

## Fathers' Involvement in Childcare in the United Kingdom: Trends and Social Differences

Fathers' involvement in childcare has become a focus of much research since there is accumulating evidence about its beneficial effects on children's, mothers' and fathers' well-being. Many time-use surveys have documented the increasing involvement of fathers in childcare during the past decades. In the UK, among fathers of children under 5 years of age the involvement in child-related activities increased from 15 minutes a day in the mid-1970s to around two hours a day in 1999 (Fisher, McCulloch & Gershuny 1999, p. 3). Father's time with children aged between five and 15 years of age has risen from about 15 minutes per day to 50 minutes per day in the same period (Fisher, McCulloch & Gershuny 1999). Fathers' share of all childcare time has increased from shares around 12 to 15 % in 1961 to about a third in 1999 (Fisher, McCulloch & Gershuny 1999).

The first aim of this presentation is examining whether the trend of increasing involvement of fathers in bringing up their children has continued in the UK during the last fifteen years. It will compare fathers' involvement in childcare recorded in the UK Time Use Surveys from 2000 (UKTUS 2000) and the soon to be released survey from 2013-14 (UKTUS 2013), focusing on fathers in intact families, i.e. fathers living with a partner.

Fathers' increasing involvement in childcare is part of a more profound change of fathers' role in many European countries, which leads us to predict a further rise of father involvement during the last 15 years. In addition, several policy changes have been implemented in Britain since the year 2000, some of which were designed to support father involvement in childcare, most notable the introduction of two weeks of paid paternity leave, so-called additional paternity leave for up to 26 weeks, and the right of parents to request flexible working. Further reforms were designed to facilitate paid employment for parents by introducing 15 hours per week of free early education or childcare for 3 to 4-year olds and extended statutory maternity leave, the latter making it easier for mothers to return to their previous employment. Past research has found that the more engaged mothers are in paid work, the more equally they share in caring for their children (Craig & Mullan 2011; Sullivan et al. 2009). In addition, mother's employment increases father's involvement with childcare if the mother works unusual hours in the evening or on the weekend. Thereby, policies that encourage mother's employment might have indirectly increased father involvement.

However, Britain was strongly hit by the economic crisis of 2008. On the one hand, unemployed or underemployed fathers tend to be more involved in childcare than full-time employed fathers (Craig & Mullan 2011), which might have led to an increase in father involvement during the crisis years. On the other hand, among employed fathers lower levels of job security might have reduced their willingness or scope to prioritize involvement in childcare, leading to a decrease in father involvement in childcare during the crisis years. An analysis of the UKTUS 2013 will show which or the contrasting forces prevailed.

The second aim of the paper is examining trends differences in father involvement by father's education and social class. Past research has found differences in father involvement by fathers' level of education and/or fathers' class. According to Sullivan (2010), differences in childcare have

increased between 1975 and 2000 with men with above secondary education increasing the most and providing considerably more childcare in 2000 than the two other groups. Trends with regard to fathers' occupational class have been less clear cut. In the 1960s, professional men spent slightly more time with their children than men in the other occupational groups whereas at the end of the 1990s they spent the least time with children (Fisher, McCulloch and Gershuny 1999). Also Ferri and Smith (2003) observed that middle-class fathers were less involved in childcare. These findings are in contrast to Gray (2006) and Mullan and Henz (2015), who reported that fathers with a white-collar job spent more time with childcare than men in manual jobs.

Past research suggests that fathers with higher education were the forerunners in involved fatherhood. Analyses of the new UKTUS 2013 will show whether highly educated men have remained the forerunners in father involvement in the UK and they will shed more light on the patterns by occupational class.

The United Kingdom is an interesting case for studying father involvement because of the weakness of its family policy framework. Therefore, father involvement depends more on the immediate household context, which leads to diverse patterns. Analyzing these patterns is one of the main purposes of the presentation.

#### Data and Methods

Many studies have used the UKTUS 2000 data for analyses of father's involvement in childcare (Gray 2006; Gracia and Esping-Andersen 2015; Hook 2012; Hook and Wolfe 2012, Sullivan 2010; Sullivan et al. 2009). This presentation will examine father involvement in caring for children aged 14 years or younger. It only addresses fathers who lived with a partner and will control for partner characteristics in the multivariate analyses. UKTUS 2000 includes diaries of 1,064 fathers with the described characteristics. The sample of UKTUS 2013 is of the same order of magnitude as UKTUS 2010. Its official release is planned for February 2016 or slightly later in 2016 (cf. <http://www.timeuse.org/>).

Both surveys provide information about several dimensions of childcare. In addition to the total time in childcare, routine and interactive childcare can be distinguished. Furthermore, one can identify whether the father was in the company of a child. This information will be used to distinguish between fathers' time alone with a child and fathers' time with a child and the mother, the former arguably being associated with more responsibility for childcare on the side of the father. These four aspects of father involvement will be the focus of the analyses. The presentation will include descriptive statistics and results from regression analyses.

#### References

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