THE NEW DAD:

Caring, Committed and Conflicted

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WORK & FAMILY

The authors would like to dedicate this study to our spouses:
Annie Soisson, Alice Van Deusen, and Andy Humberd,
who have always supported us in our efforts
to integrate work and family.

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Back when I was a child

Before life removed all the innocence

My father would lift me high

And dance with my mother and me and then

Spin me around till I fell asleep

Then up the stairs he would carry me

And I knew for sure

I was loved

– From *Dance with My Father*
by Luther Vandross

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Introduction

The April 25th, 2011 cover of ***Newsweek*** magazine featured a picture of a man laying face down in a business suit, washed up on a beach, holding a briefcase. The headline read: *Epidemic Alert! The Beached White Male*. The magazine's lead article was called *Dead Suit Walking: If This Isn't the Great Depression, It's the Great Humbling. Can Manhood Survive the Lost Decade?* It explored the situation for today's white American male. Traditionally a place of privilege, the authors portrayed middle-aged men as an endangered species with few job prospects, intractable unemployment, and a host of psychological challenges (graphically displayed on the image of a sad-faced, suited male with the caption "Sorry, He's Toast"). This cover story appeared less than a year after ***The Atlantic*** ran a cover story by Hannah Rosin "The End of Men" which garnered tremendous attention in painting much the same picture of men's demise from power and their grim prospects in the workplace.

At the same time as "The End of Men" was portraying a gloomy portrait of men and their prospects, the Boston College Center for Work & Family published the results of our own study, *The New Dad: Exploring Fatherhood in a Career Context* (June 2010). This research was based on a set of in-depth interviews with new fathers. In the introduction to our report, we echoed many of the same statistics that Rosin and others had cited to illustrate a decline in the power base of men:

- **Over the past three decades, women have experienced tremendous success in education.** This is strongly evidenced by their performance in higher education where, in the United States today, women earn 62% of the associate's degrees, 57% of the bachelor's degrees, and 60% of the master's degrees awarded each year. In addition, approximately 50% of professional degrees and nearly 50% of PhD's are now given to women. This compares to 1970, when women earned fewer than 10% of professional degrees & PhD's in the United States (Mason, 2009).

- **Women, for the first time, now make up slightly more than 50% of the US workforce.** This is due in part to the highly unequal impact of the recession of 2008-2010 on men, who lost more than 70% of the 8 million total jobs lost in the US (due in great measure to the typically male-dominated industries that were most affected by the recession – housing, construction, automotive, and financial services). By contrast, service industries and education, sectors where women have a stronger presence, were less adversely impacted by the recession. In addition, as we look to the future, of the 15 jobs projected to have the greatest growth rate in the next decade, 12 are dominated by women (Boushey, 2009).

- According to the National Study of the Changing Workforce, for the first time since 1992, **young women and young men do not differ in terms of their desire for jobs with greater responsibility** (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008). As a result, young women may be less prone to be the "accommodating spouse" in two-career couples, placing their career aspirations second to that of their male spouses.

- The changes in family structure in the United States over the past 35 years have been profound. While we have seen a dramatic increase in a number of types of families, **the greatest single change has been the drastic decrease in the "traditional family"** consisting of two parents where one works and the other stays at home to care for the children and perform domestic tasks. Today, the percentage of "traditional families" in the United States has slipped from more than 45% in 1975, to just over 20%, a decrease of well over half. This family structure has been replaced mainly by dual-career couples and single parent heads-of-household where the single parent is employed. (Boushey & O'Leary, 2009).

- Finally, we have the somewhat startling finding from the National Study of the Changing Workforce (Galinsky, Aumann, and Bond, 2008) that **fathers in dual-earner couples feel significantly greater work-life conflict than mothers**, and this level of conflict has risen steadily and relatively rapidly.

Figure 1: Fathers Now Experience More Work-Life Conflict Than Mothers

(National Study of the Changing Workforce by Galinsky, Aumann, and Bond, 2008)

After speaking to the new fathers in our qualitative study, we did not come to the conclusion that these trends heralded the end of men or dead suits walking. Quite to the contrary, as we wrote in the Huffington Post, June 16, 2010 (Harrington, 2010), we concluded that:

> *In homes across America, fathers are launching a quiet revolution...while the changing face of fatherhood has its seeds in the shifting and uncertain economic fate of men, it is equally born of a new, growing spirit of determination among young men to fully embrace their roles as fathers.*

We went on to say, based on our interviews that:

> *Young fathers today know that they will have working wives. Their wives are likely to be at least as well if not better educated, just as ambitious as they are, and make more money than they do. More importantly, these men feel that being a father is not about being a hands-off economic provider. It's about paying attention, nurturing, listening, mentoring, coaching, and most of all, being present. It's also about changing diapers, making dinner, doing drop-offs and pick-ups, and housecleaning. And if that seems as if we are redefining dad, that's correct, with one small exception. We're not doing the redefining, the dads are.*

As always, there is likely some truth in both sides of the explanation of what is happening with men and fathers in America today. But as a research center, our goal was not to paint a rosy picture of working fathers wanting nothing more than equality with their partners and a chance to pick up their share of domestic tasks. Nor were we inclined to suggest that all fathers feel that caregiving outweighs their role as breadwinners in terms of how they define themselves as fathers. Rather what we hoped to portray was what we observed as a growing spirit among new dads to be accepted, both at home and in the workplace as whole persons.

This report presents the results of the second phase of our research on fatherhood, a survey completed by nearly 1000 fathers who are "white collar workers" in large corporations. In this follow-up study we set out to gather a more complete picture from a much larger number and range of fathers, not just new dads, but also those who are still experiencing active caregiving with children at home up to age 18. Most of these men are living with working wives/partners. This report presents a portrait of fathers who strive for professional growth in the workplace as they also strive for equality in their home life, although they openly admit they have not yet achieved it.

This report illustrates the desire of today's fathers to do meaningful work and live meaningful lives, to be effective as both workers and caregivers. As we report in detail in the following pages, this is clearly a work in progress for today's fathers. Nonetheless, it appears to us to be more a period of transition than one of demise or maintaining the status quo. As men transition from a narrow definition of fatherhood to one that embraces career and family, we feel that the term "beginning" may be a more fitting characterization than "end."

Exploring Fathers' Roles as Workers and Caregivers

The trends highlighted in the Introduction to this report have had a significant influence on today's working fathers. Fathers share the role of financial breadwinner more and more with their spouses or partners and are taking on a larger and more diverse role in parenting and caregiving. As a result, their expectations for their work environments are changing to align with their increased desires to provide care. Fathers want their companies to better support their needs, and employers are working to adjust to these new expectations.

In this report, we explore the roles of worker and caregiver from the perspective of the fathers who participated in this study. We examine the two roles independently, and also how they intersect. We explore fathers' roles in relationship to their spouses/partners. Then, we examine the efforts that companies are making to support the fathers as they work to combine these two important roles. Finally, in light of our findings, we conclude with some recommendations, both for companies and for fathers themselves.

Description of the Study

Our findings are based on a national survey we conducted of 963 working fathers with at least one child age 18 or younger, who work for one of four Fortune 500 companies that agreed to administer the study within their organizations. The four companies are all large and have revenues ranging from $20-50 billion per year. All are members of our Boston College National Work & Family Roundtable.

The companies differed in terms of their core products and services. They included:

- an outsourcing services provider
- a pharmaceutical company
- a global security company
- a transportation/logistics company

Some important demographics of our sample include:

- This is almost exclusively a "white collar" sample: 60% of respondents were managers, 37% salaried professionals, and only 3% were paid hourly. All worked full-time.
- 87% of the fathers held at least an associate's degree, 77% at least a bachelor's degree and 35% held a master's degree or higher.
- 76% of the fathers earned more than $75,000 per year and 44% earned over $100,000.
- 91% of the fathers identified themselves as either married or living with a partner. Of those, 69% had a partner who was working.
- The average age of the fathers was 42.6 with a range from 25-65.
- In terms of race and ethnicity, our sample roughly mirrored the US male population in professional and managerial jobs. 81% of the fathers self-identified as White, 7% Black, 5% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 1% Native American.
- 79% of the fathers have worked for their employer for at least 6 years, and over 50% for more than 11 years.

The survey was completed on-line by these fathers, who answered a series of questions relating to their work and family lives. (See Appendix A and B for further details on the sample demographics and our study methodology).

Fathers as Workers

KEY FINDINGS:

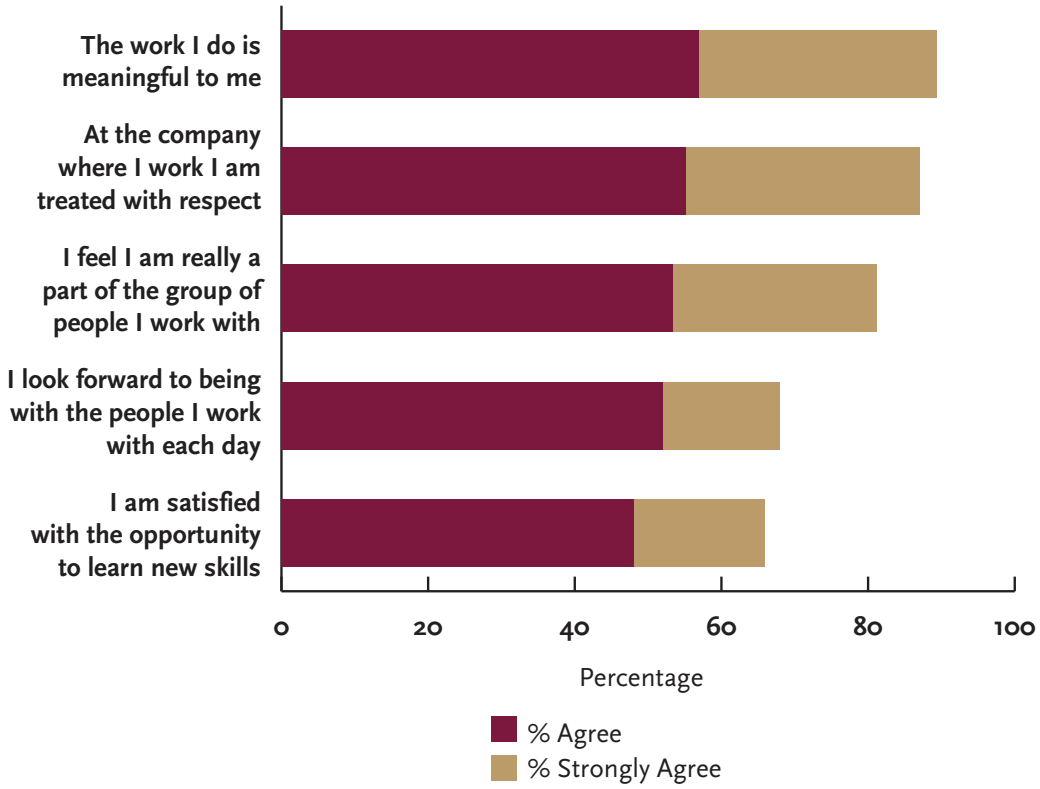
- The fathers we studied have a strong desire for career advancement.
- Job security was rated as the most important job characteristic by fathers.

We begin by considering the role of fathers as workers, and examine how they feel about their jobs and their careers. We asked the fathers about their work to better understand their level of job and career satisfaction, their desire to advance, the pressures they face, and how important their careers are to their overall identities. The fathers were presented with a series of statements and were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement (on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). The charts in this section highlight the percentages that agreed or strongly agreed with the accompanying statement.

Job Satisfaction

From the nearly 1000 fathers in the sample, we can make a number of assertions. By and large, these fathers were satisfied with their work. Nearly 90% of the fathers in the study agreed/strongly agreed with the statement "the work I do is meaningful to me." Approximately 3% disagreed with this statement and 7% were neutral.

Chart 1: Job Satisfaction



Generally, the fathers had a quite positive view of their employing organizations. 87% agreed/strongly agreed that they were treated with respect in their workplace, and 81% felt they were really a part of the group that they work with.

While most fathers were happy with their careers and desired to advance, only 16% said that most of their interests were centered on work.

Overall, this group of fathers was willing to invest a lot of time and effort into their work.

- Approximately two-thirds worked over 45 hours per week.
- Nearly 20% worked 55 hours or more per week.
- 84% of respondents said they were willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected to help their organizations succeed.

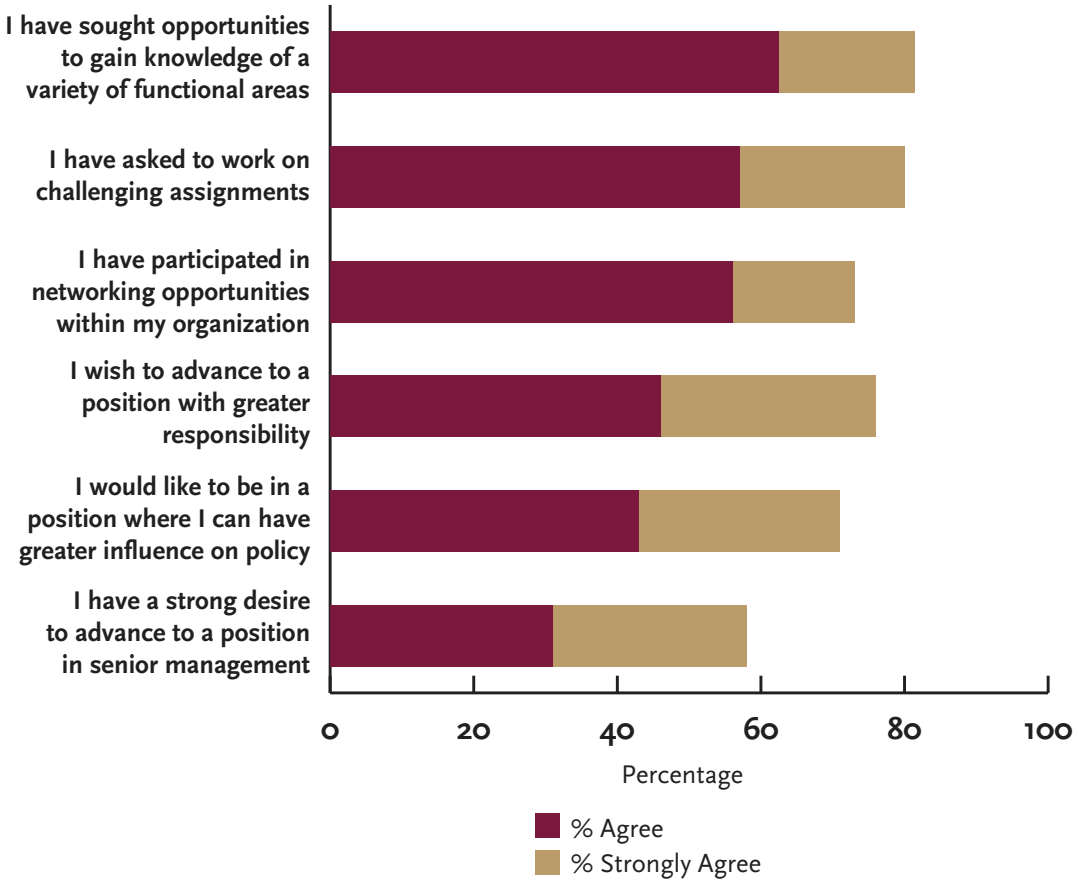
Of course, not all was positive when it came to fathers' perceptions of and relationship to their jobs.

- Job pressures were high for many of the fathers: 53% agreed/strongly agreed they were constantly working against the pressure of time.
- Although 73% planned to stay in their job for some time, more than 16% often think about quitting.

Career Aspirations and Satisfaction

Most of the fathers were satisfied with the opportunities they had been given to learn new skills in their careers. It was also clear that these fathers have invested a good deal in advancing these career objectives. Nearly 80% stated that they had asked to work on challenging assignments and 82% reported that they had sought opportunities to increase their knowledge of a variety of functional areas.

Chart 2: Career Aspirations



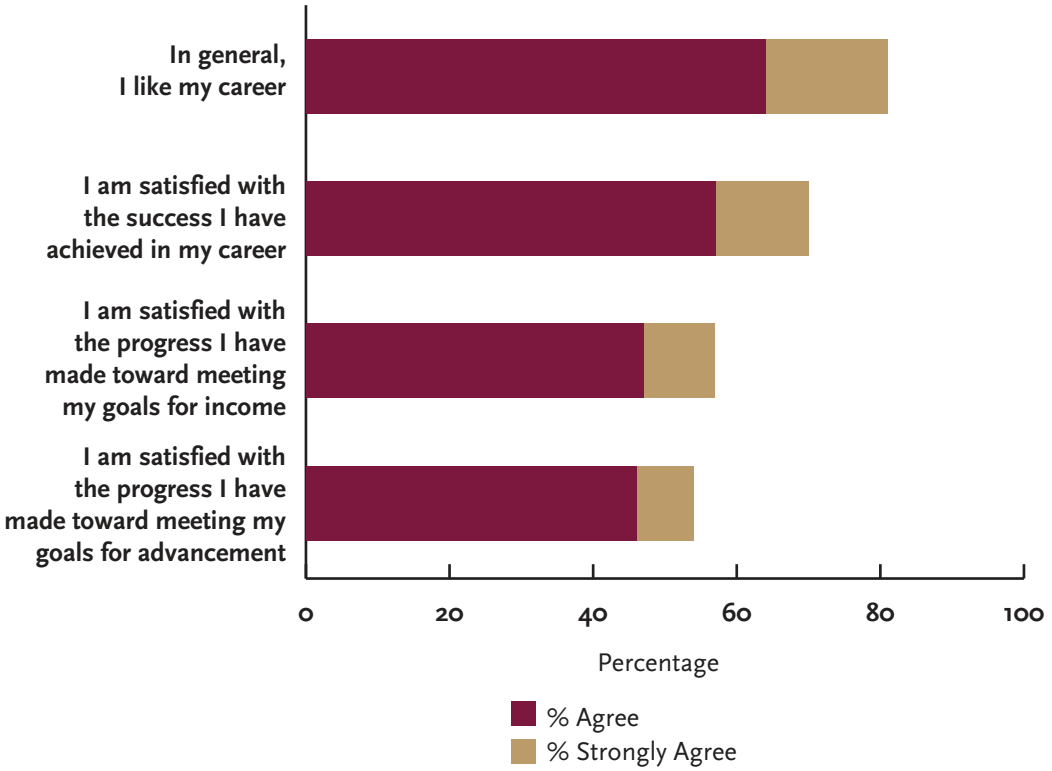
The fathers had strong aspirations to advance in their careers:

- 76% of respondents wished to advance to a position with greater responsibility
- 58% of respondents had a strong desire to be in senior management.

We found this strong desire to advance to be a noteworthy finding from our study, particularly when we juxtaposed it with the fathers' equally strong desire to be involved at home in caregiving, a finding that we discuss in subsequent sections of the report.

The fathers in the study also tended to be happy with their careers. More than 80% said that they liked their careers, and more than 70% agreed/strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the success that have achieved in their careers.

Chart 3: Career Satisfaction



In spite of their high aspirations and degree of satisfaction with their careers, most fathers did not view their work as the center of their existence:

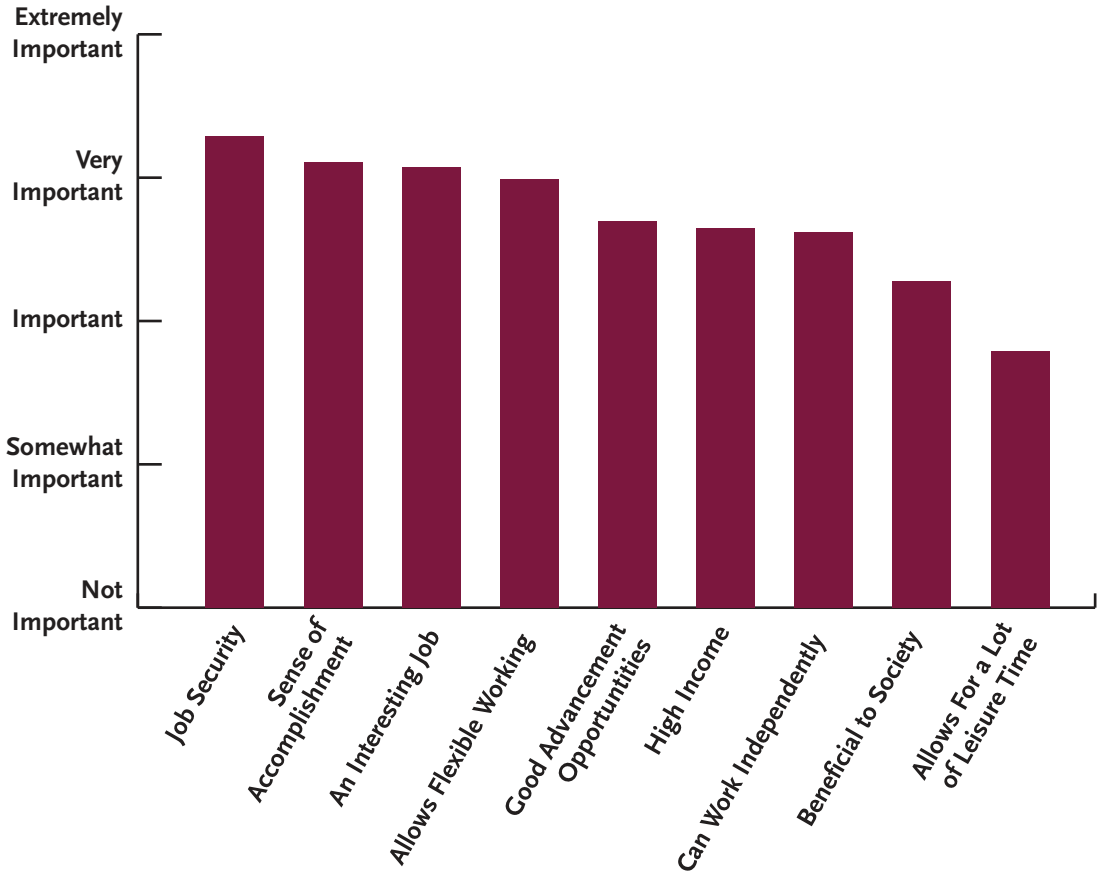
- Two-thirds of survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement "To me, my work is **only a small part** of who I am".
- Only 16% of respondents supported the statement that "most of my interests are centered on work."

Based on the above findings, to characterize this sample of fathers as workers overall, we seem to have a group of fathers who like what they do and who find meaning in their work. They invest in developing the skills and relationships that will help them succeed, and many aspire to roles in senior management. That said, these fathers are not solely "career-centric". They want to have lives beyond their work.

Importance of Various Job Characteristics

To understand more deeply what these fathers desire from their work, we asked respondents to rate the importance of various job characteristics on a 1 to 5 scale from not important to extremely important. As Chart 4 shows, job security was rated as the most important job characteristic for fathers, which is not something we fully expected and likely a sign of the unstable economic times.

Chart 4: Average Importance of Various Job Characteristics



A full 97% of the sample listed job security as ranging between important and extremely important with nearly 50% listing it as extremely important. In light of the massive downsizing that has occurred over the last two decades, and especially in the last two years, the high premium placed on job security may not be surprising. However, it does demonstrate the tremendous importance fathers place on job security. It may also suggest that companies that still try to maintain job security, seemingly a somewhat outdated idea in recent times (Uchitelle, 2006), are likely addressing the value that fathers care most deeply about. Similarly when asked to define what work should primarily be about, the highest scoring answer was "making a living and realizing financial security."

Job security and a job that allows flexible working were rated more important than good advancement opportunities and high income.

Also noteworthy is the high importance placed on flexible work arrangements by this group, even higher than good advancement opportunities and high income. This is somewhat surprising, and demonstrates how important various types of flexible working opportunities are to the fathers we studied. (For additional information on flexible work arrangements, see the section of this report entitled "Company Response to the Changing Roles of Fathers").

Finally, when asked to think of an ideal image of work, respondents emphasized the following images: the close camaraderie felt by a really close group or family; someone with a focused highly developed

skill set in a given area (a craftsman, scientist, or surgeon); and someone who is changing the world for the better.

Overall, we see that secure, meaningful work performed in a highly professional fashion with close colleagues constitutes an ideal work situation in the eyes of the fathers in this study.

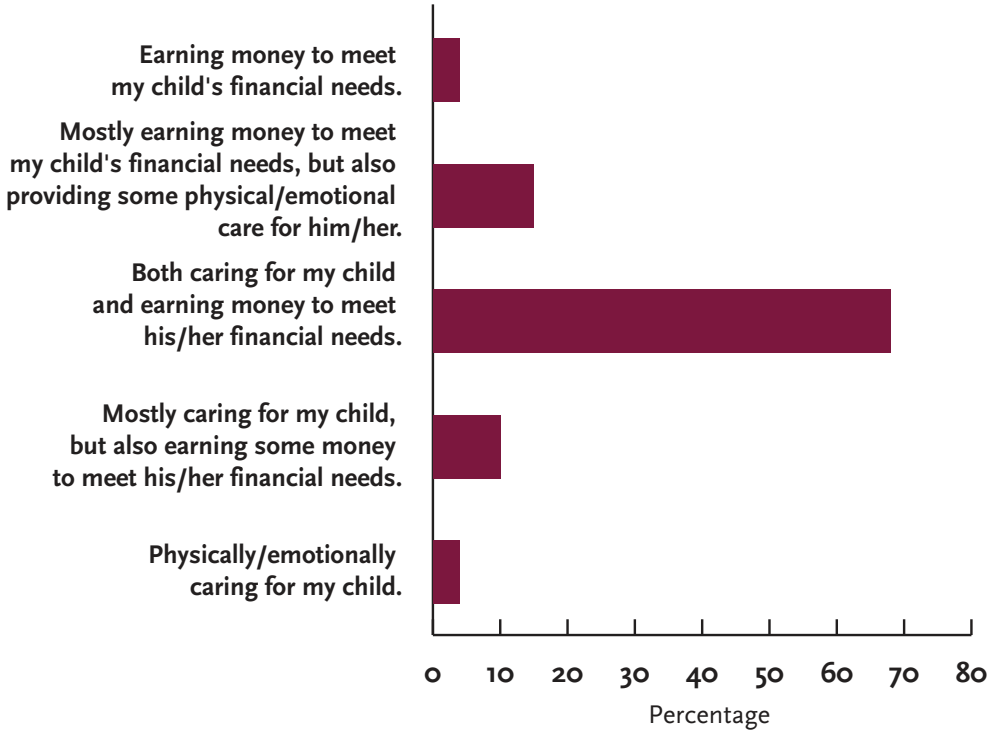
Fathers as Caregivers

KEY FINDINGS:

- Fathers who spend more time with their children report having more confidence as parents.
- Few fathers took more than two weeks off after the birth of a child.

We now shift gears to look at the fathers' "other" role: caregiver. In the first phase of our work (*The New Dad* study, 2010), we concluded that new fathers do not see their roles as fathers as being solely, or even primarily about, being the financial breadwinner. While supporting their families financially was important, other caregiving responsibilities were seen as equally, if not more important in defining what it means to be a good father. To further explore this assertion with a larger sample of fathers, we asked "Which of the following statements most accurately describes how you see your responsibility to your children?"

Chart 5: How Fathers See Their Responsibilities to Their Children



As depicted in the chart, a significant majority of the fathers see their responsibilities to their children as both caring for them *and* earning money to support them, suggesting that traditional breadwinning responsibilities are combined with caregiving responsibilities in the images of what it means to be a father today. Analyzing these perceived responsibilities of fatherhood further, we found that:

- The further away fathers were from traditional breadwinning definitions of fatherhood (and thus closer to purely caregiving images of fatherhood), the greater confidence they have as parents and the more hours they report spending with their children on a typical working day.
- On average, fathers over the age of 40 were slightly more likely to see their responsibilities as fathers in a traditional breadwinning sense than those under the age of 40.

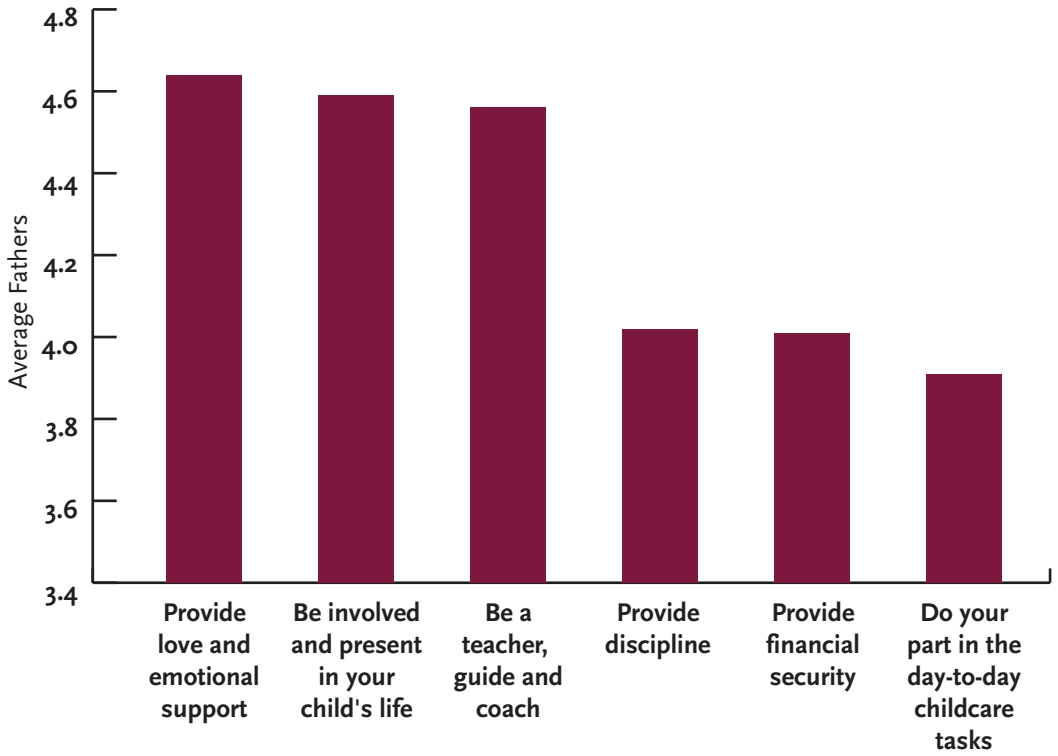
In the following sections, we explore these definitions of fathering in more detail, as well as other important aspects of these fathers' lives from the perspective of their role as caregivers.

Interestingly, "do your part in the day-to-day childcare tasks" was the lowest rated attribute of being a good father.

Definition of "Good Father"

To understand more fully how these fathers define good fathering, we asked "What are the most important aspects of being a GOOD FATHER?" Their answers were on a one to five scale where five is "extremely important", four is "very important", down to one is "not important". The chart below shows the average score of each of the six attributes.

Chart 6: Six Aspects of Being a Good Father



The three attributes "Provide love and emotional support", "Be involved and present in your child's life", and "Be a teacher guide and coach" were rated by fathers as higher in importance than the other three attributes "Provide discipline", "Provide financial security", and "Do your part in the day-to-day childcare tasks". This similarly highlights the importance of more "non-traditional" images of fathering (love, emotional support, being present, teaching, guiding, coaching). However, interestingly, the actual day-to-day tasks associated with caring for children was the lowest rated aspect of good fathering, thus highlighting that fathers' desires to be present for their children may not carry through their day-to-day involvement in caregiving tasks. This suggests that the fathers' definition of caregiving may differ from that of their spouses/partners.

Only 1 in 20 fathers took more than two weeks off after their most recent child was born, and 1 in 100 took more than 4 weeks off.

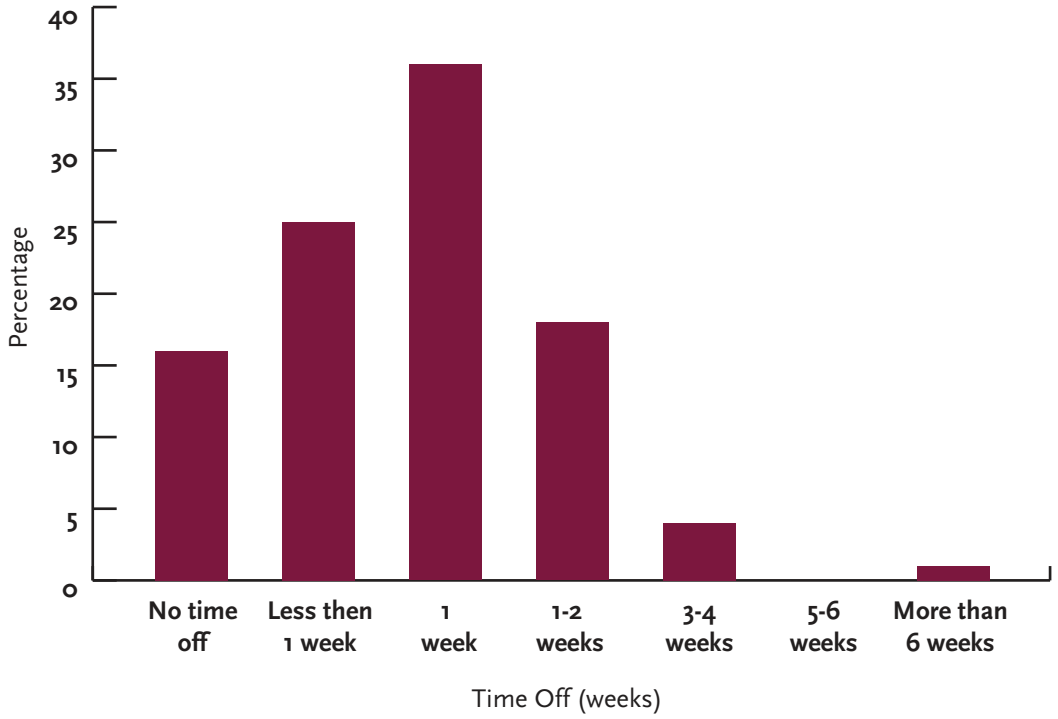
In another question, we asked the fathers to prioritize these same six attributes, forcing them to rank them one through six. When asked in this manner, "Provide financial security" moved up to a higher priority in fathers' collective rankings, although it was still a lower priority than "Provide love and emotional support" and "Be involved and present in your child's life". Interestingly, when forced to rank amongst other aspects, nearly an even number of fathers ranked "Provide financial security" in each of the six priority positions, suggesting that there is a wide range of perceptions about how truly important financial support is, in a relative sense, in the definition of a "good father".

Time Off After Childbirth/Adoption

Another key finding from our first phase study was that new fathers reported that they rarely took significant time off from work when their child was born. Perhaps due to lack of available paternity leave or well entrenched gender stereotypes, in our initial study, only one father took more than two weeks off to be home with his newborn.

Not surprisingly, our survey findings reflect a similar pattern with a broader sample of fathers.

Chart 7: Time Off After Most Recent Birth/Adoption



As Chart 7 illustrates, more than three-quarters of our sample took off one week or less and 16% did not take any time off at all following the birth of their most recent child. While government and corporate policies (or lack of policies) often make if difficult and financially challenging for fathers to spend any significant time off with their newborn children, it is nonetheless a clear opportunity missed for the fathers to spend time bonding with their new offspring and caring for their needs. As a result, fathers do not experience the immersion in parenting that most women do (who take approximately six to twelve weeks off in the companies included in this study).

Despite its short duration, over 92% of respondents' who took time off reported having a positive experience in that time with their children. More than 75% of the fathers stated that they would like to have had more time off with their new children, which speaks to their desire to be more involved in caregiving. These desires might also suggest that fathers recognize the importance of bonding at the earliest stages of their children's lives.

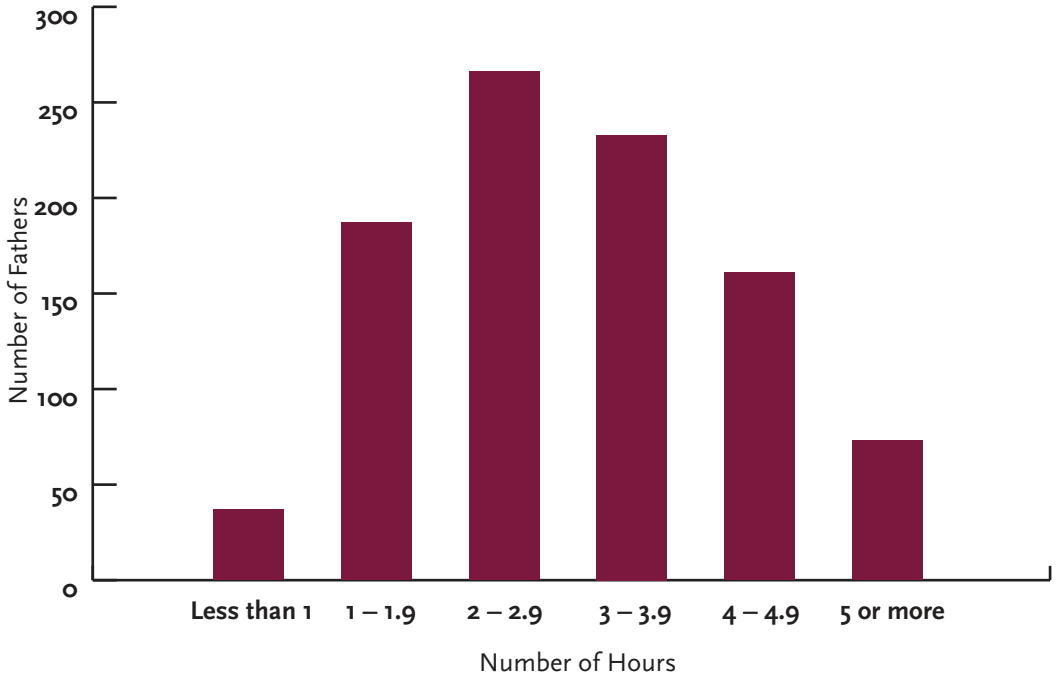
Further, we found that fathers made few, if any, adjustments to their work after the birth of their children. Virtually all of the fathers (98%) returned to the same jobs (which is not surprising given their time off much more closely resembled a vacation than a leave). 96% of fathers said their supervisors' expectations of them in their work role stayed the same after the birth of their children, and 3% said their supervisors' expectations actually increased after the birth of their children. Only 6% of fathers reported that they negotiated a formal flexible work arrangement after the birth of their children.

Collectively, these findings highlight a noteworthy gap between what fathers desire, and what they seem able to do to adjust their work lives after their children are born, both in an immediate sense (e.g., through taking leave) and an ongoing sense (e.g., through using flexible work arrangements).

Hours Spent with Children and Confidence as a Parent

Participants in our study stated that on a "typical working day", they spent an average of 2.65 hours interacting with their children[1] (see Chart 8). The range of the 963 responses was from 0 hours per day (21 fathers) up to 8 or more hours per day (7 fathers). When asked if they would like to spend more time interacting with their children on a typical work day, 77% of the fathers reported that they would. 22% were satisfied with the amount of time they spent with their children and only 1% would like to spend less time. This again seems to reflect the fathers' overall desire to be more involved with their children.

Chart 8: Fathers' Hours Spent Interacting with Children on a Typical Working Day



Although most of the fathers wanted to spend more time with their children, in general the fathers in our study expressed a great deal of confidence in their role as parents as evidenced by the responses below.

- 90% of respondents said that they were confident in their ability as parents.
- 93% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they were proud of what they do (for their children) as parents.
- 93% of respondents also agreed that with the statement that "Sacrificing for my children is part of parenthood".
- 94% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed "If I were considering taking a new job, I would consider how much that job would interfere with my ability to care for my children", with fathers under 40 even more committed to this than those 40 and above. Less than 2% disagreed with this statement overall.

[1]We did not ask about the number of hours spent in caregiving activities (e. g. feeding, bathing, changing, etc.) When the question is asked this way, the number of hours reported as "time spent interacting with children" on a workday is generally lower.

In our Phase 1 study, virtually none of the fathers had seriously considered being stay-at-home fathers. By contrast, in this study we were surprised that when given the statement "If my spouse/partner made enough money for our family to live on comfortably, I would feel okay if I didn't work outside the home", 37% of fathers agreed and 16% of fathers strongly agreed - more than 53% in all. It appears that more fathers would consider being stay-at-home dads than our previous research had suggested.

Considered together, we found a direct relationship between the amount of time fathers spend with their children and their confidence as parents: that is, the more time fathers spent with their children on a typical working day, the more confident they were as parents. This relationship highlights that as fathers desire to be more involved and capable in their role as parents, it is important that they are able to spend substantial time with their children.

Combining the Roles of Worker and Caregiver

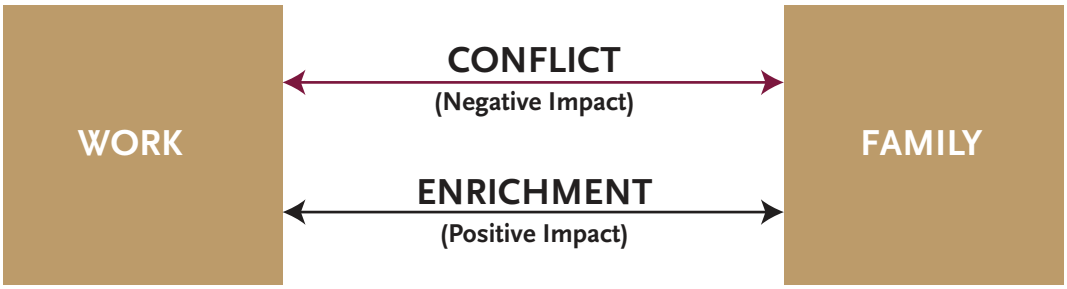
KEY FINDING:

- Fathers reported that work caused more conflict with family life than family life caused conflict with work.

Having reported on the findings of our study from the perspectives of fathers as workers and as caregivers independently, we moved on to examine in more detail how these roles intersect, focusing in particular on how fathers in our study experience the relationship between work and family.

Researchers have long studied the conflict between work and family; that is, in what ways are the role pressures from the work and family domains incompatible leading to potentially negative outcomes in one sphere or both. More recently, research has been expanded to study enrichment between work and family; that is, in what ways do the roles of work and family enhance one another. A simple pictorial representation for these relationships is shown below. Conflict and enrichment can both go in either direction. Work can impact family life either negatively (conflict) or positively (enrichment) and similarly family life can have an impact on work either negatively or positively.

Figure 2: Work/Family Conflict and Enrichment



Conflict

From our results, it is clear that the degree of work-to-family conflict (i.e. work adversely impacting family life) experienced by fathers in our study was higher than their reported levels of family-to-work conflict (i.e. family responsibilities adversely impacting work).

- 57% of respondents AGREED or strongly agreed with the statement "In the past three months, I have not been able to get everything done at home each day because of my job" (work-to-family conflict).
- 65% of respondents DISAGREED or strongly disagreed with the statement "In the past three months, my family or personal life has kept me from doing as good a job at work as I could" (family-to-work conflict).

In order to delve more deeply into this conflict between work and family, we asked fathers to report how often they experienced interruptions of their time at work to deal with family matters, and vice versa. Fathers reported that interruptions occurred in both directions, but similar to the conflict reported above, the family domain seemed more likely to suffer.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Quite Often	Very Often
How often do you interrupt your time at home or away from the workplace outside "official" work hours to address work-related issues?	2%	26%	43%	21%	8%
How often do you interrupt your time at work to address family-related issues?	2%	40%	52%	6%	<1%

It is clear from the above responses that while interruptions occurred in both directions, fathers' time at home was more than four times as likely to be interrupted quite often or very often by work than fathers' time at work was interrupted by family matters.

More specifically, as illustrated by the questions in the table below, fathers reported that time spent with their children was much more likely to get interrupted (by work-related matters), than time with managers was likely to get interrupted (by family-related matters).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Quite Often	Very Often
How often do you interrupt your time with your children to address work-related issues?	7%	32%	42%	13%	6%
How often do you interrupt time with your manager or supervisor to address family-related issues?	35%	54%	10%	1%	0.1%

Enrichment

When past research has considered the relationship between work and family, it has tended to predominantly focus on the way one sphere conflicts with the other. In contrast to this "zero-sum game" view, it can also be useful to explore whether and how work and family may enrich one another. We wanted to determine if experiences at work are viewed as useful in parenting, and experiences as a parent are viewed as helpful at work. Based on existing research on enrichment, we included questions in our study related to work-to-family and family-to-work enrichment. Looking first at work-to-family enrichment:

- 50% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that their involvement at work helped them to understand different viewpoints, which helped them to be a better family member. 29% were neutral and 21% disagreed/strongly disagreed.
- 52% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that work helped them acquire skills and this helped them be a better family member.
- 60% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that work provided them with a sense of success and this helped them be a better family member.
- The respondents were less positive about work making them feel happy which helped them be a better family member. 29% agreed/strongly agreed, 38% were neutral, and 33% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Family-to-work enrichment was somewhat stronger:

- 64% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that involvement in their family helped them gain knowledge that made them a better worker.
- 61% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that family life encouraged them to use their time in a focused manner and that helped them be a better worker.
- The fathers were significantly more positive about the transfer of happiness from family-to-work than from work-to-family. 82% agreed/strongly agreed that family life made them feel happy and that helped them be a better worker.

Fathers and Their Partners

KEY FINDING:

- While fathers believe that caregiving should be divided equally, they acknowledge that this is not the current reality in their families.

The majority of fathers in the study were married (88%) or living with a partner (3%). The fathers and the spouses/partners had fairly similar levels of education, with the fathers having a higher percentage of Master's degrees and a lower percentage that stopped with a High school diploma. 31% of their spouses/partners did not work outside of the home, 26% of their spouse/partners worked part-time and 43% of their spouses/partners worked full-time. Spouses/partners who worked averaged 35 working hours per week. In terms of actual hours worked, in most cases the fathers were working significantly more hours than their spouses/partners. The charts that follow compare education levels, hours worked and income for the fathers and their spouses/partners.

26% of spouse/partners worked part-time; 0.2% of fathers in our study worked part-time.

Chart 9: Comparison of Highest Education Levels for Father and Spouse/Partner

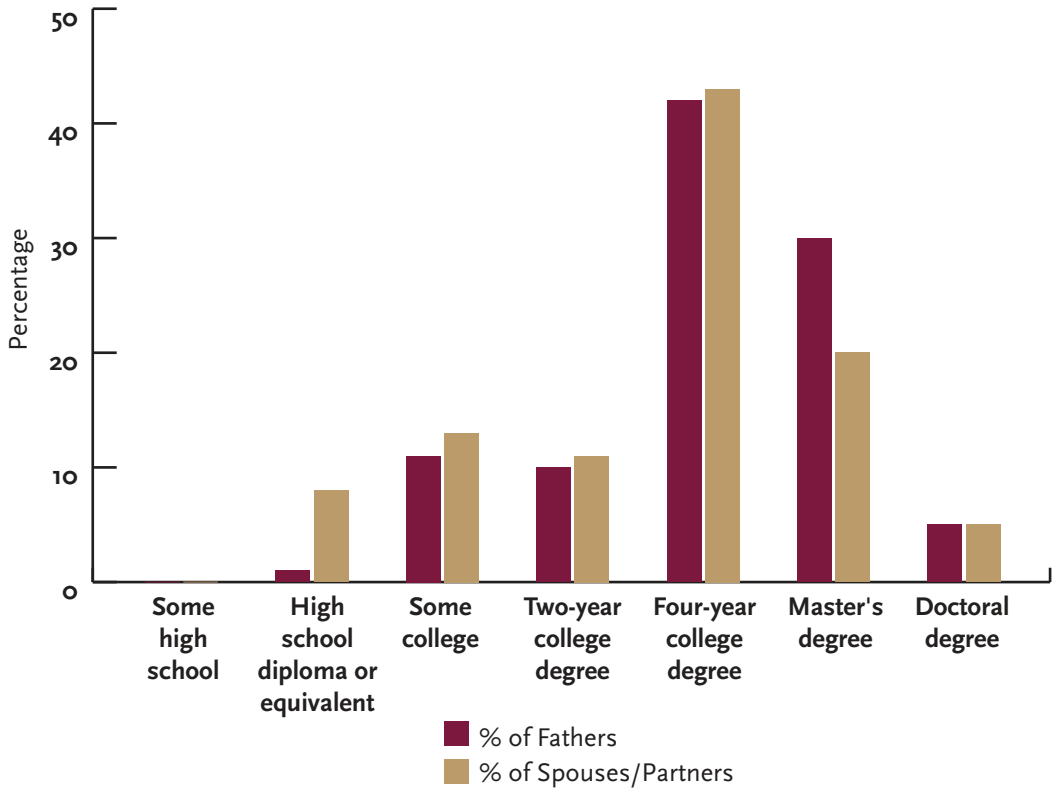


Chart 10: Comparison of Typical Workweek Hours for Fathers and Working Spouses/Partners

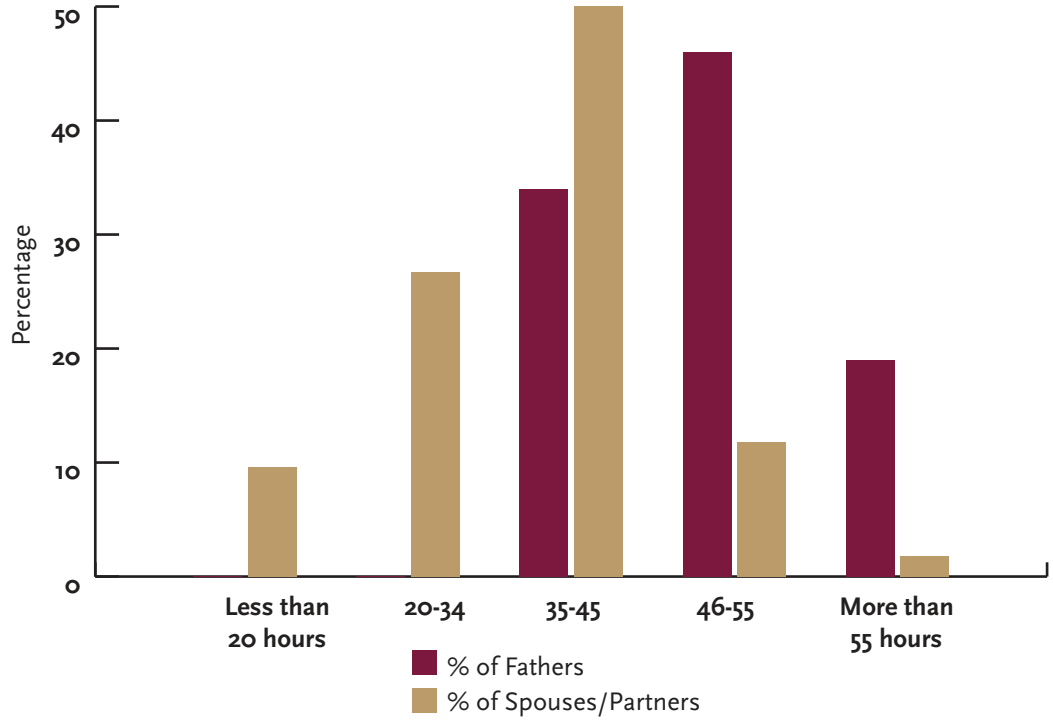
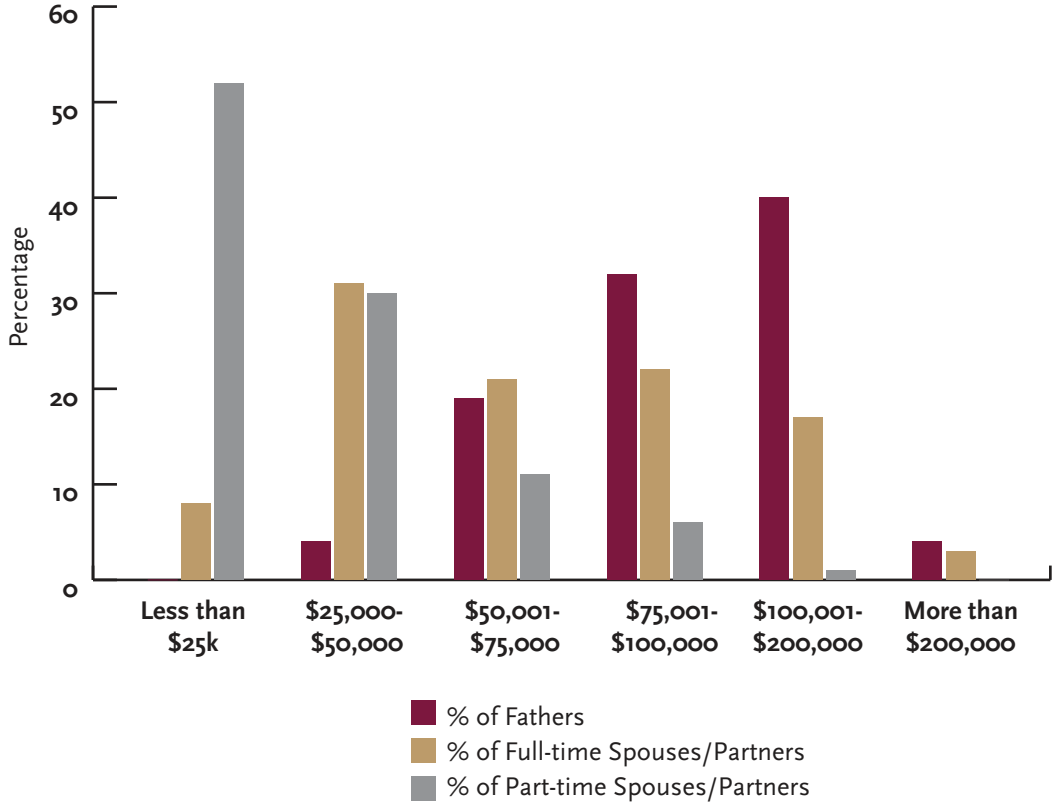


Chart 11: Comparison of Annual Income Levels for Fathers, Full-time and Part-time Spouses



In general the spouses/partners earned significantly less than the fathers in our study. The median annual income for the fathers (who were nearly all managers or skilled professionals) was in the range of $75,000-100,000. By contrast, the spouse/partners who worked full-time had a median income in the range of $50,000-$75,000, and those working part-time had a median income of less than $25,000.

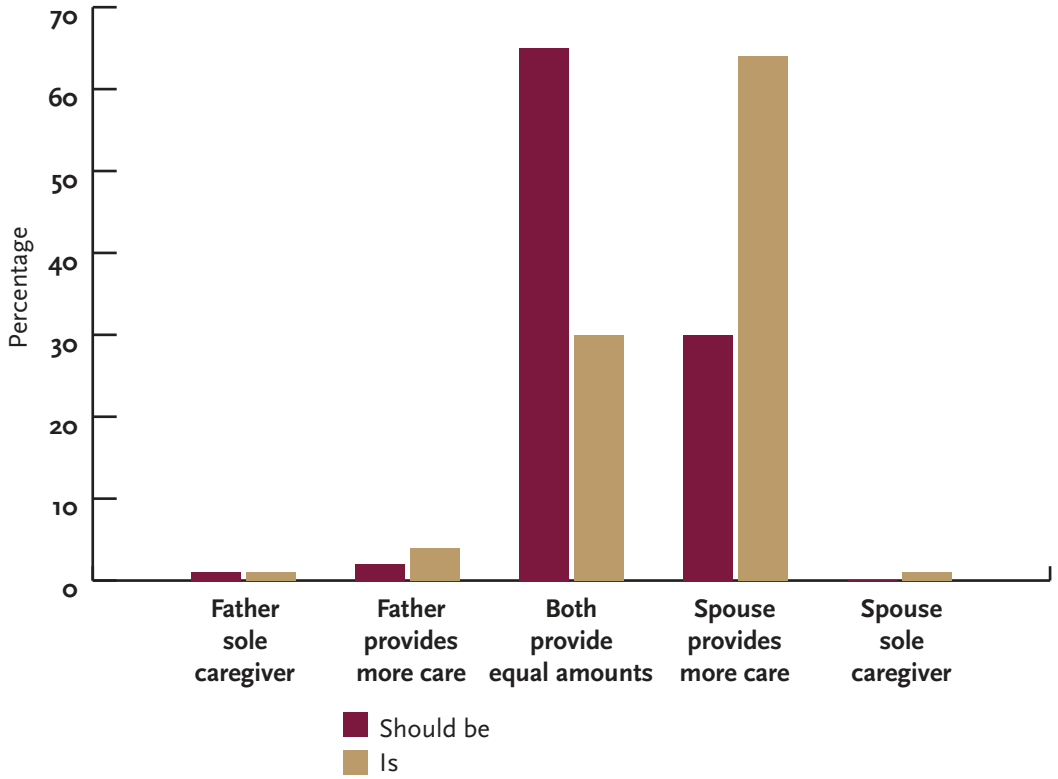
There are a number of other noteworthy statistics that can be drawn from this data. First, more than one third of the spouses who worked did so on a part-time basis. Second, of those spouses/partners that worked part-time, more than half earned less than $25,000 per year. When these are combined with the percent of spouses/partners that do not work at all (31%), more than 40% of the spouses in our study are contributing less than $25,000 per year in annual income to the family. Even in cases where both spouses worked full time, men were more than twice as likely (44% vs. 20%) to earn over $100,000 a year than their spouses. This difference in contribution to annual income may partially explain why the spouses in our study seem to take on the lion's share of caregiving while leaving the primary breadwinner role to the fathers.

Sharing Caregiving

One of the important questions that we explored in Phase 1 of our research was how the fathers and their spouses shared caregiving responsibilities. This obviously can have a significant impact on both partners' ability to successfully combine work and family. Most of the fathers in our previous study said they were trying to share caregiving equally with their spouses/partners, and where they fell short, they were trying to reduce the gap.

We explored this dynamic further in our current study. As Chart 12 clearly demonstrates, there is a disconnect between what fathers believe they should be doing in terms of sharing caregiving, and what they are doing. The maroon bars in the chart below depict how fathers in our survey felt that caregiving SHOULD BE divided and the gold bars depict how fathers reported care IS divided.

Chart 12: How Caregiving Should be Divided and Is Divided



As can be seen, 65% of the fathers believe that both partners SHOULD provide equal amounts of care while 30% feel that their spouse should provide more care. However, when asked to report on how caregiving IS divided, only 30% of fathers reported that caregiving is divided equally, while 64% reported that their spouse provides more care. This highlights a large and noteworthy gap between aspirations and reality for the majority of the fathers in this study.

We wonder if the fathers are suffering a bit from the "myth of having it all" (a phrase coined by Sylvia Hewlett in her 2002 *Harvard Business Review* article on successful career women). The fathers desire to be more involved at home with their children, yet most work long hours and place strong emphasis on advancing to senior positions with their employers. Eighty-six percent agreed/strongly agreed with the statement "My children are the number one priority in my life," but are they willing to give less at work in order to give more to their children? Do the fathers need to adjust their caregiving expectations? What support do families need to successfully make the caregiving roles more equal? Do the spouses in the study aspire to work more? These are clearly important questions for future research, as well as for fathers themselves, to consider.

Division of Labor

In order to delve more deeply into this disconnect between caregiving aspirations and realities, we conducted an analysis to determine if the income level of the father versus the income level of the spouse/partner had a significant impact on the fathers' parenting expectations and behaviors. Our assumption was that fathers who were the primary breadwinners would be more career-driven and less parenting-focused, and would tend to do less at home. As illustrated below, this assumption is reasonably supported by the data we collected.

We compared the findings of two groups within our sample:

- Father is primary breadwinner (father makes more money, majority of our sample)
- Spouse/partner is primary breadwinner (spouse/partner makes more money, smaller percentage of our sample)

The table below summarizes the statistically significant differences between the two groups where the father is primary breadwinner vs. the spouse/partner is primary breadwinner.

Table 1: Differences in Fathers' Expectations and Behaviors When They are Primary Breadwinners and When Their Spouses/Partners are the Primary Breadwinners in the Family

	Father is Primary Breadwinner	Spouse/Partner is Primary Breadwinner
Hours spent with children	Fathers spend less time with children	Fathers spend more time with children
Definition of "good father"	Fathers have higher levels of agreement with "provide financial security"	Fathers have stronger agreement with "doing your part in the day-to-day childcare tasks"
Responsibility to children, parenting roles, confidence as a parent	No significant differences	No significant differences
How is caregiving divided	Spouse/partners do more	Spouse/partners do more but not as much more as those where father is breadwinner
How should caregiving be divided?	Spouse/partners should do more than fathers, but less than they do now	Caregiving should be equal or perhaps slightly more the fathers' responsibility
Degree of family-to-work enrichment reported	Fathers report less family-to-work enrichment	Fathers report more family-to-work enrichment
Career success	Fathers reported being **MORE satisfied with** the: • success they have achieved in their careers • progress they have made toward meeting overall career goals • progress they have made toward meeting goals for income	Fathers reported being **LESS satisfied with** the: • success they have achieved in their careers • progress they have made toward meeting overall career goals • progress they have made toward meeting goals for income
Need for high income	More important	Less important
Job security	More important	Less important
Career aspirations	No significant difference	No significant difference

The contrast between these two sub-sets of our sample of fathers is striking. Fathers who are not the primary breadwinners in their families spend more time on average with their children and expect to have a larger role in caregiving. On average they are also less satisfied with their careers and have less of a need for job security and high income. It is also interesting to note the areas where we did not find a significant difference between the two groups. Both groups are approximately equal in confidence as parents, and both have similar levels of career aspirations. This highlights again, that even though dads who are primary breadwinners desire to be more involved with caregiving, their careers seem to take center stage, leaving them less time to spend with their children and less able to share equally in caregiving.

The more supportive the spouse/partner is of the father as a worker, the higher his job and career satisfaction.

Spouse/Partner Support

Not surprisingly, a very large factor in the ability of fathers to successfully integrate work and caregiving is the supportiveness of their spouses. We certainly expected spouse/partner support to have a strong influence on family-to-work conflict and family-to-work enrichment, which it does. We were somewhat surprised to learn that spouse/partner support also has a significant impact on work-to-family conflict and enrichment, as well as the father's job and career satisfaction. In general, the fathers felt they received significant career and work support from their spouses. Nearly 80% said that their spouse contributes to their career with more than half feeling their spouse supports them a great deal. Examples of how they felt supported included:

- 92% of respondents said their spouse acknowledged their obligations as a worker
- 79% of respondents agreed that their spouse willingly takes on more responsibility at home when they are required to travel for business
- 75% of respondents stated that their spouse/partner is supportive when they take on challenging projects at work.

When asked to evaluate their spouse/partners' contributions to their careers, 51% said that they contribute a great deal and 28% said they contribute somewhat. Only 4% said they disrupt somewhat and 1% said they disrupt a great deal.

Company Response to the Changing Roles of Fathers

KEY FINDINGS:

- A supportive corporate environment that includes a family-supportive culture, supportive managers, and supportive co-workers leads to better alignment between work and family, and also leads to more satisfied employees who are less likely to leave the company.
- The efforts that have been made to create this environment have been somewhat successful, but more work remains to be done to create a truly supportive environment for fathers.
- Fathers utilize informal flexible work arrangements at a much higher rate than formal flexible work arrangements.
- Fathers who utilize flexible work arrangements, either formally or informally, have higher job satisfaction and higher career satisfaction than those who do not.

We now move from the family influences on fathers to examine the organizational context more specifically, recognizing that organizational policies, cultures, and expectations likely have an impact on fathers' ability to combine working and caregiving.

As women have increased their presence and influence in the corporate world over the past several decades, many employers have been striving to provide an environment that is more supportive of employees' commitments to parenting and caregiving. Parental leaves, access to child care centers, and a variety of flexible work arrangements are just a few of the many benefits that companies provide to support parents. Most of these offerings are also available to men in these organizations. Parental leave is a more of an exception. Few organizations offer paternity leave and those that do typically offer only one to two weeks. As the fathers increase their caregiving responsibilities, they could benefit from these supports as much as their female counterparts.

However, there still remain a number of obstacles associated with the use of many of these programs by men. Overall, there continues to be a lack of recognition that fathers, too, play an important role in caring for family. Traditional expectations for men and fathers as workers have not changed significantly in spite of the changes that are apparent in American families. Thus, it appears that it is still expected that fathers will have a stay-at-home or part-time working spouse who will be available to meet most or all of the family's caregiving needs. Further, organizational and societal expectations, unwittingly or not, send signals to fathers that work needs to be their primary focus, and that too much time taking care of family matters may have a serious impact on their careers. Although many companies recognize the shifts that are occurring in terms of the needs of working fathers, there is still much to be done to adapt to and fully recognize fathers' increased role as caregivers.

Considering these ideas, and in order to extend beyond our initial Phase 1 study, one of our main goals in this phase of our research was to understand more fully the role that the organizational environment plays in influencing fathers in their dual roles as workers and caregivers.

Family Supportive Culture

An important area of exploration with the fathers was to gain insight into their perception of their workplace culture and its support for families. We wanted to better understand the role work culture plays in fathers' experiences. To better understand the level of support that was evident in the various company cultures, we examined the fathers' responses to several individual questions. In general, the fathers felt their workplaces did take a "whole person perspective" when it came to understanding that their employees had important concerns to attend to outside of work. When asked, for example, specifically about the culture in their organizations, the fathers responded in the following ways:

- Two-thirds of respondents **disagreed** with the statement "Individuals who take time off to attend to personal matters are not committed to their work."
- 62% of respondents **disagreed** with the statement "Employees who are highly committed to their personal lives cannot be highly committed to their work."
- 52% of respondents **disagreed** that at their workplace, the culture suggests that "Work should be the primary priority in a person's life."
- 56% of respondents **agreed** that "employees are given ample opportunity to perform their job and their personal responsibilities well."

Manager and Co-worker Support

To delve more deeply into the organizational environment, we also assessed the degree to which fathers in our sample felt that their managers and co-workers were supportive of work-family issues. When it came to assessing the level of support that supervisors provided with episodic work-family situations that arose, the responses were very encouraging. For example:

- 89% of respondents **agreed/strongly agreed** that their manager accommodated them when family or personal business needed to be taken care of
- 82% of respondents **agreed/strongly agreed** that their manager was supportive when they had a problem
- 78% of respondents **agreed/strongly agreed** that their manager didn't show favoritism in responding to employees personal needs or situations
- Only 18% of respondents **disagreed/strongly disagreed** with the statement "My supervisor really cares about the effects that work demands have on my personal and family life."

Slightly more than 60% of the fathers surveyed said they felt comfortable bringing up personal/family issues with their managers and nearly the same number felt their supervisor was supportive of employees using flexible work arrangements. These numbers collectively suggest a fairly high level of agreement that their individual managers are supportive when it comes to the needs to address personal/family issues.

We found similar levels of perceived support from co-workers: 79% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that "My co-workers are understanding when I have personal business to take care of – for example, medical appointments, meeting with child's teacher, etc."

One of the key findings from our Phase 1 qualitative study is that new fathers tend to receive nearly universally positive feedback in the workplace regarding becoming parents vs. the mixed messages women often receive regarding their ability to balance career and family.

Our survey findings largely confirmed these positive responses:

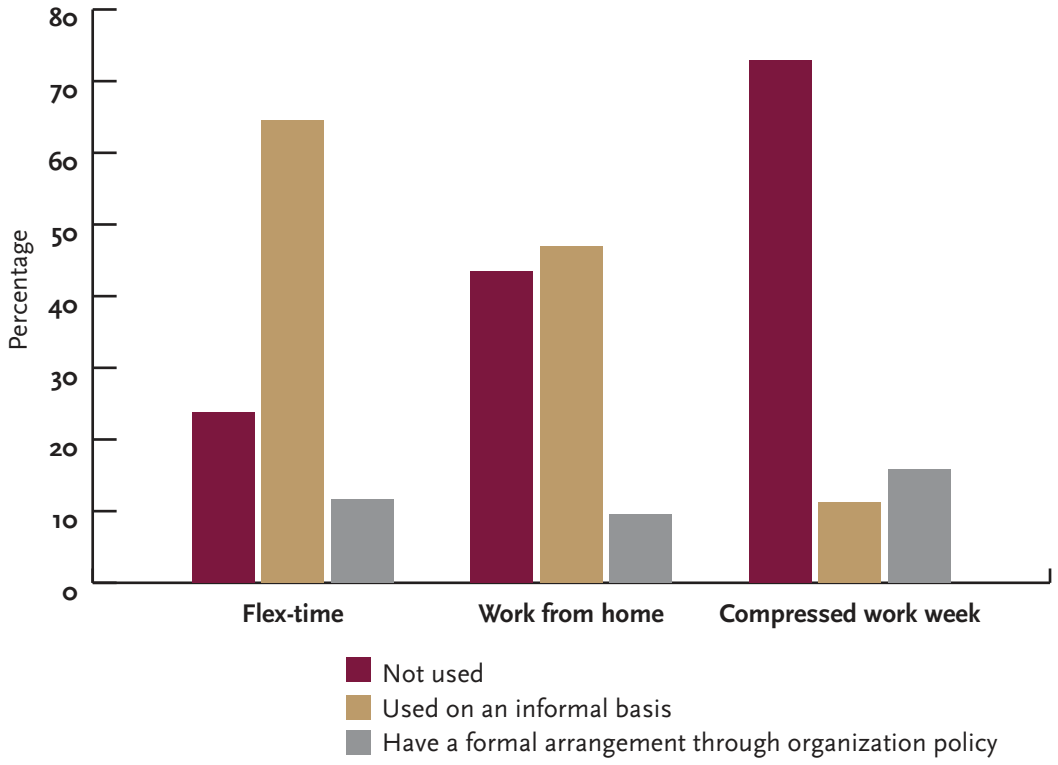
- 91% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed when they returned to work they felt welcomed back by their peers
- 87% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed when they returned to work they felt welcomed back by their supervisors

Use of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)

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.

A surprisingly high number of the fathers in our study utilized flexible work arrangements. It is important to note that the companies included in this study all have developed flexible arrangement policies and practices. Chart 13 shows the percentage of respondents who use flex-time (varying hours when they arrive for and leave work), work from home, and compressed workweek (complete a full-time schedule in fewer than 5 days), noting those that use these arrangements through formal policies and those that use them on a more informal basis.

Chart 13: Flexible Work Arrangement Usage



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. These num-

bers are encouraging in terms of fathers and the utilization of flexibility, but perhaps more noteworthy is the percentage of those fathers that used flexibility on an informal rather than formal basis. For example, more than 40% of fathers that used compressed workweeks did so on an informal basis. More dramatically, over 80% of those who worked from home or used flex-time did so on an informal basis (the difference between compressed workweeks and the other two flexible work options is not surprising in that compressed workweeks are much more likely to require formal arrangements than flextime or telecommuting). This extremely high percentage of fathers that use informal, rather than formal arrangements may speak to a general pattern that suggests informal flexibility is used much more often than formal.

79% of the fathers who were not currently telecommuting believed the company would not allow them to telecommute; 52% of those not using flex-time believed the company would not allow them to use flex-time.

Of those who did not use flexibility (24% did not use flex-time, 43% did not work from home, and 73% did not use compressed workweeks) a surprisingly high percentage believed that their employer would not be supportive of them doing so, in spite of the fact that a high percentage of their colleagues were using them. There may be a number of reasons to explain this phenomenon. It is possible that the nature of the jobs of those not using flexible work arrangements does not support such an arrangement, their specific manager does not support flexible work arrangements, or it could simply be a misconception held by those who do not utilize flexible work arrangements that doing so is "frowned upon" (this is more likely to be the case where such a high percentage of fathers are using informal arrangements that are often less visible and less publicly sanctioned). Whatever the cause, the percentages of those assuming the use of FWA would not be supported were quite high:

- 52% of those not using flex-time,
- 79% of those not telecommuting,
- 71% of those not using compressed work weeks.

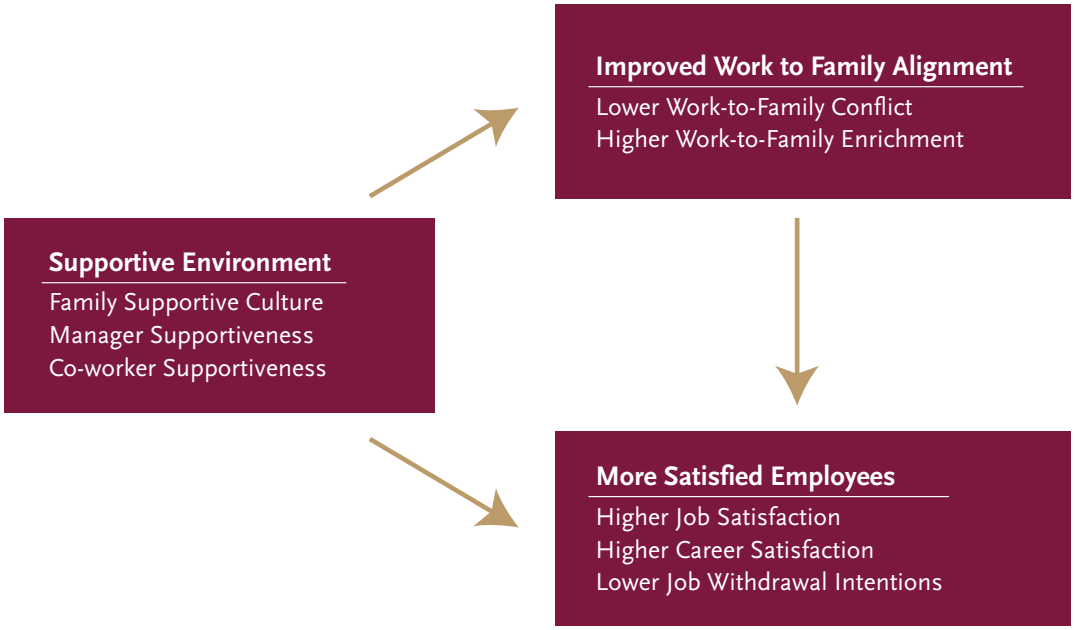
Virtually none of the fathers in our study worked reduced hours (i.e. worked part-time) and nearly two-thirds believed that the employer would not support them if they wanted to do so. This is interesting in light of the fact that 26% of their spouses worked on a part-time basis and again, may say something about organization or individual manager's support for part-time work, or suggest differences between the way men and women perceive the availability and desirability of part-time work.

Fathers with full-time working spouses report greater importance of FWA than fathers with spouses who work part-time or not at all. We also examined the relationships between use of flexible work arrangements and job and career satisfaction and learned that those using FWA, whether formally or informally, have higher job satisfaction and also higher career satisfaction than those that do not use flexible work arrangements.

Relationships Among Supportive Environment, Work-to-Family Alignment and Satisfied Employees

Through our study we hoped to better understand the impact that the organizational environment itself has on fathers' work and family experiences. Therefore, we analyzed the relationships among the key variables of supportive environment (including family supportive culture, manager supportiveness and co-worker supportiveness); work-to-family alignment (including work-to-family conflict and work-to family enrichment); and satisfied employees (including job satisfaction, career satisfaction and job withdrawal intentions). Figure 3 offers a high-level summary of the important relationships that we identified through our analyses.

Figure 3: Relationships between Supportive Environment, Work-Family Alignment, and Employee Satisfaction



We found that the more supportive fathers perceive their work environments to be overall (in terms of a family supportive culture, manager supportiveness and co-worker supportiveness), the lower the level of work-to-family conflict and the higher the level of work-to-family enrichment they report experiencing. This highlights the important role that the organizational context plays in influencing fathers' work-to-family alignment. While the relationship between culture/manager supportiveness and reduced work-to-family conflict is not surprising based on prior research, we also found there was a strong connection to work-to-family enrichment, which adds additional insight into the role that organizations play in supporting working fathers. A more supportive work culture has a positive effect on a father's home life. Success at work can lead to success at home, and the skills learned in managing relationships at work can be useful at home as well. Further, our analyses revealed that co-workers can also have a significant effect on a father's work-family alignment. The more supportive co-workers are of fathers as caregivers, the less work-to-family conflict experienced, and the more work-to-family enrichment there is for the fathers.

The level of work-family alignment experienced by fathers becomes even more important when we recognize the role improved work to family alignment plays in fathers' overall satisfaction at work. In other words, as illustrated in Figure 3, fathers who experience better alignment between work and family (less conflict, more enrichment) report being more satisfied overall with their jobs and with their careers, and are less likely to leave their jobs. Additionally, the family-supportiveness of the organizational environment also impacts fathers' job satisfaction and career satisfaction directly, such that the more family-supportive the environment is perceived to be, the more satisfied fathers are with both their jobs and their careers overall and the less likely they are to leave their organizations.

All of these elements; family supportive culture, manager supportiveness and co-worker supportiveness; create an environment that enables the fathers to be more successful in performing both their roles as caregiver and worker, as well as achieving greater alignment and integration between the two. Thus, from a company perspective and from the fathers' perspectives, fostering an environment that is supportive of and recognizes the importance of fathers' roles as both workers and parents is potentially a major "win/win" for the organization and the employee.

Summary of Key Findings

One year ago, we completed ***The New Dad: Exploring Fatherhood Within a Career Context***, our qualitative study of 33 new fathers. At the conclusion, we were very cautious of making generalizations about contemporary working fathers based on our limited sample. While the sample we draw from in this study is nearly 30 times as large, we continue to offer similar cautions. Our survey sample is composed of professionals and managers from large corporate employers who are not representative of the population as a whole. Nonetheless, our study, and the details reported here, do have important and relevant implications for fathers and the organizations in which they work. We begin by summarizing our key takeaways from the study.

Key Findings

- **Most of the fathers in our study aspire to share equally in caregiving with their spouse/partner, but often are unable to bring this desire to reality.** Our study showed that fathers today do clearly see their roles as breadwinners and caregivers in a very balanced fashion. This was quite apparent when more than two-thirds reported that they see their primary role as an equal balance between "both caring for my child and earning money to meet his/her financial needs."

  However, perhaps the most telling finding from our study is the gap between fathers' desires to equally share caregiving with their partners, and the reality of their situation – that most fathers are not equally sharing these day-to-day responsibilities with their partners. The gap between the "should be" and the "is" in the eyes of most of our fathers is very significant. Perhaps much of this can be explained by the fact that 31% of their spouses/partners do not work outside the home, that spouses worked fewer average hours, or by the earning disparity between the men and women we studied. But whatever the reason, men do feel that there is a significant gap between what they are doing in terms of caregiving and what they would like to be doing. Perhaps this gap between their aspirations and their current realities best explain the high level of work-family conflict that men report experiencing.

In addition to this important baseline finding, there are a number of other important findings that may also explain some of this gap between the "is" and the "should be".

- **Fathers need time to develop parenting skills, but in the United States, they don't have it.** The fact that men don't bear children is obviously an unchangeable biological fact. The fact that men don't rear children is not. People are not born with the gene that teaches them all they need to know to be effective parents – neither women nor men. From the first days and weeks after childbirth, many (we hope most) women have the opportunity to spend time with their children, which facilitates both bonding with their newborn and developing competencies as new parents. In contrast, few men are provided with an opportunity to spend significant time with their young children. In our study, only 1% of the fathers took more than 4 weeks off to be with their children after they were born, and only 1 in 20 fathers took as much as two weeks.

  Parenting is a skill that must be learned. If men are not afforded the opportunity to take the time early on to become intimately involved in caregiving for their new children, then they may never feel completely comfortable or competent in doing so. In many parts of Europe, most specifically the Nordic countries, men are encouraged and incented by government policy to take paid leave in their children's earliest days. In addition to helping fathers, this also contributes to the goal of attaining greater gender equity in those countries where such policies exist. In the U.S. no such government support exists, and the majority of fathers do not take the time off.

- **Men do use flexible work arrangements, but predominantly in an informal manner.** A surprising percentage of the fathers in our study did use flexible work arrangements with flexible hours and telecommuting being the most common; however the vast majority did so in an informal fashion. Again, this propensity may have a number of different explanations. Perhaps fathers feel a greater sense of entitlement to simply "take" flexibility and do not feel they need formal permission. Or conversely, it may suggest that fathers are more comfortable using flexibility in a subtle or "stealth" fashion in order to avoid any negative organizational implications. Remember, more than 99% of the fathers in our study reported that their managers' expectations either stayed the same or actually increased after the birth of their most recent child. With these expectations, and the all too common perception in many organizations that using flexibility is career limiting, perhaps it is not surprising that fathers tend to use flexible work arrangements in a predominantly informal way. This may have strong implications for employers who spend a great deal of time and effort focusing on formal flexibility programs and approaches.

- **Reduced hours/part-time work is not an option fathers utilize.** While research shows that women are far more likely than men to work part-time (BPW Foundation, 2004), our research clearly illustrates how rarely working reduced hours is utilized by fathers – especially those who have "high career aspirations." In our study, where 76% of the respondents are interested in higher level positions in their organizations and more than 58% aspire to a role in senior management, the use of reduced work hours was virtually non-existent. Of the nearly 1000 fathers in the study, only two worked part-time – that's 0.2%. While many women use reduced hours to cope with the demands of work and family, it appears this is not an option for professional men (perhaps for reasons of organizational culture or individual aspirations) or at least not an option that men utilize.

- **A family supportive culture reaps multiple rewards for fathers and their organization.** A supportive culture where the employee is respected as a whole person has been shown to have beneficial impacts in study after study. This study of nearly 1000 fathers strongly confirms the value of this type of working environment. Demonstrated through organizational policies, leadership support and manager and co-worker responses and actions, fostering a culture that is supportive of fathers in their multiple roles leads directly to more satisfied, loyal employees and a lower level of work-to-family conflict.

And finally, one other finding that companies should note:

- **Job security matters greatly to working fathers.** We live in a time when job security seems to be a workforce strategy from days gone by. Companies that were once committed to providing "lifetime employment" for their employees have mostly abandoned this commitment and those very few that remain committed to job security seem anachronistic. Instead, today we see organizations spending a great deal of money on employee engagement, talent management and total rewards programs to maintain top talent. Yet, what seems to matter most to our fathers is security. While we recognize that it is more difficult for organizations to provide such security in the present economic climate and with the extremely volatile dynamics of operating in a global marketplace, it is nonetheless of tremendous value to recognize the great importance placed on job security by the fathers in our survey. While engagement, talent management, and total rewards are certainly important, it seems that fathers' basic desire to be secure in their jobs should remain of paramount importance for organizations looking to retain and develop their talent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed in this report, there is definitely room for improvement if we are to accept the realities of today's workforce, and help fathers achieve their goal of greater involvement in caregiving. Employers and employees need to take active steps to remedy the circumstances that keep fathers pigeonholed as breadwinners and which limit women's opportunities for advancement. Having a supportive environment both in the organization and at home (spousal support) helps fathers to achieve better work-family alignment. And as we have shown, better work-family alignment leads to greater job and career satisfaction and more involved and confident parents. Thus, our study confirms what past research has suggested: balancing work and family is not just a "woman's issue". We see that fathers, too, need a family-supportive work environment when it comes to aligning work and family, and this has tangible benefits for their jobs and careers, and in turn for their organizations. Therefore, we offer the following recommendations for employers and for the fathers themselves.

Recommendations for employers

As part of our survey, we asked fathers the following open-ended question: "What one thing can your organization do to help you be a more effective father?" It would seem that no one is in a better position to help companies' create an effective father-friendly work environment than the fathers themselves. The following common themes from the answers to this question, as well as other survey responses, offer helpful recommendations for employers:

- **Fully Embrace Flexible Work Arrangements:** The most frequently cited need by fathers in the study was for greater flexibility. This took many forms but the two most commonly cited forms of flexibility fathers wanted were the opportunity to telecommute and work flexible hours. This is a somewhat surprising request given that all of the companies in the study have policies that support flexible work arrangements for their employees, and a relatively large percentage of the fathers reported using various forms of flexible work arrangements. Clearly there are still some obstacles that are restricting the use of these arrangements, at least for some of the fathers. Beyond accommodating working parents, the business case for these types of flexibility has clearly been made in recent years. Perhaps the most compelling example of this is a recent IBM study which showed the profound impact of these two specific flexible work options on employees' ability to handle heavy workloads. In the IBM study (Hill, Erikson, Holmes, & Ferris, 2010), employees with schedule flexibility and the ability to work from home were often able to work 8-16 more hours per week than employees without such flexibility before work-life conflict became a pressing concern. In addition to various types of formal flexible work arrangements, fathers also desired more informal flexibility that would allow them to attend to personal matters during the week (e.g., volunteer at children's school, take child to doctor's appointment, etc.).

- **Provide Benefits that Directly Support Caregiving:** Work-life benefits can run a broad spectrum from concierge services to fitness centers to resource and referral activities. While any of these may be helpful, two common benefits that fathers requested were daycare and time-off. Under the topic of daycare, fathers mentioned both on-site daycare as well as other options such as back-up child care. Under the theme of time-off, fathers wanted more/better time-off benefits, and the most common suggestion was to offer fathers some form of paternity leave. As has been mentioned, this time-off would enable them to more effectively bond with their children and better prepare them to be primary caregivers. As one work-family researcher stated, "Impact studies of parental leave are in an early stage of development and only recently have started to examine the relevance of fathers and other relationships beyond the mother-child

dyad during this period. However, the emerging evidence suggests that parental leave has the potential to boost fathers' emotional investment and connection with infants as well as their support of the mothers" (O'Brien, 2009).

- **Recognize Father's Caregiving Role:** It is evident from our research that societal, organizational, and professional norms still inhibit fathers from fully embracing their parenting role. In answering the open-ended question, many fathers talked about heavy workload, the unavailability of part-time work, the need for employers to listen to their employees, and an overall desire for their organizations to recognize and respect their role as fathers. We know that changing organizational cultures is a slow and difficult undertaking, but the reality for many of the fathers in our study (not all) is that their work lives are pressured, their work days are long, their wives are working, and their organizational culture, while supportive, is demanding. Based on the changing nature of women's careers that we discussed in the Introduction, employers should not expect that women will continue to bear the burden of the majority of family responsibilities while they maintain their own high pressured careers. Organizations need to let go of outmoded thinking about gender roles and realize that fathers are increasingly as likely as mothers to want and need to be extremely active in parenting. Organizations that aggressively take this enlightened stance, encouraging and actively supporting all parents to find the ideal work-life fit, will be the employers of choice – for men and women, fathers and mothers.

- **Give dads a place and "permission" to talk:** Long-standing gender role stereotypes and organizational cultures may unintentionally create barriers to men discussing their caregiving roles. It is important that employers take proactive measures to encourage conversations among men about issues such as parenting and work-life balance. Establishing fathers' affinity groups, offering brown bag seminars targeted at men, and ensuring the branding of your existing parenting and work-life supports are gender neutral, can all increase the likelihood that the conversation about these issues will not only be about men, but will include men.

- **Get to know your dads and their needs:** The survey utilized in this report and the data analysis conducted by the Center for Work & Family will be available to assist other organizations with obtaining input from fathers and evaluating whether their organization is perceived as supportive to fathers.

As a credit to the companies where we did our research, it is noteworthy that one of the top three answers to the question of how the organization can help them be a more effective father was "Nothing, my company is already doing a great deal." One of the fathers replied, "I have to honestly say they do more than I expect." Clearly many fathers are encouraged with what is already being done.

Recommendations For Fathers

Our recommendations for fathers are based in our own knowledge of fatherhood and careers, as informed by the studies we have done in this area.

- **Examine Your Caregiving Goals in Light of Your Career Goals:** We earlier referenced a Harvard Business Review article by Sylvia Ann Hewlett "Executive Women and the Myth of Having It All." In it, Hewlett tries to help debunk the idea that women can have it all, or at least have it all at the same time. She lays out the challenge high performing women face of the "biological clock" and the decisions and trade-offs women must make to have a meaningful career at the same time as having a long-standing relationship and caring for children. The problem, as another work life scholar puts it, is simple – the idea that one person can simultaneously be the ideal worker and the ideal parent is simply a myth. While men don't face a "biological clock", the

dilemma for men who want or need to be engaged caregivers is the same – it is difficult if not impossible to have it all. Ideals regarding what constitutes success may need to be re-defined, not just from a whole person perspective but also a whole-family perspective. While seeking on-going development and advancement is a perfectly logical and desirable goal for nearly everyone, such goals may need to be tempered by what's best for the family at any given point in time.

- **Consider Taking More Time Off After the Birth of Your Children:** As we have noted, the experience of fathers in countries that offer generous, extensive paternity leave suggests that fathers who take more time-off early in their child's life will have a higher likelihood of being a hands-on caregiver than fathers who do not. Women are immersed in caregiving and nurturing their children from the moment they are born. There is no opportunity to wait for others to assume those roles. Fathers who take very limited time-off following the birth of a child are more likely to feel less competent and be more hands-off with their children. This is especially true if the spouse and perhaps others, such as the new grandparents, are also present. We recognize that many organizations do not offer paternity leave. If they do, it is of very short duration and much of it is unpaid, which many families cannot afford. But where possible, evidence would suggest that fathers spending time "flying solo" as a caregiver to their newborn will experience long-term benefits in terms of their relationship with their children over time.

- **Support Your Fellow Fathers:** We have discussed the fact that organizations and their cultures need to change if men are truly going to embrace their role as caregiving fathers. As has been made clear in this study, work-family is no longer simply a women's issue, men are also struggling to find their own work-family fit. But work-life scholar and lawyer Joan Williams (2010), goes a step further saying that work-life isn't simply "also a men's issue, it is a men's issue." What does she mean by this? Most organizations and their cultures have been created by men, for men (Harrington & Ladge, 2009). They are built on assumptions about family responsibilities that are no longer valid in many instances. Because men have created workplace cultures and norms, and because they continue to control the vast majority of senior management positions (97% of CEOs in the Fortune 1000 are men) only men can truly change most workplaces. Men need to attend to this whether from their influential positions as organizational leaders or through grass-roots efforts. Men can either reinforce "macho stereotypes" (e.g. only those who work excessive hours are truly committed) that make it difficult for women and men to be effective parents, or they change the norms and recognize individuals' work and family responsibilities.

In conclusion, our findings show that fathers want to have more time to be with their children and they aspire to do more at home. At the same time, they have equally strong desires to be successful at work and to advance in their careers. Thus, we are left with an image of today's fathers as caring, committed and conflicted, struggling to be engaged parents while striving for advancement in their careers. This leaves us with the obvious question: can they have it all? Can they increase their caregiving role without sacrificing their advancement goals in their workplace? Or must they adjust their expectations – redefining what it means to be successful in both domains? We are convinced that the fathers we studied are far from "dead suits walking." They are not experiencing "the end of men." From our research, we believe that men are on the verge of a new beginning, one that brings a greater appreciation of the important role fatherhood plays in their own lives and that of their family members.

Acknowledgements

Over the past ten years, we have been very aware of the serious lack of research that has been done on the experiences of working fathers. The work-family field has been dominated by women – whether that be practitioners, researchers, consultants, advocates or users of the services. In addition, all forms of media continue to portray that this (i.e. the overlapping spheres of work and family) is a woman's world. Precious little time or attention has been invested in understanding how men deal with these often competing forces in their lives. While this may have been appropriate at one time, today's reality would suggest it is well past time to move beyond this outdated, simplistic paradigm that women are caregivers and men are breadwinners.

These realizations led a team of us (Fred Van Deusen, Jamie Ladge, and me) to research and publish *The New Dad: Exploring Fatherhood in a Career Context* in 2010. In spite of the fact that our study was modest, the outpouring of interest in this research led us to the conclusion that the world was indeed hungry to learn more about the experiences of working fathers, hence this quantitative study became, in effect, Phase 2 of our work on men and fathers.

As always, our colleagues at the Center, Danielle Hartmann, Catie Maillard, and Iyar Mayar have helped support our research. Jennifer Sabatini Fraone, in particular has been and continues to be our primary partner in editing, publishing and communicating our work. In addition, Dr. Annie Soisson of Tufts University added many substantive edits, comments and suggestions to our final paper. Although she did not participate directly in this study, Professor Jamie Ladge of Northeastern University provided us with a great deal of help in our pre-study activities. She had developed a questionnaire for her own research on parents that became one of the fundamental building blocks for our final survey. In addition, she was always willing to help us think through ways to make this research more effective.

We would also like to thank the Boston College Center for Work & Family Corporate Partners who served as our primary contacts within the four member companies where the research was conducted. Specifically, we express our gratitude to Charlotte Hawthorne at Eli Lilly and Company, Jodi Davidson at Sodexo, and Sue Schmidlkofer at UPS for their assistance in helping coordinate the study as well as soliciting participants. And to our anonymous partner at our fourth member company, we are equally very grateful for your support.

Last, and certainly not least, we would like to thank the nearly 1000 fathers who agreed to participate in our research. Each one gave up some of their valuable and scarce time to fill out our "extensive" (a.k.a. long) questionnaire. It is thanks to them that we have been able to provide this portrait of today's working father.

Prof. Brad Harrington, Executive Director
Boston College Center for Work & Family
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Appendix A: Sample Demographics

Personal Demographics

	Average	Median	Range
Age of Respondents	42.63	43	25-65
# of Children	2.34	2	1-8
Children's Ages	10.67	10	0-35

	Categories	% of Respondents
Marital Status	Single, never married	2%
	Living with partner (not married)	3%
	Married	88%
	Separated	2%
	Divorced	5%
	Widowed	0%
Level of Education	Some high school	0%
	High school diploma or equivalent	1%
	Some college	11%
	Two-year college degree	10%
	Four-year college degree	42%
	Master's degree	30%
	Doctoral degree	5%
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	4%
	Black, not of Hispanic Origin	7%
	Hispanic	5%
	White, not of Hispanic Origin	81%
	Other	3%

Work-Related Demographics

	Categories	% of Respondents
Hours worked per week	Less than 20 hours	0%
	20-34 hours	0%
	35-45 hours	34%
	46-55 hours	46%
	More than 55 hours	19%
Tenure in Organization	Less than 1 year	2%
	1-5 years	20%
	6-10 years	27%
	11-20 years	30%
	More than 20 years	22%
Occupation	Individual contributor (hourly)	3%
	Individual contributor (salaried)	37%
	Manager/ Supervisor	60%
Annual Personal Income	Less than $25,000	0%
	$25,000-50,000	4%
	$50,0001-75,000	19%
	$75,001-100,000	32%
	$100,001-200,000	40%
	More than $200,000	4%

Appendix B: Survey Methodology

Respondents to this survey were employees at four large companies that agreed to participate in the research study. Individuals were recruited to participate in the survey by their organizations via either an intranet site, an email sent to a subset of employees, or an employee newsletter. The sample of 963 fathers was distributed relatively evenly across the four organizations. Sample sizes from each organization are as follows:

- Outsourcing services provider: 349
- Pharmaceutical company: 221
- Global security company: 243
- Transportation/logistics company: 150

Respondents accessed and completed the survey on-line. At the beginning of the survey, they were presented with information introducing the study goals as well as instructions for completing the survey. The introduction indicated that the purpose of the survey was to explore their experiences of combining work and fatherhood, and how these experiences are shaped by the organizations in which they work.

In the body of the survey, respondents were asked questions to gauge their perceptions on various topics listed under headings such as features and attitudes about your job, career-related questions, workplace support, personal and family situation, work and family alignment, and various demographic questions about themselves and their spouses. We used various scales previously tested in other research in order to gather respondents' perceptions on these topics. A scale is a group of questions that relates to a particular attribute. For example, the scale for work-to-family conflict is made up of 5 statements (such as, "in the past three months, I have not had enough time for my family or other important people in my life because of my job", or "in the past three months, I have not been in as good of a mood as I would like to be at home because of my job") and respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they agree with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Responses to each statement are combined into an overall measure of the degree to which the respondent experiences work-family conflict. Most scales were drawn from previous research and we validated all scales statistically for use in this study.

We analyzed the survey data using statistical techniques that allowed us to understand the relationships between variables (e.g., how perceptions of family supportive culture relate to experiences of work-family conflict) as well as comparisons among groups within the survey population (e.g., how fathers who are breadwinners compare to those who are not). All relationships or differences discussed in this report were statistically significant (at $p<.05$ or $p<.01$).

As with any research study, there were some limitations to our methodology, which primarily center on our sample and sampling. As clearly stated throughout the report, the findings here are reflective of a sample of primarily white collar, professional, managerial employees from large organizations. Further, the sample is made up of predominantly White males. Additionally, because we worked through liaisons at each of the participating organizations (who were extremely generous with the time and effort they devoted to getting the survey running in their companies), we are unable to calculate a definitive response rate to the survey. It is also worthy of mention that the organizations that agreed to assist with this research are all members of the Boston College Center for Work & Family Roundtable, and thus are likely to be more attentive to, and perhaps more progressive with respect to, issues of work and family, and thus may have yielded more positive results in this respect than other companies.

About the Authors

Dr. Brad Harrington is the Executive Director of the Boston College Center for Work & Family (CWF) and a research professor in the Carroll School of Management. CWF is the country's leading university-based center that assists employers in their efforts to improve the lives of working people and their families. Prior to coming to Boston College, Brad was an executive with Hewlett-Packard for twenty years. He served in a wide range of business and global leadership assignments in the US and Europe.

Brad's teaching and research focuses on career management and work-life integration, the leadership of organizational change, contemporary workforce management strategies, and the changing roles of men. He is the author of *Career Management and Work/Life Integration: Using Self-Assessment to Navigate Contemporary Careers* (Sage, 2007) and was lead author of *The New Dad: Understanding Fatherhood in a Career Context*. His work on fatherhood has garnered international media attention from, for example, *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Miami Herald* as well as the national newspapers of China, India, and Brazil. Dr. Harrington is a graduate of Stonehill College and holds graduate degrees from Boston College and Boston University in psychology and human resources. He is married to Dr. Annie Soisson and they are the proud parents of Maggie, Hannah, and Dillon.

Fred Van Deusen is a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Work & Family. He participates in and manages various research initiatives that the Center performs, with a special focus on member driven research. His work has focused on workplace flexibility and family supportive workplace cultures. He was co-author of *The New Dad: Understanding Fatherhood in a Career Context* and lead author of the CWF study *Overcoming the Implementation Gap: How 20 Leading Companies Are Making Flexibility Work*.

Fred has held a number of executive positions with Hewlett-Packard Company, primarily in quality management. Prior to joining the Center, Fred was a Senior Vice President at NORC, the National Opinion Research Center. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Northeastern University, and a Masters Degree in Business Administration from Boston College. Fred and his wife Alice live in Concord, Massachusetts and are the proud parents of three grown children, Mark, Amy and Julie. They also have a wonderful grandchild named Dylan.

Beth Humberd is a researcher at the Boston College Center for Work & Family, and an instructor and PhD Candidate in the Organization Studies Department at the Carroll School of Management at Boston College. Broadly, Beth's research aims to understand how diverse individuals experience organizational life, focusing on topics at the various intersections of gender and diversity in the workplace, interpersonal relationships at work, individual identity management at work, and work-life integration.

Prior to entering academia, Beth worked in various roles in Finance and Human Resources at PriceWaterhouseCoopers and Boston Scientific Corporation. Beth holds a B.S. from Babson College, an MBA from Bentley University, and an M.S. in Organization Studies from Boston College. Beth lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts with her husband Andy and their dog, Cooper. They are expecting their first child due this summer.

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

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