

The New Dad

Exploring Fatherhood within a Career Context



Just in time for Father's Day, a new study focusing on the complex and changing role of fathers in the modern American family will be released by the Boston College Center for Work & Family on June 18, 2010. This qualitative study of first-time fathers—**The New Dad: Exploring Fatherhood within a Career Context**—lends supporting data to some existing notions of fatherhood and reveals possible new future trends in the work-family conversation.

The year-long study, conducted by BC Center for Work & Family researchers, focuses on both the career and paternal identities of new fathers; how the two integrate, conflict, and enrich one another. Spearheaded by Executive Director Professor Brad Harrington and Senior Research Associate Fred Van Deusen, this study builds on data from a previous qualitative 2007 study of first-time mothers with careers (by Professor Jamie Ladge of Northeastern University).

There are significant data points that influence work-life issues for first-time fathers. According to current statistics, in the U.S. today women make up 50% of the workforce (The Shriver Report, 2009) and dual-career couples comprise over 70% of two parent households with children (Bianchi, 2008). In addition, in recent years 185 women have graduated from college for every 100 men who have done so. (David Brooks, *New York Times*). Given the sharp rise in women's advancement in education and the impact this has on dual-career couples and their earning potential, women will be less likely to play the role of the "accommodating spouse" as it pertains to child-rearing duties. The implication for fathers is that the "traditional roles" of fatherhood no longer exist. New fathers are looking to their peers as role models on how to navigate within this new paradigm.

Research Highlights

- The research concludes that today's fathers do not equate being a good father with the role of "the breadwinner", as traditional models suggest. The theme of "being there, being present, spending time, being accessible" was oft repeated.
- An overwhelming percentage of fathers in the study confirmed that perceptions of them at work increased in a positive way, and the level of commitment to their job was never at question (as it is with women). In fact, many fathers reported feeling that their new role as parents had enhanced their reputation, credibility, and even career options.
- Although fathers generally felt supported at work, there was also evidence that the workplace does not expect fathers to reduce their workload or career aspirations to take into account their new responsibilities outside of work, and many fathers are doing just that.
- Although new fathers felt supported by their bosses regarding work-life flexibility, most did not arrange formal flexible work arrangements (as new mothers often do), but instead balanced work-life issues informally.

Implications for workplaces include recognizing that fathers, as well as mothers, are challenged by the need to balance their work and home lives. Organizations can support parents in their workforce by understanding that mothers and fathers desire and can benefit from flexible work arrangements, parental leave and other parenting supports.

This new study provides a richer understanding of the struggle of fathers to embrace their roles as breadwinner and caregiver. To obtain a copy of the completed study, please contact Jennifer Fraone at 617-552-2862 or Jennifer.fraone.1@bc.edu.

About The Boston College Center for Work and Family

Boston College Center for Work & Family is a global leader in helping organizations create effective workplaces that support and develop healthy and productive employees. With over 100 corporate partners worldwide, the Center links the academic community to leaders in employment settings who are committed to promoting workforce effectiveness.

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Professor Brad Harrington, Executive Director of the Center for Work & Family, is available to interview on the following topics:

- Fatherhood and the Changing Role of Men
- Career Management and Work-Life Integration
- Women and the Workplace
- Contemporary Workforce Management Strategies
- Leading Organizational Change

About Professor Brad Harrington

Executive Director of the Center for Work & Family

Associate Professor of Organization Studies, Carroll School of Management, Boston College

B.A., Administration, Stonehill College

M.A., Psychology, Boston College

Ph.D., Human Resource Development and Organization Development, Boston University

Prior to joining Boston College, Professor Harrington served as an executive with Hewlett-Packard Company for twenty years. He served in a wide range of worldwide leadership assignments. His roles included Global Director of Management and Organization Development, Chief Quality Officer and Member of the Executive Committee for HP's Medical Products Business, Quality Director for Hewlett-Packard United Kingdom, Ltd., as well as a number of division human resource management positions. Professor Harrington began his career in the public sector as a counselor in Department of Labor job training programs. He has consulted with many major corporations in the areas of strategic planning, organizational change, and innovative human resource strategies.

Professor Harrington is a frequent keynote speaker at professional conferences and has published numerous journal articles and book chapters. He is the co-author of **Career Management and Work/Life Integration: Using Self-Assessment to Navigate Contemporary Careers**, and has been named one of the "10 Most Influential Men in the Work-Life Field" by a national Work-Life publication. He also serves on the advisory board of the International Centre of Work and Family at IESE Business School in Barcelona, Spain.

Professor Harrington successfully balances his own work-life challenges with his wife, Dr. Anne Soisson, a Senior Faculty Development Specialist at Tufts University. They are the parents of three children, Maggie, Hannah, and Dillon.

Access a full bio at www2.bc.edu/~harrinb.