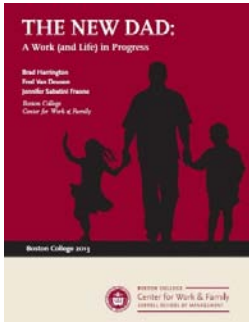


The New Dad: A Work (and Life) in Progress – Executive Summary



Introduction

In homes across America, fathers are launching a quiet revolution. Catalyzed by the women's movement and women's steady and certain progress toward greater prominence in higher education and the fastest growing professions, men and women have come to understand that traditional gender roles only hinder today's fathers and mothers in their efforts to succeed at integrating their work and family endeavors.

While some of the changes that face today's fathers are the result of women's prospects and the shifting, uncertain economic fate of men, these changes are equally born of a new, growing spirit of determination among men to fully embrace their roles as fathers. They no longer want to be seen simply as economic providers operating at arms-length from their families. Fathers today seek roles that are much more integral to the lives of their families and require greater presence and engagement.

Since 2009, we have conducted research and published a series of annual reports on the changing roles of fathers titled "The New Dad." These reports have studied the transition to fatherhood, how men manage career and family priorities, how they share caregiving responsibilities with their spouses, and what supports fathers look for and, at times thankfully, receive in their workplaces. Over this time period we have interviewed or surveyed nearly 2,000 dads - mostly white collar fathers in professional and managerial positions - to learn about their joys, their struggles, their achievements and their setbacks. We believe that our work has helped to create a more complete, and hopefully accurate, portrait of today's fathers as men who care deeply about their work and their families, who strive to be active, engaged parents while at the same time investing significant energy in building successful careers.

The Changing Role of Fathers

Several key changes have contributed to the evolving role of modern day fathers. The first is women's educational and professional achievements, which have impacted family structures.

- Women now earn 57% of bachelor's degrees, 60% of master's degrees, and about 50% of professional degrees and PhD's (Mason, 2009, 10-4).
- Working mothers make up just under half of the U.S. workforce and 23% earn more than their husbands.
- Including single mother households, they are primary breadwinners in 40% of U.S. households. (Pew Research, 2013).
- Young women no longer differ from young men in their aspirations for high-responsibility jobs.

Family structures have also changed significantly in the past 35 years.

- The number of "traditional families" (families where the father works and the mother stays home with the children), has decreased from 45% in 1975 to 31% today (BLS, 2013, Table 4).
- In 2012, 59% of two-parent households with children under 18 are dual-career earners (BLS, 2013, Table 4).
- The challenges of balancing work and family are no longer a women's issue but an issue that both parents grapple with on a daily basis.

A significant majority of the fathers see their responsibilities to their children as both caring for them *and* earning money to support them. The definition of what it means to be a good dad has shifted from the traditional breadwinning, disciplinarian role to one that emphasizes love, support, guiding, and being present.

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Sharing Care Responsibilities

- Fathers spend an average of 10.7 hours per week in solo childcare, while women spend 30.2 hours per week in solo childcare (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang, 2012).
- Men with at-home spouses spend about 8 hours per week in solo childcare compared to men in dual-earner couples, who provide 11-15 hours of solo childcare per week.
- Participants in the 2011 New Dad study spent an average of 2.65 hours per “typical working day” interacting with their children.

There appears to be a gap between how fathers feel caregiving *should* be divided between spouses and how it actually *is* divided.

- 65% of fathers believe that both partners should provide equal amounts of care and 30% feel their spouse should provide more care.
- In reality, however, only 30% of fathers reported that caregiving actually is divided equally and 64% acknowledged that their spouse provides more care than they do.

A growing number of fathers are now the primary caregiver for their children.

- The number of fathers providing sole or primary care for their children has dramatically increased in recent years. In 2011, 32% of fathers with a working spouse served as a regular source of care for their children under age 15 and 20% of fathers with preschool aged children served as the primary caregiver.
- Approximately, 2.5 million fathers headed single-parents households that included their own children age eighteen and younger (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, 2011).
- The percentage of at-home fathers has doubled in the last decade, rising from 1.6% to 3.4% of all stay-at-home parents.
- 53% of the nearly 1,000 fathers surveyed indicated that they would be comfortable with being an at-home father if their spouse had sufficient earnings to allow for it (Harrington, et. al , 2011).

While most of the fathers interviewed in our 2012 study of at-home fathers felt comfortable in their role as a full-time parent, our research and that of others who have studied at-home fathers has indicate that social stigma and social isolation are the two most significant concerns facing men who consider taking on this role.

The Workplace Response to Fatherhood

There is support for fathers in most workplaces, but more work remains to be done.

- Most of the men felt that becoming a father positively impacted how others viewed them at their workplaces.
- Flexible work arrangements are one of the most important benefits a company can provide to enable its workers to better balance work and home life.
- In this study more than three quarters of fathers reported using flex-time on either a formal or informal basis, 57% worked from home at least some part of their time, and 27% utilized compressed workweeks.
- Fathers using flexible work arrangements, whether formally or informally, have higher job satisfaction and also higher career satisfaction than those that do not use flexible work arrangements. Men tend to use informal rather than formal flexible work arrangements.
- Fifty-seven percent of 2011 survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their supervisor was supportive of employees using flexible work arrangements.

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Of those who did not use flexible work arrangements, a high percentage believed that their employers would not support their doing so. There could be many reasons for this, such as the nature of the job, fear of negative career implications, or the individual manager's stance toward flexible working.

Our studies have shown that fathers take little time off after the birth of a child.

- More than 75% took off one week or less.
- 16% did not take any time off

Having a working culture that is supportive of fathers and families is good for both the fathers and the companies. There is strong evidence that a working culture that is supportive of fathers and families leads to:

- Lower work-to-family conflict
- Higher work-to-life enrichment
- Higher job satisfaction
- Higher career satisfaction
- Lower job withdrawal intentions

Continuing the Progress

A fairly large percentage of the 900+ fathers studied agreed that in order to get ahead they needed to

- Put their work life before their family life
- Work more than 50 hours/week
- Take work home at night and on weekends
- Not turn down a promotion or transfer due to family-related reasons

It is clear that these cultural issues and the lack of support for part-time work make for a less family-friendly environment despite efforts to improve work-life balance at these companies. We believe:

- The changes that are taking place with fathers have not been fully understood and embraced within organizations, and old values and ideas still persist.
- Work-life balance continues to be seen as mainly a women's issue.
- Fathers are expected to work long hours and put their work lives ahead of their family lives.
- Perhaps the single greatest impediment that prevents fathers from being more active caregivers is the assumption that working more hours leads to higher productivity and more effective workers. This belief is deeply ingrained and often fails to consider the costs of added employee stress, lower morale, lower job satisfaction and lower employee engagement, not to mention the decrease in productivity in those extra hours.

Regardless of views on longer hours and productivity, it is clear that roles of both men and women are changing and will continue to change. Companies need to find ways to support all types of family arrangements and provide the flexibility needed to make both the companies and the employees successful. Those that do this will have access to the best talent pool, and potentially a very productive and engaged workforce.

Specific recommendations for fathers and employers, as well as full publications from The New Dad research series can be found at www.thenewdad.org. We welcome your feedback at cwf@bc.edu.