

TIME SPENT BY FATHERS WITH THEIR PRESCHOOL  
SONS AND DAUGHTERS

by

MARGARET JOAN WATKINS

A. B., Friends University, 1954

---

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1956

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	1
METHOD OF PROCEDURE.....	6
DATA AND DISCUSSION.....	8
CONCLUSIONS.....	27
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	30
REFERENCES.....	31
APPENDIX.....	34

## INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A common assumption has been that women are responsible for the home; therefore, by implication, for the children too. But the trend of thinking is gradually changing toward encouraging couples to desire increased interest and attention from the fathers for their young children (1).

English and Foster (9) felt it was a mistaken idea to believe that small children belonged to the women. They stated that the young war veterans, as a whole, seemed to be taking a more active interest in their children than did the men of previous generations. The opinion was also expressed that those war veterans were doing a good job in helping with their children.

In some areas, according to English and Foster (8), the father's role seemed to be more vital than that of the mothers. Children developed the tendency to expect the world to treat them much as their fathers did when they were young. By starting early to help with the children, fathers more easily showed their sons what was expected of them in the masculine role. As fathers became their daughters' first masculine friends, they helped these girls establish their position as members of the feminine sex. From this experience, the girls also learned more of what men were like; therefore were presumably able to make a better selection of a marriage partner. As the fathers supported the mothers' roles, they helped show the children what

was to be expected of mothers.

Again, English and Foster (9) defined fatherhood as follows:

By showing a willingness to participate in all these homely little routines of early childhood, a man pays his initiation dues and earns his right to true paternity, a highly select organization to which many are called but few are chosen.

Along with all the blessings of added father participation in child rearing, there was a danger to avoid. The more active participation by fathers might tend to increase the femininity of the father's role (1). This partial change in the fathers' roles might give the children confused ideas of manhood and fatherhood. With the established cultural patterns, society would frown upon such shifts of behavior.

Various methods have been used to encourage men to think more about helping and playing with their children. Blatz and Bott (5) set up a scale by which men could measure their abilities in the fatherhood role. This scale consisted of items about discipline, the fathers' attitudes toward children, the amount of time they spent with their children, the amount of responsibility they felt for the children's social and religious education and the attitudes of children toward parents. Many articles have appeared in popular periodicals for quick and easy consumption. Radio and television have often broadcasted programs containing elements of father participation with children. Parent associations have achieved more father participation with their school age children as well as interest in child development, parent-child relationships, home and school cooperation,

and in understanding of the importance of mental and emotional health.

In 1954 children from 20 professional families were interviewed by Finch (10) to gain an insight into children's concepts of their parents' roles. Seventy-five per cent of the children between three and seven years of age thought of their fathers as an economic provider; a concept similar to that which most people have held throughout history. Even though most children thought of their fathers as economic providers, they preferred them to be more like companions and less like disciplinarians (19). Fathers in the United States have seemed to control most of the disciplining; therefore it has been relatively easy to understand why some children might have looked upon their fathers with a bit of disfavor and might have also found it more difficult to bring their problems and joys to them.

World conflicts have made it difficult for children to get a true concept of fathers, as well as of themselves. A summary of research concerning children's reactions to separation from their fathers by McFarland (16) presents the following picture. Many of the fathers were away from home during the four pre-school years when they should have been helping their children develop their first ideas of men. The personalities of the children of that age, whose fathers were away, tended to develop toward femininity when only mothers were around. These preschool children were usually less aggressive than the children whose fathers were home because fathers tended to stimulate aggression

but were also a support to the children in learning how to control their aggressive impulses. The non-aggressive characteristic carried over even to the elementary school age children.

These veterans returned home to find their children with more serious problems than those children whose fathers were not absent. The children were less independent, less skillful in handling peer relationships as well as being the subjects of aggression instead of the aggressors. These fathers found it difficult to establish their rightful father role. The children were unusually close to the mothers, for the mothers had shared with the children many things that would otherwise have been shared with the fathers (16).

Conditions in modern industrialized society have made it difficult for fathers to spend much time at home with their children. Increased specialization has required additional time, money, and energy that would have been devoted to the family. The elements of strain are becoming more visible in the masculine role (21).

The amount of time fathers spend with their preschool children varies of course from family to family. There have always been some fathers who have spent time with their children. For example, in 1925, Rust (22) found that in a group of infants, fathers gave an average of five per cent of the care the children received.

More recent studies (13), (27) have established the fact that fathers are apparently spending more time with children now. Over half of the fathers in both studies gave routine care to

children such as feeding, bathing, or dressing. Fathers are helping in many other ways too. Tasch (27) in her study made a listing of the activities the fathers participated in with those mentioned most frequently listed first. They are as follows:

- Development of motor abilities, acquisition of skills, interests
- Development of intellectual abilities and interests
- Development of social standards, conduct and control
- Going to places of recreation
- Routine daily care and safety
- Assignment of chores, work allowance
- Radio, movies, comics
- Maintaining family unity
- Moral and spiritual development
- Emotional development
- Development of personality characteristics
- Giving material objects, presents
- Development of artistic interests

Several studies have been made in an effort to find reasons for the varied amounts of time fathers spend with their children. Klatskin (14) used social class as the basis for her study. Upon completing the study, she drew the conclusion that social class caused no significant differences in the amount of time fathers spent with their children. Underwood (28) studied veteran student fathers and found that there was little relationship between the amount of time devoted to the children and the credit hours the fathers carried, the time spent in studying or the time spent working. She concluded that the fathers who wanted to spend time with their children did so regardless of their other obligations.

The investigator chose the subject of time spent by fathers with their preschool children because little research has been done concerning father-child relationships or the time fathers

spend specifically with daughters or with sons.

The purposes of the study were (1) to determine the relationship of the sex of the children to the amount of time their fathers spent with them and (2) to find what differences existed in the time fathers spent in helping children of each sex in routine activities and in motor activities. If some fathers did differentiate in time spent with the children according to their sex, the investigator wanted to ascertain what factors, if any, were characteristic of those fathers who did or did not make differentiations.

#### METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The subjects of this investigation were fathers living in wards three and five of Manhattan, Kansas, a city of approximately 19,000 population. Wards three and five were chosen as being typical of the population of the town. This selection also avoided college housing and military personnel which involved specialized groups. Family names, addresses, telephone numbers and number and ages of children were obtained from the city's census books. Criteria for the selection of families were (1) those having at least one child between the ages of two years, three months and four years, three months, (2) those having not more than one other child, (3) those in which both parents were living at home with no extra persons living within the family group. Families who met these requirements were then selected by use of a table of random numbers.

Pretests with three families were made of the face sheet,

check list and time records (Appendix). The necessary revisions were made on the face sheet and check list for further use with the selected families.

Contacts were made with 74 families. Sixteen of the families had children over four years, three months and one family's child was less than two years, three months; hence they were unable to help with this study. Eighteen families said they were too busy or did not want to help. One family was a military family, one family was never at home when home visits were made and three families were moving and would be unable to complete the time records. Thirty families completed all records satisfactorily and were used in this study.

Contacts were first made with each family by telephone. At this time they were given a short explanation of the purpose of the study, a summary of what the parents would be expected to do, and an appointment was made for a personal interview with the family. At the time of the personal interview, the face sheet and the check list were filled in by the interviewer. Methods of keeping the time records were explained to both parents. The mothers were asked to record each activity and the time involved that the fathers spent with their preschool children. It was assumed that the mothers would make a more accurate description of the activity, and that it would be easier for them to record the time involved while the fathers were participating. Three time record sheets were left with each family to be used the following Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday in order to

obtain a representation of both the week end and the work week. A self addressed, stamped envelope was left so that the family could return the time record to the interviewer by mail; thus not necessitating a second personal contact. The few that were slow in returning the time records were quick to respond after a telephone reminder.

#### DATA AND DISCUSSION

The fathers used as subjects in this study constituted a diversified group. The greatest number of them had been married for six years. The mean number of years married was eight although the years ranged from four to 20. The fathers' ages ranged from 23 years to 48 years with a mean of 32 years. Their age average ranged two years higher than that of their wives whose ages ranged from 20 to 53 years with a mean of 30 years.

Many of the fathers belonged to one or more organizations. The one mentioned most often was church. Both regular and occasional church attendance were equal to or exceeded the attendance of any other group. The veteran and informal social organizations were not mentioned by any father. Four of the 30 fathers held an office or were committee members. Eight belonged to no organizations. The most organizations to which any one father belonged was five. This father attended all of them regularly.

The working hours per week varied considerably. Nine or 30 per cent, of the fathers worked a 40 hour week, which was also the minimum hours worked, but two had 84 hour weeks. These were the firemen who worked on 24 hour shifts. The mean number

of hours worked was 50.

Working mothers were at a minimum in this group. Twenty-four, or 80 per cent, of the mothers were not working outside the home at that time. Six, or 20 per cent, did work but only in four instances were the fathers required to spend more time with the children because of the mothers' working. Those four mothers worked 35 or 40 hours weekly. Although very few mothers were working at the time of the interview, many had worked prior to their marriage. Twenty, or 66 per cent, had held positions including teaching, office work, waitress work, therapy, nursing and clerking.

The mothers' education ranked slightly lower than that of the fathers. One mother had only a grade school education and similarly, one father. Two fathers and two mothers had at least one year of high school but not more than three years. Thirteen of the mothers graduated from high school but only nine of the fathers. Twelve fathers and 13 mothers had vocational training or college training. Only one of the mothers had had advanced work while six of the fathers had such training.

Each family had one child of preschool age. The preschool age was established at two years, three months to four years, three months. The children's ages were calculated as of August 1, 1955 rather than at the time of the interviews in June or July. Twenty-five, or 83 per cent, of the families had another child; therefore five, or 17 per cent of the children were only children. Of the preschool children who had siblings, eight were the older child and 17 were the younger child. Of the 30

preschool children, 16 were girls and 14 were boys.

Only seven, or 23 per cent, of the families did not use a baby sitter at any time. The 23, or 77 per cent, that did use sitters, hired them for daytime use, evening use and for both. The five that hired them only in the daytime were families with working mothers. Eight used sitters only in the evening while 10 families relied on outside help both daytime and evening. The sitters were grandparents, neighbor children or neighbor women. Even though 23 of the families did make use of sitters, 11 used them less than once a week and seven used them only once a week. One family employed a sitter as often as twice a week while four families had sitters regularly five times a week, which directly corresponds with those families that had mothers working full time.

The fathers were asked how they felt about the time they spent with their children. Fathers as a whole felt that they spent considerable time with them. The fathers were questioned about the amount of time they participated with their children in play activities and daily routine activities. Twenty-three fathers said they often participated in play activities while 24 mentioned that they often participated in daily routine activities. Fathers acknowledged occasional participation in play activities in seven instances, as compared to six mentions of occasional participation in daily routine activities. In play activities, as in daily routine activities, none of the fathers said they offered no time at all to their children.

When questioned whether they would like to spend more time,

less time or were spending a satisfying amount of time with their children 17, or 57 per cent, of them were quite satisfied with the existing situations. Thirteen, or 43 per cent, stated that they would like to spend more time with their children but when asked how more time might be arranged, none of them could offer any solution other than taking time from their work, which they felt was impossible. In other words, these fathers felt they were spending all of the time they had available with their children.

Wives were an influencing factor for their husbands. Within this group of husbands eight felt their wives wanted them to spend more time with their children. Twenty-two of the husbands felt their wives were satisfied with what they were doing with the children and none felt that their wives wished them to spend less time with the children. The wives were not asked their opinion on this subject, so it was not known whether husbands and wives were in agreement.

The fathers tended to feel that they were at ease around their children and understood them. None of the fathers seemed to feel that it was difficult to understand their children's feelings and only six of them found it moderately difficult. The remaining 24 stated that it was easy to understand their children's feelings most of the time. The investigator felt it showed a feeling of ease in the fathers when they could view many of their children's activities with a sense of humor. Eighteen of the fathers felt it was easy to view their children's activities with a sense of humor and 12 of them thought it was

relatively easy. None of them expressed the opinion that it was difficult.

The feeling of ease did not carry over completely to children outside of the immediate family, such as neighbors or relatives. A definite feeling of tenseness when other children were around was expressed by three of the fathers. An increased proportion, felt that they were unconcerned about the presence of other children. A feeling of ease was felt by 16 of the fathers when children other than their own were around them.

The fathers of girls spent a mean of five hours, 14 minutes with their daughters during three days or a daily mean of one hour, 45 minutes (Table 1). The fathers of boys spent a mean of six hours, 11 minutes with their sons during a three day period and a daily mean of two hours, four minutes. That is a difference of 39 minutes in the daily mean between girls and boys, with the boys receiving the greater portions of their fathers' time. The ratio of significance, 1.13, for total time spent with children fell below the five per cent level, therefore, the difference between the amount of time spent with boys as with girls is not significant. The father giving the least time to his child was the father of a boy. That father gave one hour, 20 minutes to his son in a three day period, making an average of 27 minutes a day. The least amount of time any girl received from her father was two hours, six minutes during the three day period, making a 42 minute daily average. In direct contrast, one boy's father gave him more time than any other child received from his father. One boy received 12 hours, 25 minutes of his

Table 1. Time spent by fathers with sons and daughters.

Time with children in	Sons				Daughters			
	'Total mean for'		'Daily mean'		'Total mean for'		'Daily mean'	
	three days				three days			
	hrs.	mins.	hrs.	mins.	hrs.	mins.	hrs.	mins.
Total time	6	11	2	24	5	14	1	45
Motor activities	1	37		32	1	9		23
Routine activities	2	15		45	1	45		35
Nonroutine activities (includes motor act)	3	56	1	19	3	29	1	10

father's time, giving him a daily average of three hours, 35 minutes. The greatest amount of time any girl received from her father was eight hours, 45 minutes during the three day time interval, averaging two hours, 55 minutes for one day's time.

The time records were examined to find how much time fathers spent with their sons and daughters in routine activities and motor activities. The investigator defined routine activities as those activities necessary to provide physical comfort and health. Motor activities were defined as those activities that help develop greater gross muscular dexterity. The fathers spent a mean of two hours, 15 minutes in routine activities with their sons during the three day period which made a daily mean of 45 minutes. A mean of one hour, 37 minutes was spent by the fathers in motor activities with their sons. The daily mean was 32 minutes. Fathers of girls spent a mean of one hour, 45 minutes with their daughters in routine activities, making a daily mean of 35 minutes. Less time was devoted to motor activities by fathers of girls as was indicated by the time records. A mean of one hour, nine minutes was spent with girls, with a daily mean of 23 minutes. The daily mean was 10 minutes greater for time spent in routine activities by fathers of boys than by fathers of girls. The fathers of boys also spent nine minutes more per daily mean of motor activities than did the fathers of girls. The ratio of significance for routine activities was .94 and for motor activities 1.05. Both fell below the five per cent level; therefore, there was no significant

difference between the amount of time spent with boys and with girls.

The activities the fathers participated in with their pre-school children were divided again according to routine and non-routine activities. The time records revealed that fathers spent a three day mean of two hours, 15 minutes in routine activities with their sons and a daily mean of 45 minutes. Fathers of girls spent a three day mean of one hour, 45 minutes and a daily mean of 35 minutes in routine activities. Nonroutine activities with boys averaged three hours, 56 minutes, with a daily mean of one hour, 19 minutes. Fathers of girls spent a mean of three hours, 29 minutes, or a daily mean of one hour, 10 minutes in nonroutine activities.

Results show that fathers spent more time with boys than girls in routine activities, motor activities and in total amount of time spent with children. The face sheet and the check list (Appendix) were examined to discover whether there were any characteristics of those fathers who did or did not differentiate in amount of time spent with boys and girls.

In regard to age, fathers 23 through 34 years of age spent a mean of 36 minutes per day with their daughters in routine activities and 21 minutes in motor activities (Table 2). The fathers 35 through 48 years spent a mean of 29 minutes in routine activities and 32 minutes per day in motor activities. The fathers 23 through 34 years spent a daily mean of 41 minutes in routine activities with their sons and a mean of 28 minutes in motor activities. The older fathers, 35 through 48

Table 2. Fathers' ages and time spent with sons and daughters.

Fathers' ages		23 - 34 years	35 - 48 years
		Minutes per day	Minutes per day
Daughters	Routine activities	36	29
	Motor activities	21	32
Sons	Routine activities	41	43
	Motor activities	28	36
Number of fathers		20	10

Table 3. Number of years fathers had been married and time spent with sons and daughters.

Number of years fathers were married		4 - 11 years	12 - 20 years
		Minutes per day	Minutes per day
Daughters	Routine activities	37	27
	Motor activities	21	27
Sons	Routine activities	51	20
	Motor activities	36	22
Number of fathers		22	8

years, spent a mean of 43 minutes with their sons in routine activities and 36 minutes in motor activities.

The daily mean minutes were also related to the number of years the fathers were married. It was found that the fathers married four through 11 years spent a daily mean of 37 minutes in routine activities with girls and 21 minutes in motor activities (Table 3). The longer married fathers, 12 through 20 years, spent a daily mean of 27 minutes in routine activities and 27 minutes in motor activities with girls. The more recently married fathers, four through 11 years, spent a daily mean of 51 minutes in routine activities and 36 minutes in motor activities with their sons. The fathers married 12 through 20 years spent a daily mean of 20 minutes with their sons in routine activities and 22 minutes in motor activities. The number of years married seemed to make no difference in the amount of time spent with boys or girls in routine or motor activities.

The amount of time spent with children was compared with the fathers' education. The fathers who had had grade school or high school educations spent a daily mean of 29 minutes with their daughters in routine activities and 36 minutes in motor activities (Table 4). The fathers who had vocational or college educations spent a daily mean of 38 minutes in routine activities with their daughters and 21 minutes in motor activities. The fathers who had post graduate work spent a daily mean of 37 minutes in routine activities with their daughters and 22 minutes in motor activities. The fathers of boys spent a

Table 4. Fathers' education and time spent with sons and daughters.

Fathers' education		'Grade school and ' high school	'Vocational school' and college	'Post graduate
		Minutes per day	Minutes per day	Minutes per day
Daughters	Routine activities	29	38	37
	Motor activities	36	21	22
Sons	Routine activities	35	54	43
	Motor activities	36	37	25
Number of fathers		12	12	6

slightly different amount of time with their sons. Those fathers with a grade school or high school education spent a daily mean of 35 minutes in routine activities and 36 minutes in motor activities. The fathers with vocational or college education spent a daily mean of 54 minutes in routine activities and 37 minutes in motor activities with their sons. A daily mean of 43 minutes in routine activities and 25 minutes in motor activities was spent with sons by fathers who had done post graduate work.

The fathers' occupations had little relationship with the amount of time they spent with their children. The fathers who were proprietors, managers and officials spent the most time, usually, with both boys and girls. They spent 53 minutes with girls and 61 minutes with boys in routine activities. Twenty-eight minutes per day were spent with girls and 24 minutes with boys in motor activities. The fathers who were skilled or semi-skilled workmen spent the least time with their children. The least time spent with girls in routine activities was 31 minutes per day and 21 minutes in motor activities. The time spent with boys by these fathers was 33 minutes in routines and 29 minutes in motor activities. There was no marked difference between the time spent with boys and with girls by the various occupational groupings (Table 5).

The number of days off from their occupations had little relationship with the amount of time spent with children. The fathers with one day off spent 33 minutes in routine activities and 27 minutes in motor activities with girls. The boys'

Table 5. Fathers' occupation and time spent with sons and daughters.

Fathers' occupation		'Professional'	'Proprietors, 'Clerks and 'managers, and officials'	'kindred workers'	'Skilled 'workmen and foremen'	'Semi- skilled'
		Minutes per day	Minutes per day	Minutes per day	Minutes per day	Minutes per day
Daughters	Routine activities	37	53	39	31	34
	Motor activities	21	28	26	21	21
Sons	Routine activities	44	61	45	--	33
	Motor activities	28	24	47	--	29
Number of fathers		6	3	9	5	7

fathers who had one day off spent a daily mean of 58 minutes in routines and 33 minutes in motor activities. The fathers with three and one-half days off spent the least time with their children. Seventeen minutes per day were spent with girls in routine activities and two minutes in motor activities. Eighteen minutes were spent with boys in routine activities and 25 minutes in motor activities. Only fathers of boys had four days off but they spent more time with their sons than did other fathers with their children. These fathers spent 58 minutes per day in routine activities and 45 minutes in motor activities (Table 6).

The fathers who thought that they often participated in routine activities did spend more time in routines than did the fathers who thought they only occasionally participated (Table 7). Fathers who thought they participated often spent 37 minutes with girls and 47 minutes daily with boys in routines. The fathers who thought they participated only occasionally in routine activities spent 30 minutes with girls and 17 minutes with boys. Fathers who thought that they often participated in motor activities also spent more time in motor activities than did the fathers who thought they only occasionally participated. The fathers who thought they participated often spent 27 minutes with girls in motor activities and 33 minutes with boys. Those fathers who thought they only occasionally helped their children with motor activities spent 14 minutes per day with girls and 30 minutes with boys.

The fathers did not belong to many organizations; therefore, little time was spent away from home in organizational meetings.

Table 6. Number of fathers' days off from work and time spent with sons and daughters.

Number of days off		' 1 day '	' 1½ days '	' 2 days '	' 3½ days '	' 4 days '
		Minutes per day				
Daughters	Routine activities	33	37	42	17	--
	Motor activities	27	18	28	2	--
Sons	Routine activities	58	49	37	18	58
	Motor activities	33	28	33	25	45
Number of fathers		8	7	12	2	1

Table 7. Frequency with which fathers thought they participated in motor activities and time spent with sons and daughters.

Fathers thought they participated		Often	Occasionally
		<u>Minutes per day</u>	<u>Minutes per day</u>
Daughters	Motor activities	27	14
Sons	Motor activities	33	30
	Number of fathers	23	7

Table 8. Frequency with which fathers thought they participated in routine activities and time spent with sons and daughters.

Fathers thought they participated		Often	Occasionally
		<u>Minutes per day</u>	<u>Minutes per day</u>
Daughters	Routine activities	37	30
Sons	Routine activities	47	17
	Number of fathers	24	6

There was little relationship between the number of organizations to which the fathers belonged and the amount of time they spent with their children. The fathers belonging to five organizations usually spent the least time with their children. These fathers spent 28 minutes per day with girls and 19 minutes with boys in routines (Table 9). These same fathers spent 10 minutes with girls and seven minutes with boys in motor activities. The fathers belonging to two organizations spent the most time with girls. They spent 44 minutes daily with daughters in routine activities and 27 minutes in motor activities. The fathers belonging to four organizations spent the most time with boys. These fathers spent 76 minutes daily with their sons in routine activities and 55 minutes in motor activities. The fathers belonging to no organizations did not spend the most time with their children as might be assumed.

The number of times a baby sitter was employed had no relationship to the amount of time the fathers spent with their children. The fathers of girls spent the most time with their daughters when a baby sitter was hired less than once a week. These fathers spent 40 minutes daily in routines and 30 minutes in motor activities (Table 10). The fathers of girls spent the least time with their daughters when a baby sitter was hired twice a week. These fathers spent 27 minutes in routines and 13 minutes in motor activities. The time spent with boys was so irregular that it was impossible to make any inferences. In the families that hired a sitter five or more times a week, the fathers did not spend the least time with their children, nor

Table 9. Number of organizations to which fathers belonged and time spent with sons and daughters.

Number of organizations		None	1	2	3	4	5
		Minutes per day					
Daughters	Routine activities	36	32	44	31	37	28
	Motor activities	23	26	27	18	22	10
Sons	Routine activities	57	34	59	40	76	19
	Motor activities	0	38	26	17	55	7
Number of fathers		8	10	5	2	2	3

Table 10. Frequency of employment of baby sitters and time spent with sons and daughters.

Number of times baby sitters employed		' Never	' Less than 'once a week'	Once a week	' Twice a week	' Five or more times a week
		Minutes per day	Minutes per day	Minutes per day	Minutes per day	Minutes per day
Daughters	Routine activities	28	40	44	27	31
	Motor activities	21	30	20	13	21
Sons	Routine activities	50	29	54	--	57
	Motor activities	22	32	49	--	0
Number of fathers		7	11	7	1	4

did the fathers spend the most time with their children when no sitters were hired.

If these are typical middle class families, one might assume that at the preschool age the sex of the child does not affect the amount of time fathers spend with preschool children.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In general, although this group was diversified, a picture of a hypothetical father representing this group would be as follows. He would be middle class, 32 years old, a clerk or kindred worker working 50 hours a week, and would have been married eight years. He would belong to few organizations, and would not be an officer or committee member in them. He would attend church rather regularly. He would have had a high school education and probably two or three years of college. His wife, who would be two years younger than he, would rank slightly lower in education and would not be working outside the home. The family would use baby sitters, usually grandparents, neighbor children or neighbor women, but only once a week or less. This father would state that he felt he spent considerable time with his children, would be satisfied with the time spent, and would feel that his wife would be satisfied with this amount of time. He would feel that taking more time from his work to be with his children would be impossible. He would think that it was easy to understand his children's feelings most of the time, and he would feel it easy to view their activities with a sense

of humor. He would feel slightly less easy with other children than his own.

This father, if his child were a boy, would spend a little over six hours with the child during Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, or a mean of two hours, four minutes a day. Of this time he would spend, in the three days, two hours and 15 minutes in routine activities and one hour, 37 minutes in motor activities with his son.

On the other hand, if this father's child were a girl, he would spend a little over five hours with her during the three days. Of this time he would spend one hour, 45 minutes in routines and one hour, 9 minutes in motor activities.

During the three days studied, then, a boy would receive about an hour more of total time from his father than would a girl. Of this time he would receive 30 minutes more with routines and 28 minutes more with motor activities. Although the fathers did spend more time with their sons, the difference was due to a chance variation in the sampling rather than a particular characteristic of the fathers. The significance ratio for total time was 1.13 and for routine and motor activities were .94 and 1.05 respectively. These fell below the five per cent level; therefore the variations were not significant.

The amount of time spent with the children was not found to be related to the fathers' ages, the number of years married, their education, their occupation, or the number of days off from work. The number of organizations to which they belonged or the number of times a baby sitter was hired during a week had

no relationship to the amount of time spent with children. The amount of time the fathers thought they spent with their children was not related to the time actually spent during the three day period.

Evidence from this study shows these fathers to be working 50 hours a week and spending approximately two hours a day with their children. In view of the increased knowledge concerning the importance to the child of the father's role in the family, it seems essential in our culture to find some means of lessening the bread winning pressures in favor of more father-child companionship.



### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To Mrs. Leone Kell, Professor of Family and Child Development and major instructor, sincere appreciation is acknowledged for her interest and encouragement in the development of this study.

Appreciation is also expressed to the parents for their cooperation.

## REFERENCES

- ( 1) Anonymous.  
The menace of the maternal father. *Hygeia*, 20:468-70.  
June 1942.
- ( 2) Aberle, David F. and Kasper D. Naegele.  
Middle-class fathers' occupational role and attitudes  
toward children. *Am. J. of Ortho.* 22:366-78. 1952.
- ( 3) Bach, George R.  
Father-fantasies and father-typing in father separated  
children. *Child Dev.* 17:63-80. March-June 1946.
- ( 4) Bach, George R. and Gloria Bremer.  
Projective father fantasies of pre-adolescent de-  
linquent children. *J. of Psych.* 24:3-17. 1947.
- ( 5) Blatz, William E. and Helen M. Bott.  
Are you fit to be a father? *Parents' Magazine*, 6:33-34.  
June 1931.
- ( 6) Bowman, Leroy E.  
Making a parent of a father. *Parents' Magazine*, 10:13.  
November 1935.
- ( 7) Dybwad, Gunnar.  
Fathers today: neglected or neglectful. *Child Study*,  
29:3-5. 1952.
- ( 8) English, O. Spurgeon, and Constance J. Foster.  
Father's changing role. *Parents' Magazine*, 26:44-45.  
October 1951.
- ( 9) English, O. Spurgeon and Constance J. Foster.  
What's happening to fathers. *Better Homes and Gardens*,  
30:200. April 1952.
- (10) Finch, Helen M.  
Young children's concepts of parental roles. *J. of Home  
Ec.* 47:99-103. February 1955.
- (11) Frank, Lawrence K.  
The father's role in child nurture. *Child Study*,  
9:163-165. 1931.
- (12) Gardner, L. P.  
An analysis of children's attitudes toward father.  
*J. of Gen Psych.* 70:3-28. March 1947.

- (13) Gardner, L. P.  
A survey of the attitudes and activities of fathers.  
J. of Gen. Psych. 63:15-53. September 1943.
- (14) Klatskin, Ethelyn Henry.  
Shifts in child practices in three social classes under  
an infant care program of flexible methodology.  
Am. J. of Ortho. 22:52-61. January 1952.
- (15) Lu, Yi-Chuang.  
Parental role and parent-child relationship. Marriage  
and Fam. Liv. 14:294-297. 1952.
- (16) McFarland, Margaret B.  
Research concerning children's reactions to separation  
from their fathers. N.A.N.E. Bulletin. 10:22-27. 1955.
- (17) Neisser, Walter and Edith.  
Making the grade as dad. Public Affairs Pamphlet  
No. 157. 1950.
- (18) Newman, B.  
Father and son. Today's Health, 29:38-41. June 1951.
- (19) Nimkoff, Meyer F.  
The child's preferences for father or mother. Am. Soc.  
Review. 7:517-524. August 1942.
- (20) Ogburn, William F. and Meyer F. Nimkoff.  
Sociology. Chicago: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1946.
- (21) Parsons, Talcott.  
Age and sex in the social structure of the United States.  
Am. Soc. Review, 7:604-616. October 1942.
- (22) Rust, Lucile.  
A time study of infant care. Unpublished Masters thesis,  
Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas. 1925.
- (23) Sears, R. R., M. H. Pintner and P. S. Sears.  
Effect of father separation on preschool children's doll  
play aggression. Child Dev. 17:219-243. December 1946.
- (24) Stolz, Lois Meek.  
Father Relations of War-Born Children. Stanford, Calif:  
Stanford University Press, 1954.
- (25) Stott, Roscoe Gilmore.  
Sons need fathers. Rotarian, 78:32. May 1951.
- (26) Takas, Andrew.  
What children need from dad. Parents' Magazine, 28:44.  
May 1953.

- (27) Tasch, R. G.  
The role of the father in the family. J. of Exp. Ed.  
20:319-362. June 1952.
- (28) Underwood, Virginia VanMeter.  
Student fathers with their children. Marriage and  
Fam. Liv. 11:101. August 1949.

**APPENDIX**



Face sheet, check list and time record.

  
ANCHOR CLASP  
H 55 6 x 9  
MADE IN U. S. A.

FACE SHEET

Father's name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

Year of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years married \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours a week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

Which hours of the day do you work? \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

How many days of the week do you work? 1\_\_\_\_, 2\_\_\_\_, 3\_\_\_\_, 4\_\_\_\_, 5\_\_\_\_, 6\_\_\_\_, 7\_\_\_\_.

If you have a day or days off, which day of the week is it? Monday \_\_\_\_, Tuesday \_\_\_\_,  
Wednesday \_\_\_\_, Thursday \_\_\_\_, Friday \_\_\_\_, Saturday \_\_\_\_, Sunday \_\_\_\_.

Does your business take you out of town? Yes \_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_, Sometimes \_\_\_\_.

If it does, how much of the week are you gone? \_\_\_\_\_

When did your formal education stop?

High School	Vocational School	College	Post Graduate School
1 2 3 4	1 2	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

Mother's name \_\_\_\_\_

Year of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation before marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Do you work outside the home now? Yes \_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_.

(If she does) How many hours a week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

Does this necessitate the father's spending more time with the children?  
Yes \_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_.

When did your formal education stop?

High School	Vocational School	College	Post Graduate School
1 2 3 4	1 2	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ of first child's birth. F \_\_ M \_\_.

Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ of second child's birth. F \_\_ M \_\_.  
(Circle the preschool child)

CHECK LIST

Do you employ a baby sitter? Yes\_\_\_, No\_\_\_.

The baby sitter is employed during the day \_\_\_\_, evening \_\_\_\_, or both \_\_\_\_.

The sitter is employed, on the average, 1\_\_\_, 2\_\_\_, 3\_\_\_, 4\_\_\_5 or more \_\_\_\_  
times a week \_\_\_\_, or less than once a week \_\_\_\_.

How many children in the father's family? \_\_\_\_girls. \_\_\_\_boys.

Attendance of Organizations

Organization	Never	Occasionally	Regularly	Committee member	Officer	How many times a month
Church						
Lodge						
Civic						
School						
Educational						
Labor						
Professional						
Veterans						
Recreational						
Social						
Inform. Social						
Other						

Do you participate in your children's play activities often \_\_\_\_,  
occasionally \_\_\_\_, or never \_\_\_\_?

Do you often \_\_\_\_, occasionally \_\_\_\_, or never \_\_\_\_ help your children with daily  
routine activities?

Would you like to spend more time with your children \_\_\_\_,  
less time \_\_\_\_, or are you satisfied \_\_\_\_?

(If more) Do you know of any ways to arrange for more time with your  
children?\_\_\_\_\_

Does your wife want you to spend more time with your children\_\_\_\_\_,  
less time\_\_\_\_\_, or is she satisfied\_\_\_\_\_?

Is it difficult \_\_\_\_, moderately difficult\_\_\_\_, or easy\_\_\_\_ to understand your  
children's feelings?

Do you feel at ease\_\_\_\_, tense\_\_\_\_, or unconcerned\_\_\_\_when other children  
are around you?

Do you feel it is easy\_\_\_\_, relatively easy \_\_\_\_, or difficult\_\_\_\_to regard  
your children's activities with a sense of humor?

# TIME RECORD

(Please record activity immediately upon completion to insure greater accuracy.)

Activity	Time spent in minutes
For example:	
Played catch	19
Helped at supper table	33
Got drink of water	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Breakfast and morning:	
Lunch and afternoon:	
Dinner and evening:	

Table 11. Degree of fathers' participation in activities.

Degree of participation	Often		Occasional		None	
	No. of fathers	per cent	No. of fathers	per cent	No. of fathers	per cent
Motor activities	23	76	7	23	0	0
Daily routine activities	24	80	6	20	0	0

Table 12. Fathers' attitudes toward time spent with children.

	Want more time		Want less time		Satisfied	
	No. of fathers	per cent	No. of fathers	per cent	No. of fathers	per cent
His own time	13	43	0	0	17	57
How he thinks his wife feels about his time	8	27	0	0	22	73

Table 13. Degree of fathers' understanding of children and children's activities.

	Difficult		Moderately difficult		Easy	
	No. of fathers	Per cent	No. of fathers	Per cent	No. of fathers	Per cent
Understands children's feelings	0	0	6	20	24	80
Views children's activities with humor	0	0	12	40	18	60

Table 14. Fathers' feelings toward other children.

	Tense		Unconcerned		At ease	
	No. of fathers	Per cent	No. of fathers	Per cent	No. of fathers	Per cent
When other children are around	3	10	11	37	16	53

TIME SPENT BY FATHERS WITH THEIR PRESCHOOL  
SONS AND DAUGHTERS

by

MARGARET JOAN WATKINS

A. B., Friends University, 1954

---

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1956

Research concerning the father's role in family life has received increasing emphasis during the past decade. This study was made to determine the relationship of the sex of the children to the total amount of time their fathers spent with them, also the time spent in routine activities and motor activities. If some fathers did differentiate in time spent with the children according to their sex, the investigator wanted to determine what factors, if any, were characteristic of these fathers.

The 30 fathers selected for this study were from wards three and five of Manhattan, Kansas. These wards contained a minimum of college students and military personnel and were typical of the general population of the town. Information concerning available families was obtained from the city's census books. Families were selected: (1) who had one child between the ages of two years, three months and four years, three months, (2) who had not more than one other child, and (3) in which both parents were living at home with no extra persons living within the family group.

A face sheet, a check list and time records were prepared, pretested and revised. Contacts were made by telephone with the families selected for this study to explain the purpose of the study and make an appointment for a home visit. During the home visit, the interviewer filled in the face sheet and check list and then left the time records to be filled in by the mother on three consecutive days, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. The time records were mailed back to the interviewer.

Analysis of the records revealed that the fathers spent a

three day mean of six hours, 11 minutes with their sons and five hours, 14 minutes with their daughters. The ratio of significance, 1.13, showed that the difference between total time spent with sons and total time spent with daughters was not significant.

During the three days, fathers spent 30 minutes more with boys than with girls in routine activities, and 28 minutes more with boys than with girls in motor activities. The ratios of significance for the different amounts of time spent with boys and with girls in routine activities and in motor activities were .94 and 1.05, respectively, indicating that the differences were not significant. The amount of time spent with the children was not found to be related to the fathers' ages, the number of years married, their education, their occupation, or the number of days off from work. The number of organizations to which they belonged or the number of times a baby sitter was hired during a week had no relationship to the amount of time spent with children. The amount of time the fathers thought they spent with their children was not related to the time actually spent during the three day period.

The fathers were working 50 hours a week and spending approximately two hours a day with their children. The emphasis on the bread winning aspect of the fathers' roles seemed, in this group at least, to overshadow the fathers' companionship with their children.

