

"It's quite easy to be a father, but you've got to be a dad as well": Aboriginal men's discourse on parenting."

Authors: Dr Kootsy Canuto, Kurt Towers, Joshua Riessen, Jimmy Perry, Shane Bond, Dudley Ah Chee & Alex Brown.

Abstract

Introduction: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men rarely rate a mention within discussions of parenting unless framed in the negative, or as the cause of dysfunctional family life. Consequently, the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men within parenting have largely been neglected or ignored, leading to a societal perception that they are disinterested in and or disengaged from their parental roles and responsibilities, however, our study found this to be far from the truth.

Aims: Our study aimed to (i) explore the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander male parents in South Australia as defined by men themselves and (ii) uncover strategies to assist how these men can be engaged appropriately to participate in the parenting realm to continue to be successful and supportive in their parenting roles.

Methods: Research topic yarning guided the gathering of individuals stories in four focus groups across four communities in South Australia; Coober Pedy, Yalata, Port Lincoln and metro Adelaide. This study is entrenched in an Indigenist research approach which privileges Indigenous lives, Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous voices.

Results: 46 Aboriginal male parents across four South Australian communities contributed to this study. The roles, responsibilities and challenges uncovered in this study highlights an urgent need for maternal and early years services to increase and improve their understanding of the needs and desires of Aboriginal male parents to be included in parenting.

Conclusion: It is evident that more should be done to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents, and this should start with the acknowledgment of their vital roles in the healthy development of children and their families.