

# Poverty and Parenting: Initial Findings PSE 2012

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Third Peter Townsend Memorial Conference  
Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK



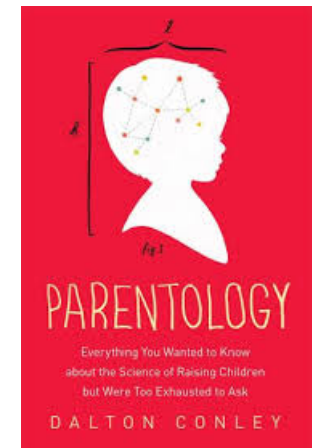
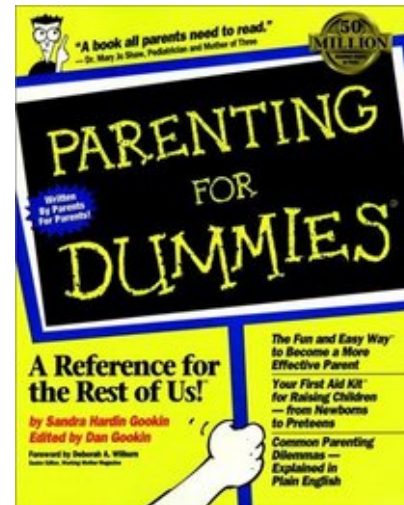
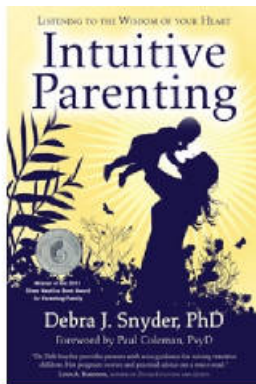
# Overview

- Parenting Culture
- Parenting in Political Context
- Parenting and Poverty
- Measures of parenting
- Data - Relationship with poverty, education and time
- Conclusions



# Parenting Culture

- Increased profile of parenting: ‘tiger mothers’, ‘feckless fathers’, ‘helicopter parents’
- Intensive motherhood (Hays 1996)
- Paranoid parenting (Furedi 2001)



# Parenting in Political Context

- Cycle of deprivation (1970s)
- Focus on family structure (1980s)
- Shift to parenting practices (1990s)
- Individualised discourse (current)



# Parenting *versus* Poverty

- “the right kind of parenting is a bigger influence on their [children’s] future than wealth, class, education or any other common social factor” (Allen 2011: pxiv)
- “It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development...that together matter more to children than money” (Field 2010:p5)
- *Troubled Families* programme (launched 2011). Directed at 120,000 families with ‘troubled and chaotic lives’



# Measuring Parenting

- “We all know what good parenting looks like” (David Cameron 2010)



- Parenting includes:
  - Parenting style
  - Quality of parent-child relationship
  - Direct parent-child activities
  - General caring activities

# Parenting Practices

- “Activities that parents undertake with their child(ren) which have a positive effect on their development, such as reading with their child, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, playing with letters and numbers, visiting the library, teaching the alphabet and numbers, and creating regular opportunities for them to play with their friends at home” (Field 2010:93)
- Five “small, manageable steps”: Talk to your child (with the television off) for 20 minutes; play with your child on the floor for 10 minutes; read to your child for 15 minutes; provide good nutrition; offer positive praise (Paterson 2011:6)



# Parenting Practices

Education: Reading  
Homework  
Attend school parents' evenings

Leisure: Television  
Sports  
Games

Food: Family meals

Every Day

Most Days

Some Days

Never

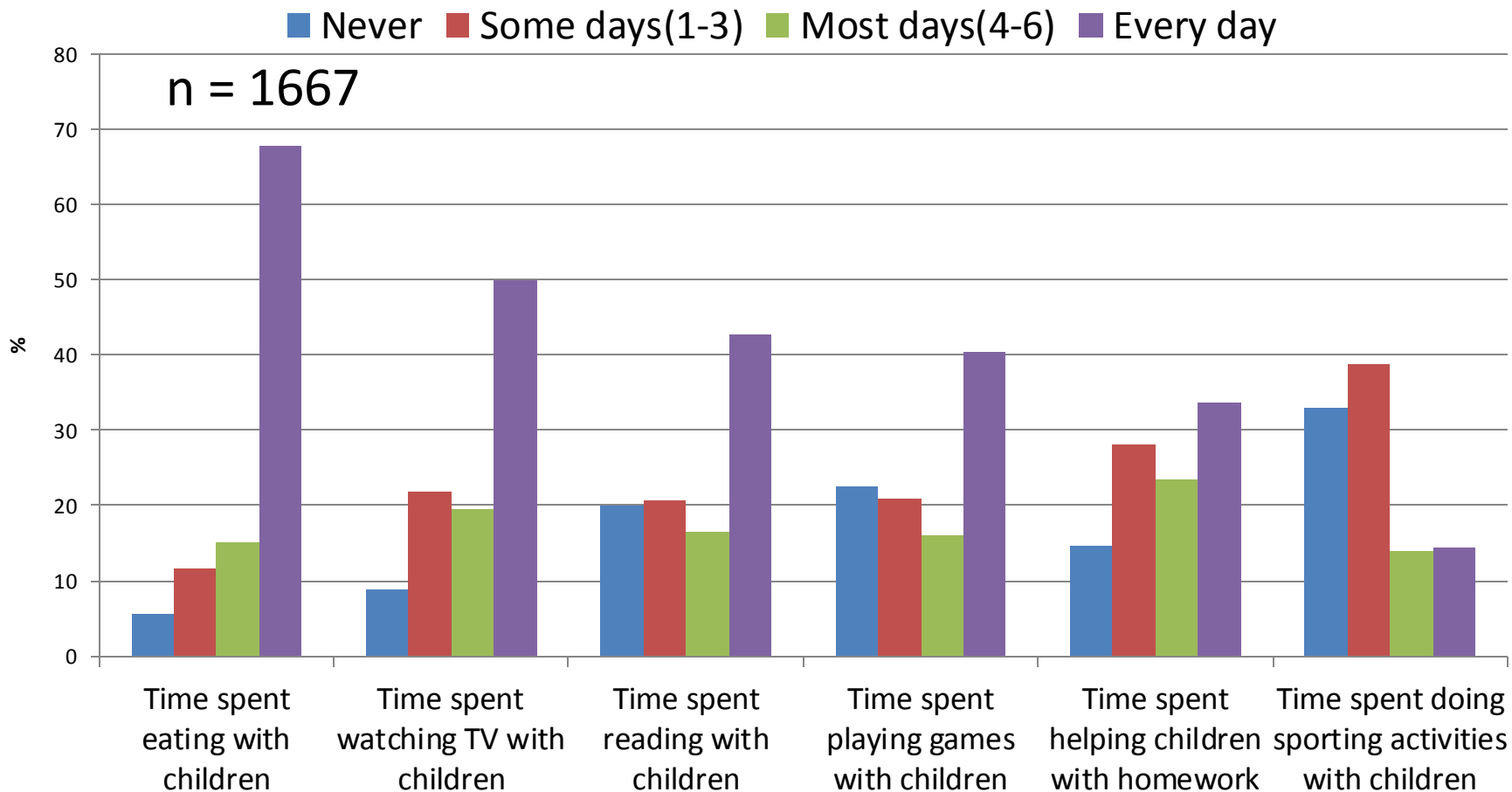


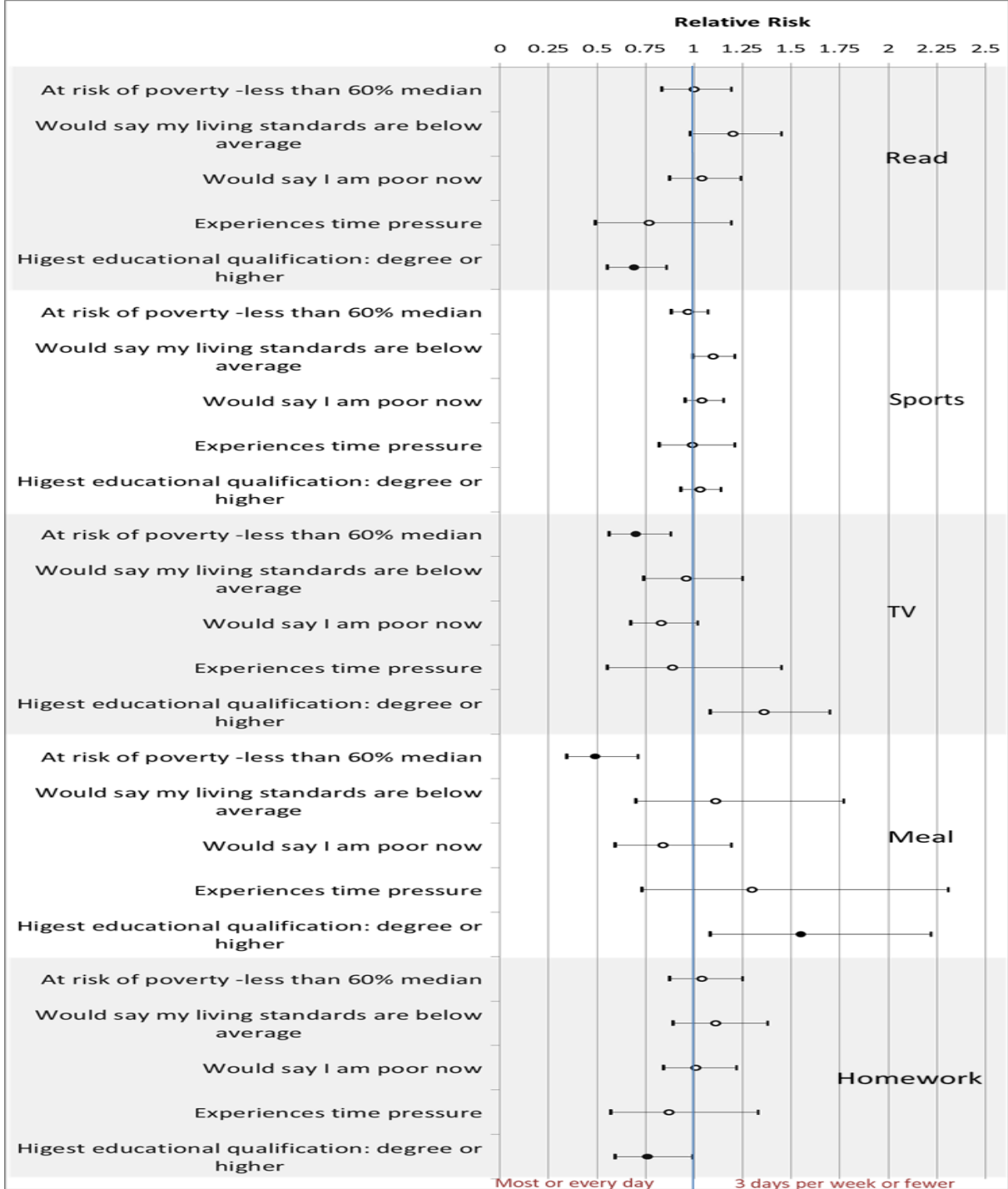


# Influences on Parenting Practices

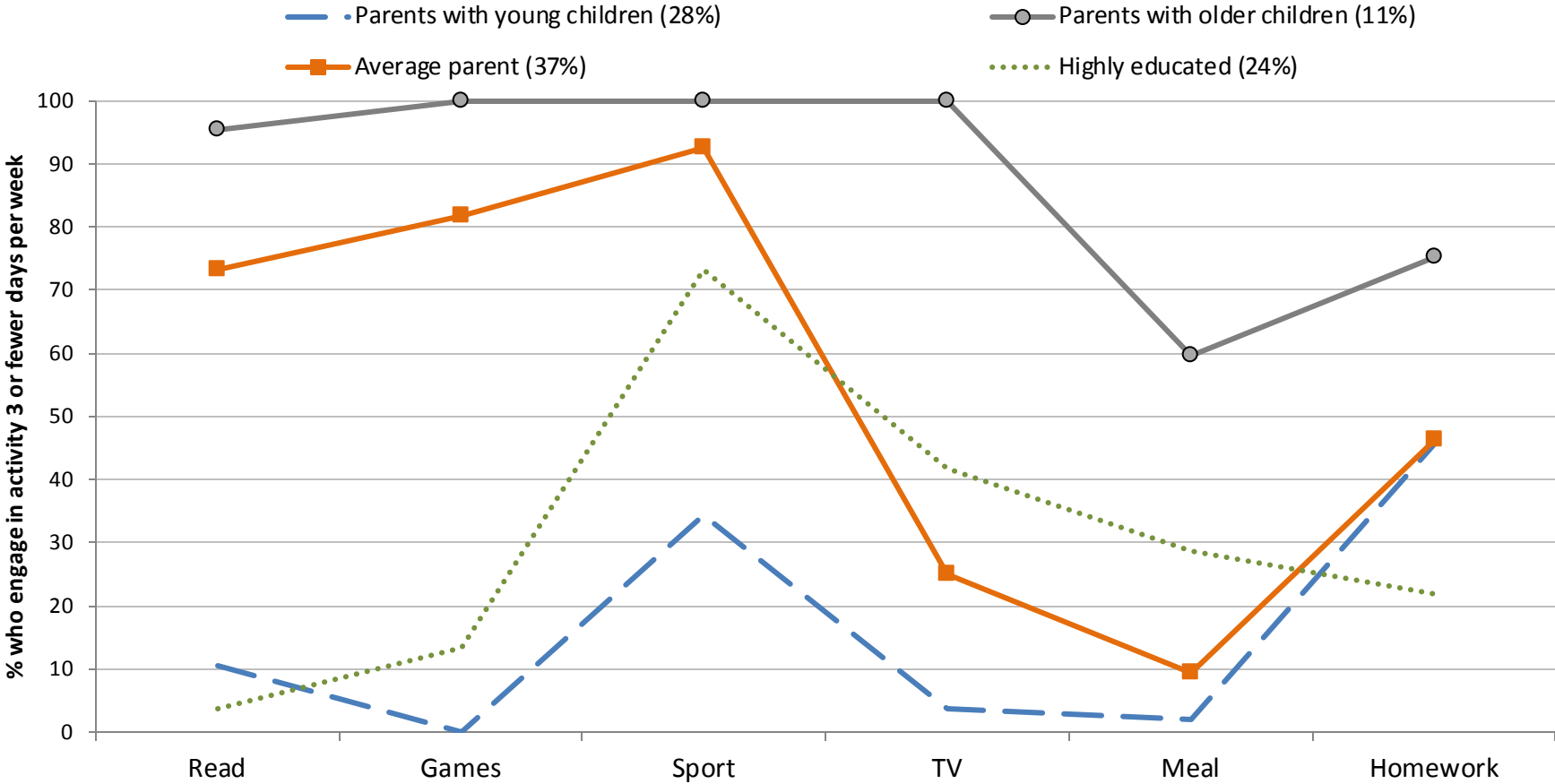
- Poverty
  - Income poverty (< 60% median)
  - Subjective assessment of poverty
- Education
  - Educational qualifications
- Time
  - Employment status (anyone unemployed / all adults in employment)
  - Perceived time pressure

# Frequency of Parenting Practices



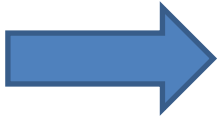


# Latent Class Profiles



# Conclusions

- No evidence for group of parents who fail to participate in high profile parent-child activities



- Rethink assumptions about existence of group of 'poor parents' doing 'poor parenting'
- Focus analysis on the top of the social scale and the 'unusual' practices of these parents

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