



What Influences Paternal Childcare Involvement From Nine Months To Eleven Years Post Birth In The UK?

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Presentation Outline

- What do we already know about paternal childcare involvement?
- Theoretical framework
- Research Questions
- Data and methods
- Results: What is associated with paternal childcare involvement?
- Summary and conclusions
- Limitations and next steps



What do we already know?

- Men do more childcare and housework, but still much less than women.
- Women usually switch to part-time employment after having children.
- This 'one-and-a-half earner' family model is perpetuated by public policy and normative beliefs that children suffer if their mothers are employed full-time.

Our research using data of >9K two (opposite-sex) parent households shows:

1. Fathers' employment hours has a negative association with paternal childcare involvement when children are pre-school age (Norman et al. 2014)
2. The employment hours of the mother has a positive and stronger effect (Norman et al. 2014; Norman 2020);
3. If a father shares childcare with the mother during the first year of parenthood, he is more likely to share childcare when the child is aged 3 (Fagan and Norman 2016)

- **What is paternal involvement?**
- Defined as a father who participates in the nurturing tasks involved in the ‘taking care of’ children.
- **Lamb (1986) - Three dimensional model of PI**
- Accessibility – availability or ‘being there’
- Responsibility – anticipation of child’s needs & subsequent planning & arrangement
- **Engagement – one-to-one interaction**

Research Questions/objectives



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1. To develop a construct (i.e. measure) of 'paternal engagement' in childcare across ages 9 months to 11 years old?
2. Do fathers' and mothers' employment hours respectively have a negative and positive relationship with paternal childcare engagement between 9 months and 11 years post-birth?
3. How important are employment hours relative to prior paternal engagement during the pre-school and early-school stages of a child's life?

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)



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- A nationally representative survey following a cohort of children born around 2000 in Great Britain

Sweep	Year	Age of child
1	2001	9 months
2	2004	3 years
3	2006	5 years
4	2008	7 years
5	2012	11 years

- Sample = the same, opposite-sex, intact couples (n=5,882)

MCS variable: How often does the father....	Age				
	<1	3	5	7	11
... change the baby's nappy?	X				
... feed the baby?	X				
... get up in the night for the baby?	X				
... look after the baby/child on his own?	X	X	X	X	X
... read to the child?		X	X	X	
... play with the child?		X			
... get the child ready for bed?		X	X	X	
...tell stories to the child not from a book?			X	X	
...play music, listen to music, sing songs or nursery rhymes, dance or do other musical activities with the child?			X	X	
...draw, paint or make things with the child?			X	X	
...play sports or physically active games outdoors or indoors with the child?			X	X	
...play with toys or games indoors with the child?			X	X	X
...take the child to the park or to an outdoor playground?			X	X	X
...Talk about things that are important					X

Method to derive our dependent variables:

- Confirmatory factor analysis
- Identifies patterns of relationships and correlations between variables
- Then reduces a large number of variables into a smaller number of composite measures

Dependent variables (i.e. composite measures):

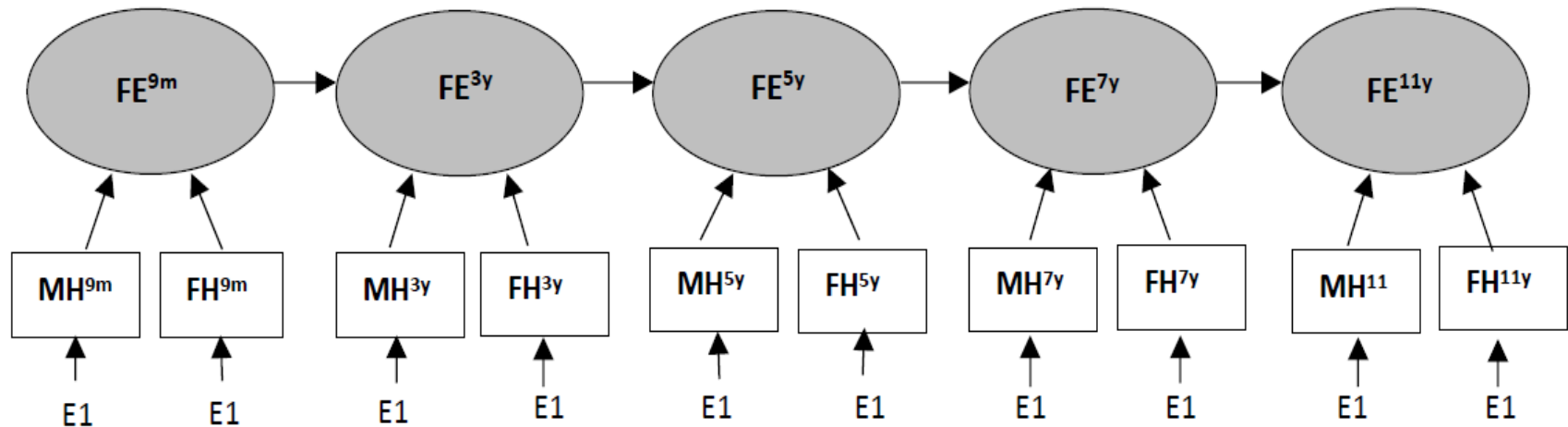
- 1) Father engagement (FE) at 9 months old
- 2) FE at 3 years old
- 3) FE at 5 years old
- 4) FE at 7 years old
- 5) FE at 11 years old

Method to explore what influences PI:

- Multiple Indicators Multiple Causes (MIMIC) model

MCS variable: How often does the father....	Age				
	<1	3	5	7	11
... change the baby's nappy?	X				
... feed the baby?	X				
... get up in the night for the baby?	X				
... look after the baby/child on his own?	X	X	X	X	X
... read to the child?		X	X	X	
... play with the child?		X			
... get the child ready for bed?		X	X	X	
...tell stories to the child not from a book?			X	X	
...play music, listen to music, sing songs or nursery rhymes, dance or do other musical activities with the child?			X	X	
...draw, paint or make things with the child?			X	X	
...play sports or physically active games outdoors or indoors with the child?			X	X	
...play with toys or games indoors with the child?			X	X	X
...take the child to the park or to an outdoor playground?			X	X	X
...Talk about things that are important					X

- MIMIC model exploring the structural relationships between fathers' engagement & parental employment hours at 9 months, 3, 5, 7 and 11 years old



Note: FE = Father engagement latent factors at 9 months (9m), 3 years (3y), 5 years (5y), 7 years (7y) and 11 years (11y); MH = Mothers' employment hours; FH = Fathers' employment hours at each of the above time points.

MIMIC model Results



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Engagement	Covariate	Unstandardized β (S.E.)	Standardized β
9 months (9m)	Mother emp hours (9m)	0.01 (0.0)***	0.29***
	Father emp hours (9m)	-0.00 (0.0)***	-0.16***
3 years (3y)	Mother emp hours (3y)	0.00 (0.0)***	0.06***
	Father emp hours (3y)	-0.00 (0.0)***	-0.07***
	Father engagement (9m)	0.17 (0.01)***	0.32***
5 years (5y)	Mother emp hours (5y)	0.00 (0.0)***	0.09***
	Father emp hours (5y)	-0.00 (0.0)**	-0.04**
	Father engagement (3y)	0.45 (0.02)***	0.38***
7 years (7y)	Mother emp hours (7y)	0.00 (0.0)**	0.035**
	Father emp hours (7y)	0.00 (0.0)	0.013
	Father engagement (5y)	0.53 (0.01)***	0.59***
11 years (11y)	Mother emp hours (11y)	0.00 (0.0)	-0.01
	Father emp hours (11y)	0.00 (0.0)	-0.001
	Father engagement (7y)	1.33 (0.04)***	0.43***

Summary & conclusions



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- The effect of paternal engagement builds over time - the unstandardized coefficient for prior engagement is significantly stronger at each age
- The effect of paternal engagement at the previous stage of a child's life is was more important for fostering current paternal engagement than the current employment hours of either parent
= *Engagement fosters engagement*
- Parents' employment hours strongest association at 9 months
- Mothers employment hours have a stronger association with father engagement from age 3

Limitations & next steps



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- We are bound by the MCS data, which determines how we measure engagement!
- Our MIMIC model provides a foundation from which to build the analysis
 - Important to include other covariates that will mediate the relationships between employment hours and childcare engagement e.g. socio-economic class, other children in the household, father's motivation to be involved etc.
 - Develop model to explore the potential causal pathways that lead to father engagement at different ages of the child's life?

- Norman, H. Elliot, M. “How important is early paternal engagement? Deriving longitudinal measures of fathers’ childcare engagement and exploring structural relationships with prior engagement and employment hours” – *under review*

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- **Involved Fathers (2016-17)** – University of Manchester. PI: Helen Norman, Co-Is: Mark Elliot & Colette Fagan. Partner: Working Families
<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/involved-fathers/>
- **Paternal Involvement and its Effects on Children’s Education (PIECE) (2021-23)**, University of Leeds. PI: Helen Norman, Co-Is: Mark Elliot & Colette Fagan (University of Manchester), Jeremy Davies (Fatherhood Institute):
<https://piecestudy.org/>



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- Norman, H. (2020) Does paternal involvement in childcare influence mothers' employment trajectories during the early stages of parenthood in the UK? *Sociology* Vol 54(2): 329-345
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- Lamb, M. (ed) (1986). *The Father's Role: Applied Perspectives*. John Wiley & Sons: New York