Challenges and Developments, London, Jessica Kingsley Publications.
2. Humphreys, C., Healey, L., Nicholson, D. & Kirkwood, D. (2018) Making the case for a differential child protection response for children living with domestic and family violence. *Australian Social Work*, 71, 162–174 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2017.1415366>
3. Lamb, K., Humphreys, C. & Hegarty, K. (2018 accepted) "Your behaviour has consequences": Children and young people's perspectives on reparation with their fathers after domestic violence. *Child and Youth Services Review* DOI: 10.1016/j.chilcyouth.2018.03.013
4. Humphreys, C., Healey, L. & Mandel, D. (2018) Case reading as a practice and training intervention in domestic violence and child protection. *Australian Social Work*, 71, 162–174 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2017.1413666>
5. Humphreys, C. & Campo, M. (2017) Fathers who use violence: options for safe practice where there is ongoing contact with children. CFCA Paper no. 43. Melbourne, Australian Institute of Family Studies.
6. Stanley, N. & Humphreys, C. (2017). Identifying the key components of a 'whole family' intervention for families experiencing domestic violence and abuse. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 1 99–115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1332/239868017X14913081639164>
7. Thiara, R.K. and Humphreys, C. (2017) Absent presence: the on-going impact of men's violence on the mother-child relationship. *Child and Family Social Work Social Work*, 22, 137–145 DOI: 10.1111/cfs.12210
8. Tarzia, L., Humphreys, C. & Hegarty, K. (early access 2016) Translating research about the response to domestic and family violence into practice in Australia. *Evidence and Policy*. 13, 709–722. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1332/174426416X14742825885830>
9. Laing, L. and Humphreys, C. with Cavanagh, K. (2013) *Social Work and Domestic Violence: Critical and Reflective Practice*. London, Sage Publications.
10. Humphreys, C. and Absler, D. (2011) History repeating: child protection responses to domestic violence. *Child and Family Social Work*, 16, 369–489

