

## **ABSTRACT**

With a human ecological perspective, this longitudinal study investigated the level and nature of fathers' involvement in family work, how father involvement is influenced by the macrosystem, and how it relates to the personal relations in the family. At the follow-up, the samples consisted of 75 Swedish and 72 American urban two-parent families with a six-year-old child.

Both parents were interviewed about the division of labor of 30 tasks, which were combined into six dimensions of family work: Care and evening activities with children, Play and outings, General responsibility for children, Food-related work, Cleaning and laundry, and Maintenance work. The level and nature of father involvement was very similar in the two samples. The average father did most of the maintenance work in the family, and participated more in child care than in routine housework.

Mother's employment markedly increased father's involvement in General responsibility for children, in Sweden also in Food-related work. Higher education increased father's involvement in Care and evening activities and Cleaning and laundry, but decreased his share of the Maintenance work. Younger fathers were more involved in child care, particularly in Sweden.

Father's involvement and the personal relations in the family displayed partly different patterns in the two cultures. Father's emotional involvement in the child anteceded a higher involvement in child care three years later; in Sweden in the form of Care and evening activities, in the USA, in Play and outings. For the Swedish fathers, higher involvement in child care was associated with less enjoyment of the child, for the US fathers, with more enjoyment. In both samples, positive feelings between family members anteceded more sharing of Cleaning and laundry and Maintenance work. The differential patterns could be understood in a context of cultural variation of paternal styles.