



Where's the daddy? Fathers and father figures in UK datasets

Rebecca Goldman
Independent research consultant
With Adrienne Burgess at the
Fatherhood Institute

The Fatherhood Institute



- Charity founded 1999
- Research summaries to disseminate knowledge and understanding about fathers/ fatherhood
- Some original research (e.g. this datasets review)
- Policy (currently Special Advisors to the Women & Equalities Select Committee)
- Practice e.g. equipping health, education & family professionals to engage better with fathers and father-figures – ‘father inclusive practice’
- Some direct work with fathers, their children and partners

Fathers in the UK: what do we know? what do we need to know?

- Led by Adrienne Burgess at the Fatherhood Institute
- Funded by the Nuffield Foundation
- Literature library - **over 2350 references** – systematic searches for UK studies
- **Research reviews** on key fatherhood topics:
 - *Cash or Carry: Fathers combining work & care in the UK* (December 2017)
 - *Who's the Bloke in the Room? Fathers antenatally + at the birth* (May 2018)
- **Datasets review:** *Where's the Daddy? Fathers & father-figures in UK datasets* – **Online TODAY!**

www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2017/contemporary-fathers-in-the-uk/

Where's the Daddy? Changing families

Changing longitudinal studies

- **Fathers** in intact, separated and blended families
 - How can **birth, adoptive and social** fathers, and **resident and non-resident** fathers, of **dependent** and **adult** children be **identified** and **differentiated** in large-scale UK datasets?
 - How is data about fathers **collected**?
- **New language** & less extensively researched categories
- **Resident means full-time or part-time co-residence**
- **ESRC Review of Longitudinal Studies** – a new cohort study?
- **Closer's collaborative work** including question harmonisation

To look at questions asked and fieldwork practices in....

- 16 large-scale **UK** datasets: 7 **longitudinal studies**; 9 **repeated cross-sectional datasets**
 - National Child Development Study, British Cohort Study, Millennium Cohort Study, Growing Up in Scotland, Alspac
 - First Longitudinal Study of Young People in England
 - Understanding Society (UK Household Longitudinal Survey)
- **Published** research instruments and fieldwork documentation
- **Precedents** to use in new longitudinal studies and new sweeps/ waves of ongoing studies
- Larger repeated cross-sectional studies to establish statistical time series e.g. for non-resident parents

A new residence typology

New language

- **'Resident'** = 'Live with' = **Overnight full-time or part-time** co-residence of father and child
- Parents and children living full-time at one address?
 - “there are revolving doors to family life with many parents and children living together only some of the time” (Kiernan, 2006, p666).
 - Second addresses (2011 Census) and families & couples split across households
- A proportion of 'resident' and 'non-resident' fathers live with their child/ren **part-time** (on a regular basis) or are **temporarily away**
- Resident **or** non-resident? - Limits research questions

Full-time resident fathers

Part-time resident fathers

- Part-time away fathers
- Fathers of part-time away children
- Overnight care fathers
 - *Minority overnight care*
 - *Equal overnight care*
 - *Majority overnight care*

Temporarily non-resident fathers (longer-term non-residence)

- Long-term away fathers
- Fathers of long-term away children

Other full-time non-resident fathers

Stepfathers	Defined according to a current or previous cohabiting relationship (married or not) with birth/ adoptive parent
Full-time and part-time resident	
‘Declared stepfathers’	Described as a “stepfather” or “parent/ guardian” by the father himself or by his partner, child or other household member who is the research respondent
‘Other cohabiting partners’	May be identified, as a parent’s partner or boyfriend and as a “non-relative” of the child
Non-resident One fifth of adult children perceived a former step-parent at least partially as a parent (Schmeeckle et al., 2006)	Former cohabiting partner of a birth/ adoptive parent – previously lived with child and maintains contact
Around a fifth of Australian and US adults with dependent stepchildren described as ‘non-resident’ were male (Stewart, 2001; Qu & Weston, 2005).	Current cohabiting partner of a non-resident birth/ adoptive parent in contact

Table 4. CROSS-SECTIONAL RESEARCH DATASETS: Can ‘resident’* birth, adoptive and social fathers be differentiated as separate categories for analysis?

	Categorised as ‘resident’				
	Birth fathers	Adoptive fathers	Social fathers		
			Stepfathers (married and cohabiting; non-married) including ‘other cohabiting partners’	Foster fathers	Male legal guardians
British Social Attitudes					
Health Survey for England	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Labour Force Survey			✓ * *	✓✓	
Family Resources Survey			✓	✓✓	
2011 Census for England and Wales			✓		
Opinions and Lifestyle Survey - core demographic questions			✓	✓✓	
UK Time Use Surveys			✓	✓✓	

Note: ✓ (one tick only) = identifies subset of these fathers

* In this report, we use quotation marks around ‘resident’ and ‘non-resident’ when referring to an identifiable category in a dataset not comprising solely resident or solely non-resident fathers according to our definitions.

** In the ONS datasets, the Family Resources Survey and the UK Time Use Surveys, a proportion of stepfathers will be excluded from this category if they are identified generically as a ‘parent’ or ‘guardian’ of their stepchildren, and their stepchild is identified as their ‘son/ daughter’ rather than their ‘stepchild’.

Table 5: LONGITUDINAL STUDIES: Can cohort children/ young sample members with a ‘resident’ birth father, adoptive father or social father be differentiated as separate categories in at least one (childhood) sweep?

Cohort child/ young sample member with a ‘resident’...	Birth father	Adoptive father	Social father		
			Stepfathers (married and cohabiting; non- married) including ‘other cohabiting partners’	Foster father	Male legal guardian
Longitudinal Study of Young People in England	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Growing Up in Scotland	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
National Child Development Study	✓✓	✓✓	✓* *	✓✓	
British Cohort Study	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Millennium Cohort Study	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Alspac	✓✓	*	(✓✓)* *	*	
Understanding Society	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	

Note: ✓ (one tick only) = identifies subset of these fathers; (✓) (tick/s in brackets) = subset identified if assumptions made

*In many Alspac childhood sweeps, stepfathers, adoptive fathers and foster fathers are included among the cohort child’s identifiable resident fathers (“father-figures”), but relationship categories cannot be explicitly differentiated. Assumptions could be made using variables about whether the cohort child is adopted or fostered.

**Analyses of resident stepfathers could use the assumption that if the cohort child’s resident birth mother has a cohabiting partner who is not the child’s “biological or “natural” father, that cohabiting partner is a stepfather (a proportion of these cohabiting partners may be a stepfather who formally adopted the child).

Table 8: LONGITUDINAL STUDIES: Can adult cohort members/sample members who are resident and/or non-resident birth, adoptive and social fathers be differentiated as separate categories in at least one (adulthood) sweep?

	Categorised as 'resident'				Categorised as 'non-resident'	
	Birth fathers	Adoptive fathers	Foster fathers	Stepfathers (married and cohabiting; non-married) including 'other cohabiting partners'	Birth fathers	Stepfathers
Longitudinal Study of Young People in England	✓✓	n/a *	n/a		✓* *	
National Child Development Study	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
British Cohort Study	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Alspac***	✓✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓* * * *	
Understanding Society	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓* * * * *	✓

Note: ✓ (one tick only) = identifies subset of these fathers

**In early adulthood sweeps of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England and Alspac with published questionnaires at time of our dataset investigations, cohort members were too young to adopt or foster children.*

***If they have no resident birth children.*

****We did not access questionnaires for the Children of the Children of the 90s (G2/ COCO90s) study.*

*****If they have no resident birth children.*

******For sample members who were in the study at the first sweep.*

Table 7: LONGITUDINAL STUDIES: Can cohort children/ young sample members with a ‘non-resident’ birth father or ‘non-resident’ stepfather be differentiated as separate categories in at least one childhood sweep?

	Cohort child/ young sample member with a ‘resident’...			
	Living ‘non-resident’ birth father	‘Non-resident’ stepfather (Group 2) (current cohabiting partner of child’s ‘non-resident’ birth/ adoptive parent)	Previously ‘resident’ stepfather no longer ‘resident’ in the child’s household for reason other than death	‘Non-resident’ stepfather (Group 1) (former cohabiting partner who moved out of the child’s household and remains in contact)
Longitudinal Study of Young People in England	(✓)*		✓	
Growing Up in Scotland	✓	(✓)* *	✓	
National Child Development Study	(✓)* * *		(✓)	
British Cohort Study	✓		✓	
Millennium Cohort Study	✓	(✓)* * * *	✓	✓
Alspac	✓	*	✓	*
Understanding Society	✓	✓	✓	

Note: ✓ (one tick only) = identifies subset of these fathers; (✓) (tick/s in brackets) = subset identified if assumptions made

**No questions asked about ‘non-resident’ birth fathers so cannot identify that the father is alive; nor establish that he is known to have died unless he lived with the cohort child at an earlier sweep of the study.*

***In second birth cohort; Don’t know “sex” or gender of cohabiting partner of ‘non-resident’ birth parent.*

****Not known whether alive if reason given for not living with cohort child is divorce/ relationship separation. No questions asked about current contact or child maintenance.*

*****Don’t know “sex” or gender of cohabiting partner of ‘non-resident’ birth parent.*

Table 3: LONGITUDINAL STUDIES: Can cohort children/ young sample members who are part-time resident with a ‘part-time away’ father or ‘overnight care’ birth/ adoptive father be differentiated as separate categories in at least one (childhood) sweep?

Cohort child/young sample member with a...	Part-time away father	Overnight care father			
		All ‘overnight care’ fathers as one identifiable category	Majority overnight care father	Equal overnight care father	Minority overnight care father
Longitudinal Study of Young People in England					
Growing Up in Scotland		✓	✓	✓✓	✓
National Child Development Study					
British Cohort Study					
Millennium Cohort Study	✓	(✓)*			
Alspac					
Understanding Society		(✓)* *	✓✓	(✓)* * *	✓

Note: ✓ (one tick only) = identifies subset of these fathers; (✓) (tick/s in brackets) = subset identified if assumptions made

* We do not know whether this is a regular pattern of stays.

** We did not find a question asking about the ‘non-resident’ parent’s ‘sex’/ gender.

*** In sweep 3, ‘shared care 50/50’ may not be the same as our definition of ‘equal overnight care’.

Who is counted? 'Main residence'

Published household inclusion rules

PART-TIME AWAY ADULTS

- **MCS:** includes 'part-time away' adults in cohort child's household
- **USoc:** excludes but does not enumerate adults working away & "home" only at weekends when the study household is not their "main address".

OVERNIGHT CARE CHILDREN

- **USoc:** "Parents living separately may have **joint custody** of their children who divide time between two households. Subject to survey-specific instructions...the child's main residence is usually where they have spent the most time in the last six months".
- **Equal 'shared care'** (cf 2011 Census and 2014/15 Time Use Survey)?
- **MCS and recent adulthood sweeps of NCDS and BCS:** household members should include all children living in the household for some of the time/ "**where custody is shared**"

Identifying questions

...see our full report for more...

- **Part-time away: v MCS later sweeps:** “Can I check, does [name of person] live here all of the time, or does [he/she] also live somewhere else?”
- **Overnight care: v Understanding Society:** “About how many nights each week, fortnight or month does [child name] usually stay overnight with their [mother/father] during term-time?” Number of nights per week/ fortnight/ 4 weeks/ calendar month
- **Long-term away: v BCS 1975:** “List below any members of the family not included in the above table, for example those who are only home for holidays or leave, and enquire or state from your own knowledge the reason for absence, for example at residential school or working away”.
- **Long-term away: v MCS:** “Can I check, what happened to [name of person in household at previous sweep]?”: Deceased; Long-term absence (i.e. 6 months or more) eg hospital, army, prison; Lives somewhere else
- **Non-resident stepfathers:(v) NCDS age 50/ BCS age 46:** Do you have any children who are not currently living in your household? (of whom you consider yourself to be a parent)..child of current/ previous spouse/ partner...Has [child] ever lived with you? **But overnight stays?**

Our contribution to ESRC Review of Longitudinal Studies

“We propose that data collection from resident and non-resident fathers is a core part of birth and child cohort studies in order to adequately address the scientific priorities of ‘long-term effects of childhood experience’ and ‘biotechnology revolution’ (the genetic contribution of biological fathers)”

Tracking and interviewing fathers who leave study households

Townsley, R. (2017). ESRC Longitudinal Studies Review: Further analysis of responses to the consultation: Paper 6: What did respondents say about birth cohort studies?

Data collection: Contribution of our residence typology

- The given: Difficult and costly to collect data from parents **who do not live full-time with their children** – Response bias
- Data collection from part-time resident ‘overnight care’ fathers? And the most involved ‘daytime care’ fathers?
- If ‘**equal** overnight care’, published fieldwork guidance results in the mother’s household being the sole study household. ‘Two household’ children including part-time resident step-parents/ step-siblings



Where's the Daddy? outputs

ONLINE TODAY !!!

Executive summary (if short of time!)

Condensed report (16,000 words)

Full working paper (56,000 words) (bedtime read!)

www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2017/contemporary-fathers-in-the-uk/

CITATION

Goldman, R. & Burgess, A. (2017). Where's the daddy? Fathers and father-figures in UK datasets. Contemporary Fathers in the UK series. Marlborough: Fatherhood Institute.

<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2017/contemporary-fathers-in-the-uk/>



Lead contact

AdrienneBurgess@fatherhoodinstitute.org

The study was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation