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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cooking</th>
<th>Eat evening meal with child</th>
<th>Helps child brush teeth</th>
<th>Get child ready for bed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Father engagement in home learning experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Music/sing/dance</th>
<th>Read book</th>
<th>Arts and crafts</th>
<th>Tell oral story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
Thank you!

Questions?