

**WORKING FATHER IDENTITY: EXPLORING FATHERHOOD WITHIN AN  
ORGANIZATIONAL AND CAREERS CONTEXT  
PILOT STUDY DRAFT RESULTS**

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It is rarely easy. There are plenty of days of struggle and heartache when, despite our best efforts, we fail to live up to our responsibilities. I know I have been an imperfect father. I know I have made mistakes. I have lost count of all the times, over the years, when the demands of work have taken me from the duties of fatherhood. There were many days out on the campaign trail when I felt like my family was a million miles away, and I knew I was missing moments of my daughters' lives that I'd never get back. It is a loss I will never fully accept.

On this Father's Day, I am recommitting myself to that work, to those duties that all parents share: to build a foundation for our children's dreams, to give them the love and support they need to fulfill them, and to stick with them the whole way through, no matter what doubts we may feel or difficulties we may face. That is my prayer for all of us on this Father's Day, and that is my hope for this nation in the months and years ahead.

President Barack Obama, June 21, 2009

The experience of becoming a mother in an organizational context has been widely studied touching on challenges women face with respect to learning to manage work and family domains and the need to reconstruct their sense of self to meet these conflicting demands (Frone, 1994; Williams, Suls, Alliger, & Learner, 1991; Higgins, Duxbury & Johnson, 2000; Millward, 2006; Ladge, 2008). An area of research that has drawn far less attention is the experience of becoming a father in an organizational context. Indeed, many studies have explored work-family conflict concerns of both mothers and fathers (Hill, 2005; Winslow, 2005; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998) but little is known about how men construct their identity as fathers and the impact this identity construction process has on their career intentions, aspirations, attitudes and behaviors. While women still bear the majority burden of household and childcare responsibilities (Doucet, 2000), men have increasingly become more involved in household and child caretaking (Coltrane, 2004; Levine & Pittinsky, 1997). There is no doubt that contemporary definitions of good fathering differ greatly from traditional definitions with respect to the meaning and value placed on fatherhood. Whereas the traditional model of fatherhood reflected more masculine values and breadwinner status, contemporary models of good fathering reflect a more relational approach including much greater involvement and

partnership with spouses in sharing the childrearing and household responsibilities (Dowd, 2000).

There are a number of factors influencing the current ideologies of good fathering. These include the rise in dual career couples and increase in women's earning power within those couples, changing career patterns and shifts in generational values. In the United States, in nearly 70% of couples with children, both parents are in the workplace (Bianchi, 2008) This means that we have reached a point where in most families in the United States, there is no longer a stay-at-home parent concerned with child rearing and management of the household. Since this major set of responsibilities did not simply disappear, this phenomenon has increased the responsibilities of working people. While historically, this "dual agenda" of work and family has fallen more to the female spouse creating what has been famously termed the "second shift" (Hochschild, 1989, 2003) we believe for a number of reasons this is changing. For example, in 24% of dual-career couples today, the woman earns more than her male spouse (Raley, Mattingly and Bianchi, 2006). While there are many reasons why women have continued to play the more significant role in child rearing including entrenched gender roles, this shift toward more balanced earnings should have a profound impact on the division and balance of home labor.

In addition to the rise in dual-career couples, the change in career patterns has also likely had an impact on fathers' career ideals. Beginning in the late 1980's, a dramatic shift occurred in the relationship between careers and employers. As employers' downsizing efforts reached record levels in the 1990s and early 2000s (see for example Uchitelle, 2006), employees realized that the employment contract which had existed in previous generations had come to an end. The result is that individuals seem to be shifting to a career model that is increasingly independent of organization, perhaps heralding the end of the "Organization Man," a stereotyped view from the

book by William H. Whyte which characterized the ideal working man. In this highly influential 1956 work, Whyte described these men as, “the ones of our middle class who have left home, spiritually as well as physically, to take the vow of organization life, and it is they who are the heart and soul of our great self-perpetuating institutions.” (Whyte, 1956) Today, instead of seeing a career as associated with a particular organization, individuals are more likely to identify with their profession or simply themselves (i.e. see themselves as being “self-employed”). This has led to a more self-directed approach to career management for many individuals which has been termed as the *Protean Career* (Hall, 2001) or the *Boundaryless Career* (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

Complicating matters, generational value differences seem to also be influencing career ideals. There is evidence to suggest that younger generations in the workplace (referred to as Generation X and Generation Y) do not share the career attitudes of the baby boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964.) In many studies, younger workers have placed a greater emphasis on autonomy and work-life balance than is the case with previous generations (National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2005). This change in values may be the result of many forces but likely include the factors mentioned above (i.e. the rise in dual career couples, the changing employment contract) as well as the greater affluence that members of these generations have experienced throughout their lifetimes which has led to a greater emphasis on and concern for quality of life issues.

All of these changes in demographics, values, and career prototypes point toward a changing role for working fathers in our society. In essence, contemporary fatherhood ideals are in many respects where maternal ideals and expectations were 30 years ago but, in essence, with the opposite challenge. Women have been always had legitimacy in the home and yet have

struggled to find the same level of credibility and respect in the workplace. Conversely, men's place in the world of work is clear but their struggle to balance career aspirations with a focus on parenting may encounter "paternal walls" not unlike the glass ceiling that women have faced. While many programs and policies are in place within organizations to assist working mothers, many fathers currently struggle with the same set of issues but lack the support needed within their organizations. The new fatherhood imperative requires greater work flexibility for dads to take charge or at least equally share in childrearing and household responsibilities yet the reward systems within most work contexts have not changed to reflect these new ideals. Ideal work norms still reward on the basis of competition and loyalty where long work hours show commitment to an organization (Williams, 2001). While a few organizations are beginning to alter their human resource systems to recognize multiple models of career success and paths, most organizational work-life programs are still viewed primarily as women's initiatives. Thus, little support is offered to new fathers as they navigate their own work-family demands. Given that fathers are often left out of the equation but that they too may desire alternative career paths, we felt it was important and timely to explore how men experience fatherhood in a work context. In this summary of our pilot study, we discuss the ways in which men ascribe meaning to the new role as fathers and identify the potential factors that shape these meanings. We conclude by juxtaposing men's experiences with women's experiences becoming mothers and explore potential career-relevant implications.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

We conducted a small pilot study with 10 men who had recently had their first child (Appendix B). The criterion for selection was that all men were first-time fathers in professional and managerial roles. Men were selected using snowball sample techniques. We emailed MBA students from class lists at a large East Coast University. Participants included students from the class or colleagues or friends of classmates. Each of the 10 men was interviewed by one of the two primary research investigators. An interview protocol (see Appendix A) was established prior to the start of the interviews to guide the discussion. Thus, the interviews were semi-structured with some open-ended and some detailed questions guiding the conversation. Each of the interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes.

All of the men were married and had five or more years of professional work experience. Five of the men were married to working spouses while the other five had stay-at-home wives. At the time of the interview, the children's ages ranged from 3 months to 18 months. The sample is predominately white so the experiences may not be able to be generalized to other racial or culturally diverse groups of men.

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and we analyzed the transcripts by looking for common themes in the data. Since our primary interest was with identity concerns of fathers and factors that influence how their father identity is shaped in a work context (both career and fatherhood identities), we searched primarily for themes that addressed these issues. We also drew comparisons from findings from a prior study (Ladge, 2008) that looked at similar issues with new mothers. A summary of our key findings are addressed in the next section.

## ANALYSIS

Our findings are broken down into three parts: 1) The meanings new fathers ascribe to their role as dads, 2) the factors that seem to influence these meanings and 3) the rewards of becoming a father in organizational contexts. We conclude with some initial thoughts regarding the implications for men's careers.

### 1. Self-ascribed meanings of fatherhood

We found that fathers ascribed two distinct meanings to their new role as fathers. These include both *intrinsic meaning* and *extrinsic meanings*. Intrinsic meanings are driven by internal needs such as emotional development while the extrinsic meanings are centered on more externally focused concerns such as creating a financially secure, safe environment. The intrinsic meanings typically revolved around the degree of involvement and time spent playing, caring for and connecting with their child. This also included the desire to be a good role model and provide emotional support.

<b>Intrinsic Meanings</b>	<b>Quote</b>
Involvement – play, care, love, making connections	<p><i>“It’s spending time and having connections, special things that are meaningful between you and your child.” [Aaron]</i></p> <p><i>“Being a part of the growing up process and playing with her, spending time with her, just being involved... being a part of their life in whatever capacity.” [Keith]</i></p>
Good Role model (building confidence in them)	<p><i>“A good father is someone who provides a good role model that displays good decision making, good ethics, fun, fun-loving, positive.” [Craig]</i></p>
Emotionally supportive	<p><i>“It means bringing him up in the most loving environment.” [Sam]</i></p> <p><i>“My top priority...is making sure she feels loved, that she develops into a strong confident person and she hopefully tries to approach the world and others with a sense of compassion.” [Rob]</i></p>

All of the fathers described their experiences and the meaning of being a good father using these more intrinsic meanings but several of them also described more extrinsic meanings. These primarily revolved around providing for their child financially and ensuring their family functioned as a solid unit (i.e. creating a secure environment). A sample of these comments are included in the table below:

<b>Extrinsic Meaning</b>	<b>Quote</b>
Financial Security	<i>“The first is, in my opinion, to [provide] support for the child, financially.” Peter]</i>
Making the family unit work	<i>“It means being responsible for making the family unit work. We have to be a cohesive unit that will work together.” [Sam]</i>
Final outcome	<i>“In the end it’s all about how she turns out.” [Michael]</i>

## **2. Factors that influence the meanings ascribed to fatherhood**

We also looked at several factors that seem to influence the meanings these fathers ascribed to the role of being a dad. We found that these meanings are largely shaped by their own parents (i.e. how many hours their dads spent at work and with the family, whether their mom worked, etc.) and other aspects of their personal history. Aaron, a computer analyst for a large investment company who has a stay-at home wife stressed the critical role his father had played in helping him to define what it meant to be a good father / parent:

*Aaron: He’s the president of a small business ,,, we were always sort of around that, whether coming in to help out in his office, little tasks, or I worked there when I as in high school, stuff like that. He had a very strong influence on how I think about the mix of work and family and why I find it important not to work so many hours now. He was always home at reasonable hours ...he would balance doing that kind of thing at work with coming home and doing yard work with us, house projects. That’s the one thing I got from him, he was always tearing something apart and I’m starting to do that.”*

Another participant, Peter, age 29, echoed this sentiment when he said “I think seeing [my father’s] approach to it gave me a fairly balanced outlook on the way I actually approached it as well.”

In two cases however, the lack of a father’s presence or the lack of a positive example also led two of our participants to develop ideals of fatherhood in response to their lack of a personal role model. Dan, who is in the military but who was attending an MBA program on a full-time basis when we met, describes his experiences in this way:

*Dan: My family life growing up, that’s a separate interview altogether. I came from a family that, you know, my dad and mom divorced at a very early age. My dad was always working. I don’t think that shaped my views on the whole balance stuff...my two siblings and I who both stayed with my mom and my dad was kind of in the fringes. Later on and came back into our life...Back to the original question, I don’t think that directly affected how I see my role.*

*INT: As a father?*

*Dan: As a father, but I guess in very general terms you always try to improve upon the experiences you had which isn’t to say that my dad wasn’t a good father. But there are definitely some things I would like to do differently.*

*INT: Any particular example?*

*Dan: Just level of engagement I guess, you know, to get more involved in my sons activities as he grows up. Probably more than my dad did. I think the way I would like to participate in Drew’s development is different too. I think my dad just always kind of set the line in the sand and if you strayed outside of the acceptable, those boundaries, he was there to provide some incentives to get back on the right path. And you know, I think I’d like to have a little bit more of a give and take interaction, kind of a mentorship role with my son.*

Keith, a manager in a medium sized public accounting firm, had a father who was not at all present in most of his life. While Keith’s experience was much different than Dan’s, he too seemed to learn a great deal from what he did not experience in his interaction with a father.

Keith shared some very personal and challenging elements of his life as a young child and the impact it had on his expectations of what a father should be:

*Keith: My parents were divorced when I was 4. Um, I saw my father 2 or 3 times after that, so largely uninvolved. My mother, we don't have a great relationship. We speak periodically, she lives in Virginia. She wasn't particularly responsible. She, we were supported growing up by my grandparents (on the mother's side), who ultimately took the reins for responsibility, discipline, things like that, um.*

*INT: So you actually lived with them?*

*Keith: No, we lived with my mother but my grandparents owned the house. They paid all the bills, my mother worked but didn't really make enough to support 3 kids... Growing up and even now, she doesn't feel like she should have that obligation. Um so yeah, those types of things certainly shaped my view there. I certainly wanted to be an involved parent*

*INT: So would you say that you had a role model that you looked at and said this is how I think about fatherhood? How did you form your idea of what it meant to be a father?*

*Keith: I think it was probably an anti-role model for all of the male folks out there.*

In addition to their father's role modeling, participants also learned a great deal by watching how their parents shared responsibilities for child rearing and domestic tasks. Rob, a director of a non-profit economic development agency, had perhaps the most conspicuously "shared care" arrangement with his wife, a teacher and Ivy-League educated lawyer. Rob spoke about the example his parents had set for him in this respect:

*Rob: My parents – my father is a Buddhist minister. And my mother is a public school teacher. She taught elementary school. [pause] The way the Buddhist Temples are kind of structured in Los Angeles is that – and I'm not sure how other churches are structured – but it is pretty loose, it is a pretty loose kind of, like work day. A lot of my father's actual work occurred in the evenings and weekends. Funerals, services, um, meetings Stuff like that, so during the day, he had a little bit more flexibility.*

*So growing up, my father was the one maybe cooking us breakfast, taking us to school, picking us up from school – watching us. You know, mom would come in after she got off from her work day. And then, mom helped out from there. So I would say now at least, in terms of kind of seeing the sharing of the workload? I would say I got a lot from that.*

*INT: And did you view that as kind of a model for you?*

*Rob: I kind of saw that as more of the norm – I mean, I didn't know any different. Right? And you know, just as being the kids of the Buddhist minister, - it could be pretty rough in terms of demands of my parents, so. We were pretty much raised by a bunch of people who were very active in the church. So you know, baby-sitting. Or sleeping over their houses - during services they'd watch us. So, it was very much a communal kind of upbringing*

In addition to parental influence, meanings of good fathering and fatherhood also seemed to be shaped by making comparison with friends. As Michael, a 45 year-old scientist in our study stated, *“I would say in between your own childhood and seeing other people raise their children, that's probably the two things that influence how we're raising our child the most.”* Other participants echoed a similar sentiment about watching how their peers were raising their children and drawing lessons from this observation. In Craig's case, he tried to emulate the example of some close family friends. *“I have some really close friends I look up to. I just look at the ways they live their lives as families and workers.”* In other case, such examples can serve as “what I don't want to do” as was the case for Aaron. He and his wife had decided she would stop working when the baby was born and watching the experiences of friends in a dual career couple reinforced that the decision Aaron and his wife made was the right one for them. As Aaron stated, *“I have friends who have 3 month old babies and they drop them off at daycare. I can't even imagine doing that.”*

### **3. What do men get from the overall experience?**

Perhaps not surprisingly, many of the men were not quite sure what to expect when they became fathers. For example, two of our study participants, Craig and Sam, stated:

*“I envisioned that it would be difficult and that I would have trouble wanting to find the time to be a parent. ...I had no understanding of the emotional bond genetically that occurs when you have a baby. ...I think it's very hard for a man especially to really understand what's going to happen.” [Craig, age 40, entrepreneur]*

*“I knew I would probably like it. But the negative side of it was, ‘Oh my gosh, I’m going to be **responsible** for this kid for 18 years! [gasp]” [Sam, age 47 account executive]*

This lack of understanding and ability to grasp what to expect, changed very quickly when their babies were born. The fathers we spoke with were profoundly emotionally impacted by the birth of their child and expressed nearly universally positive reactions to that event. Some typical reactions to becoming a father included:

*“Just elation. Just absolute elation. Seeing a beautiful baby boy come out of what was an unbelievably difficult delivery was like a gift. It was like a blessing.” [Sam]*

*“It hit me in a way that nothing else ever has. ... It was just absolutely overwhelming in a positive way.” [Paul]*

*“...it was the first time in my life I ever cried from happiness. ...it was a very new sensation for me to be that happy.” [Josh]*

There were also a number of participants who also experienced fear and anxiousness at the same time in regards to the daunting responsibility of caring for and raising their child. Dan admitted feeling, *“Absolute terror, yeah. It was overwhelming. I think it kind of made me experience feelings that I didn’t know were even out there.”* As Michael pointed out, the responsibility can be overwhelming. *“You don’t quite know what’s coming. And you feel kind of a responsibility drops like a piano in a carton on your shoulders. It’s frightening. It’s exciting but scary. Mostly scary right at first.”*

Since the participants now had between 4-18 months experience as a father, we asked them to reflect on what they liked best about fatherhood. Their responses focused primarily on the feeling of being a “real” family for the first time, the close emotional bonds they felt with their new child, and having the opportunity to watch their child develop. Somewhat ironically,

even the heightened sense of responsibility was mentioned as one of the positive outcomes of being a new father. The charts below summarize their responses.

**Like Best about Fatherhood**

<p>Family aspects</p>	<p><i>“We’re actually a family now. And that’s one of the best aspects about being a father. I remember somebody saying, ‘You never grow up until your parents die’. That’s kind of true. I think you don’t really grow up until you have a family of your own that’s kind of creating its own identity.” [Michael]</i></p> <p><i>“I think just the whole family unit thing and it’s a lot of fun to come home to see my wife and my son playing, to go run around with them. It’s just the feeling, the emotional feeling you get from having a family at home.” [Aaron]</i></p> <p><i>“Emma just kind of brings new life and energy to me. And it’s this warmth that I feel – just around her. And it’s not just so much like a – like an individual thing...but it’s like being part of something larger.” [Rob]</i></p>
<p>Emotional bond</p>	<p><i>I just love the emotional bond that I have with my son. That’s amazing, amazing thing, you know, just the way he lights up when I walk in the room, walks over and pulls himself on my leg you know, with a huge smile is great and um, just the whole notion of fostering his development and guiding his development and being influential in his development has been impactful for me, -- to experience. [Craig]</i></p> <p><i>“I love being a father so much more than I thought I would and I can’t say exactly why except that spending time with my daughter, the highlight of my day is in the morning and I hear her start to wake up and I can just go in there and pick her up. -- And how do you, how do you define that other than [love].” [Josh]</i></p>
<p>Watching a human develop</p>	<p><i>“I would have to say just the wonder of watching him grow and being able to do new and different things. Just kind of, it makes you, it’s kind of, makes you think about all he potentially has. It’s a wondrous thing to kind of envision where he’s going to be down the line and try to understand the gravity of your role in changing that process.” [Dan]</i></p>
<p>Being responsible</p>	<p><i>“I think the best aspect of being a father is, just...knowing that I am responsible now for another human being. His well being, entirely—he’s completely dependent on us.” [Sam]</i></p> <p><i>“Everything. I enjoy my responsibilities. In doing the things that I want to do when I get home every day.” [Keith]</i></p>

We also asked the fathers what they liked least about being a father. In general, many of the respondents struggled to answer this question, perhaps best characterized by Keith who could only think of the fact that he has to leave his newborn to go to work every day. Some typical responses included:

**Like Least About Fatherhood**

Can't spend more time with child	<i>I don't know that I have a least favorite aspect of being a father, is that I've got to leave and go to work every day. [Keith]</i>
Relationship changes	<p><i>"I would say it's kind of forced my wife and I, it changes the dynamic of our relationship. Not necessarily always in a bad way. It's not like there's constant tension or in conflict but you know, it's, going from the 2 of us to the 3 of us in a family. Probably 85 to 90 percent of that is great but it's also just kind of changed the relationship. The level of intimacy and connection between my wife and I." [Dan]</i></p> <p><i>"...other things get put on the back burner like I don't see my friends at all anymore. My family doesn't want to see me, they come over a lot more but it's not to see me." Josh]</i></p>
Lack of flexibility to work to one's own schedule (or conversely the need to be flexible)	<p><i>"...the lack of flexibility this entails, and the, the requisite compromise or, um sacrifices of freedom that goes with that. [Peter]</i></p> <p><i>"I don't have the freedom to do what I want to do, when I want to do it. [Sam] it would be great if you could somehow pause the responsibility for a few hours and go hang out with your friends and not have to worry like I gotta get back for the sitter or my parents." [Aaron]</i></p> <p><i>"I've learned to realize that you know, I just have to kind of live in the moment with her. Just go with it. And then, any sort of you know, any kind of sense of structure I had in my brain, prior to [her birth], it's like, forget about it." [Rob]</i></p>
Fatigue	<p><i>"Occasionally I get tired, I get tired. I need a break. And the fact that I need a break doesn't feel very good. Like I feel kind of like I'm letting him down in a way, so there's some negative stuff that goes around with that." [Craig]</i></p> <p><i>"The worst parts for me are the stay in times alone, trying to entertain an infant. I find that very trying after a few hours." [Michael]</i></p>

## Organizational responses to new working fathers

We also asked the participants to reflect on the overall experiences of becoming a father in an organizational context. In general, we found that virtually all of the men in our pilot have had very positive experiences becoming fathers in a work context: The meaning of being a good father and living up to the associated expectations seems to be influenced by their organizations and through the support of colleagues, bosses and peers who are parents at work. As one participant put it, *“My organization is not inhibiting me from being the kind of father I want to be.”* Some of the positive factors of becoming a father in an organizational context that our participants mentioned were that:

- Men are rewarded interpersonally and often feel they are able to make better social connections with others at work who are parents. They also feel as though they are now “members of the parenting club.”
- Many of the men also feel that becoming a father gives them an aura of maturity and credibility at work. They are viewed as more serious and responsible by others.
- The participants also described getting support and encouragement from their peers and supervisors who are also parents.

Interpersonal Gains	Quotes
Social aspect	<p><i>“I think a lot of my co-workers see me in a different way when they see me chasing him around vs. doing serious business stuff...that I have a lighter side.” [Aaron]</i></p> <p><i>“It provides another way to get close to someone...it helps bridges the relationship a little bit.” [Sam]</i></p> <p><i>“I didn’t really envision it having much of an impact, except for maybe easier conversations.” [Josh]</i></p>

“A member of the club”; feeling a greater connection with other fathers / parents	<p><i>“I thought they would look at me as... ’He’s now one of us, one of the club members.’” [Sam]</i></p> <p><i>“I have grown to meet other people who have kids who I would never have talked to if we didn’t have that bond of having kids.” [Aaron]</i></p>
Feel mature/grown up/credibility/seen as serious (in a good way)	<p><i>“I think it lends...amongst your coworkers credibility, a sort of maturity.” [Craig]</i></p> <p><i>“I actually thought it would be positive. I thought they would look at me as ‘Sam’s finally getting serious... ’” [Sam]</i></p>
Boss and peer support (especially those with kids)	<p><i>“The boss I had when my daughter was born, he and his wife were expecting their first child one month after so he was very flexible and understanding...” [Paul]</i></p>

Men also describe several personal rewards in becoming fathers. Many describe themselves as more patient, more focused, balanced and feel as though coming home to spend time with their family as an opportunity to ease the stress of work.

<b>Personal Rewards</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
More patient	<p><i>“Maybe I’m more patient than I was, because that was the one thing I was concerned about being a father was being patient.” [Josh]</i></p> <p><i>“I think having a child brings out some patience that I probably didn’t have originally because of my go-getter mindset...” [Aaron]</i></p>
More focused; scheduled; balanced	<p><i>“It’s given me a heightened sense of responsibility. I’m definitely aware of the actions and roles, the models I’m setting or showing...There’s an overall calmness in my life. I used to network pretty aggressively. Now I don’t really at all. I’m very careful about where I spend my time.” [Craig]</i></p> <p><i>“It’s given me a lot more focus and kind of purpose. In terms of some of the urgency behind my work, and what sort of society I want my little girl to be able to live in.” [Rob]</i></p> <p><i>“It’s definitely changed my priorities quite a bit. I spend a lot more time with my wife and with my son.” [Aaron]</i></p>
Eases stress from work (Coming home)	<p><i>“I’ll come home from a stressful day at work, a little bit stressful and then be with my child and take a step back and leave the stress at the door.” [Paul]</i></p>

## CAREER-RELATED IMPLICATIONS

The impact that fatherhood has had on their careers is tangible for some, but only very minimal for others. And the impact seems to be considerably less and more positive than the impact on women who had recently become mothers and were part of Ladge's earlier study on new mothers (2008). As Aaron stated, *"I don't think they [my career aspirations] really have [changed] because I have this vision that this will be part of my career and my life."* While the men in the study were cognizant that their priorities needed to change (*"There is a certain priority that needs to be placed on being a father that wasn't there before."* [Peter]) and that their work schedules would be impacted (*"Just that I couldn't be as crazy a worker as I was."* [Rob]), overall becoming a father was perceived as requiring adjustments rather than being a career-altering life event. In fact for some, becoming a father increased their identity as the breadwinner and therefore the importance of succeeding in their career goals. As Sam stated, *"It's just making me feel more responsible and more, I guess serious about...accomplishing my goals."*

## GENERAL DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

While it can be easily interpreted from these themes that these gains are very positive for men, we think they could potentially have some negative consequences with respect to career progression and decision-making. Different from women, most of the men in our sample didn't seem to take the time to reflect on their careers, their career goals and/or their futures when children enter their world. These individuals primarily discussed their continued trajectory in their current job. However, the men with working wives seemed to talk more about the

challenges and opportunities work-family balance presents to them and got them thinking more about their career goals and outlook on life in general.

We plan to interview an additional 25-30 men / working new fathers and also conduct a larger comparison study of professional and managerial men and women's experiences becoming parents using quantitative methods. We will be embarking on both of these projects during the summer / fall of 2009. We want to continue to focus on new first-time fathers and the impacts of fatherhood on their lives and careers. We are considering whether to focus more narrowly on first-time fathers that have working wives as at least initially as we speculate there seems to be some differences between the experiences of new fathers with stay-at-home vs. working wives. Eventually, having the data on both groups (men with working wives and those with stay-at-home wives) would allow us to compare these two groups which we feel would be of great interest.

Another goal would be to compare the experiences of Gen X and Gen Y new fathers with those of Gen X and Gen Y new mothers. Because we have based our fatherhood study on the earlier study on motherhood which Jamie conducted (see Appendix C) and because so many of the questions we are asking the fathers were also asked of the mothers in that previous study, we will have the opportunity to compare and contrast some of the responses and experiences of fathers and mothers from the two studies. A few differences that have begun to surface between the two groups already, but which are highly speculative at this stage include the following:

1. **Women face the prospect of taking leaves and then the challenge of re-entering the workplace, men do not.** All of the women in Jamie's 2008 study took a leave of at least 3 months to have their first child. Only one of the men in our pilot study took a formal

leave and the rest left the workplace for very short periods of time (3 days to 3 weeks) following the birth of their first child.

2. **All of the women in Jamie’s study asked for some form of flexible work arrangement during their early return to work phase, none of the men did so.** In our pilot, it appeared that men were far more likely to exercise flexibility rather than ask for a (formal) flexible work arrangement. While many of the men did use flexibility to be available to back up their wives, share childcare responsibilities (e.g. drop-off or pick-up at a childcare center), or attend physician’s appointments, this was always done in an informal or sometimes “stealth” fashion.
  
3. **Many women experienced mixed or negative messages in returning to the workplace, none of the men did.** While many of the women in Jamie’s study felt that they received negative or mixed messages in the workplace about their challenge of balancing work and family, virtually none of the men seemed to encounter or at least take note of any significant repercussions from becoming a father. To the contrary, as we have stated earlier, most men felt they had received only positive feedback from their colleagues about their role as parents and that it had, if anything, enhanced their reputation and credibility. Women received far more mixed messages upon their return to work, regardless of the decision they had made in terms of their employment status (e.g. those returning full-time were questioned about the care of their child, those returning part-time were questioned about the impact it would have on their careers.)

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## **Appendix A: The Interview Protocol**

This study is focused on men's experiences of combining fatherhood and a career. We're interviewing a small group of professional men who have recently become a first-time father. Your identity will be held in confidence and just the thematic results will be used as a basis for refining the study. The interview should take approximately 60-90 minutes.

### **I) Warm Up**

Let's begin by discussing your current position and organization.

1. What is your current role in your organization? How long have you been working in this role? Could you briefly summarize the key responsibilities of your position.
2. How long have you been working in your present organization?
3. What number of hours do you work? Can you describe a "typical" workweek?
4. How much travel is involved in your work? What is your typical commuting time?
5. Do you feel your current role is one in which is easy to combine work and family? Why or why not?
6. How would you describe your present role in terms of your overall satisfaction with it?

### **II. Questions regarding Personal and Career History**

I'd now like to move on and ask you to reflect for a bit on your career and how that intersects with fatherhood.

1. Would you briefly describe your educational history to date?
2. Would you briefly describe your career history to date?
3. Tell us your marital status, when you got married and when your child was born.
4. What aspects of your history (critical life events - family life, religion, etc.) do you think have influenced your views of fatherhood and your career? Did/do both your parents work?

### **III. Career and Career Aspirations**

Now let's talk about your career and career aspirations.

1. Why do you work?
2. Do you consider your work a job, career, calling?
3. What are your career aspirations? 5 Years from now? 10 years from now?
4. How has your family (spouse, parents, in-laws) responded to your career?
5. Did you have a vision of what your life today would look like in terms of your career at this point and do these compare to your life today?
6. On a scale of 1-5, how important is your career to your identity, to how you define yourself (1 not important, 5 very important)? Why this number?

### **IV. Questions on the Process of Becoming a Father and Fatherhood**

1. Prior to becoming a dad, what did you anticipate it would be like to be a father?
2. Tell us about when you first became a father. What were you feeling?
3. Did you anticipate that becoming a father would impact your career? In what ways?
4. When and how did you announce to your friends, family co-workers that your wife/partner had the baby? How did they respond?
5. Did you take a paternity leave or any time off after the birth of your child?
6. Have you considered/did you consider being a stay at home father?
7. Have you utilized/are you utilizing any flex time or alternative work arrangements in order to provide care for your child?

### **V. Questions on fatherhood in the workplace**

1. Did you think becoming a father would impact how others in the workplace would see you? If so, how? Now that you're already a dad, has there been any instances where your being a father has had an impact on your work?
2. Does your being a father, come up as a topic of conversation at work?
3. Is your boss supportive of work-family policies and programs in general? In your specific case do you feel he/she has been supportive?
4. Are you co-workers supportive of work family policies?
5. Are there other working dads where you work? Do you engage with them in conversations about being a working father or balancing work-family issues?

### **VI. Questions on Being a Father and Caregiving**

1. Could you characterize how you and partner typically share care-giving responsibilities?
2. How many hours do you spend with your child per day? Per week? Could you clarify how you spend this time with your child?
3. On a scale of 1-5, how involved are you in the care giving of your child (1 being not at all, 5 very involved). Explain your answer.

## **VII. Questions Regarding Fatherhood and Career Identity**

1. What does it mean to you to be a good father? On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate yourself as a father? Why?
2. Has being a father influenced your professional identity? Has your professional identity influenced your being a father?
3. Is there anyone at work or in your personal life that you look to for guidance or follow in their footsteps with respect to balancing family and work? Explain.
4. What are the best aspects of being a father? What are the aspects you like least about being a father?
5. Do you feel you have changed in any way as a result of becoming a father? How?
6. **Have your career aspirations changed as a result of becoming a father? In what ways?**

## **VIII. Personal Information and Demographics (ask only if they did not come up in the conversation)**

1. How old are you?
2. Could you provide some basic information regarding where you grew up and your education? (High School, College, Graduate/Professional school, etc.)
3. How long have you been with partner / married?
4. Does your wife work? In what kind of capacity? How many hours? Is her job flexible?
5. How old is your child?

Are there other things you'd like to discuss that you think are relevant but that we didn't cover?

Can you recommend anyone who might be a good candidate for this study?

## Appendix B: Summary of Interviewees

Pseudonym	Dan	Aaron	Keith	Josh	Peter	Craig	Paul	Rob	Sam	Michael
<b>Age</b>	32	32	30	31	29 (30 in a few weeks)	40	33	38	47	45
<b>Age of Child</b>	10 months	18-19 months	10 months	1 year old	4 months	9 months	7 months	8 months	6 months	3.5 months
<b>Occupation</b>	Grad Student/Military	Analyst	Manager/Accountant	Treasurer @ Investment Management Firm	See resume	Business CEO?	Manager	Director @ APIA Social Service Agency	Sales	Science/Research
<b>Job Title</b>	Student/U.S. Major	Individual Computer Analyst (Business/technical analyst)	Manager of Public Accounting Firm	Treasurer	See resume	Former VP of Products @ Tech Company; now a founder and CEO of own company	Software Product Manager	Director of Community Economic Development	Senior Account Executive	Staff Scientist/Biologist
<b>Education Level</b>	MBA in progress	MBA in progress	Masters (in Accounting?)	MBA	MBA	MBA	MBA in progress	Masters in Public Admin./Government	BS in Economics; some post-Grad work in GIS	PhD
<b>Does Wife Work?</b>	No	No	No (going back in Sept as a teacher)	No	No	Yes? (Talks about wife going to conference, nanny comes 3 days per week)	Yes (Business)	Yes (HS teacher)	Yes (Part-time nurse)	Yes (Full time Executive Assistant)

<b>Length of Paternity Leave?</b>	3 days	3 weeks	3 weeks	1 week	1 week	1 week	A little over 1 week; then worked short days and took some Fridays off	3 months	2 weeks	2 weeks
<b>Use Flex Time?</b>	No, none available	"Not really."	Yes?	No formal policies; company is flexible	Yes (Job is flexible already, works from home 1-2 days per week)	Offers it to own employees to an extent	Yes (daycare drop off and pick up)	Yes (daycare at workplace, work from home, evening meetings, weekends)	"Informally " (Leaves @ 5:00 M&F to pick up son)	Yes (Goes in late, leaves early, so long as gets all work done)
<b>How important is career to identity? (1-5)</b>	3	4	2	3	2	4	4	4	4 or 5	4
<b>How involved in caregiving of child? (1-5)</b>	2	5 compared to other fathers; lower # compared to wife.	For 2 hours a day, 4-5; for the rest, 2-3.	2 during the work week; 4-5 on weekends	2.5-3	4	4 or 5	3 or 4 (higher compared to other fathers, lower compared to wife)	5 ("My wife would say 4")	2 – time wise 4 - contributions and in relation to other fathers)
<b>Self-rating as a father (1-5)</b>	3-5; 4 most of the time	5	not asked	not asked	4	4	4	3 or 4	3	2 to 3

## Appendix C

### Fatherhood Study: Comparison to Ladge’s Study on Motherhood

	<b>Ladge’s Study on Motherhood (2008)</b>	<b>Ladge &amp; Harrington: Study on Fatherhood</b>
<b>Target population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working mothers in professional/managerial roles</li> <li>• Minimum of 5 years work experience</li> <li>• Following the birth of the first child had taken a 2-3 month maternity leave</li> <li>• Had returned to work on a full-time basis</li> <li>• Age group 29-44</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working fathers in professional /managerial roles</li> <li>• Minimum of 5 years work experience</li> <li>• Following the birth of the first child</li> <li>• Working on a full-time basis</li> <li>• Age group 27-44</li> </ul>
<b>Focus of the study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studying individual and organizational dimensions</li> <li>• Individual: Identity and Efficacy Issues</li> <li>• Organizational: Formal and Informal support mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as Ladge study</li> </ul>
<b>Methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative, interview-based (semi-structured)</li> <li>• Snowball sample</li> <li>• 40 participants</li> <li>• Inductive process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as Ladge Study for pilot of 5-10 interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory Building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory Building</li> </ul>