

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

	All fathers living with dependent age children	Married fathers living with dependent age children	Cohabiting fathers living with dependent age children	Lone fathers living with dependent age children
Live with biological children	94%	96%	87%	98%
Live with step-children	11%	8%	25%	1.2%
Live with adopted children	1%	1%	1%	1%
Live with foster children	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	2.1%

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

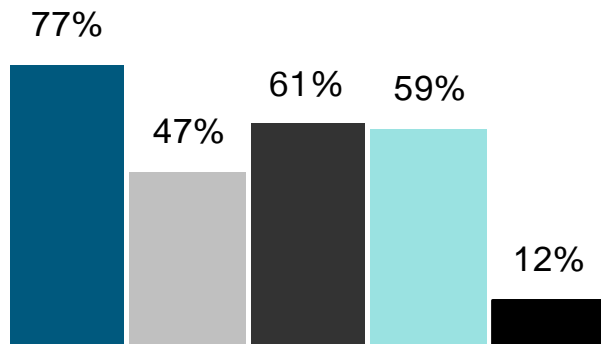
Fathers and their children

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.

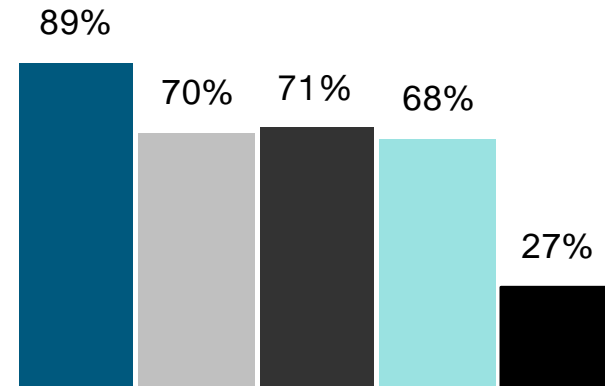
Parental involvement

- Praises very often
- Shouts at children sometimes
- Helps with homework most days



Couple fathers

- Talks about important things most days
- Eats evening meal with child most days



Couple mothers

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

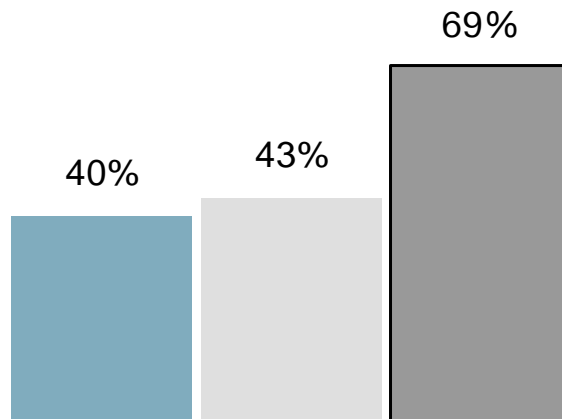
- For mothers similar factors were associated with child involvement.
- *However* whereas unemployed or inactive fathers are **more likely** to shout at their children we find that unemployed or inactive mothers are **less likely** to do so.

Parental relationships

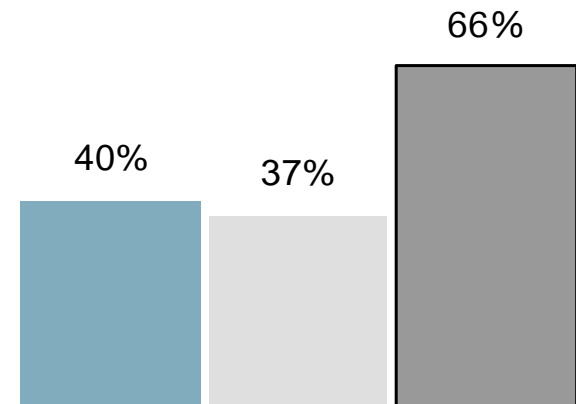
Parental relationship quality

■ Daily stimulating exchange of ideas
■ Very happy with relationship

■ Rarely or never get on each others nerves



Couple fathers



Couple mothers

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

Engaged fathers (46%)

- At least weekly contact
- Regular stays
- Most provide child support
- Live less than 15 minutes away
- Mainly single

Less engaged fathers (28%)

- Contact once a week or month
- Most have stays
- Most provide child support
- Live an hour away
- Mix of family situations

Disengaged fathers (16%)

- No or very rare contact
- No stays
- Most don't provide child support
- Mix of distances
- Mix of family situations

Distance fathers (11%)

- Rare contact
- Most have rare or no stays
- Most provide child support
- All live over an hour away
- Mix of family situations

‘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?