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Introduction: Men's family involvement across industrial nations: introduction to special section

Sandra L. Hofferth,
University of Maryland

Kimberly Fisher, and
University of Oxford Centre for Time Use Research

Ignace Glorieux
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Introduction

This special issue draws upon theoretical work outlining two halves of the ongoing gender revolution (Goldscheider et al. 2014). In the 1970s women, particularly mothers, began to move from primary involvement in the private sphere at home to greater involvement in the public sphere through paid employment. This first half of the process was completed in many countries by the mid-1990s, with a leveling off of the increase in married mother's labor force participation in many countries (OECD 2004). Men are expected to complete the revolution through greater involvement in the private sphere at home, but this part is ongoing. The second half of the gender revolution is the focus of this special issue.

The United States, the home of one of the editors of this special issue, has a romantic picture of how gender roles in the family have changed in Europe. We imagine fathers taking several weeks of parental leave after childbirth and thereafter sharing childrearing. In fact, as our third editor could tell us, across Europe there is substantial variation in the participation of women in the work force and, similarly, father involvement varies dramatically from country to country and even within country. One example is that, until a little more than two decades ago, Germany had been split into East and West for more than 40 years. In terms of gender roles, today the two regions remain distinct; the legacy of different political and economic systems and social expectations is not instantly erased. As another example, Switzerland's cultural heterogeneity – German, French, and Italian – makes for an intriguing set of contexts for variation in gender roles and public policies from canton to canton. This special issue sheds light on how different political, economic, and social system variations and conditions are linked to father involvement with children.

Testing the hypothesis of the second half of the gender revolution, several authors ask whether, as mothers engage more in the labor force across industrial nations, fathers respond with greater involvement at home, particularly regarding care for children? Several of the papers in this volume examine how the father's total time spent engaged with his children varies with the labor force participation of his partner. Absolute level of involvement is a good indicator, but a better indicator for measuring gender role equality is the proportion of total child care time the father contributes. A relative measure adjusts for the absolute

amount of time spent by mothers in caring for children and, therefore, equalizes countries with different levels of maternal childcare time. Several of the studies take advantage of time diaries that were collected from both husbands and wives to classify their joint caregiving and to identify times when fathers are solo primary caregivers rather than joint caregivers. Two papers focus their analyses on the association of maternal and paternal employment with the absolute and relative degree to which fathers are involved in caring for their children.

Besides the contribution it makes in sorting out variation in the total time fathers spend caring for children, this volume adds a focus on *different types of father involvement* with children – all the papers divide involvement at least into routine physical care, and developmental (also called play, educational, or interactive) care, with some including managerial care. The issue is whether fathers who increase time spend more time in play, which has been their bailiwick all along, or do they spend more time in the basic care and management of children. The latter implies a later stage in the second half of the gender revolution. Most of the empirical papers utilize high quality data from time diary studies collected in each nation and which today are archived and available for research use at the Centre for Time Use Research, the University of Oxford (Fisher & Gershuny, et al., 2013). A web-based extract builder is available to facilitate researcher access to the American Time Use Survey (Hofferth, Flood, and Sobek, 2013).

Third, the volume contributes through examining how characteristics of the fathers themselves, such as their education, family living arrangements, or age of children, contribute to their involvement with children.

Introduction to papers in this volume

There are seven empirical papers in this volume.

The paper by **Hofmeister and Baur** is the most theoretical of the set. The paper focuses on examining social expectations of fathers' roles in East and West Germany. Using data from a survey of the attitudes of 691 German citizens in four regions of the country, the study examined whether citizens believe the ideal father is a nurturer primarily, or both nurturer and breadwinner. Almost no one held the breadwinner-only model as ideal. The authors analyze how gender, region, birth cohort, education level, partnership and parenthood status, and religion influence attitudes towards the role of the father. Results suggest strong institutional and structural — especially East-West — effects on the social construction of fatherhood in Germany and a mismatch between the idealized father and the opportunities men have to achieve it.

Martin **Gasser** examines how much time fathers spend on physical and interactive childcare as a function of cultural differences between the 26 Swiss cantons using data from labor force surveys conducted between 2004 and 2013. The major independent variable is gender culture, construed as family and child care ideals aligned on a spectrum between 'male breadwinner/female part-time care provider' and 'dual breadwinner/external care'. The gender culture index turns out to be a high-ranking u-shaped predictor of fathers' time spent

on interactive care, but not of time spent on physical care. The study also found partner's education, employment, child ages, day of the week, and the availability of flextime to be associated with fathers' involvement in child care.

Two papers address both absolute paternal child care time and time relative to that of the partner. The paper by **Gracia and Esping-Andersen** utilizes time use data for married/cohabiting couples with children under 15 from three countries at very different points in the gender revolution — Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom. They examine the link between maternal labor force participation (LFP) and paternal involvement, defined as routine or interactive care. Absolute levels of paternal involvement and relative share are highest in Denmark. Paternal involvement in routine care is lowest in the UK, but the share of routine care is higher in the UK than in Spain. Spain is higher than the UK in sharing interactive care. Intriguing is the finding that in Denmark, which has already gone through the first half of the gender revolution, the link between maternal LFP and routine child care is weak, whereas it is strong in Spain, a country in which the first half of the gender revolution is ongoing. Part-time labor force participation is more common in the UK than in the other two countries, and that would limit the gender revolution. Thus it is not surprising that the UK lies in-between Spain and Denmark in terms of sharing routine care of children.

The paper by **van Tienoven, Glorieux, Minnen, and Daniels** also addresses the issue of the relationship between maternal LFP and paternal involvement in care of children. The data come from two large-scale Belgian time use surveys in 1999 and 2005; their study examines two-parent families with children under age 7. In this study primary paternal child care involvement is divided into physical and interactive care. In addition, the authors also include a look at secondary child care (when doing another activity) and accessibility (in the home but not providing care) as well. They categorize care depending on whether the father is the sole primary provider with the mother elsewhere (individual), the parents are both providing care for children but in different locations (complementary), he is providing care while the mother does something else in the same location (parallel), and both are caring for children at the same place (synchronized). Greater maternal labor force participation is associated with a higher level of solo paternal care for children.

Three papers address other factors associated with paternal child care time.

The **Altintas** paper focuses on how *paternal education* links to father's routine, developmental, and managerial care of children using U.S. data. Lareau (2003) argued that middle class families (measured by educational level) spend more time in concerted cultivation whereas working class families simply allow their children to grow naturally without such directed attention, but her research focused on mothers not on fathers. Altintas asks whether paternal involvement with children reflects fathers' educational level, just as Lareau argued that maternal involvement reflects mothers' education. The author uses data from the American Time Use Survey from 2003 to 2013 for married/cohabiting fathers with a child under 13. The authors find an association of paternal education with more time devoted to all three types of caregiving activities. However, the association of education with routine care was completely explained by the education of the mother, whereas the father's

education has an additional significant impact on his developmental and managerial care after controlling for maternal education.

Jennifer **Baxter** uses data for two-parent families from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children to examine changes in father involvement as children grow from birth to age 5. Australian data provide information about children's total and solo time with fathers and mothers on weekdays and weekends based on diaries of the children, reported mainly by the mother. This unique large-scale dataset allows analyses of changes in children's time with fathers as they grow and experience contextual changes such as increased parental work hours. Previous studies have only been able to compare across families with different levels of maternal employment to see whether there is an association of greater maternal employment with greater father care of children. This study has some promise for being able to sort out the causality of maternal employment hours within families – does father's time with children increase with increases in maternal work hours over time? The limitation is that there is another process occurring simultaneously; parent involvement generally declines as children grow older. Of course, this offsetting effect should be minimized during the parenting-intensive preschool years. The results support the hypothesis that solo father time with children increases with increased maternal work hours whereas total father time is not so affected. This finding is set in the context of Australian work and child care patterns and policies.

The Hofferth and Lee paper completes the set of papers by examining change over the past decade in the United States in care of children by fathers, looking at routine care, play, management and teaching. This paper uses data from the American time use Study from 2003 to 2013 for fathers living with their children under 18 to examine the association of family structure and parental employment jointly with paternal time spent in the primary care of children. In addition, it examines whether the 2008-2009 economic downturn had any noticeable influence on the involvement of fathers with children relative to the years before and after the downturn. This paper provides some input not only regarding the contribution of family structure and employment, but also the impact of economic conditions on the involvement of fathers with children. The results show that the proportion of fathers reporting primary child care — routine care — increased significantly during the recession (particularly for single fathers) and then returned to prerecessionary levels. In contrast, for fathers reporting time caring for children, there was an overall increase in the time they spent caring for children that was unrelated to the recession. Finally, the actual employment status of parents mattered; unemployed fathers were more likely to report being a primary caregiver for a child and reported spending significantly more time in child care than employed fathers, regardless of maternal employment status.

Conclusions

The papers contained in this volume provide consistent evidence that fathers are responsive to mothers' labor force participation by spending more time in routine child care tasks, not just play. This finding is supported particularly by the single study that follows families and children over time. Increased maternal LFP is associated with increased time by fathers in caring for children. What is interesting is that the extent to which fathers respond appears to

be linked to where the country is located on the gender revolution time line. Gracia and Esping-Andersen show that in Denmark, which has substantial paternal participation and is the most gender equitable of the three nations studied, fathers' time is not responsive to additional increases in the labor force participation of their spouses. In Spain, which is least equitable, fathers were the most responsive. Thus after a certain point, fathers' involvement appears to level off. Gasser also noted a contradiction: father involvement tended to be higher in both the most conservative and the most gender equitable cantons. This is consistent with other research that suggests that some very conservative religious denominations encourage men to be more involved with their children (Wilcox 2004).

The differences pointed out within two different nations – Switzerland and Germany – were fascinating and informative about the lengthy process of social change and our inability to change long-held habits and attitudes overnight.

We note that this set of papers did not include Scandinavian nations other than Denmark. The Goldscheider et al. (2014) volume contains research on male-female gender roles, including focus on household work and parental leave in Scandinavia but that volume does not focus as much as this one on father involvement in child care. Household work is an important part of the gender revolution, but the care of children is the most important indicator of this second phase. Certainly more research is needed that includes the Scandinavian nations as well as the Asian nations that are currently experiencing their own gender revolutions.

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