



## VITAL COMMUNITIES, VITAL SUPPORT

Symposium: Wider Vision of Pascal Report  
January 8, 2010




### If it takes a village, How are our villages doing?

To take a *quantitative measure* of:  
... How parents of young children feel about the support they receive **for their parenting role** from their communities?

... Does support matter?

*-- from parents' point of view*




### 2006 Survey

Demographically and regionally representative on-line survey of parents;

- 20 years or older
- With a child age 5 or younger.


2,500 partnered mothers and fathers



### To better understand

- Parents' knowledge of child development
- Parents' confidence in their parenting
- Parenting behaviour

How these relate to the support parents feel in their parenting role.




### Parenting needs improvement

NEGATIVE PARENTING: get annoyed, scold, physical punishment, shame		
	Mothers %	Fathers %
Excessive levels of	24	30

POSITIVE PARENTING: laugh together, praise your child, play just for fun.		
	Mothers %	Fathers %
Insufficient levels of	15	29




### Parenting behaviour not driven by socio-ec factors

Negative parenting: not related to income or education for mothers or fathers.

Positive parenting: not related to income or education for mothers.

- For fathers, positive parenting actually decreases as income increases.



## Knowledge and confidence matter!

- The more knowledgeable parents were about child development,
- And the more confident they were in the parenting role,
- The more positive, less negative was their parenting behaviour.

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## Is parenting related to support?

### 4 sources of support:

- Spouse/partner: primary source of support for the parenting role for most partnered parents.
- Own Parents: viewed as a source of support, even if they do not live close by
- 'Other' Family and Friends: also relied on by many
- Neighbourhood Community: expectations to provide warm and welcoming place to raise their child

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## Wife/Partner Support

### Mothers are key for fathers:

- Main support for the parenting role.
  - High support → more positive and less negative parenting behaviour.
- Primary influence re fathers' knowledge and confidence.
  - High support → more knowledge and confidence

Yet only 44% of fathers perceive high support from their wife/partner.

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## Husband/partner support

### Fathers are important to mothers.

- High support → more positive, less negative parenting behaviour.
- High support → more knowledge and confidence

Yet only 43% of mothers perceive high support from their husband/partner.

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## Own Parent Support

### Plays a critical role for their adult children.

- Fathers: the only other source of support related to parenting.
  - High support → more positive, less negative parenting & more confidence in parenting.
- Mothers:
  - High support → less negative parenting and more knowledge about child development.

Yet only 55% of Mothers and 46% of Fathers report high support from their own parents.

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## 'Other' Family/Friend Support

### Fathers:

- Only 1/3 report high support.
- Not related to their parenting behaviour.

### Mothers:

- Only 50% report high support
- The single most influential source of support related to positive parenting.
- High support → 2 times as likely to have sufficient levels of positive parenting.

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## Neighbourhood Support

Only 26% of Mothers and 27% of Fathers feel high support by their neighbourhood community!

A critical support for Mothers:


- High support → more *knowledge* about child development and more *confidence* in parenting.



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## Too few parents feel highly supported in their parenting role

	MOTHERS % Highly Supported	FATHERS % Highly Supported
Spouse/Partner	43	44
Own Parents	55	46
Other Family Friends	50	34
Neighbourhood Community	26	27




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## What about Programs, Services and Resources?

Most parents see the basket of programs, services and resources available to them as an important extension of their neighbourhood community

-- a tangible demonstration of a supportive community



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## We asked parents about every common community resource

**Gen'l Public Resources:** e.g., playgrounds, libraries, arenas/rec centres, public places for parents & children

**Organized Activities:** e.g., instructional swim/skate/exercise progs, organized sports leagues, instructional arts

**Child-Focused/Informal Programs:**

- Drop-in programs
- Early Years/Parent Link Centres, Family Resource Centres, YW/YMCAs
- Parent/child programs such as Mom and Tot, Baby and Me
- Organized playgroups

**Parenting Issue/Role Improvement Programs**

- Workshops/programs re handling parenting challenges
- Parenting classes/general parent improvement sessions




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## Does "use" matter?

Yes!

High users (6+ resources/programs last year):

- More feel highly supported by their neighbourhood community than low users.
- Are 65 - 75% more likely than low users to have good levels of positive parenting.
- However -- no relationship to negative parenting



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## The Clear Favourites

**Playgrounds**  
80% say they are "very important"  
80% "used" them



**Libraries**  
70% say they are "very important"  
70% "used" them




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## The Last Choices...

Parenting Workshops  
re: Behavioural Challenges  
40% say are "very important"  
15% "used" them



General Parenting  
Improvement Sessions  
30% say are "very important"  
15% "used" them



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## The most popular resources

- Universal (not targeted or remedial)
- Informal and unstructured
- For "my child" not "for me."
- Non-judgmental

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## Clearly there is an issue re Parenting Programs - Why?

Parents feel parenting is supposed to be natural, intuitive.

If there's a problem

- "It's because I am failing at my most important job."
- "Society expects me to fend for myself until my children reach school age."

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Society reflects this because:

- Target high risk and special needs families.
- Creates a stigma about asking for help.

Taken together:

- Most don't think parenting programs are "very important."
- Even fewer admit to using them.

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## Re-cap

1. Parenting behaviour is strongly related to the support parents feel for their parenting role.
2. Too few parents feel highly supported by anyone.
  - Yet each source is critical to parents':
    - knowledge about child development
    - confidence in parenting
    - parenting behaviour.

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3. Volume of program use is important because it is linked to increased positive parenting.
4. Few parents use traditional parent education programs, or even think they are important.

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## The findings support Charles Pascal's message

- Every parent - all parents - can benefit from parenting supports.
- We need to normalize the challenges parents face, and remove the stigma that often comes with seeking parenting support.
- While it "takes a village to raise a child," we need our villages to be more effective.

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## The challenges of parenting have never been greater

Yet parents do not experience the support they need... from their partners, their own parents, their friends, their neighbors or their community programs and resources.

*We are those partners, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbours and service providers...*

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Look around this room....

We have the power to transform how parents experience a new kind of supportive village, a village we all want to be part of...

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... and what could be more rewarding,  
more worthwhile?

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