

Father involvement and child outcomes

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Importance of father involvement

- Change in the role of fathers in past decades
- Father involvement related to language, cognitive, socio-emotional development of children (Gray & Grittenden, 2014; Hagan & Kuebli, Duursma, Raikes, Pan, 2008)
- Important role of Home Learning Experiences (HLE) for child development (Melhuish, 2008; Yu & Daraganova, 2014)
- Little known about Indigenous fathers and their involvement with children, in particular in HLE



Research Questions

- How are Indigenous fathers involved in the lives of their 5-year-olds?
- What type of home learning experiences (HLE) do they engage in with their children?
- Does father engagement in HLE predict children's language and cognitive skills?



Participants

- Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)
- 2 cohorts: 1) children ages 6-18 months (b cohort)
2) children ages 3.5-5 years (K cohort)
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 1,200 interviews with mothers and 200 interviews with fathers
- Wide range of topics from health, family, home learning environment, major life events, culture and language, substance abuse etc.
- Child assessments



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Characteristics participants

- 213 fathers interviewed at child age 5-6
- Majority biological father
- 40% low socioeconomic status
- Average age father= 36 years (SD=8, range=24-67)
- 62% of fathers employed
- Most fathers educated until year 10



Best thing about being a father

- “She is the best thing I have ever done”
- “Being able to teach him what I know”
- “Enjoy crafts things and making things”
- “Everything, except toilet training”
- “He means everything to me, he inspires me”
- “I am the lucky one to be his father”



Father engagement in daily tasks

	Cooking	Eat evening meal with child	Helps child brush teeth	Get child ready for bed
Never	13%	0.5%	29%	9%
Occasionally	27%	10%	25%	18%
Often	29%	9%	20%	26%
Very often	31%	80%	26%	47%



Father engagement in home learning experiences

	Music/ sing/d ance	Read book	Arts and crafts	Tell oral story
Never	13%	14%	18%	14%
Occasionally	26%	36%	43%	33%
Often	34%	29%	27%	24%
Very often	26%	21%	12%	29%



Does father engagement predict child outcomes?

- Father involvement in HLE does NOT predict language skills
- Father involvement in HLE does NOT predict cognitive skills

- Paternal bookreading did NOT predict language or cognitive skills
- Paternal bookreading (as reported by mom) DID predict language and cognitive skills
- Maternal bookreading and oral storytelling DID predict language and cognitive skills



Conclusion

- Fathers in this study very much involved
- All fathers positive about being a father
- Father HLE involvement did not predict child outcomes directly
- However, father bookreading as reported by mom does impact child development



Next steps

- Does maternal bookreading mediate paternal bookreading?
- Other aspects of father involvement influence child dev.?
- Examine mother report on father involvement



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Thank you!

Questions?



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