

**Growing Up
in Ireland**
National Longitudinal
Study of Children

Parental Employment and Child Outcomes at 9 Years

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Introduction

- Main focus is association between parental working patterns and child outcomes
- Recent period of economic boom in Ireland has led to dramatic increase in participation of women in the workforce, including mothers of young children (Russell et al 2009) – changed the pattern of employment in Irish families
- Parental employment or non-employment impinges directly on the quality of children's lives, and believed to impact through a number of mechanisms - time, income, and potential work-life stress



Introduction Continued

Possible mechanisms:

- Time
- Income
- Work-family stress



Previous Findings

- Majority of previous research is on maternal employment and child outcomes – positive, neutral and negative effects identified, and some inconsistencies. For example:
 - Negative consequences on reading scores of ft work during the child's first year (e.g., Brooks-Gunn et al, 2002; Verripoulou and Joshi, 2005). Employment > 1 small positive associations.
 - Negative effects of first year employment are temporary (Harvey, 1999), whereas others indicate greater persistence (e.g., Waldfogel et al., 2002).
 - Research on older children - maternal employment has either no effect (or may benefit) “disadvantaged” children. By contrast, deleterious consequences for “advantaged” adolescents



Previous Findings

- Full time maternal employment begun in 18 months after childbirth has small negative effects on later child outcomes (cog and behav). Part-time work and work begun > 18 months – no adverse consequences (Gregg and Washbrook, 2003)



Limitations in Previous Work

- Focus on maternal employment – but the work-life conflict literature emphasises importance of household work strategies
- Much of the maternal employment literature focuses on infants, however potential influences of parental employment extend throughout childhood and adolescence (although influences may differ at different stages)
- Early research often did not consider the heterogeneity within employed and non-employed mother groups. For example important factors such as work-life balance, socioeconomic factors, and family type and environment
- Current Study will explore these mechanisms – look at parental employment in couple households only (N=6484)

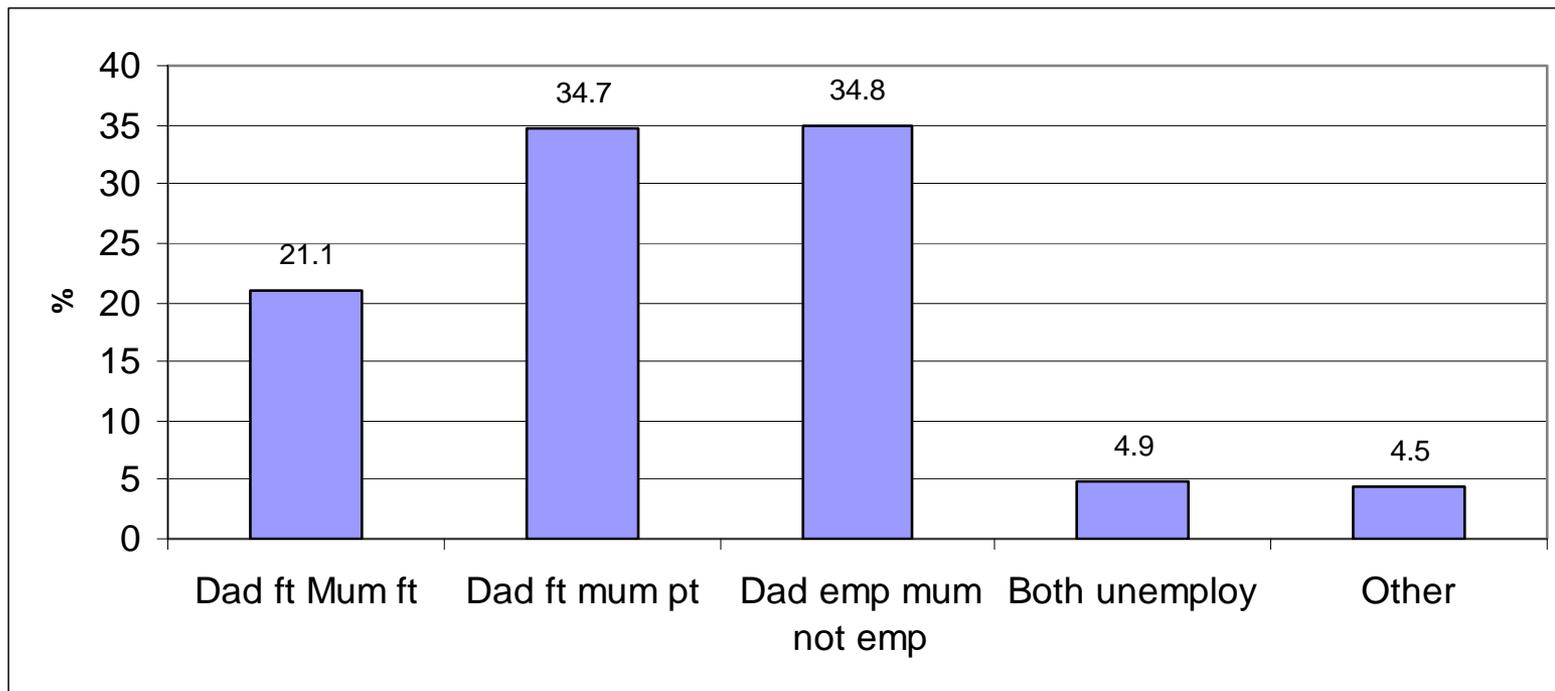


Research questions:

- Is current household employment associated with child outcomes at age 9 (emotional and behavioural; cognitive; and child-parent relationship)?
- Is the relationship influenced by the level of work-family conflict in the household?
- Do outcomes vary by education level of mothers?
- Can relationship be explained by differences in the time spent with children?
- Does family type and environment contribute to child outcomes?



Parental Employment Status





Work-family Conflict Measure

Because of your work responsibilities:

- A. You have missed out on home or family activities that you would have liked to have taken part in
- B. Your family time is less enjoyable and more pressured

Because of your family responsibilities:

- C. You have to turn down work activities or opportunities you would prefer to take on
- D. The time you spend working is less enjoyable and more pressured

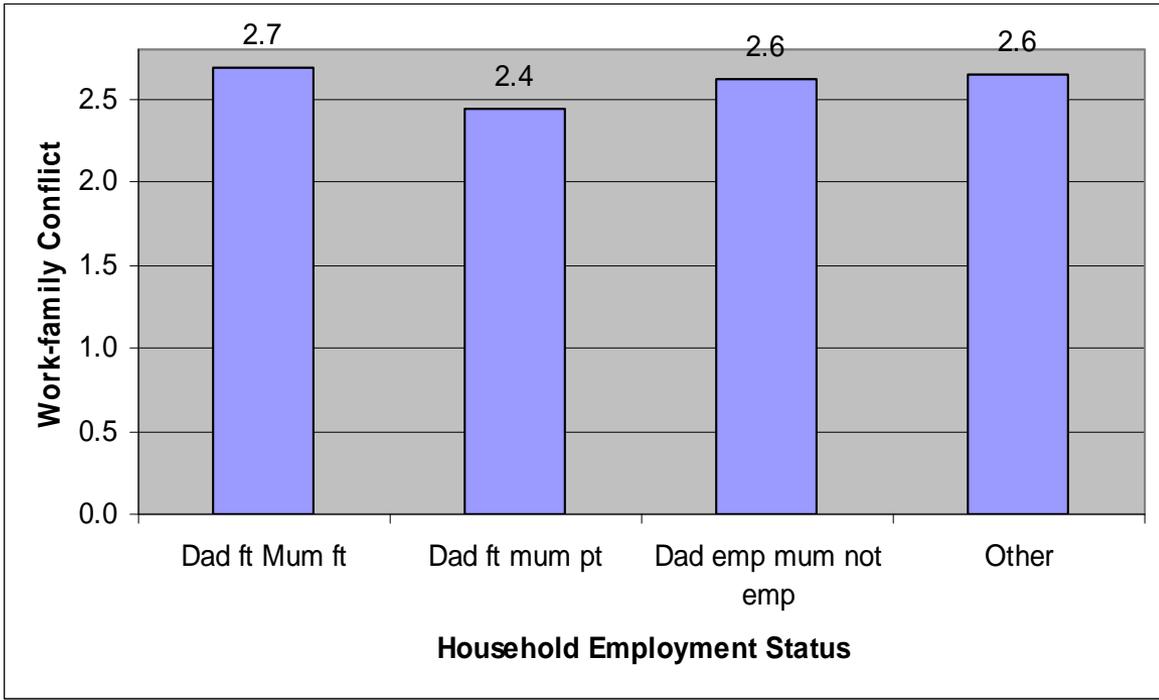
Response categories – Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

Scale created combining all four items

- Coded so higher score indicates greater conflict
- If both are employed average is used, if only one respondent is employed their score is used. Where both were not employed the couple was put in neutral category



Work-family Conflict





Mothers Time with Child – activities

Activities

- A. Sit down to eat together
- B. Play sports, cards or games together
- C. Talk about things together
- D. Do household activities together (gardening, cooking, cleaning, etc.)
- E. Go on an outing together (including going shopping)

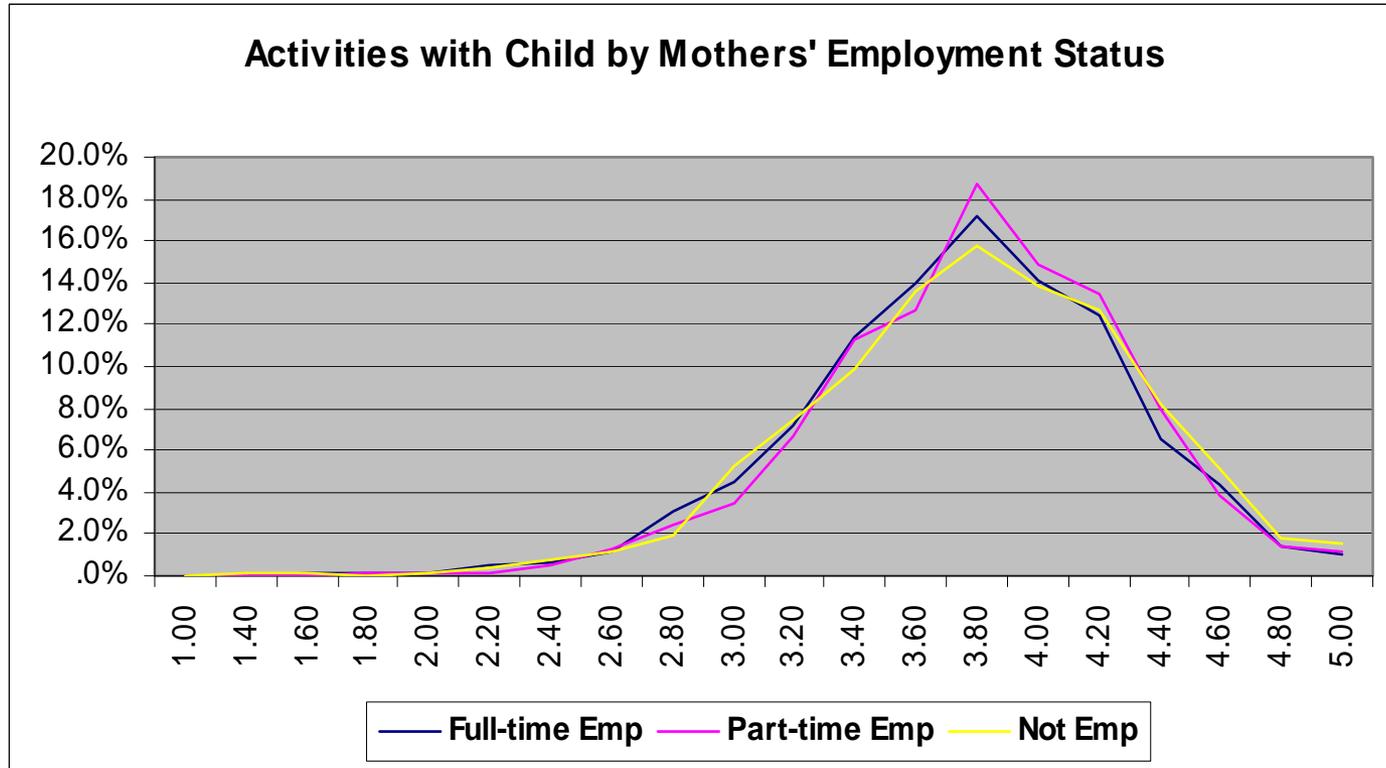
Response categories

- Every day / 7 days per week
- 3 to 6 days per week
- 1 to 2 days per week
- 1 to 2 times per month
- Rarely or never

Mother reported activities with the child - includes times when others are there - higher score = more time spent on activities



Activities with Child





Child Outcome Measures

- **Emotional and behavioural problems**
 - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) – parent report
 - Five subscales – emotional symptoms, conduct, hyperactivity, prosocial behaviour, and peer problems
 - Total difficulties – scores run from 0-40
- **Academic achievement**
 - Drumcondra reading (vocabulary) and Maths tests
 - Completed in group-settings within the school
 - Tests developed for Irish school children
- **Child-parent relationship**
 - Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale
 - 30-item scale completed by both parents – mother report used
 - Three subscales - closeness, conflict and dependency



Analytical strategy

Base Model: parental employment only (+ gender of child)

Add work-life conflict measure

Add measure time spent in activities with child

Add household income (log of equivalised income)

Add education of mother and household social class

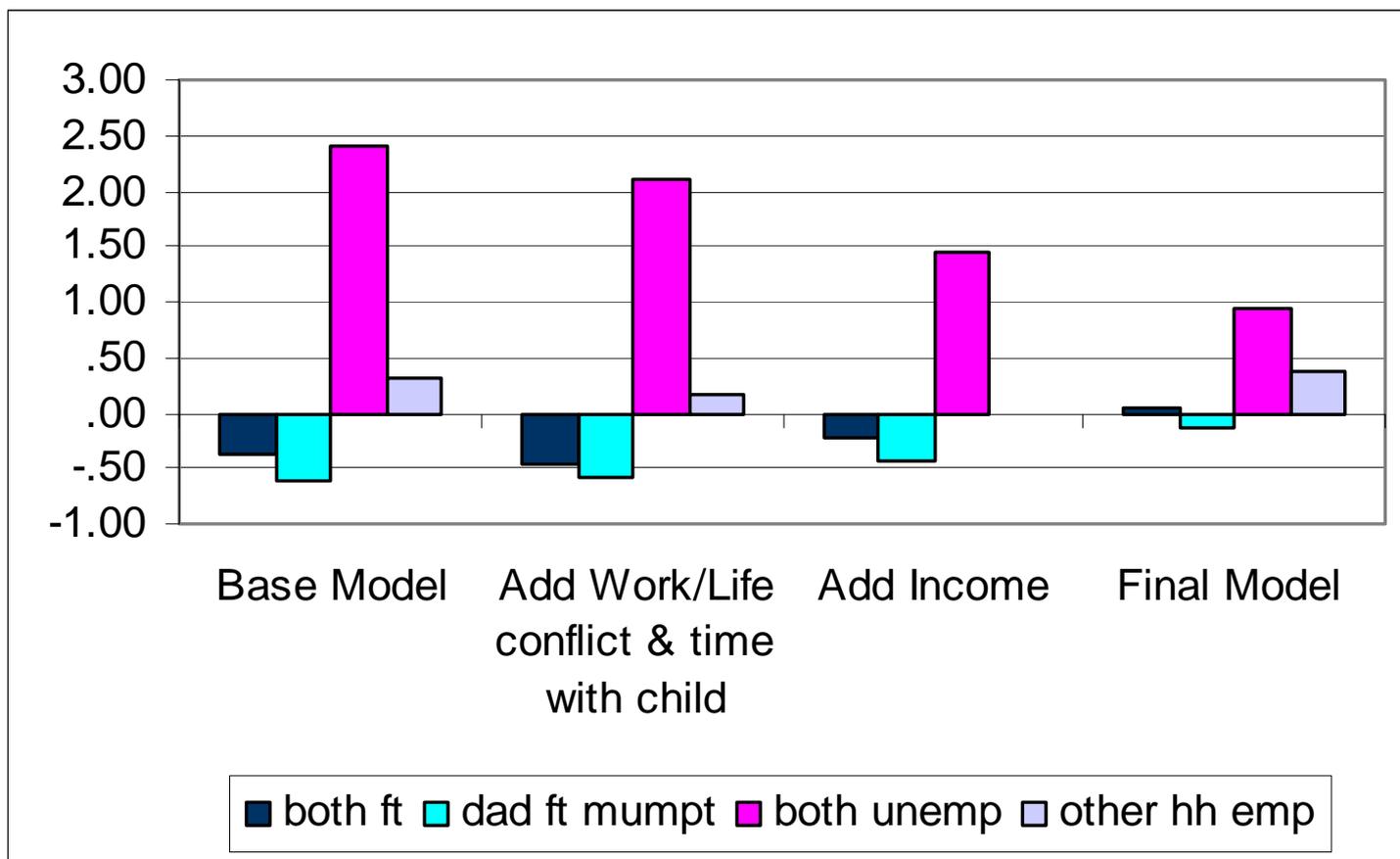
Final Model: Add additional family context and maternal well-being measures (reconstituted family, number of children, parenting style, depression mother, chronic illness child)

Test interaction between mother's education and employment (using separate models)

Graphs present co-efficients from models

Models of SDQ: Effect of Parental Emp

Ref = Father full-time & mother not employed



Note: SDQ higher score indicates greater behavioural/emotional problems



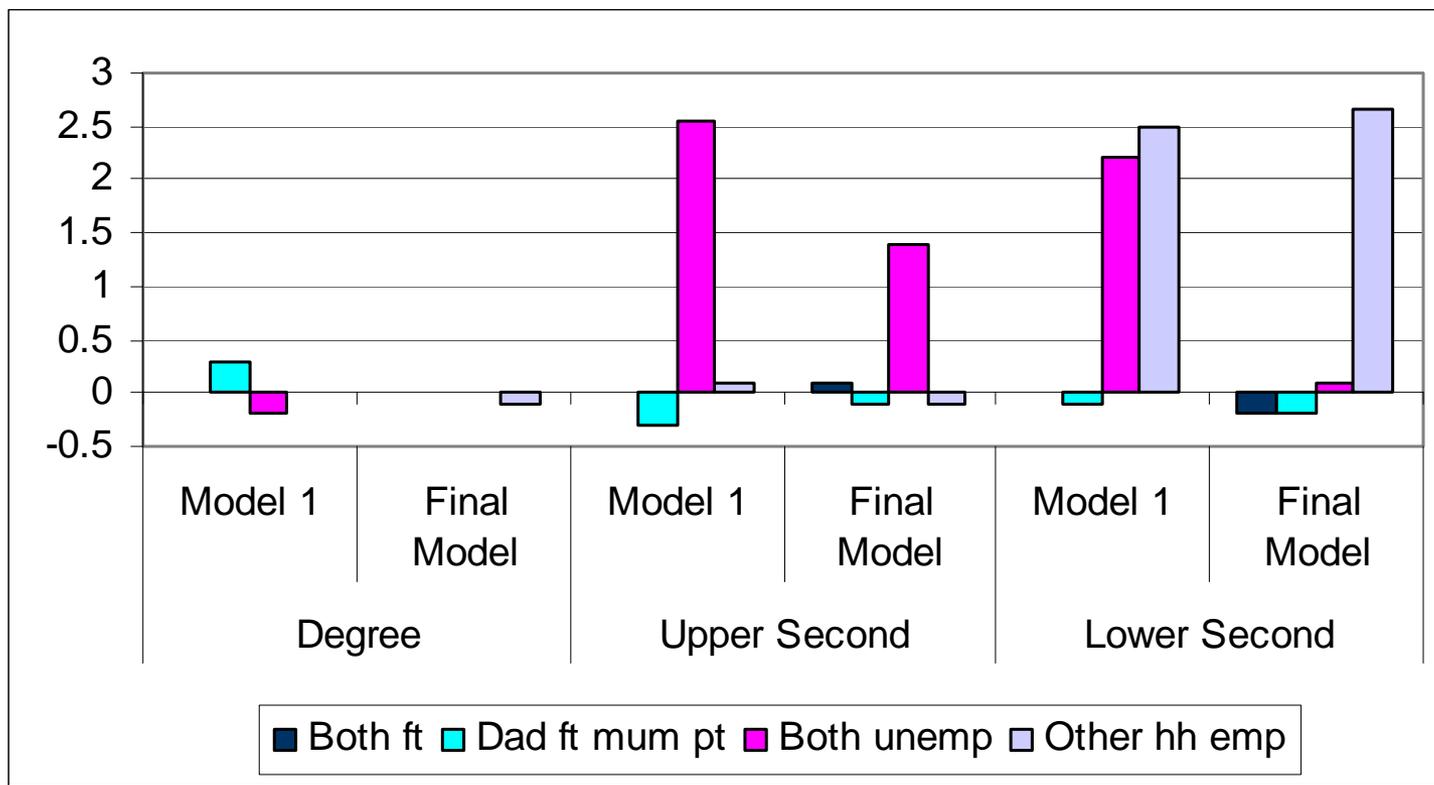
Effects of Control Vars- SDQ

- Work-life conflict significant increase in SDQ
- Mother's time with child sig reduction in SDQ
- Higher Income decreases SDQ
- Professional/managerial, non-manual hh class sig lower SDQ than semi/unskilled
- Mother third level or upper second level lower SDQ than children with mother with lower second level education
 - Other controls effect as anticipated – boys higher SDQ, higher number of children reduces SDQ, reconstituted family increases SDQ, mother depression higher SDQ, authoritarian or neglectful parenting style increased SDQ, child illness higher SDQ



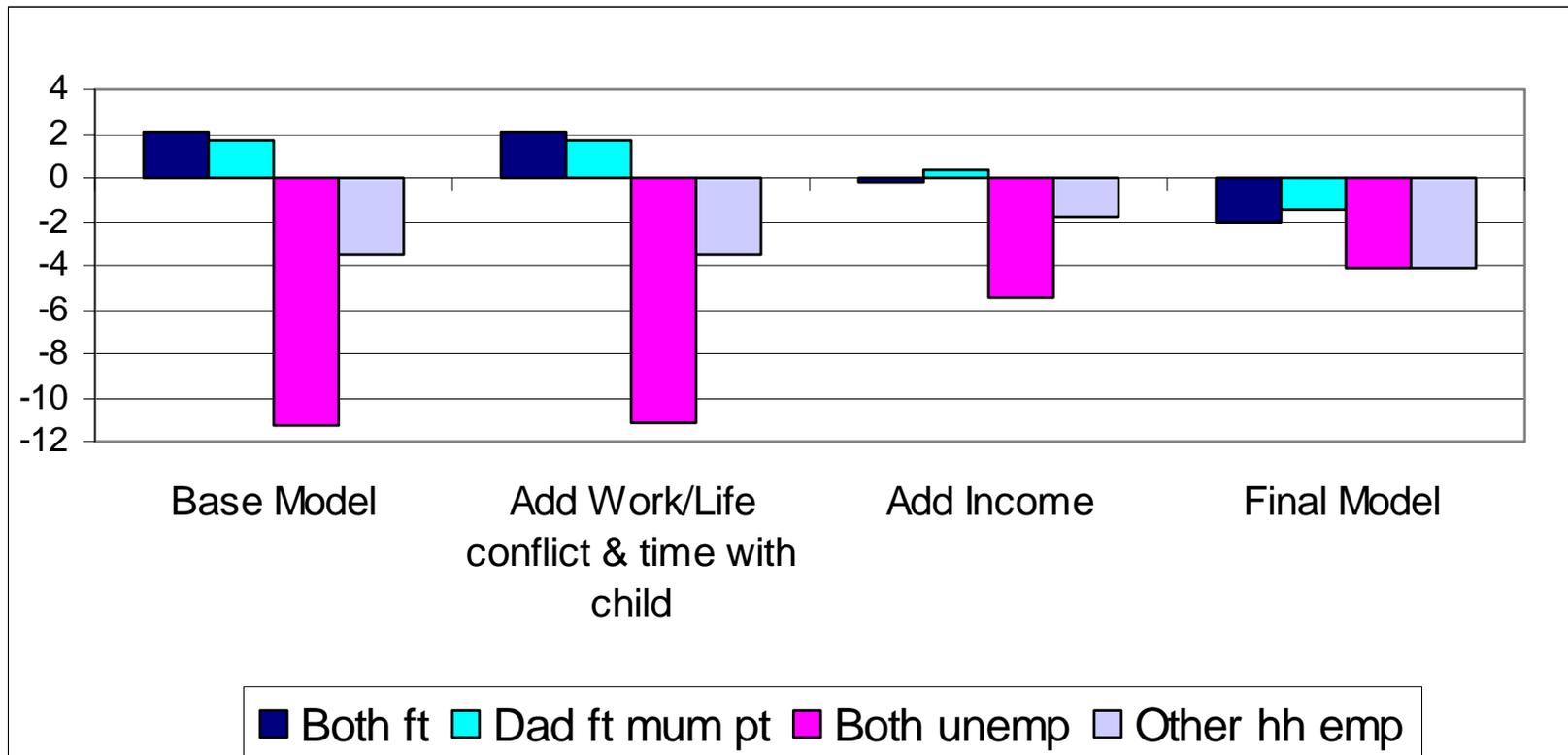
Does Parental Employment effect on SDQ vary by Mother's Education?

Reference group = father full-time mother not employed



Models of Reading Percentage Scores

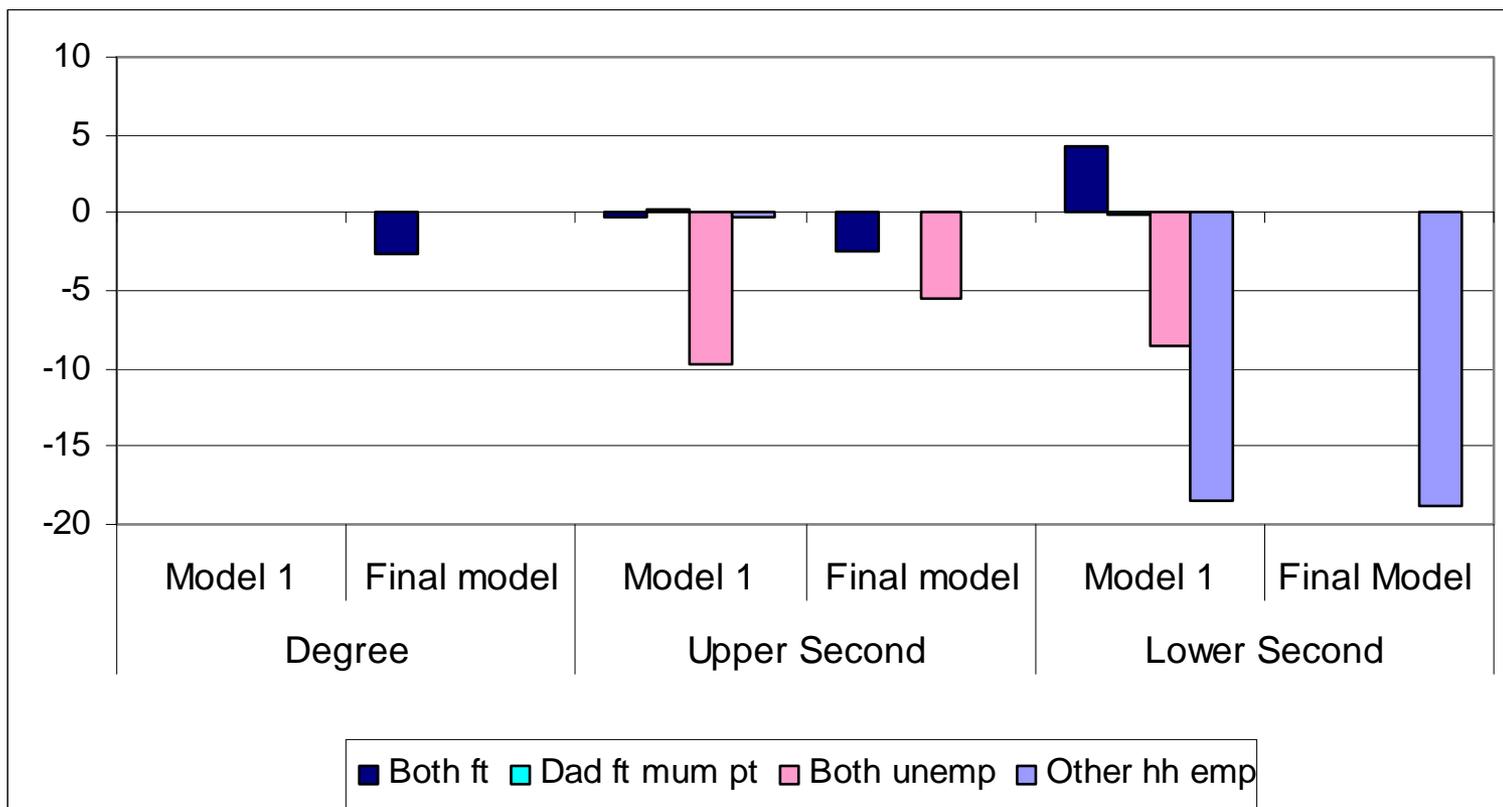
Reference group= father full-time mother not employed





Does Effect of Parental Emp on Reading Score differ with Mother's Education?

Ref=father employed & mother non-employed (with same ed).



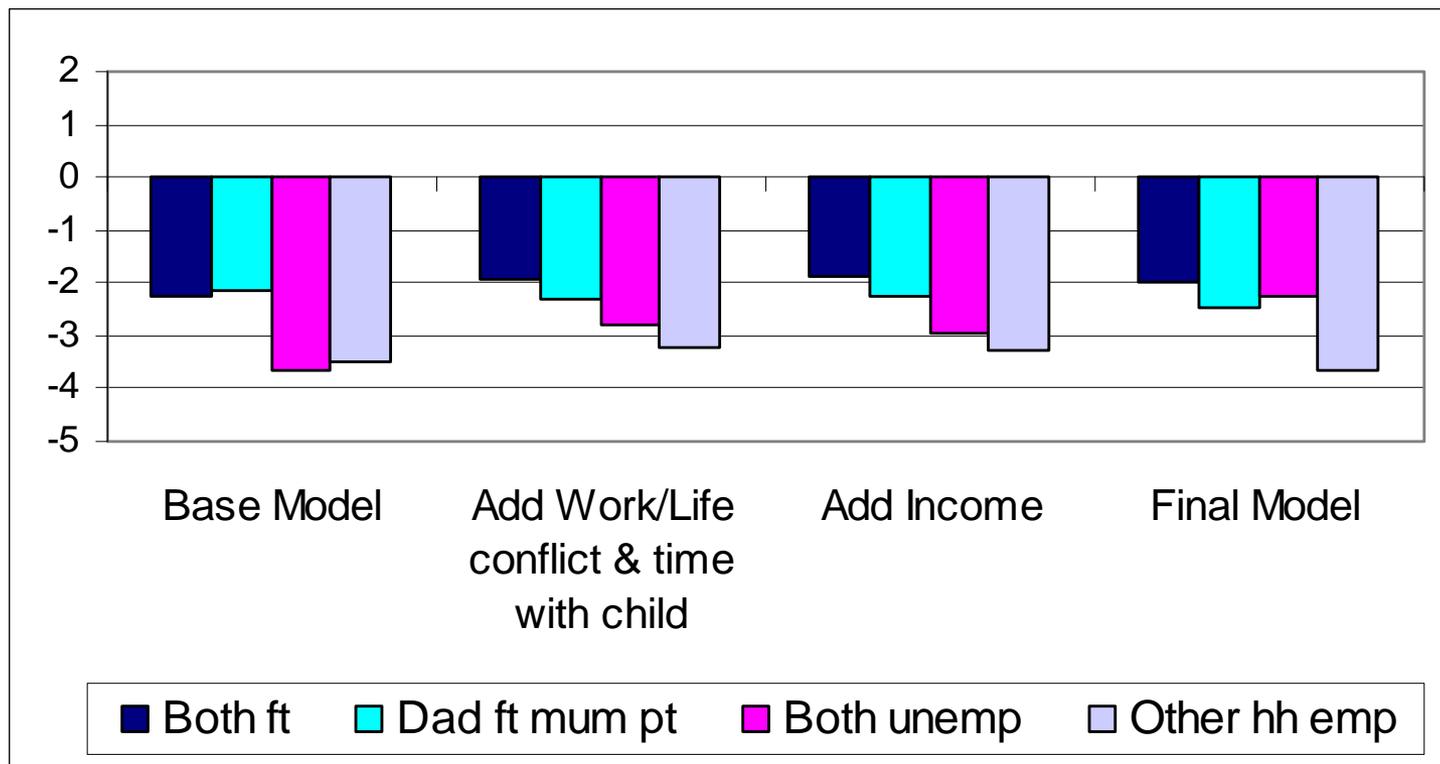


Influence of Control Variables on reading scores

- Work Life Conflict not associated with reading score
- Mother's activities with child has negative impact in some models (perhaps different activities different effects)
- HH income positive association (all models)
- Mother's education strong positive effect – and when controlled effect of parental employment switches sign
- HH social class positive effect
- No. of children's books in hh strong positive effect
- Results of other controls as expected



Models of Parent/Child Relationship Pianta Scale – Parental employment effects



Pianta scale: higher score= more positive

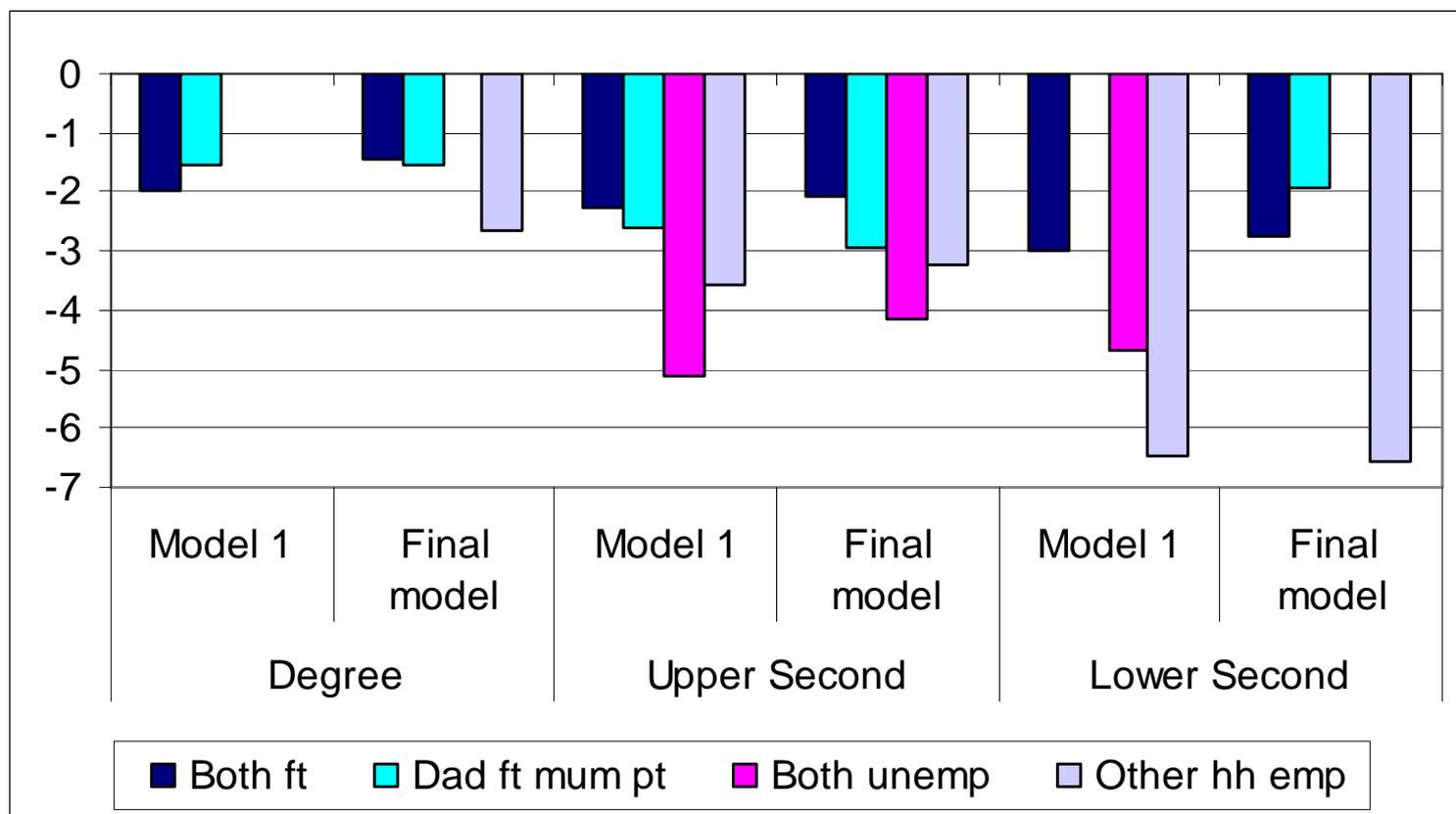


Effects of Control variables on Pianta score

- Work life conflict – significantly reduces the perceived quality of parent/child relationship
- Mothers activities with child – v. strong positive association (causality may run both ways)
- Income no effect
- Mother's education little influence
- HH social class no influence



Does effect of parental emp on Child-parent relationship differ by Mother's educ?





Limitations

- Only examines influence of current employment status on outcomes. Effect could be the result of parental employment at earlier point in child's life (longitudinal nature of GUI important for further unpacking these issues)
- Literature on infants suggests quality of non-parental care moderates effects of maternal employment - further research planned among employed parents comparing different child care arrangements
- Limited information on employment conditions – flexibility, work pressure etc, previous research highlighted that these are important for WLC.



Conclusions

- Parental employment – important to consider both parents
- Non-employment of both parents has uniformly negative outcomes for children (important in light of recession)
- Employment no consistent positive or negative impact, depends upon the outcome that is being investigated.
- Effects of parental employment mediated through household **income** and resources
- For cognitive development – positive effect that operates through increased hh resources (income), appears to be more advantageous for children in hh where mother has low education
- Behavioural/emotional problems SDQ employment of mothers some benefit through additional resources.
- Child-parent relationship – negative effect of increased maternal employment (dual earner compared to traditional male breadwinner). This neg effect is evident for all maternal educ groups



Conclusions Continued

- Mother's employment patterns vary strongly by educational level for some outcomes effects differ by education level
 - Reading scores negative impact of both full-time in hhs where mum has higher second level or above (when income held constant). Low educ mother, positive impact of both full-time via extra resources
 - But little diff by education for SDQ and Parent-Child relationship. Except female breadwinner arrangements appear to have more negative impact of SDQ in low education hhs
- Negative impact of work-life conflict on SDQ and on parent-child relationship, irrespective of parental employment status
- Suggests way hh accommodates work and family demands is crucial and in some cases more important than employment status itself.
- Influence of time/activities with children is direct, rather than acting indirectly through work patterns, little variation between hh employment categories (compensation/adaptation)



Thanks