

Family Type and Parental Time Involvement in Educational Activities

Background and Significance

Scholarship on patterns of parental time-involvement with children in the U.S. has increased in recent years. 'Family type' has received attention as a sociodemographic dimension that structures differentials in parental time-investment (e.g., Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Hofferth, 2006), thereby playing a role in establishing family structural inequality found among children today (Amato & Cheadle, 2008; Martin, 2006). Family structure is noted to have a particularly large impact on children's educational outcomes (Ginther and Pollak 2006; Jaynes 2005).

Previous studies linking family structure to children's time involvement with parents have typically examined the *total* time parents spend with children. Most recently, Hofferth (2006) found parental time involvement had little impact on children's academic achievement level, regardless of family type. However, the conclusion may be a product of measuring total time involvement rather than *activity-specific* time involvement that is directly related to academic achievement. It is important to reexamine whether parental time involvement that would be related to academic achievement differ across family types.

Therefore, we ask two questions: (a) does parents' involvement in activities directly related to achievement positively affect children's achievement level, as measured by achievement test scores?; and (b) does this type of time involvement vary across two parent family structures? Currently, very few studies have examined variation in children's time involvement with parents across a diverse array of two parent family

types. A deepened understanding of time diversity among two-parent households is needed; family type bears on educational achievement and nontraditional two parent families have significant demographic presence that has grown in the recent years. The number of children age 18 and under raised in two parent family arrangements is more than twice the number of children being raised in single parent arrangements (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2008) and has been on the rise, from 25 million in 1990 to 26 million in 2005. Researchers of child well-being have only begun to pay substantial attention to the implications of variation in parental time investment among two-parent household types, yielding a few relevant studies (e.g., Artis, 2007; Brown, 2006; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Hofferth & Anderson, 2003).

Data and Analytic Strategy

We analyze the 1997 and 2003 waves of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) which include the Child Development Supplement (CDS). Children in the sample were age zero to twelve in 1997 and approximately six to eighteen when surveyed in the 2002-2003 school year. Only children age six to twelve are present in both the 1997 and 2003 data. Thus, we restrict our analysis to pre-teen children (i.e., six to twelve-year-olds), resulting in a sample size of 1,447 children in 1997 and 1,569 children in 2003 for a total of 3,016 children.

Variables. We analyze three dependent variables, two of which will also be used to predict the last covariate: a) time involvement with a parent on academic activities; b) time involvement with a parent on nonacademic activities; and c) Woodcock Johnson achievement scores. Time shared on academic activities is similar to the achievement-

related activities measure used by Yeung et al. (2001). The activities include: studying, reading, doing homework or class-related research, lessons and practices in arts, crafts, literature, music, theater, dance or sports, and selected computer-related educational activities (such as lessons in computers, library functions via computer, reading class related material). The remaining time is defined as nonacademic activities. The Woodcock-Johnson battery was used to obtain standardized reading and math scores. Another measure of achievement is obtainable teachers compared children's reading and math proficiency to other students in their classes, giving them a rating of above average, average, or below average. These four variables can be included in a factor analysis that produces a latent measure of educational achievement with a Cronbach α of 0.85 (McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan and Moon-Ho 2004).

We measure family types across three union types (i.e., parental first marriage, remarriage, or cohabitation) and two parent types, as defined by step and biological parent. Sample size for each family type is: 1583 first marriages, 290 remarriages and 179 cohabitations. Control variables included in multivariate models are: sex of the child, age of the child, age of the coresident parents, sex of the parents, number of children in the household, race of the child, family income, and education of the coresident parents. Cognitive ability, as measured by a digit span memory score, is also included to proxy for the level of care that a child needs.

Analytic Strategy. Multivariate analyses employ Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and Tobit regression techniques. These estimation approaches have been used in previous studies, depending on how many observations have zero minutes as an outcome. Multiple imputation analysis will be used for missing values.

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