Fathers' Childcare Time: Concerted Cultivation?

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Introduction

Until recently research on childcare has focused on mothers, often neglecting fathers understandably as mothers are seen as the primary caregivers. Across different countries and cultures, mothers tend to provide the majority of childcare (Bianchi and Milkie 2010; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008; Dermott 2005; Craig and Mullen 2011; Garcia-Mainar et al. 2011; Hossain et al. 2005; Laflamme et al. 2002; Seward and Richter 2008; Stephenson 2010). Mothers not only undertake regular childcare activities, they are also more likely than are fathers to provide unexpected emergency care and to engage in multitasking combining housework and childcare (Maume 2008; Offer and Schneider 2011). Even when couples entered marriage and parenthood with expectations of egalitarian role divisions, there is a tendency for wives to shoulder the greater share of housework and childcare over time (Biehle and Mickelson 2012; Stone 2011). Meanwhile, recent data show that fathers spend increasingly longer time in childcare activities as their attitudes have shifted more egalitarian in household work (Bianchi and Milkie 2010; Wang and Bianchi 2009).

This study asks whether the quality of fathers' childcare also matches to that among the mothers, i.e., whether educated fathers engage in those parenting practices broadly called "concerted cultivation" as educated mothers do. "Concerted cultivation" refers to a particular approach of parenting practices that middle and upper class parents adopt in order to transmit class advantages to their children (Lareau 2002). Middle and upper class parents highly structure children's schedules and engage their children in numerous extra-curricular activities. This style of childrearing imposes a large burden of material resources and time on the parents, but it will instill children with life skills, values, and a sense of entitlement (or assertiveness) that can help with their social and economic success later in life. On the other hand, poor and working class parents engage in a practice of "natural growth" where parents do not expend gross efforts in cultivating children's skills and managing schedules but rather allow children more free time. These parents also emphasize giving directives to their children and physical discipline, whereas middle and upper class parents prefer to use reasoned discussion as a means of discipline. Compared to the sense of entitlement developed among middle and upper class children, poor and working class children who grow up under the parenting practice of natural growth tend to build up a sense of constraint.

Kalil et al. (2012) applied the hypothesis of concerted cultivation to mothers' childcare time and found it supported. More educated mothers not only spend longer hours total but also modify their time allocation among different types of care activities to a greater extent by children's developmental gradients, compared to their less educated counterparts. When the children are infants and toddlers (aged 0 to 2) they would benefit most by basic care and play activities. When the children are preschoolers (aged 3 to 5) they benefit most by parents' engaging in teaching activities to prepare for entry into school. When the children are school ages (aged 6 to 13) they benefit by parents' management care that enriches children's social and learning networks. More educated mothers follow these changing needs more strictly than mothers with less education.

The Current Research

The research questions are three-fold: (1) whether fathers' total time spent for childcare differ by

father's educational attainment, (2) whether more educated fathers adjust their care activities to a greater extent than do their less educated counterparts to better fit children's developmental needs, and (3) whether such educational and developmental gradient in fathers childcare time, i.e., fathers' engagement in concerted cultivation, is true for fathers' sole childcare time in the absence of a spouse. If fathers engage in cultivation only when a spouse is present, then fathers may not be consciously shaping their childcare activities but merely emulating what mothers are doing. This project will also expand the number of control variables compared to Kalil et al. (2012) so as to better identify the relationship between education and children's age, on the one hand, and father's childcare time, on the other.

Data are from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) from 2003 to 2011, conducted by the US Census Bureau based on a nationally representative sample. The criteria choosing a subsample for the current analyses mirror those applied in Kalil et al. (2012), except using fathers instead of mothers: having one or more children (own, adopted, or foster) aged 13 and below and living in his household; having more own (own, adopted, or foster) children in the household than non-own children; and, whose time diary captured a weekend day. The final sample used for analyses contains 7,984 respondents.

The dependent variables, time spent in childcare by fathers, are operationalized through five different categories and the sum total: basic care, play, teaching with reading and conversing, teaching assisting educational activities, management, and total time aggregating these five categories. Each is measured by logged time in minutes. Basic care refers to physical care for children and looking after children. Play refers to activities involving playing with children not counting arts and crafts activities, which are classified as teaching. Teaching consists of two subcategories: one includes reading to children or conversing with, i.e., talking with or listening to, children, and the other deals with activities of an educational nature, such as helping with homework. Management refers to activities dealing with organizing or planning for children and attending children's events. Childcare time is also classified in another dimension by the presence of the spouse: solo versus double. Solo childcare time only counts the time in which the father acts without the presence of a spouse or partner.

The two independent variables of interest are youngest child's age and fathers' education. The age of youngest child in the household is grouped into three categories: 0-2 years of age, 3-5 years of age, and 6-13 years of age. Father's education is divided into three categories: high school or less, some college, and college education. With the extremely skewed distribution of the paternal childcare time with many zeros, the linear regression with the logged time (i.e., ad-hoc log-normal model) seems to be more appropriate than the tobit or negative binomial (poisson) regression models often used for other, less skewed time dependent variables. The interaction effects between youngest child's age and father's education are the key in testing the hypothesis of concerted cultivation.

The preliminary results for fathers' total and solo childcare time are presented in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. The findings generally support the hypothesis of concerted cultivation, showing significant interaction effects between father's education and youngest child's age, for full care time and across the five different types of activities, for total as well as solo care activities. In the equation of full childcare time (i.e., combining all types of activities), the main effect of father's education indicates that education has a very strong positive effect among fathers with youngest child aged 0-2. The main effect of youngest child's age shows that fathers with high school or less education spend significantly shorter time, as the youngest child grows older. The significant negative interaction effects confirm that fathers with higher education

reduce their care time to a greater extent when the youngest child grows older. This pattern is exactly the same for basic care, suggesting that more educated fathers spend more basic-care time in general than do less educated fathers and that such educational differentials are greater when the youngest child is aged 0-2, when children most benefit from basic care. Time for play activities and to a lesser extent but time for reading- and conversing-type of teaching activities also show similar educational gradients. In the areas of more educational teaching and management, college-educated fathers' excess care time compared to less educated fathers' care time is pronounced when the youngest child is older.

This pattern of concerted cultivation is also confirmed for fathers' solo care activities. In conclusion, fathers not only spend increasingly more time for childcare, the quality or content of their childcare activities is comparable to that among mothers.

Table 1. Determinants of Fathers' **Total** Childcare Time by Types of Activities

	Full	Basic	Play	Teach1	Teach2	Management
Father's education (High school or less)						
Some college	0.5475***	.5951***	.1785*	0.082	0.0116	-0.0208
College	1.2999***	1.1137***	.9247***	.3835***	-0.0086	.1970**
Youngest child's age (0-2)						
'3-5	-0.4512***	-.4155***	-.3774***	0.0265	-0.0035	0.0755
'6-13	-1.2251***	-1.0703***	-.8990***	-0.0754	0.025	0.0471
Father education * Child age						
SC*(3-5)	-0.0467	-0.1676	-0.0781	0.003	0.0386	0.0881
C*(3-5)	-0.1903	-0.213	-.3997**	-0.017	0.1039**	0.0999
SC*(6-13)	-0.2757*	-.5859***	-0.1187	-0.0644	.0860*	.1871*
C*(6-13)	-0.3994**	-.7490***	-.7092***	-.1960**	.1925***	.2794**
Control Variables						
Father age	0.3639***	.1550**	.3378***	.1107**	0.0435	-0.0958
Age squared	-0.0085***	-.0035**	-.0076***	-.0025**	-0.001	.0024*
Age cubed	0.0001***	.00002**	.00005***	.00002**	0.000007	-0.00002
Race/ethnicity (whites)						
African American	-.5037***	-.3792***	-.3283***	-.0793*	.0518*	-.1695**
Latino	-.6698***	-.6508***	-.2865***	-.1123**	0.0101	-.1141**
Asian	-0.1632	-.4240***	0.1035	-.1748**	.1701***	-0.0679
Other	-.439**	-0.1883	-.3377*	-0.0351	0.0564	-0.0762
Number, children	.1502**	.1179***	-.0732**	0.0176	.0231**	.1433***
Father working	-.2795**	-.2068**	-0.0905	-0.0658	-.1085***	-0.0289
Spouse (not working)						
No spouse	0.1281	.1554*	-0.0154	0.0223	-0.0008	.2017**
Spouse working	0.0686	0.0646	-0.0702	-0.0205	-.0347**	0.0524
Year 2008-2011	0.087	.0779*	.1382***	0.0259	-0.0191	0.0327

Constant	-2.3359**	-0.3565	-3.1354**	-1.2990**	-0.5189	1.3595*

Table 2. Determinants of Fathers' **Solo** Childcare Time by Types of Activities

	Full	Basic	Play	Teach1	Teach2	Management
Father's education (High school or less)						
Some college	.2422**	.3070***	-0.007	0.0392	0.0041	-0.0835
College	.9517***	.7841***	.4768***	.1885***	-0.0038	0.0552
Youngest child's age (0-2)						
'3-5	-.2625**	-.2066**	-.1507*	0.0214	-0.0324	-0.0193
'6-13	-.7866***	-.6672***	-.4956***	-0.0549	0.0002	0.0378
Father education * Child age						
SC*(3-5)	0.0362	-0.0655	0.0626	-0.0091	0.0318	.1565*
C*(3-5)	-0.0339	-.2638**	-0.0725	0.0162	.0676*	.2093**
SC*(6-13)	-0.1072	-.2541**	0.0453	-0.0197	0.0326	.1329*
C*(6-13)	-.2975**	-.5618***	-.2517**	-0.059	0.1440***	.2274***
Control Variables						
Father age	.2525**	0.0566	.2172***	.0860**	0.0053	-.0854**
Age squared	-.0056**	-0.001	-.0050***	-.0021**	-0.00002	.0022**
Age cubed	.00004**	0.000005	.00004***	.00002**	-0.0000002	-.00002**
Race/ethnicity (whites)						
African American	-.3150***	-.1274*	-.2182**	-.0746*	0.0144	-.0972**
Latino	-.5999***	-.4152***	-.3220***	-.0839**	0.0268	-.1150***
Asian	-0.1657	-.3186***	0.0146	-.1330**	.1224***	-0.0296
Other	-0.1984	-0.0735	-0.1542	-0.0425	0.0583	-0.0279
Number, children	.1321***	.0526**	0.0097	0.0141	.0162**	.1028***
Father working	-.1961**	-.1735**	-0.0605	-.0664*	-.0703**	0.0658
Spouse (not working)						
No spouse	.9458***	.6543***	.3280***	.1350***	.0744**	.4481***
Spouse working	.1844***	.1206**	0.0245	-0.0049	0.0019	.0607**
Year 2008-2011	0.0417	0.0449	.0678*	0.0279	-.0214*	0.03
Constant	-2.2604**	0.0525	-2.2333**	-1.0084**	-0.0917	0.8722