

ABSTRACT

- Title: Fathers in day-care parental co-operatives:
A descriptive study of their involvement.
- Language: Swedish.
- Key words: Case study, child-care, father role, gender patterns,
parental co-operative.
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The general purpose of this study is an examination of the involvement of fathers in parental co-operative child day-care centres, the influence they have on the selection of activities and development of relationships by the children, and the influence they have on factors significant for the child-care environment and the development of gender socialisation patterns there in.

Case studies of eight parental co-operative centres have been carried out. They involved observations of programmed and free-play periods over four consecutive days at each centre. In addition questionnaires have been administered to both male and female parents. A selection of parents, as well as all full and part-time educational staff at all eight centres, have been interviewed. The combination of methods has made technical triangulation possible.

The results show that social conditions, primarily employment situations in rural and urban regions, are the most significant factors influencing the nature and degree of commitment in centre activities for families who become involved in parental co-operative child-care. In general, the fathers' involvement was greater in urban as compared to rural regions.

The study showed that there are differences in the ways in which fathers and mothers become involved in child-care centre activities, particularly with respect to time principles, interaction styles and relationships with their own child. The male parents' personal characteristics and pre-conditions for involvement varied. Three different "father types" were identified: the playful and initiative-rich; the calm and initiative-rich and the collected. The fathers played different roles with the children: the play-mate, the play-organiser and the comforter.

The study showed that the gender patterns among child groups varied in the centres. This was mirrored in the gender cultures which could be either categorised as to integrated or segregated. The staff were mostly females and this influenced the environment and choice of activities by children. The male parents' possibilities for exerting influence were subject to norms and values in this environment and

were not high in this primarily female world. Only one father in ten (the playful father) had any obvious influence on child activities. In general, fathers influenced choices very little or not at all. These results need to be considered against the background that the staff seemed to lack formal knowledge of gender role issues and therefore laid very little emphasis on the role of the father in the care centre or on the gendered choices of activity made by children.

The results show that parents of both sexes were equally involved in centre activities. However, the distributions of work and responsibility between them usually showed typical gender patterns. Both parents were as concerned about the needs of the children, and the awareness amongst the staff of the home-conditions of each child was enhanced by parental engagement and used to further inform the creation of an emotionally secure environment. The relationships between the children and staff were characterised by familiarity. The social network and possibilities of influence and insight were of significance for both parents roles in the centres. The presence of the father contributed to the establishment of a secure socialisation environment for the children. Certain specific conditions in the environment gave space to the children to express gender values and differences.