Fathers in different family contexts

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Outline

• Who are British fathers?

• Father involvement and couple relationships

• Non-resident fathers
Who are fathers?
Fathers in Britain

• 26% of all men aged 16-64 in the UK report that they live with dependent age children -5.9 million men according to ONS figures (ONS, 2013).

• 5% of men report non-resident children under 16 years.

• Average age of fathers at birth of a child has increased to 32.6 years in 2011 from 30.8 years in 1991 (ONS, 2013).
Fathers in Britain

Fathers, compared with men who have never fathered a child or played a fathering role, are more likely to:

- Be older
- Be in paid employment
- Belong to a Black or Asian ethnic group, compared with a White-British ethnic group
## Fathers’ Households

### Biological/Social fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All fathers living with dependent age children</th>
<th>Married fathers living with dependent age children</th>
<th>Cohabiting fathers living with dependent age children</th>
<th>Lone fathers living with dependent age children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live with biological children</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with step-children</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with adopted children</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with foster children</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Father involvement and couple relationships
Father involvement and couple relationships

• Father involvement with children cannot be separated from the network of family relationships.
• Key in this network is the couple relationship.
• Research has found an association between the parental relationship and paternal involvement.
Father involvement and couple relationships

• Research suggests that:
  – high father involvement is associated with a positive couple relationship (Pleck and Masciadrelli, 2004).
  – partners’ relationship quality influences their parenting behaviour, supporting the ‘spillover model’ (Jones, 2010).
  – the father-child relationship is more vulnerable than the mother-child relationship to the negative effects of poor parental relationships (Cummings, Goeke-Morey and Raymond, 2004).
Methodology

• Secondary analysis of Wave 1 Understand Society (2010-2011):
  – representative cross-section of the UK population
  – data collected directly from each resident adult in the household (16+)

• Focus is on fathers and mothers living in couple relationships and living with children under 16 years old.

• Range of analysis techniques including:
  – descriptive analysis
  – binary logistic regression
  – linear regression
  – factor analysis
Fathers and their children
Paternal involvement

• Pleck (2010) has proposed a conceptualisation of paternal involvement:
  – 3 primary components: positive engagement activities, warmth and responsiveness and control
  – 2 auxiliary domains: indirect care and process responsibility

• Our analysis is restricted to factors which examine direct interactions between father and child.
Parental involvement

For couple fathers:
- Praises very often: 77%
- Shouts at children sometimes: 47%
- Helps with homework most days: 61%
- Helps with homework most days: 59%
- Eats evening meal with child most days: 12%

For couple mothers:
- Talks about important things most days: 89%
- Eats evening meal with child most days: 70%
- Eats evening meal with child most days: 71%
- Eats evening meal with child most days: 68%
- Eats evening meal with child most days: 27%

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Factors associated with *paternal* involvement

- For fathers in couples a range of factors were associated with involvement with their children:
  - Work status of father
  - Educational attainment of father
  - Marital status
  - Number of children in household
Factors associated with *maternal* involvement

• For mothers similar factors were associated with child involvement.

• *However* whereas unemployed or inactive fathers are **more likely** to shout at their children we find that unemployed or inactive mothers are **less likely** to do so.
Parental relationships
Parental relationship quality

- Daily stimulating exchange of ideas
- Very happy with relationship

Couple fathers:
- 40% daily stimulating exchange
- 43% very happy
- 69% total

Couple mothers:
- 40% daily stimulating exchange
- 37% very happy
- 66% total

Rarely or never get on each others nerves

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Parental relationship quality – factor scores

- Principle component factor analysis found three underlying ‘factors’ of relationship quality:
  1. Doing things with your partner
  2. Negative relationship factors
  3. Positive relationship factors
Factors associated with fathers’ relationship quality

• Some socio-demographics are associated with fathers’ relationship quality:
  – Father’s work status
  – Marital status
  – Ethnicity of father

• More factors are associated with mothers’ relationship quality:
  – Mother’s educational attainment
  – Fathers work status
  – Marital status
  – Ethnicity of mother
  – Number of children in the household
Factors associated with fathers’ relationship quality

• Some differences in the socio-demographic characteristics associated with relationship quality for fathers and mothers.
• Overall socio-demographics do not appear to be a predictive factor of reported relationship quality.
Does relationship quality matter for parental involvement?

• There is an association between relationship quality and both fathers’ and mothers’ involvement with children.

• Fathers and mothers who report better quality relationships with their partners are more involved with their children, when controlling for other factors.
Does relationship quality matter for *fathers’* involvement?

- Fathers who do things with their partners are **more likely** to report that they praise their children and talk to them daily.
- Fathers who report more negative relationship factors are **more likely** to shout at their children.
- Father who report more positive factors are **more likely** to praise their children.
Non-resident fathers
Research on non-resident fathers

• Changing family structures:
  – four million dependent children living in two and a half million separated families (DWP, 2012)
  – around 97% of separated parents with primary care of children are mothers (DWP, 2010)

• However, limited primary research with fathers in general and non-resident fathers in particular:
  – hard to reach group
  – proxy measures often used
Non-resident fathers in the UK

- 29% of all men aged 16-64 in the UK report that they have dependent age children.
- 5% of men report non-resident children under 16 years old – this equates to 980,000 men in the UK.
- However this is reliant on men reporting their non-resident children.
Non-resident fathers in the UK

Non-resident fathers do not form a homogenous group. However a range of characteristics have been found to be associated with non-resident fathers in comparison with resident fathers.

Logistic regression analysis found differences in three main areas:

1. Family life
2. Economic disadvantage
3. Ethnicity
Non-resident fathers in the UK – Family life

Non-resident fathers more likely to:

– live alone
– have had multiple previous relations (cohabitations and marriages)
– have fathered, or played a fathering role to, multiple children
Non-resident fathers in the UK – Economic disadvantage

Non-resident fathers more likely to be:
- unemployed or economically inactive
- living in rented accommodation
- belong to the lowest socio-economic group
Non-resident fathers in the UK – Ethnic group

Non resident father are:

- **more** likely to belong to a Black ethnic group (compared with White British)
- **less** likely to belong to an Asian ethnic group (compared with White British)
## Four groups of non-resident fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Engaged fathers (46%)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least weekly contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular stays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most provide child support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live less than 15 minutes away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly single</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Less engaged fathers (28%)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact once a week or month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most have stays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most provide child support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live an hour away</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mix of family situations</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Disengaged fathers (16%)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No or very rare contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No stays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most don’t provide child support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mix of distances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mix of family situations</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Distance fathers (11%)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rare contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most have rare or no stays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most provide child support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All live over an hour away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix of family situations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
‘Engaged’ fathers

• ‘Engaged’ are less likely to be economically disadvantaged:
  – 74% working full or part time
  – 20% degree educated
  – 55% have a mortgage or own a house outright

• Vast majority are White British (90%) and a minority report religious affiliation (30%).

• 44% have never been married and 14% have been married two or more times.
‘Less engaged’ fathers

• ‘Less engaged’ are less likely to be economically disadvantaged:
  – 73% working full or part time
  – 26% degree educated
  – 53% have a mortgage or own a house outright

• Vast majority are White British (86%) and a minority report religious affiliation (36%).

• 35% have never been married and 26% have been married two or more times.
‘Disengaged’ fathers

• ‘Disengaged’ are the most disadvantaged group:
  – 53% working full or part time
  – 15% degree educated
  – 35% have a mortgage or own a house outright

• Highest proportion of all groups to report poor physical health (11%).

• Vast majority are White British (88%) and a minority report religious affiliation (36%).

• 43% have never been married and 27% have been married two or more times.
‘Distance’ fathers

• Interesting minority group –
  – Majority are in full or part-time work (68%)
  – Most ethnically diverse (62% White British)
  – Higher religious affiliation (48%)
  – Highest educational attainment (32% at degree level)
  – Large minority not born in the UK (40%)
  – Large minority have children living abroad (43%)
Any questions?