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MALE INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LIVES:
Roles and Relevance to Academic and Non-academic Outcomes in the Australian Context

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Abstract: Quantitative and qualitative Australian evidence shows that fathers and male teachers can have positive impacts in children's academic and non-academic lives – and that these impacts are greatest when fathers/males are highly and constructively involved in children's development. It seems that positive impacts are a function of the father as a parent (or male teacher as a quality educator) rather than the father as a man – as evidenced when fathers are positively involved in child-rearing (and when male teachers implement quality pedagogy). However, because of the generally low levels of father/male involvement in children's lives, it is evident that there is further scope for children to be more optimally assisted in their academic and non-academic lives through greater constructive and pro-social involvement of fathers/males. Australian research has suggested ways this can happen and identified some of the challenges and opportunities ahead as practitioners, policy makers, and researchers seek to do this.

Keywords: fathers, fatherhood, males, male teachers, male caregivers, children, academic development, non-academic development, elementary school, pre-school

With particular focus on the Australian context (but also drawing on relevant international research), this chapter examines current findings, government policy, commissioned reviews and evaluations, successful programs, and future directions relevant to the role of father/male involvement in children's academic and non-academic lives. Not a great deal is known about father/male participation across diverse cultural contexts (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000) and so the present chapter offers an opportunity to situate recent Australian research, policy, and practice in an international context.

1 HISTORY, RECENT RESEARCH, AND CURRENT DEBATES

There has been substantial popular commentary articulating the need for more paternal involvement in children's lives. More recently, this has filtered into the academic domain and translated into the espoused need for more male teachers to better develop students academically. In the Australian context, in interviews with teachers as well as key researchers and policy makers, Martin (2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004) found that participants consistently endorsed the need for more male teachers and male role models in children's (particularly boys') lives. Similarly, work by Fletcher (2008) has found that there is dominant view in Australia that males should be more involved in care-giving (see also West, 1996).

It is proposed here that four lines of research are influential drivers of debates on this issue. The first relates to the gender differences on numerous academic and non-academic outcomes – differences that are often not in favor of boys (summarized below) – prompting questions about the need for more male teachers and more positive male role models. The second is the generally low levels of father/male participation in parenting and teaching. For example, across three key dimensions of parenting (engagement, accessibility, responsibility), fathers spend significantly less time than mothers with their children – sometimes to the point of no meaningful involvement whatsoever (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2003; see also McBride & Mills, 1993; McBride & Rane, 1997; Nichols, 2009; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003). Indeed, there are very low levels of fathers' participation in research, in itself a major barrier to understanding the effects of father/male engagement (Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 2000; Nichols, 2009). The third is something of a confluence of the first two that addresses questions about the need for fathers/males in boys' academic and non-academic lives, and by extension, the role of fathers/males in girls' academic and non-academic lives. The fourth relates to the potential yields of involved fathers and male caregivers for children's academic and non-academic outcomes. With particular emphasis on the Australian context but also drawing on foundational and salient international work, each of these four lines of research is reviewed.

1.1 Father/Male Involvement and Participation

According to Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), increasingly fathers are more *and* less involved in child-rearing. That is, there is a growing dichotomy in children's experience of fathering. In terms of greater involvement, there are more single fathers involved in care-giving and there are more fathers involved in childcare as their wives/partners are in work (Pleck, 1997). In terms of lesser involvement, there are more children in single-parent homes headed by mothers/female caregivers (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) and families where the father's primary role is breadwinner (O'Hare, 1995). Problematically, studies are consistent in demonstrating significantly less paternal interaction time with children (Pleck, 1997). Even when the mother works, fathers assume significantly less responsibility such that though they are proportionally more involved (because the mother then spends less time child rearing), in terms of absolute

time spent with children fathers are not highly involved (Lamb, 1997a; Pleck, 1997). Similarly, whilst research indicates that fathers are more involved in play than in 'nurturing' activities, mothers still spend more time in play than fathers (Lamb, 1997a).

The limited research conducted in Australia generally supports these findings. For example, although increases in paternal time in child-rearing have been found overseas (e.g., USA, Canada, the Netherlands) (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003), such positive shifts are not so marked in Australia. For example, time use studies in 1983 and 1997 found that the time fathers spent with their children had not changed by any substantial measure. Similarly, time use studies by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) between 1992 and 1997 found a small increase in paternal time with children (ABS, 2006; Russell, Barclay, Edgecombe, Donovan, Habib, Callaghan et al., 1999). Interestingly, this is in stark contrast to what Australian males believe should be the case. Findings from a national sample of 1,000 Australian men showed that the vast majority agreed that mothers and fathers should share equally in the responsibilities of child rearing (Russell et al., 1999). Similarly, the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes indicated that the majority of females and males agreed that fathers should be 'heavily involved' in child rearing (Wilson, Meagher, Gibson, Denemark, & Western, 2005).

There is also agreement amongst Australian service providers that fathers should be more involved in child rearing duties (Russell et al., 1999). The Fitting Fathers into Families Report surveyed professionals and service providers and found that male and female respondents agreed that fathers and mothers should share responsibility for child rearing (Russell et al., 1999). However, a sizeable number also believed that fathers were not sufficiently capable of responsible child rearing.

Other Australian research has examined fathers' involvement in their children's academic life. In a survey of principals from 43 elementary schools, Fletcher and Silberberg (2006) found only one-fifth of school volunteers were male, a finding consistent with prior research (Bittman, 1995; Bittman & Pixley, 1997). Involvement was highest for outdoor activities such as school watch and working bees (between 50 and 70 percent) and lowest for child-centered activities such as in the classroom (around 7 per cent). When reporting on attendance at discipline interviews, 87 percent of mothers attended discipline interviews compared with 43 percent of fathers.

Other Australian research has investigated parental involvement in specific academic areas. For example, in an Australian study of school-parent partnerships, Cairney and colleagues (1995) reviewed 260 parent language and literacy programs. These researchers found that parent participation was highly gendered with mothers representing the vast majority of program participants. They recommended that Australian research should investigate the role of gender in children's literacy and literacy programs and the specific role of fathers in literacy and children's literacy development (see also Hawkes, 2001).

This low level of paternal involvement in child rearing and school involvement has led some to suggest that gender neutral terms such as 'parent programs' and 'school-parent' partnerships is inappropriate and potentially misleading (Nichols, 1994). According to David (1993; see also Nichols, 1994), gender neutral terminology such as this risks masking patterns of paternal and maternal influence that are important for optimizing children's academic and non-academic outcomes.

1.2 Differences Between Boys and Girls

A second line of research driving debates around paternal and other male influences relates to differences between boys and girls on numerous academic and non-academic outcomes[1]. These differences have not only prompted extensive research focusing on boys and girls but have also led to interest in issues relevant to fathers and mothers and their role in shaping some of these differences (Martin, Marsh, Cheng, & Ginns, in press). On many counts, academic and non-academic differences are not in boys' favor. On average, girls outperform boys in a greater number of subjects and there are more girls amongst the higher achieving students (Collins, Kenway, & McLeod, 2000). In Australia (the focus of the present chapter), 90 percent of girls in the early school years attain the minimum national standard compared with 85 percent of boys (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000). Similarly, girls outperform boys on writing, reading, speaking, and listening measures (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000). Boys are also more negative about school, see homework as less useful, are less

[1] It is recognized that a focus on gender differences can ignore the support for gender similarities and the sometimes small sizes of gender differences. As emphasized by Hyde (2005) in her meta-analytic review, males and females are more similar than different on many variables and there is variability in gender effects across studies. However, particularly in the academic domain the view in this chapter is that there are patterns of gender effects sufficient to conclude that on numerous measures boys and girls are different.

likely to ask for help, and are more reluctant to do extra work. From teachers' perspectives, they see that boys are less able to concentrate, less determined to solve difficult problems, and less productive (MacDonald, Saunders, & Benfield, 1999; see also Rowe, 1997). In terms of problematic behavior in Australia, there are significantly higher rates of school suspension for boys (Ainley & Lonsdale, 2000). Marsh (1989a, 1989b) reviewed research into gender differences. Although he found small gender stereotypic differences for math and verbal constructs that were consistent with other research (e.g., Hyde, 2005), he also identified a more long-term perspective based on nationally representative samples showing that gender differences favoring girls were becoming larger whereas gender differences favoring males were becoming smaller (also see Martin & Marsh, 2005).

Australian-based research has also shown that as early as elementary school, girls score higher than boys in their academic self-efficacy, mastery orientation, valuing of school, persistence, planning, and task management. Results have also shown that girls score lower than boys in failure avoidance, self-handicapping, and disengagement. Thus, girls are generally more motivated and engaged than boys (Marsh, Martin, & Cheng, 2008; Martin, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2007; Martin & Marsh, 2005). Importantly, however, it is not all going girls' way – they are, for example, higher than boys on anxiety and uncertain control. Also, in the middle years of high school (about 14-15 years old), girls are not significantly different from boys on many of these motivation and engagement factors. Taken together, these gender differences are of sufficient consistency and magnitude for questions to be asked regarding the role of fathers/males (including male teachers) in boys' and girls' academic and non-academic lives.

1.3 Gender Matched Response

In part a result of these gender differences, a third driver of debates about fathers/males in child development is research into the differential effects of fathers/males on boys' and girls' academic and non-academic outcomes (Martin et al., in press). The *gender matching* (or sex role socialization) hypothesis proposes that academic and non-academic outcomes are more positive in situations where the gender of child and adult match. This hypothesis tends to assume homogeneous conceptions of boys and girls (Marland, 1983) and the conception that males are better equipped to meet the needs of boys and females are better equipped to meet the needs of girls. This has led to the policy and practice of matching boys to men and girls to women (Arnot, 1991).

Criticisms of the gender matching hypothesis revolve around the narrow and polarized views of boys and girls and the passive conception of gender (Skelton, Carrington, Francis, Hutchings, Read, & Hall, 2009). In relation to the former, it has been argued that genuinely representative accounts of gender appropriately account for the diversity of ways to be a boy and a girl (Connell, 2002; Skelton et al., 2009). In relation to the latter, the gender matching hypothesis can be criticized for assuming boys and girls are passive recipients of male and female (respectively) modeling (Skelton, 2001; Skelton et al., 2009). These criticisms are part of what has been referred to as the *gender invariant* hypothesis. Put simply, there is no significant effect of matching child and adult gender. Thus, any derived effects are not a function of the gender interaction, but a function of other factors.

The gender matching and gender invariant hypotheses have been tested in various ways. As described in Martin et al. (in press), researchers have examined the effects of male and female teachers on boys' and girls' academic outcomes. Gender matching would predict that boys fare best under male teachers and girls fare best under female teachers. Gender invariance would predict that boys' and girls' academic outcomes are not a function of teacher gender. Also in the academic domain, researchers have examined single-sex schools and co-educational schools. Gender matching would predict advantages to students in single-sex schools compared with students in co-educational schools. Gender invariance would predict any differences between boys and girls are not a function of the gender composition of the school. Moving beyond the academic domain, researchers have examined the role of fathers (and male caregivers) and mothers (and female caregivers) in boys' and girls' academic and non-academic development. Gender matching would predict that boys evince better academic and non-academic outcomes through the active involvement of their father (and more than through their mother). Gender invariance would predict that boys' outcomes are not a function of a parent's gender. Evidence pertaining to these predictions is briefly reviewed.

1.3.1 Male Teachers and Male Students

Recently, Martin and colleagues tested Australian school students' motivation across many classrooms in mathematics, science, and English (Marsh, Martin, & Cheng, 2008; Martin & Marsh, 2005). We found no support for the gender matching hypothesis for any of the numerous adaptive and maladaptive motivations assessed. Although there were gender differences (mostly in favor of girls) on some of the

motivations, these did not depend on the gender of the teacher. Martin also examined Australian boys' motivation in focus groups and interviews (Martin, 2002, 2003a). In that research he found that some boys preferred male teachers, some preferred female teachers, but most simply wanted a teacher who could teach them well. The conclusion in these studies was that boys are not more motivated by male teachers than female teachers. Rather, they are motivated by male and female teachers who can teach and engage them successfully. Indeed, when asked about their most effective teachers, boys and girls were able to identify key characteristics of quality pedagogy that are also reflected in educational research (e.g., see Hattie, 2009; Marzano, 2003; Petty, 2006).

On the basis of this Australian research involving male teachers (and female teachers), there is not much support for the gender matching hypothesis. Indeed, recent qualitative research by others supports this position. For example, in work by Skelton and colleagues (2009) it was found that 7-8 year-old students were not particularly interested in or invested in the gender of their teacher. Rather, they were more concerned about (a) their own gender identities and (b) the quality of the pedagogy they were receiving: "For the pupils, the gender of the teacher was immaterial; rather, it was the professional abilities of their teachers that were of importance" (p. 191). Interestingly, when Skelton et al. (2009) examined teachers' perceptions and practices, there was strong evidence demonstrating that gender was a more salient issue for them. Indeed, Martin (2002, 2004) found a similar profile in Australia, with teachers being more convinced of the need for male teachers than did the students themselves.

1.3.2 Fathers and Sons

In an Australian study by Martin (2003c), the links between student motivation and parent factors were assessed. Data were collected from parents at a series of parent seminars hosted by the school their child attended. Attendance at the seminars was voluntary. Most of the 481 parents in attendance were mothers (72 percent) – consistent with prior research into levels of parental involvement (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2003; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003) – however, there were sufficient numbers of fathers (28 percent, N=134) to get a sense of their role. Parents were administered the parent-report form of the (student) Motivation and Engagement Scale (Martin, 2003c, 2007) in addition to items that assessed their enjoyment of parenting. Thus, the study assessed student-side (motivation and engagement) and parent-side (enjoyment of parenting) factors.

The study showed that student motivation was significantly associated with parent factors – consistent with prior research (e.g., Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). It was also found that the pattern of correlations between student motivation and enjoyment of parenting was similar for fathers and mothers (i.e., positive aspects of motivation positively correlated with enjoyment of parenting and negative aspects of motivation negatively correlated with enjoyment). Of particular relevance to this article was the interaction of student gender and parent gender and its effects on student motivation. On the student side there was no significant student gender x parent gender interaction (at even the least conservative significance level, p<0.05). On the parent side, there was also no significant student gender x parent gender interaction.

Hence, on the student side boys were no more (or less) motivated and engaged as a function of their father's participation/involvement and girls were no more (or less) motivated and engaged as a function of their mother's participation/involvement. Equally, however, there was no significant yield for sons with mothers and daughters with fathers. On the parent side, fathers were no more (or less) likely to enjoy parenting as a function of participation for their son and mothers were no more (or less) likely to enjoy parenting as a function of participation for their daughter. Equally, however, there was no significant yield for fathers through participation for daughters and mothers for sons. Thus, on the basis of the research involving fathers (and mothers) and sons (and daughters), there is not support for the gender matching hypothesis – but significant support for the link between student motivation and parenting.

1.4 Influence of Fathers and Male Caregivers

The fourth line of research driving debates and issues around fatherhood relates to the influence of fathers and male caregivers in children's development. There is now recognition that fatherhood can involve many functions (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Parke, 1996). Increasingly, fathers are taking children to the doctor, arranging and providing transport for childcare, monitoring children's safety, and scheduling play with children's friends (Lamb, 1997a, 1997b; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Fathers can also provide emotional support to the mother which has been found to enhance the mother-child relationship and the socio-emotional adjustment of the child (Lamb, 1997b). The father can also support in household logistics (e.g., housework) to improve general family dynamics (Pleck, 1997).

International research has shown that children whose fathers are involved in child-rearing reflect higher levels of academic achievement and socio-emotional well-being (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997; Amato, 1998; Brooks, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). A recent study of pre-schoolers found that children of involved fathers had fewer behavior problems and more social skills (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2004). Indeed, father involvement at age seven has been found to predict educational attainment at age 20 (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Notwithstanding this, it must also be acknowledged that fathers and male caregivers can also yield a negative influence. For example, Jaffee, Moffitt, Caspi, and Taylor (2003) found that children demonstrated more conduct problems when their father was involved in anti-social behavior.

Here, various levels of father/male involvement are reviewed (see also Martin et al., in press).

1.4.1 Absent Fathers

One way to understand the role of fathers is to study the effects of their absence from the child-rearing process. On this count, research indicates that children with absent fathers perform more poorly on school achievement and psycho-social adjustment – and this effect seems most marked for boys (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1997). This would suggest that fathers are important for children's academic and non-academic development. The challenge with this conclusion, however, is that it is difficult to disentangle father absence from the economic and emotional stress associated with their absence – stress known to negatively impact children. It is also difficult to disentangle the effects of an absent father from the stressors known to exist in single-parent families (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2003).

Researchers suspect these stressors are more salient and proximal negative influences than the absence of a male figure. Hence, it is not the absence of a male parent/caregiver that is negatively affecting children as much as the many follow-on difficulties this creates. According to Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda: "In sum, the evidence suggests that father absence may be harmful not necessarily because a sex-role model is absent but because many paternal roles – economic, social, and emotional – go unfulfilled or inappropriately filled in these families" (2003, p. 7). Thus, rather than study the effects of father absence it seems important to study the effects of fathers' involvement. In studying these effects, numerous researchers have investigated the numerous ways present fathers (in contrast to absent fathers) help in child-rearing and child development including: (a) direct assistance in child-rearing decisions, child rearing, and child care, (b) economic assistance and support (Pearson & Thoennes, 1990), (c) emotional support (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982), and (d) children's sense of support (Amato, 1993; Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997). These influences are now discussed.

1.4.2 Present Fathers

Early research looking at the effects of fathers' involvement in their children's social development found no significant influence – even on measures relevant to 'masculinity' (see Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2003 for an overview). Other research has found a modest role for fathers, but not as strong as that of mothers (e.g., Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Grolnick et al., 1991). More recent investigations are moving the research field closer to an understanding of the moderating and mediating factors that may be relevant here. For example, it appears that where fathers have a good relationship with their child, the child is more likely to be influenced by the father. Also, father warmth and closeness positively impact on a child's development (Radin, 1981). On the other hand, if there is no positive or significant relationship between father and child, the father is unlikely to affect the child in significant ways (for an overview see Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2003).

Interestingly, although Radin (1981) found a significant impact of emotional quality between father and child, it was also found that father masculinity did not have a significant effect. Similarly, Biller and Kimpton (1997) found that the characteristics of the father as parent were more influential than the characteristics of father as a man. Indeed, in a recent study of two year-olds it was found that the positive effect of having one supportive parent was not dependent on the sex of the parent: enhanced cognitive outcomes were also present for a supportive father (Martin, Hiscock, Hardy, Davey, & Wake, 2007). On these bases, it has been concluded: "In sum, as far as influences on children are concerned, very little about the gender of the parent seems to be distinctly important. The characteristics of the father as a parent rather than the characteristics of the father as a man appear to be most significant" (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2003, p. 6).

1.4.3 Highly Involved Fathers

Studies of highly involved fathers go beyond the typical focus on father as breadwinner to a focus on fathers who actively share child-rearing responsibilities. Consistent with work demonstrating the yields of good father-child relationships (Videon, 2005), this research finds positive effects of involved fathers on academic outcomes, cognitive competence, internal locus of control, and empathy (e.g., Biller & Kimpton, 1997; Pleck, 1997; Radin, 1994). It therefore appears that it is not so much being male or simply being present that is key in child rearing. Rather, it is the active involvement in parenting duties by fathers that seems to be a vital ingredient.

Three reasons for this have been suggested. First, with two involved parents there is greater stimulation of diverse skills and attributes in children. That is, two parents are able to develop and stimulate a diversity of attributes, skills and characteristics in the child to a greater extent than one parent – and this leads to enhanced development on each of these dimensions (reflected as positive outcomes in child-rearing research). Second, with two parents sharing the load, each parent is better able to take responsibility for areas that are rewarding and satisfying for them. This leads to greater enjoyment of parenting (Martin, 2003c) and warmer parent-child relationships that are known to benefit child development (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2003; Martin & Dowson, 2009; Martin, Marsh, McInerney, & Green, 2009; Martin, Marsh, McInerney, Green, & Dowson, 2007). Third, alongside active sharing of child-rearing duties, fathers offer direct support to the mother that enables her to parent in more effective ways, improve the economic circumstances that reduces household stress and opens up development opportunities for the children, and provide additional perspectives and insights to the children to help them better deal with life-relevant issues (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2003).

1.4.4 Indirect and Marginal Fathering

Although high involvement of fathers and male caregivers is ideal, the reality is that substantial numbers of fathers are only marginally or indirectly involved in child-rearing. As indicated at the outset of this chapter, paternal and male involvement is generally low, fathers' involvement in housework and child care tends to be lacking (Hochschild, 1989; Thompson & Walker, 1989; Shelton, 1990; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), and there is a general reluctance of fathers to read to their children (Fletcher & Daly, 2002; Solsken, 1992; National Center for Fathering, 1999) and get involved in their children's schooling (Fletcher & Silberberg, 2006). The question, then, is this: can indirect or marginal paternal involvement have positive effects on children's development?

Encouraging findings were derived from a study by Grolnick and colleagues (1991) suggesting that although fathers were less involved than mothers, this involvement was nonetheless important. Over and above the effect of mothers, father involvement was found to significantly predict children's competence and autonomy and these were significantly predictive of children's academic achievement.

Similarly, Morgan, Nutbrown, and Hannon (2009) found that although fathers' involvement in a children's literacy program was not as easily visible as mothers' involvement, in almost all cases fathers were involved through providing literacy opportunities, recognizing their children's achievements, interacting with their child around the material they were reading, and modeling reading themselves. Indeed involvement in literacy activities with children has been found to strengthen father-child relationships in the process (Ortiz et al., 1999).

Although fathers are not so involved in school activities as mothers, Australian research shows they are not avoiding school; rather, they tend to be more involved in gendered activities such as outdoor work, security functions, handiwork duties – and less involved in their child's academic and classroom life (Fletcher & Silberberg, 2006). Other work has shown that indirectly assisting infants through support to the mother reduces behavior problems in the children (Chang, Halpern, & Kaufman, 2007; Mezulis, Hyde, & Clark, 2004) and assists the mental health of the mother in cases where the mother may be depressed (Misri, Kostaras, Fox, & Kostaras, 2000).

Taken together, whilst highly involved fathers seem to generate the most adaptive academic and non-academic outcomes for their children, it is evident that positive and pro-social indirect and marginal support can assist children and mothers as well. This is not to argue in favor of indirect support in lieu of high involvement; rather, it further underscores the significant impact of fathers and male caregivers in children's lives. It also shows that given the realities of diverse family structures that might not heavily feature fathers or male caregivers, children can still benefit from the indirect involvement of fathers/males.

1.4.5 Implications for Fathers in Diverse Family Structures

Based on these arguments, it is evident that it is not so much being male that makes the difference to the lives of children. Instead, the positive effects of males are seen as a result of being an involved parent and

an effective teacher. Thus, many of the characteristics of highly involved fathers are not bound up with gender. Rather, they are bound up with the hallmarks of effective parenting and the logistic yields of having two sets of hands in the parenting process. To the extent that this is the case, these arguments are also applicable to non-traditional family structures such as those in same-sex structures (Martin et al., in press).

2 GOVERNMENT AND POLICY RESPONSES

In the past decade, Australian governments have sought to address the gender gap on various academic and non-academic outcomes (see above). One aspect of their response has centered on the role of male caregivers and male teachers in children's lives. A recent media release by the Australian Attorney General's Department reported, "The Government is extremely concerned about the decreasing number of male teachers and male role models, particularly in primary schools and the possible effect on learning and development of both boys and girls in schools" (Ruddock, 186/2004, 2004). An Australian Labor Party policy document leading up to the 2004 federal election stated, "now, more than ever, young boys need contact with men who can offer positive role models and mentor them in the right direction (p. 1) . . . Labor wants to see many more male teachers teaching and making a difference to the lives of young boys in our schools" (2004, p. 4). There have also been a number of reviews commissioned by government (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002; Lingard, Martino, Mills, & Bahr, 2002; Martin, 2002) that have sought to shed light on these issues and debates.

Seeking to directly redress the shortage of male teachers in Australian schools, the Catholic Education Office requested it be exempt from the Sex Discrimination Act to develop ways to get more male teachers into teacher training and into classrooms. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) rejected the application because it felt there was not sufficient evidence to show that boys were disadvantaged due to a lack of male teachers (HREOC, 2003). The Commonwealth Government responded by introducing the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Teaching Profession) Bill 2004. A compromise was reached involving teaching scholarships for more males and females (Fletcher, 2008).

Australian governments and government departments have also commissioned or sponsored research and reviews into the role of fathers/males in children's lives. A national forum on father-inclusive practices followed a 2005 review sponsored by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (Family Action Centre, 2005; Fletcher, Fairbairn, & Pascoe, 2004). The final day of the forum produced a set of principles with practice implications that were broadly similar to those under the Head Start (USA) and Sure Start (UK) programs (Fletcher, 2008).

In part a result of identified deficiencies in counseling responses to male caregivers, the Australian Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (CSHISC) has developed competencies for Vocational Graduate Diplomas of Relationship Counseling and of Family Dispute Resolution (CSHISC, 2005). Units such as 'Work with men', 'Engage fathers into family based programs', and 'Working with separated fathers' have been drafted – along with performance indicators, such as assisting fathers to understand the impact they have on their children's lives and the ability to critically reflect on their own interactions in relation to father-inclusive practices (Fletcher, 2008).

Notwithstanding this, although numerous early intervention strategies have been funded and evaluated by Australian federal and state governments (e.g., see Linfoot, Martin, & Stephenson, 1997, 2002; Moore, Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 2001), there has been little evaluation of fathers' involvement (Fletcher et al., 2004) and thus relatively little 'top-down' direction for successfully engaging fathers and male caregivers in children's academic and non-academic lives. Importantly, however, a number of Australian and salient overseas programs have identified successful practices involving fathers, providing something of a 'bottom-up' perspective on effectively engaging fathers and male caregivers in children's lives. Some of these successful programs and practices are now briefly discussed.

3 SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

The bulk of programs and practices focusing on successful child development tend to be characterized as 'parenting programs' but predominantly involve mothers. This is the case in Australia and internationally. Nonetheless, some prominent programs have recognized the need for paternal involvement and have shaped some recommendations around this. For example, in the USA the Head Start program has yielded positive father outcomes and numerous strategies have been identified to maintain this including suggestions for revamping service provider policies (e.g., that fathers should and will be involved), documentation (e.g., collecting relevant information on fathers), employment practices (e.g., more male staff), physical environment (e.g., displaying positive images of fathers), referral processes (e.g., linking fathers across agencies) and personnel training (e.g., on working with fathers) (Raikes, Summers, & Roggman, 2005).

In the UK, evaluations of the Sure Start program found variable male involvement in parenting and parenting programs and developed recommendations to assist program providers to increase male involvement. Recommendations were similar to those under the Head Start program in overhauling fathers' involvement, actively seeking fathers' input, adopting 'strengths-based' approaches to fathers' attitudes and behaviors, advocating for fathers' involvement across programs, and providing staff training on working with fathers (Lloyd, O'Brien, & Lewis, 2003).

Various Australian reviews and research programs have also identified elements of successful practice. In one project, 46 community-based parenting programs were extended to adopt early intervention for fathers. Not only was the extension effective in involving men who were approaching the birth of their first child, it was also successful in reaching fathers typically difficult to reach such as those in rural and regional areas (O'Brien & Rich, 2002). Reviews of these involvements indicated that strategies such as male staffing, strengths-based approaches, changes to center policies, and appropriate supervision were key in promoting positive outcomes involving fathers.

In another Australian study seeking to get fathers more involved in their children's school life, Fletcher and Silberberg (2006) identified numerous successful strategies implemented by schools. These included recognizing and utilizing fathers' preference for hands-on activities at the school, changing meeting times to evenings, celebrating Father's Day, and personal approaches to fathers for assistance with specific tasks.

Australian research looking more specifically at fathers' involvement in children's literacy identified the importance of engaging fathers before the target program commenced (Tranter, 2006). Subsequently, other successful strategies involved addressing correspondence specifically to the father if father involvement was being requested, displaying images of fathers in prominent parts of the school, having a designated newsboard or section of a newsboard for fathers, and disseminating targeted newsletters to fathers. In terms of children's literacy, successful approaches to engaging fathers involved activity- and purpose-based tasks. For example, activities involving map reading, instructions for games, and comics engaged fathers more than traditional storybook reading. In part a result of these initiatives, Tranter (2006) found that more fathers attended parent interviews, there was an increase in fathers' involvement in homework, and more fathers attended school events.

4 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are numerous directions and challenges for future research, policy, and practice when seeking to gain greater father/male involvement in children's lives. A first challenge relates to socio-economic status (SES). Fathers with higher education levels are more likely to be involved in various aspects of their children's development (Fletcher, 2008; Fletcher & Silberberg, 2006; Goldschieder & Waite, 1991; Blair, Wenk, & Hardesty., 1994; Nord et al., 1997). Similarly, the extent to which fathers are involved in literacy activities with their pre-school children is associated with socio-economic status. Specifically, fathers on higher incomes are more likely to be involved in literacy activities with their children (Morgan et al., 2009). With differential father/male involvement along SES lines, there is a risk that academic and non-academic gaps grow and become more entrenched. There is therefore a need to direct future practice, policy, and research to better engage fathers at all SES levels.

There is also a need to explore optimal modes of program delivery to increase fathers' involvement. Morgan and colleagues (2009) found that flexible home visiting was more successful than center-based meetings. The latter tended to be poorly attended by fathers. How to effectively implement optimal modes of program delivery in countries such as Australia where many families are located in rural, regional, and remote areas is an additional need for future policy, practice, and research.

Another challenge in Australia relates to the sporadic, small-scale, undocumented, and unsustainable nature of fatherhood programs and approaches (Fletcher, 2004). As Fletcher notes, with the growing recognition of the importance of fathers/males in children's academic and non-academic development, there has also been an increase in the number of small-scale approaches to involve fathers/males in health, early education and welfare services for families in Australia. However, these efforts are generally sporadic, ad hoc, and undocumented. This poses a barrier to sustainable development and implementation of successful programs and practices – and by implication, a barrier to father/male involvement. Systematic and documented implementation is needed for this barrier to be addressed.

There are also stereotyping challenges to effective father/male involvement. The counseling domain is an illustrative case in point. Counselors reporting greater stereotypical beliefs about men's emotions are more likely to blame the man for relationship conflict – a belief that is likely to reduce practitioners' effectiveness and impair effective dispute resolution (Fletcher, 2008; Heesacker & Bradley, 1997;

Heesacker, , 1999). According to Fletcher (2004), practitioner skill in developing a constructive relationship with fathers is more likely to effectively engage fathers. As O'Brien and Rich (2002) note from a review of an Australian initiative, staff training will be important in this.

If fathers are to be more involved in their children's lives, it is also important not to underestimate fathers' potential competence. Hand's (2006) research identifying a belief by mothers that fathers lack the patience to deal with the emotional dimensions of parenting young children suggests attitudinal barriers relating to parenting skill will need to be addressed. Consequently, some fathers perceive they lack support within the family to take a greater parenting role (Lamb, 1997b). Indeed, fathers themselves can perceive they lack the skill and competence to raise their children (Lamb, 1997b) and this has in part led to a lack of motivation to be more involved (Lamb, 1997b). Hence, attitudinal barriers relevant to mothers and fathers require further action.

This chapter has examined the effects of father and male teacher involvement in children's academic and non-academic lives. However, in the Australian context, little is known about the relationship between fathers and their child's teacher. For example, does a positive connection between the father and the child's teacher increase the father's involvement in the school and the child's academic life (Fletcher & Silberberg, 2006)? More needs to be known about the nexus between the child's academic life and the child's father.

There are also institutional barriers to be negotiated. The workplace is one domain that can be targeted to effect greater father/male involvement in children's lives (Haas, 1992). Paternity leave and flexible working hours are two areas that hold promise (Pleck, 1986). Although this is increasingly recognized by employers and government, at least in Australia there is some way to go. Encouragingly, it has been found that flexitime in the workplace is associated with more time spent with one's children (Lee, 1983) and so there is an evidence base to targeting workplace practices and policies in future efforts to increase father/male involvement in children's lives.

Addressing these barriers and challenges is also important for children's development into adolescence. Father/male involvement early in a child's life may be important in establishing patterns that are later played out in adolescence – and beyond. For example, it has been found that father-adolescent relationships tend to be distant and less intimate when compared to mother-adolescent relationships that are typically emotionally closer and affectionate (Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Fostering healthy father/male-child relationships and practices early in a child's life may be an important basis for healthy father/male-adolescent relationships and practices.

5 FINAL QUALIFICATIONS

Based on the arguments presented herein, it is evident that it is not so much about being male that makes the difference to the lives of children – rather, the positive effects of fathers/males are seen as a result of being a constructively involved parent and an effective teacher. Importantly, however, this does not mean there is not a need for male teachers or male role models. For example, as Martin et al. (in press) argue, an important part of school is to give students exposure to diverse authority styles and adults so they are better equipped to deal with a diverse society after school. Gender is one aspect of this diversity; hence, male teachers are important in this respect. Also, to the extent that school should reflect and educate on many of the interpersonal and other dynamics of the wider world, there is a need for a better gender balance amongst teaching staff. Furthermore, for children to appreciate the notion that learning and teaching are for men there is also a need for male teachers. Hence, there is a need for male teachers, not because they are better instructors, but because they are part of the rich and diverse fabric of children's lives and address important life-relevant needs (Martin et al., in press).

It is also important to emphasize that this chapter is not intended to negate or compromise the powerful and central role of the mother and female caregiver and teacher. If anything, this chapter has further underscored the role of maternal/female involvement in child development. This chapter has focused on fathers and their specific roles because – alongside mothers/females – they are the most frequently represented parent/caregiver across the population of households. Thus, whilst recognizing the centrality of the maternal caregiver, this chapter emphasizes fathers because they are relevant – through their absence or presence – to children's academic and non-academic development (Martin et al., in press). Emphasis is also given to fathers because of the generally low levels of father/male engagement and responsibility in the parenting and care-giving process (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003).

6 CONCLUSION

Quantitative and qualitative Australian and international evidence shows that fathers and male teachers can have positive impacts in children's academic and non-academic lives – and that these impacts

are greatest when fathers/males are highly and constructively involved. It seems that the positive impact of fathers/males tends not to be a function of being male. Instead, positive impacts are a function of the father as a parent (or male teacher as a quality educator) rather than the father as a man – as evidenced when fathers are adaptively involved in child-rearing (and when male teachers implement quality pedagogy). However, because of the generally low levels of father/male involvement in children's lives, it is evident that there is further scope for children to be more optimally assisted in their academic and non-academic lives through greater constructive and pro-social involvement of fathers/males. Australian and international research has suggested ways this can happen and identified some of the challenges and opportunities ahead as practitioners, policy makers, and researchers seek to do this.

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