






**Product Evaluation in a Social Marketing and Community Development Context: A Case Study Revisited**





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**Introduction**

- effective evaluation of social marketing (SM) programs is crucial
- Parenting programs are typically weak in the area of evaluation





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**What is Starting Points (SP)?**

- a national parent development program for parents and caregivers of 0-4 year olds
- a project of Focus on the Family Australia (FOFA: a not-for-profit NGO) with much 'buy in' from the Salvation Army



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**What is Starting Points (SP)?**

- uses social marketing techniques & local volunteers: community development
- high quality training results in 'peer activist facilitators' (PAFs) selected and trained




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**What are PAFs?**

- often parents ('peers') themselves
- not necessarily 'experts'
- materials are high quality, evidence based
- Peer to peer delivery = community development approach



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**Parenting Interventions & Social Marketing**

- social networks impact parent participation
- therefore parent programs are well suited to the use of elements of *social marketing*






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*Aim of the paper:*

- summarise the evaluation of a *community development product*
- report empirical results of the program

*Conceptual Background*

- little attention is given in the literature to *product evaluation* in a *social marketing context*
- many models of evaluation have been reported eg:  
formative/efficacy/process/outcome





*Conceptual Background*




- *Starting Points (SP) evaluation* is guided by 'continuous improvement' and 'action learning' concepts (McLoughlin 2004; Thompson and Perry, 2004)
- *SP* uses a multi levelled program of evaluation








*Conceptual Background*

- A full *Starting Points (SP) evaluation* includes *processes and outcomes* including *social dimensions* (not fully reported here)
- The dependent variable being evaluated is: *parental confidence – the 'core product'*




*Methodology*

- How do we evaluate *parental confidence*?
- By inference, through parental self assessment
- This is a longitudinal design @ T1, T2 & T3
- Questions fit into three categories measuring *cognitive, emotive and behavioural confidence*




*Methodology*

- Additional data collected from non-participant control groups: quasi experimental design
- 27 forced choice items/5 –point likert scale
- Demographic items and two open ended questions




**Methodology**

- The survey is also given to *partners (or other significant adults)* of the *Starting Points* participants, at two time points: T1 & T2




**Methodology**

- The sample:
  - 697 began pre-test/650 completed this (93%)
  - 540 completed immediate post-test (83% retention rate)
  - 164 completed post-test 2 survey(32% of those completing the immediate post-test)




**Methodology**

- Co-parent/other adult participants:
  - 250 participants completed pre-test
  - 90 (36%) completed survey about their co-parent at T2 (immediate post-test)




**Methodology**

- Control Group
  - 78 participants recruited from ready established playgroups etc, representing cross section of socio-economic status
  - 48 (62%) completed survey after 4-8 weeks
  - Somewhat older demographic than intervention group/more females




**Results**

- Demographics:
  - 78.4% female
  - 80.7% one or two children
  - 93.3% married /de facto relationship
  - 5.4% single parent families




**Results**

- Demographics:
  - Median age: 36.1%, 30-34 years
  - 33.3%, 35-44 years
  - 21.0%, 25-29 years
  - All states of Australia represented across 122 parent groups
  - Most were carers of their own children




**Results**

- a) Changes across three time periods
  - at post-test (T2), participants registered significantly +ve changes in confidence for all items (mostly at 'agree' or 'strongly agree' level)
  - at delayed post-test (T3), mean item scores sustained, or slight slip back but still higher than pre-test (T1)




**Results**

- b) Co-parent/other adult perceptions of change
  - co-parent rated participant parent as having improved confidence across three scales after attending *Starting Points*
  - 23 of 27 items = significantly higher rating

**Results**

- c) Comparison of intervention & control groups
  - Significant effect was measured for all confidence levels (CC, BC, EC)
  - Control group sample stayed the same or slipped back slightly

**Discussion**

- Possible confounding factors:
  - Test-retest familiarity with questions asked
  - A general increase in level of confidence as an affect of the passing of time
  - BUT – program participants + parenting partners are *both* perceiving improved confidence





**Discussion**



- There are a number of other benefits of participating in such a parenting program
  - a focus on interaction with child/ren
  - a focus on marriage/partner relationship
  - a focus on family interaction
  - a desire to seek support
  - a desire to look after and value 'self'






**Discussion**


- This information AND evaluation of *other social marketing dimensions* will result in a true marketing audit of the program
- *Future research*
  - investigation into networks of PAFs to raise up a profile of a facilitator, also parenting networks






*Conclusion*

- The findings report the efficacy of a program delivering as its core benefit – enhanced parental confidence
- A rigorous, comprehensive audit, marrying social marketing processes and community development = Starting Points




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*Conclusion*

- Such evaluation is vital for strong sense of continuous improvement/accountability
  - AND

Building an evidence base for forming of effective partnerships and cross learnings in an age where social needs are pressing , resources are scarce



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*Thank you*

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