Work-family conflict: how do UK fathers compare to other European fathers?

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3 July 2014, Modern Fatherhood conference in London

Note: The findings in this presentation are preliminary – please do not quote without authors’ permission
Outline

• Policy context
• Theoretical background & research questions
• Data & measures
• Findings
• Discussion

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Policy and research context

• Work-family policy development: main focus on women and mothers, but...

• Acceleration of father-targeted policies since mid-1990s

• ‘Fatherhood regimes’ emerging
  – Fatherhood rights and obligations regulated by policy (e.g. paternity leave and pay)
  – Promotion of a participative father
Wider context

• Employment and working conditions
  – Intensification, flexibilisation, increase in job insecurity, economic crisis

• Female/maternal employment rates

• Gender roles at home
  – Housework and childcare

• ‘The incomplete revolution’ (Esping-Andersen, 2009)
The new ‘male mystique’

From Aumann K, Galinsky E & Matos K, 2011:

Figure 1: Percentage of Fathers and Mothers in Dual-Earner Couples Reporting Work-Family Conflict (1977–2008)

- Men in dual-earner couples with child(ren) under 18
- Women in dual-earner couples with child(ren) under 18

Statistically significant differences between men and women in dual-earner couples with children under 18: 1977 not significant; 2008 p < .01; Statistically significant differences between 1977 and 2008: Men p < .001; women not significant.

Sample size: 1977 n=283; 2008 n=391.

Theoretical background & research questions
Concepts

- Work-to-family conflict (WFC)
- Family-to-work conflict (FWC)
- Work-life balance (WLB)
  - Problems of definition and measurement
Theoretical background

• Role theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985)
• Ecological systems theory
• Demands and resources approach (Voydanoff, 2005)
• The stress of higher status hypothesis (Schieman et al. 2006, 2009)
Societal-level factors

• Type of production regime
  – Coordinated v liberal market economy
  – Labour rights standards

• Welfare regime: support for dual earner/dual carer model
  – ‘time to care’ and ‘time to work’ policies (Lewis, 2012): leave policies, flexible working, formal childcare provision
  – Support for father care

• Gender culture / gender system
  – Gender division of labour (paid and unpaid), power relations, cultural definitions of gender roles, informal childcare practices

• Post-2008 economic crisis
Research questions

- What are the levels of work-to-family and family-to-work conflict experienced by fathers?
- What are the factors affecting the levels of these types of conflict?
- How do fathers compare between the UK and seven other EU countries?
- What do these cross-national differences tell us about the importance of different societal-level factors in facilitating successful work-family reconciliation?
Data & measures
Data

- European Social Survey
  - Round 2 (2004-2005)
  - Round 5 (2010-2011)
- UK, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, Greece, Poland
- Fathers in paid work, aged 20-64, in couples, with children aged 0-18
- Sample size: about 1,500 per survey year in total
Work-to-family conflict

- 2004 & 2010
  - Worrying about work problems when not working
  - Feeling too tired after work to enjoy the things you would like to do at home
  - Job prevents you from giving the time you want to your partner and family
  - Partner or family gets fed up with the pressure of your job

*Scale*: from ‘Never’ to ‘Always’ (5-point scale)
Family-to-work conflict

• 2004 & 2010
  – Difficult to concentrate on work because of family responsibilities

• 2010 only
  – Family responsibilities prevent you from giving the time you should to your job

Scale: from ‘Never’ to ‘Always’ (5-point scale)
Explanatory variables – paid work

– Working hours
– Unsocial hours (weekends, evenings and unpredictable overtime)
– Occupational class
– Employee v self-employed
Explanatory variables – family circumstances

– Number of children
– Age of the youngest child
– Partner’s employment status / working hours
– Partner working unsocial hours
– Housework
– Household income (subjective)
Explanatory variables – gender-role attitudes

• Composite measure of egalitarianism in gender-role attitudes:
  – A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family
  – When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women
(5-point agree/disagree scale)
Control variables

• Age
• Education
Findings
(work in progress)
Worrying about work problems when not working

Base: Fathers aged 20-64, in couples, in paid work and with children aged 0-18 (UK, 2010)

Never: 17
Hardly ever: 18
Sometimes: 30
Often: 24
Always: 11
Feeling too tired after work to enjoy the things you would like to do at home

*Base: Fathers aged 20-64, in couples, in paid work and with children aged 0-18 (UK, 2010)*
Job prevents you from giving the time you want to your partner or family

Base: Fathers aged 20-64, in couples, in paid work and with children aged 0-18 (UK, 2010)
Partner or family gets fed up with the pressure of your job

Base: Fathers aged 20-64, in couples, in paid work and with children aged 0-18 (UK, 2010)
Difficult to concentrate on work because of family responsibilities

*Base: Fathers aged 20-64, in couples, in paid work and with children aged 0-18 (UK, 2010)*

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<td>37</td>
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Family responsibilities prevent you from giving the time you should to your job

Base: Fathers aged 20-64, in couples, in paid work and with children aged 0-18 (UK, 2010)
WFC score, by country and year

Base: Fathers aged 20-64, in couples, in paid work and with children aged 0-18

Netherlands: -0.3, Greece: 0.4, Spain: -0.2, Sweden: 0.0, France: -0.1, Germany: 0.2, Poland: 0.1, UK: 0.1, 0.2
Difficult to concentrate on work because of family, by country and year (%)
Family responsibilities prevent you from giving the time you should to your job, by country (%)

*Base: Fathers aged 20-64, in couples, in paid work and with children aged 0-18 (2010)*
Work-to-family conflict: multivariate analysis

- **Work**
  
  *(significant)*: working hours, occupational group, self-employment, working unsocial hours

- **Family**
  
  *(significant)*: housework share and income
  *(not significant)*: number and age of children, partner’s employment status and hours, partner’s unsocial hours

- **Gender-role attitudes**
Work-to-family conflict: cross-national differences after controls

- 2004:
  - UK fathers reported highest WFC
  - Fathers in Greece and Netherlands reported lowest WFC
- 2010:
  - Fathers in UK, Greece and France reported highest levels
  - Fathers in Netherlands reported lowest levels
Family-to-work conflict: multivariate analyses

• Work
  (significant): occupational group (time q. only), working unsocial hours
  (not significant): working hours, self-employment

• Family
  (significant): partner’s employment status and hours and partner’s unsocial hours (concentration q. only), housework share (time q. only) and income
  (not significant): number and age of children

• Gender-role attitudes
Family-to-work conflict: cross-national differences after controls

• UK fathers reported the highest levels of FWC, on both measures in both years

• Lowest levels were in:
  – 2004: Greece, France, Sweden (concentration question)
  – 2010: Spain and France (both questions)
Discussion
Discussion: cross-national comparisons

- UK - the highest WFC and FWC
- Netherlands – the lowest WFC
- France (and Spain) – the lowest FWC
- Greece – the most dramatic change between 2004 and 2010, both WFC & FWC going up
Thank you

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