Mental health and wellbeing in children in shared parenting and other living arrangements

Malin Bergström
clinical psychologist, PhD
Aim of the Elvis-project

To study well-being, mental health and social situation in preschoolers, children and adolescents with shared parenting.
Definition shared parenting and joint physical custody (JPC)

Children live alternatively and approximately equally much in each parent’s home after a separation.

In Sweden 50/50 shares.
Proportions of children with separated parents in shared care

- Australia
- UK
- Norway
- Canada
- Netherlands
- Denmark
- Sweden
Swedish families

- 500,000 (25%) separated parents
- 14% of those 05 years of age
- 10% of all children have joint physical custody
The Swedish parental leave

- Gender neutral since 1974
- 13 months
- 2 months exclusive for each parent
- 26% used by fathers
- 36% of child sick leave used by fathers
Proportion of Swedish children in shared parenting (50/50) after parent’s separation 1984-2011
Most common in children 6-12 years
Satisfaction in Swedish parents with children 0-18 år, N=1444
Swedish studies on adolescents in shared parenting-
mental health, wellbeing, risk behaviours and contact with parents
A total population study on 172 000 12- and 15-year olds

A majority lives with both parents

- Nuclear family
- JPC
- Mostly with mother
- Mostly with father
- Single care mother
- Single care father

Few gender differences
Swedishborn four times more shared parenting and foreignborn twice as often maternal single care
Psychosomatic symptoms

- Nuclear: 12%
- JPC: 15%
- Mostly: 20%
- Single care: 23%
Low health related quality of life physical, psychological and social wellbeing

- Nuclear: 8%
- JPC: 10%
- Mostly: 16%
- Single care: 19%

Reduced wellbeing
SDQ-Mental health problems

- Nuclear family: 10%
- JPC: 12%
- Mostly/only with one parent: 18%
Jablonska Lindberg 2007. Social situation in 12 582 fifteen year olds in different family structures (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ability to make friends</th>
<th>School satisfaction</th>
<th>Truancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two parents</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared care</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single mother</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single father</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Swedish epidemiological studies

Jablonska & Lindberg 2007:
- More 15 year olds in JPC have been drunk than in intact families
- Risk behaviours (smoking, drugs, alcohol, victimisation) same in JpC and intact families
- More risk behaviours in single parent families

Carlsund et al. 2013:
- More smoking and drinking in non-intact families
- Single care but not JPC have higher risks for conduct problems and sexualised behaviour
Children in shared parenting arrangements rate their relationship to parents as about the same as those in nuclear families. Especially the relationships to their fathers are particularly good.
Shared parenting for the youngest is our next task
Thanks!

malin.bergstrom@ki.se

www.chess.su.se/elvis