Superdads

How Fathers Balance Work and Family in the 21st Century

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ONE

Introduction

More Dads at the Bus Stop

A few days ago I was at the afternoon bus stop. The bus from the elementary school comes anytime between 3:50 and 4:05, dropping off somewhere around 15 children. What I noticed this day was that there were more fathers at the bus stop than mothers. This is not completely unusual for our block, but rather you could see it coming if you paid attention to the ups and downs of the market and the individual job changes within this particular group of fathers. I suppose I should qualify my observation by noting that two of the fathers are professors, one is a pilot who mainly works weekends, and one is recently unemployed. Not to mention my husband, a writer who works from home. But we have had other, more occasional, fathers, ones whose schedules are not quite as flexible but who still make the effort to move things around at work if they need to be at home. The point is that fathers are no longer an anomaly at the bus stop. There are more dads holding hands, tossing balls, and talking with children as they wait for the bus. One local dad plays "rock, paper, scissors" with his young daughter through the bus window as other children board the morning bus.

Sociologists such as myself call these men "new" dads or "involved" dads, a sign that times are changing and men's roles as fathers are changing too. But we have been talking about new dads for a while now. They have

become an accepted and perhaps expected part of our culture. Most dads today want to be involved and are actively seeking ways to spend more time with their children. And men are expected to be more and more involved with their families. The new father takes time to eat with his family, read to his children, throw a ball around, and even change diapers. At the same time, however, men are not routinely offered options when it comes to negotiating issues of work-family balance. Instead, after becoming fathers, they are expected to continue on with their work lives as if they had experienced a minor blip on their family radar screens. Given these contrasting expectations, I became interested in discovering if fathers feel conflicted between their work and family lives. Moreover, I wanted to find out what issues are important to fathers and what kinds of strategies they use in order to balance work and family obligations and expectations.

Although there has been growing research on work and family suggesting that not only women but also men experience work-family conflict, less is known about the strategies working fathers use in an attempt to balance their work and family lives. With dramatic changes in work and family life over the past few decades, including increases in women's labor force participation, especially mothers' labor force participation, and increases in divorce and nonmarital childbearing, families consisting of a breadwinner husband/father and homemaker wife/mother are fairly uncommon. Instead, dual-earner families and single-parent families are the more standard family forms of today. These working parents often struggle to balance the time commitments involved in performing work and family roles.

Superdads provides a glimpse into the lives of American fathers in the 21st century as they attempt to be more involved fathers while fulfilling the more traditional role of provider for their families. Today's dads want to spend more time with their children and yet struggle with how they will spend that time with their kids while still being responsible workers. They may think and plan before their child arrives. Or it may not occur to them until they are holding their newborn. But more often than not fathers come to the realization that they want to be more than financial providers—they want to be dads.

While expectations for father involvement have risen, the societal supports to make greater involvement possible have not kept pace. The workplace still sees men as men and not as fathers. This book offers a picture

of men's experiences and struggles as they make the transition to fatherhood. It begins with the very real feelings of stress that are often wrapped up with a sense of work/life imbalance. This often starts with (or is exacerbated by) the birth of a child. Fathers find themselves scrambling to take time off as their options for family leave are limited. But here is where the story becomes more complicated. While some fathers accept their situation for what it is, others make changes. They do this in a variety of ways, some extreme (changing jobs) and some more tame (cutting back hours, working from home, using flex time). Out of this emerges what I call superdads, fathers who significantly adjust their work in order to have more time with their families. We might not think this would be so revolutionary if we were talking about mothers, but these fathers are a step in the direction of better families and greater gender equality.

Old Dads, New Dads, and Superdads

Erik[1] is a 34-year-old, white landscape architect. He is married with a 2-year-old son and a second child on the way at the time of our interview. When we talked, he was working at a small firm but had accepted a position with a larger firm, one that would provide more opportunities for career development and a higher income. While Erik liked working at the small firm, he also felt like a failure because his wife wanted to stay home and raise their children. She often complained about having to drop their son off at daycare, and this contributed to Erik's stress. His new, higher-paying job will enable his wife to stay home, but it also involves longer hours and more travel, a sacrifice he is willing to make for his family.

Kenan is a 25-year-old, black merchandising assistant for a large home-improvement company. He is married with a 7-year-old stepson and a 4-year-old son, and he makes it clear that he treats both sons the same. Kenan's wife works in a medical office full-time and also has a second job cleaning the same office building in the evenings every other week. This means that Kenan is solely responsible for picking up the kids, helping with their homework, cooking, and getting the kids to bed half the time. While Kenan has not had to make large changes to his work schedule, he does leave work a little early every other week. At this point, Kenan

feels as though he can get away with not staying late and not taking work home, but he does expect certain changes as he attempts to climb the ladder in his company.

Luis is a 29-year-old, Mexican American, married father of two who was working his way through college when we met. He is completely devoted to his family, and it was clear that all his decisions about education and work stemmed from his efforts to be a better father. In fact, Luis was adamant that he did not want to balance work and family but would rather spend as much time with his family as possible while working enough to pay the bills. This attitude led to his decision to quit his job at a casino and work in real estate, which has allowed him to spend two to three hours each morning with his children.

Larry is a 42-year-old, white, divorced father. He is a fabricator, but this was not always his dream job. When he and his wife separated, he felt he was at a crossroads. On the one hand, he could continue down his career path on his way to being a crew chief and be a "one-day-a-week daddy." Or, he could choose to be a real parent to his then 18-month-old daughter, which would require stepping off the fast track and into a more stable position that would not require traveling but instead offer shorter and more flexible work hours. Larry chose the latter path, moving into the shop, sharing custody equally with his ex-wife, and cherishing the relationship he now has with his daughter.

While these fathers all experience some amount of work-family conflict, their solutions differ. Erik is an "old" dad, one who sees his primary role as provider and will sacrifice his own family time in order for his wife to stay at home with their children. Kenan is a "new" dad, an involved father who makes minor adjustments to his work schedule in order to balance work and family but who nevertheless sees more constraints than solutions. Luis and Larry are "superdads," men who specifically change their work lives in order to accommodate their families.

In *No Man's Land*, sociologist Kathleen Gerson suggests that men are in "a territory of undefined and shifting allegiances, in which they must negotiate difficult choices between freedom and commitment, privilege and sharing, and dominance and equality."[2] The book begins with a description of three men, an uninvolved husband, a "well-dressed bachelor," and a

young, involved father. These men represent the concepts of breadwinning, autonomy, and family involvement. A few years after Arlie Hochschild's now-classic *The Second Shift*, in which she wrote about the stalled revolution in which changes in men's behavior, particularly regarding household responsibilities, were lagging behind women's changes, most notably their flooding of the labor force,[3] Gerson was saying that a growing number of men were more involved, placing family commitments above work commitments. Yet two-thirds of the men she interviewed were turning not toward family involvement but instead toward breadwinning or autonomy (having no children and forgoing or leaving marriage).[4] Certainly, these concepts are still relevant, as there continue to be childless men and uninvolved fathers, but a lot has changed since Gerson's book was published. Since Gerson's book, the breadwinners have declined in number, the involved group has grown, and I argue that a new group, superdads, has emerged.

Discussion over the past decade has turned to the "new father" and whether the reality of involved fatherhood has caught up with the ideology of new dads. In the book *Halving It All*, social psychologist Francine Deutsch showed that some fathers "undo" traditional gender roles, and even challenge masculinity, as they seek to become equal parents.[5] In examining men's work and family reconciliation in Europe, prominent Norwegian scholar Oystein Holter revealed a shift in men's gender ideal from breadwinner, in which men act as primary or sole earners in their families, to caring masculinities, in which men fully participate in caregiving. Of key importance is the idea that initial changes are more likely to occur at home rather than at work. In other words, new fathers may adjust their domestic role by adding childcare responsibilities during nonworking hours while leaving their work role relatively unchanged. In addition, Holter posits two models: the "new man" model, in which change occurs because men are dedicated to gender equality, and the "new circumstances" model, in which change occurs because of particular circumstances. Here we see that some men commit to change because they believe they are equally responsible for their children as their female partners, while other men do not necessarily plan to change their behavior but take on new roles because their situation requires it (e.g., partner's working hours or lack of childcare availability).[6] At the 2010 International Sociological Association World Congress,

Canadian sociologist Gillian Ranson argued that there is a small, seldom-discussed group of men that she refers to as "working fathers." She defines these fathers as "men who *do* take advantage of workplace initiatives most commonly used by mothers, and who in other ways explicitly organize their working lives around family responsibilities they are committed, or obliged, to assume." Ranson uses the term "working fathers" as an equivalent to "working mothers" in that the emphasis is on *fathers* who happen to work rather than workers who happen to be fathers. In her study of Canadian fathers, she finds that "working fathers" generally have employed partners, low career aspirations, and jobs that are not privileged within the family.[7] I build on Ranson's conceptualization to develop what I call superdads.

In this book, I distinguish between three types of dads—"old" dads, "new" dads, and superdads. "Old" dads refers to those fathers who are more traditional or old-fashioned in their outlook and behavior. This term does not refer to age, though fathers who are older in age are more likely to be characterized as old dads than younger fathers are. Old dads see their primary role as father to be a breadwinner, and some are consumed by work, earning the label workaholic. These fathers tend to see their children little during the week but may try to make up for this deficit by spending extra time with their children on weekends. They tend to feel moderate amounts of stress related to work-family conflict because they would like to see their children more, but they also know that they are providing for their families, and often they have stay-at-home wives. For the purpose of my study, *old dads make little change to their work lives upon becoming fathers*, and in fact may increase their time on, and attention to, work. About 20 percent of the fathers I talked with fit into this group (see chapter 4).

"New" dads refers to those fathers who are less traditional in their outlook and behavior. They identify strongly with their role as father. New dads place a high priority on the issue of balancing work and family and attempt to fill both the breadwinner and caregiver roles. They spend a good deal of time with their children, though weekend time still far outweighs weekday time. New dads experience the greatest amount of stress because they would like to spend more time with their children and have not achieved a desired balance between work and family. *New dads may alter some of their work practices*, but changes are limited and only provide partial solutions

for their work-family dilemmas. This was the most common group of fathers, representing half the men I interviewed (see chapter 5).

"Superdads" refers to those fathers who see their role as caregiver as more important than breadwinner. They want to spend as much time with their children as possible and feel that they have an equal responsibility for raising their children. They experience lower stress levels than the other two types of dads, mainly because they have found a way of balancing work and family. Indeed, some superdads specifically resist the idea of balance, placing more importance on the family side of the scale. Importantly, *superdads deliberately adjust their work lives to fit their family lives*, rather than vice versa. About 30 percent of the fathers I spoke with fit my description of superdads (see chapters 6 and 7).

Let me take some time right now to address the concerns of some readers about the particular terminology I have chosen. The use of "super," after all, suggests that these dads are special and perhaps more special than many working mothers who make similar choices without such recognition. Here I would make two points. First, if we go back to the 1970s and 1980s, we see that the term "supermom" was used in popular discourse to refer to mothers who "did it all."[8] The "super" part of being a supermom was the addition of paid employment to a woman's usual mom duties. For superdads, the "super" part comes from their role as dads and how this affects their decisions regarding work. It is, therefore, not a completely parallel concept because it relies on the interaction between domains rather than the simple addition of a role. Second, while some readers may be incredulous at the seeming coronation of superdads over moms who do the same thing, societal expectations for men and women have been and continue to be different. To give an example, when a woman becomes a CEO or senator, we applaud her in a way we would not applaud a man doing the same thing. That is because the big change for women has been to enter the previously male-dominated world of work and politics. Likewise, men tend to be applauded when they do something they have not done before. In other words, the big change for men is to enter the previously female-dominated world of childrearing. To give credit where credit is due, new dads have entered the home realm with great enthusiasm, contributing much to their children's and partners' needs. Nevertheless, the var-

ied structural and situational constraints they face have limited any major changes in their work lives. In this regard, they have made more changes at home than at work. In contrast, superdads respond to their family's needs by changing their work lives.

Table 1.1: Three types of fathers

	OLD	NEW	SUPERDAD
Primary role	Breadwinner	Breadwinner/caregiver	Caregiver
Stress level	Medium	High	Low
Time with children	Weekends	Occasional time	As much as possible
Change	No change	Small change	Large change

Changing Work and Family Roles

In 1950, 82 percent of men and 42 percent of women age 18 and older were in the labor force. In 2007, 66 percent of men and 57 percent of women age 18 and older were in the labor force. Men's labor force participation had decreased slowly over this time period, while women's participation increased until the 1990s (the latest decrease for both women and men may be due to increases in postsecondary school enrollment among young adults). The change in mothers' labor force participation has been even more dramatic, with 47 percent participation rates for women with children under age 18 in 1975 compared with 71 percent in 2007. Women are contributing more income, 44 percent of family income among dual-earner couples in 2008, an increase of 5 percent in the past decade. There has also been an increase in couples in which the female partner earns more. In 1997, 15 percent of dual-earner couples had wives who earned at least 10 percent higher incomes than their husbands, compared with 26 percent in 2008.[9]

Attitudes have changed, too. A common attitudinal statement in work-family surveys is "it is better for all involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children." In 1977, a slight majority of women (52 percent) and a large majority of men (74 percent) agreed with this statement, resulting in a significant gender difference in attitudes. In

2008, about two-fifths of both women and men agreed with this statement, showing that there has been a particularly strong shift in men's attitudes that has brought convergence in beliefs about work and family roles.[10]

Other signs of convergence include employed parents' time with children. Today employed fathers spend more time with young children on workdays than they did 30 years ago, but employed mothers spend about the same amount of time with children. In 1977, employed fathers spent an average of 2 hours per workday with their children under 13. This increased by one hour so that fathers now spend 3 hours, on average, with their preteen children. During the same time period, employed mothers' time with children remained steady at 3.8 hours per workday. While there is still a gender difference, the trend is one of convergence. Another study found that fathers spend an average of 2.5 hours per day with their children on weekdays and 6.3 hours per day on weekends. Furthermore, about half of employed fathers now say they take an equal share or more of the responsibility for the care of their children, which includes the management of childcare arrangements as well as daily caregiving.[11]

It is also important to note that over the past few decades, there has been a more general intensification of parenting, which is particularly prevalent among middle-class parents. Legal scholars Gaia Bernstein and Zvi Triger assert that intensive parenting is a "socio-technological trend" because it requires the use of technology in order to fully cultivate and monitor children's progress.[12] Indeed, the desire to offer children a range of opportunities and the need to transport children to an increasing number of activities results in parenting taking more time and energy. This often creates a sense among parents that more time with children is better. Because of fathers' greater likelihood to work and to work longer hours, their feelings of a time deficit with children are even greater than mothers'.[13]

Why Care about Fathers, Work, and Family?

The Families and Work Institute recently reported that a higher percentage of fathers than mothers experience work-family conflict. In 1977, 35 percent of men said they experienced work-family conflict. Today that number is 59 percent.[14] Some people might read this as bad news. After all, nobody wants

to feel conflict between what are arguably the two most important and time-consuming domains in one's life. But there is another way to read these results, and that is to emphasize the changing role of fathers. First, men were just not that involved in family life back in the 1970s. Second, most men viewed their primary role as breadwinner, and so going to work was what they did for their families. However, change was on its way back then, and while some people were impatient during the 1980s and 1990s, it is more and more clear that involved fatherhood is the new norm in the early 21st century. And this means that, just like mothers, fathers are struggling with the task of providing economically for their families, which has not disappeared, while spending more time with their children. Accomplishing all facets of involved fatherhood is "becoming more challenging" for men.[15]

Ulrich Beck, a German sociologist who has influenced a great deal of thinking on modernization, globalization, and individualization, asks, "What happens in a society where, on the one hand, fealty is forever being sworn to *family values*, and to motherhood and fatherhood and parenthood, while on the other it is preached with equally doctrinaire zeal that everyone must always place him- or herself at the absolute disposal of a labor market that offers fewer and fewer zones of protection and long-term security?"[16] Beck pinpoints the current dilemma that so many parents face and wonders how a society can do justice to family values when its mothers and fathers must answer to the demands of a labor market that is not family friendly.

The focus on work-family conflict started with a focus on working mothers. As women entered the workforce and continued to care for their homes and families—what Arlie Hochschild called the second shift[17]—they found it difficult to advance in their careers while being good mothers. On one hand, this created a great deal of stress for working mothers. On the other hand, this created a situation in which employers questioned women's, and particularly mothers', work commitment and ability to be productive employees. A spotlight was also shone on working mothers as the general public expressed concerns about children's welfare. Through this all, men were never questioned about their continued emphasis on work, but they were also rarely given the choice of whether to emphasize work or family more.

While work-family issues are certainly important for women, I argue that it is no longer solely a women's issue. Balancing work and family is

also essential for men. In turn, these issues are important for children and society at large. In a study of IBM workers, a large majority of employed fathers experienced work-family conflict. In addition, fathers were just as likely to experience work-family conflict as mothers.[18] Not surprisingly, extended work hours are associated with work-family strain for men as well as women.[19] Job pressure and having an employed partner also contribute to fathers' work-family conflict. However, there are some factors that can reduce men's work-family conflict. Men who hold family-centric (more focused on family than work) or dual-centric attitudes (focused on work and family about the same) experience less conflict than those who hold work-centric views (more focused on work than family). Also, having supervisor support and more autonomy at work improve work-family balance.[20]

While men who work more hours are less likely to experience work-family balance, men whose wives work more hours report greater work-family balance. One study found that men and women make an equal number of sacrifices at work for family life, but men's sacrifice is most likely to come in the form of working additional hours rather than cutting back. Men tend to make more sacrifices at home than women, most often by missing a family occasion.[21] Family life may also have an impact on work life. For example, one study found that men who had arguments with a spouse or child one day experienced higher levels of work stress the following day.[22]

Fathers who are more engaged with their children have higher levels of psychological well-being.[23] Fathers say that they learn more about themselves, their values, and their ability to express emotions from children. In learning how to care for their children, fathers develop important skills and gain more self-assurance.[24] Children also benefit from contact with fathers. Children who live with their father generally have better outcomes in terms of grades and delinquent behavior. However, all residential fathers are not equal. When adolescents live with their father and have a close relationship with him, they have higher self-esteem and less depression, indicating the importance of father relationship as well as presence.[25] Kyle Pruett, an internationally known child psychiatrist and expert on fathers, argues that fathers are just as essential as mothers for children's development, noting an association between high levels of father involvement and child development outcomes such as exploration, problem solving, and confidence.[26]

While I cannot argue that either a mother or father, based solely on their sex, is essential for children, as there is mounting evidence that children raised by same-sex parents have as good or better outcomes as those raised by opposite-sex parents,[27] I do hope to raise awareness of the importance of fathers in debates concerning work and family.

Historical Context and Men's Changing Roles

It is important to provide some historical context for men's changing work and family roles before unpacking the current study's findings. While many politicians and groups focused on family values like to make comparisons to the 1950s, this is a false comparison. Seeing the shift in fathers' roles—how they have gone from overlapping work-family domains to separate spheres (with an emphasis on breadwinning) to blurred spheres (with a greater emphasis on fathering)—is crucial to understanding the current dynamics of work and family for men.

When someone says he or she grew up in a traditional family or conservative political groups talk about bringing back traditional family values, they are referring to a family form with corresponding values that developed in the 19th century and reached its prime in the mid-20th century. In this respect, it is more modern than traditional, a relatively recent phenomenon in the long history of humankind. For much of this country's history, from the time of colonization until the mid-19th century, there was an agricultural economy and a corresponding family in which everyone, including women and children, was expected to contribute to the household economy. The family was responsible for producing just about everything it consumed. While men and women in the nonslave population had somewhat different roles, with men doing most of the farm work and women doing most of the "light manufacturing" and household work, the family was seen as an economic unit, and both women and men worked at home. Among the slave population, there was even less distinction in gender roles as both men and women performed field work.[28]

With the industrial revolution, large structural changes in the economy led to large changes in family life. As factories replaced farms, production moved out of the household. This meant that men too left the household to

engage in paid employment, while most women stayed at home. With the decreased need for piecework at home (clothing production, laundering, etc.), women's roles began to focus primarily on housework and childcare. And thus separate spheres—men at work and women at home—and the traditional family were born. Yet this traditional family was not completely institutionalized among minority, immigrant, and lower-class families, which often could not get by on one income. While only 5 percent of married women were employed at the beginning of the 20th century, this number was much higher for African American married women, with almost one-quarter employed in domestic or farm work.[29]

Still, the model was one of breadwinner and homemaker, and these roles were mutually reinforcing. Just as male breadwinners made it possible for women to stay at home, female homemakers made it possible for men to fully focus on work. So while the traditional family was relatively short-lived, it was the dominant family form during the crucial initial stages of the modern workplace. This meant that workplaces and employers came to rely on having what is called an ideal worker, one who could focus entirely on work, with the assumption that someone else (a wife) would be able to take care of any household needs. This is what most sociologists refer to as an "institutionalized" assumption, because organizational practices reinforce the ideology.[30] Louise Marie Roth, author of *Selling Women Short*, has argued, "Modern organizations have institutionalized employment practices that treat workers as though they have no family responsibilities, implicitly assuming that most families have a breadwinner-homemaker division of labor even though this is no longer the statistical norm."[31] There is evidence that employer expectations reinforce a long-hours culture.[32] In *Competing Devotions*, Mary Blair-Loy refers to female executives as falling into either a "devotion to work" schema or a "devotion to family" schema. The former workers fit well within the ideal worker image as they wanted to work long hours. Yet these workers' actions influenced the more structured expectations that other workers would also have an unencumbered devotion to work.[33] Roth further suggests that assumptions about gendered care work, that women are primarily responsible for caregiving, result in unequal treatment of female employees.[34]

While I do not argue against the existence of differential treatment of female and male employees, I assert that women are not the only ones who are

disadvantaged by these outdated assumptions. Men, too, are harmed by these assumptions. Surely, one could argue that women would prefer to be treated the same as male employees, which would result in more equal pay and promotions. We rarely if ever hear that men want to be treated the same as female employees. Why would they? Less pay, fewer promotions, questions about their commitment to the job. However, one could also argue that women are not held up to the ideal worker image in the same way that men are. On the one hand, while this may lead to some of the more negative outcomes just mentioned, it also provides a little more freedom and in some cases differential policies that positively impact women (e.g., maternity policies versus paternity policies). On the other hand, the pressure on men to be breadwinners and ideal workers is enormous and increasingly difficult to successfully accomplish in today's economy. In addition, it ignores the question of what men want. While women, at least middle-class women, are faced with options, men are told that they have one acceptable pathway. And so men may not lose out in the concrete economic ways that women do, but they seem to lose out when it comes to time with children. Therefore, men either miss family commitments for work or try to conceal the fact that they are taking time off for family reasons.[35]

In the second half of the 20th century, the traditional family was on the decline, and by the end of the century, it was no longer the norm. Women's roles changed first as they entered the labor force in droves. In 1940, 28 percent of women were in the labor force. In 2000, 60 percent of women were in the labor force. Even more remarkable was the increase in maternal employment.[36] Initially, this increase in female labor force participation was due to changing ideas about women's roles, first driven by their experiences working during World War II and then by rising education levels, the movement toward a service economy, and the women's movement. However, starting in the 1970s, there was also a greater need for women to work, as male wages decreased throughout the 1980s and into the mid-1990s. In fact, studies suggest that family incomes would have fallen in the 1980s if not for wives' earnings.[37]

When it was so obvious that women's roles were changing, what happened to men's roles? On the one hand, men's economic provider role became less important or, at least, less complete, with the often necessary supplementation, and occasionally replacement, of women's earnings. While many men may still consider their economic contribution to the family an important

one, more and more do not want it to be their only contribution. Furthermore, an increasing number of men want partners who will also share the financial responsibility of providing. We can see this with the greater likelihood of men to marry more educated women and women with jobs.[38] On the other hand, men's domestic roles have also changed. This first occurred in the ideology of fatherhood. In the late 20th century, the "new nurturant father role" emerged and resulted in greater expectations for fathers' involvement.[39] Cultural ideals shifted, and the new father was expected to be involved in every aspect of a child's life.[40] There was some indication that ideas about fathers were changing faster than fathers' actual behavior.[41] While some scholars noted little or slow change in the 1980s and into the 1990s,[42] the most recent evidence shows that men today spend much more time with their children than they did in the past. Among married parents, fathers' time with children has increased considerably, while mothers' time has remained more stable. Between 1977 and 1997, fathers' time with children increased by five hours per week, and fathers' proportion of childcare increased by 5 percent from 38 percent to 43 percent. Another study found that fathers' share of childcare was close to half (47 percent) on weekends.[43]

As noted earlier, Gerson found that a substantial number of men in her study wanted to share the role of caregiver, but she also found that they faced social and economic constraints that made it difficult for them to cut back at work in order to spend more time parenting.[44] Likewise, in *More Equal than Others*, Rosanna Hertz found that many of the dual-earner couples in her study felt that men had been "shortchanged as nurturers."[45] Nevertheless, some fathers challenge the status quo by prioritizing their family responsibilities and making their work lives fit their family lives.[46]

Father Identity and Involvement

Identity theory, originally formulated by Sheldon Stryker, can further our understanding of fathers' role expectations, how they identify with these roles, and how they actually enact these roles. Derived from symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes the way individuals construct their selves through their interactions with others, identity theory focuses on the relationship between identities, hierarchies, and behaviors. According to

Stryker, identities are "internalized sets of role expectations, with the person having as many identities as roles played in distinct sets of social relationships."[47] Identities can also be seen as the meanings one attaches to a role.[48] These identities are influenced by societal expectations and in turn form hierarchies based on the salience of various identities. In other words, some identities are more salient and thus higher up on the hierarchy than others. These identity hierarchies, in turn, influence behavior.[49]

Applied to fathers and father involvement, we can see that men occupy various statuses, such as father, husband, and employee. In a study of the relative importance of statuses, parent status had the highest mean rating among fathers, followed by worker status and spouse status. Most fathers consider their father role to be their most rewarding and the one that has the most influence on their lives.[50] Within each status, there can also be multiple roles; for example, a father may be a provider, nurturer, companion, and disciplinarian.[51] Michael Lamb, a prominent developmental psychologist and editor of the definitive reference book *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, identified three dimensions of paternal involvement: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility.[52] Rob Palkovitz, another development psychologist who has been active in the conceptualization of father involvement, expanded Lamb's categories of involvement to include 15 categories, only one of which is providing.[53]

In a recent study of men's perceptions of their father role identity, researchers found seven role identities within the father status: provider, protector, teacher, supporter, disciplinarian, caretaker, and co-parent. The provider role was one of the most prominent for the fathers in their study.[54] Others argue that it is still particularly salient to many men's identity as fathers.[55] Still, it is clear that fathers take on several roles beyond providing. Recent studies have found a positive relationship between father role salience, or the desire to enact a role, and father involvement.[56] However, fathers who see their parental status as central do not necessarily involve themselves in caregiving. Rather, fathers who feel that their nurturing role is central are significantly more involved than fathers who do not identify with the nurturing role.[57] Therefore, men's incorporation of a specific view of parenting is important in increasing father involvement. Fathers who have a more flexible view of their family roles have higher rates of paternal involvement.[58]

While there is often a great deal of attention paid to the transition to fatherhood, it is important to note that there are also transitions within fathering that affect father identity and the relative weight of various father roles. Transitions can lead to restructuring of both inner self and outward behavior, can involve disequilibrium and resolution of conflict, and can occur at any stage of fatherhood.[59] I apply this concept to work-family conflict in considering how challenges arise through not only individual change but also family development and family changes and how fathers seek to achieve a new equilibrium.

A Note on Masculinity and Class

Ideas about masculinity and "masculinity orientation" influence ideas about fathering. A more traditional view of masculinity may be associated with the breadwinning role (chapter 4), while a more modern view, one that redefines the father role as more nurturing, may highlight the need to adjust work roles (chapters 5–7). It is difficult to write about masculinity without mentioning Raewyn Connell, an Australian sociologist who has been profoundly influential in shaping our notions of this concept. In *Gender and Power*, she described hegemonic masculinity as a cultural ideal of masculinity that is "constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women."[60] While this ideal need not represent a majority of men, most men support it or are at least complicit in its dominance. Furthermore, Connell's text *Masculinities*, which is often seen as a foundational work for the field of "men's studies," argued for the construction of multiple masculinities.[61] More recently, Connell teamed up with criminologist James Messerschmidt to offer a reconceptualization of hegemonic masculinity. They remind us, "Gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity."[62]

Therefore, traditional constructions of fatherhood are bound to incorporate notions of masculinity, which emphasize provider, protector, and disciplinarian roles. These traditional constructions also actively avoid behaviors that appear feminine or those associated with mothering. However, there are multiple masculinities, and these are being constructed and reconstructed

continually. Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity often creates internal conflict as individual men attempt to take on multiple roles. For fathers, this may take the form of work-family conflict as the traditional provider role and ideal worker norm clash with newer ideas of father as nurturer. Again, Connell and Messerschmidt suggest that "hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily translate into a satisfying experience of life."[63] A focus on men as providers reveals particular pressures on men on the one hand and an absence or reduction of an emotionally rewarding role as caregiver on the other. Connell and Messerschmidt assert that gendered power differentials can be eliminated if we focus on both the organizational level and the individual level.[64] At the organizational level, this will require more family-friendly workplace policies. At the individual level, this might be a change initiated by superdads.

The notion of multiple masculinities suggests that men with different class backgrounds may have different ideas about masculinity, fatherhood, and the emphasis on various father roles. Further, different work experiences are likely to shape ideas about parenting as well as opportunities regarding work and family. There are mixed findings regarding class, employment, and fathers' involvement. Fathers who are not employed have higher rates of paternal involvement, while fathers who spend more time at work spend less time as the primary caregiver. However, when mothers work more hours, fathers' participation in childcare increases. Although fathers in poor families are less involved with their children, father involvement can reduce the negative effects of poverty on children's delinquency.[65]

While complicated, class is an important factor that distinguishes fathers' work-family experiences. Certainly working-class and lower-middle-class men have fewer options when it comes to balancing work and family, and this difference will be highlighted more in the book.

Who Are the Dads?

I began looking for fathers of young children who might be facing work-family conflict by going to the most practical place I could think of—day-care centers. This strategy resulted in my finding a wide range of fathers in terms of age, race, and occupational status. However, most of these fathers were married to employed wives. Therefore, I broadened the search

by posting information at or making contact with community centers and churches, which increased racial diversity and the number of men with stay-at-home wives. In order to recruit more unmarried fathers, I contacted single-parent and single-father groups. Finally, I relied on some personal contacts and snowball sampling, obtaining a few names from fathers I had already interviewed (see the appendix for more information about research methodology).

I personally conducted interviews with 70 fathers, 44 in the Charlotte, North Carolina, area and 26 in Northern California.[66] Most interviews took place in my office, a colleague's office, or the father's workplace, which ranged from a business office to a medical building to a barbershop. Before starting any interview, I went through the informed-consent process and gave each father a copy of his signed consent form. All interviews were recorded and transcribed word for word. Interviews generally took between an hour and an hour and a half. The interviews were semistructured, which means I started with a list of topics and questions related to work, family, and work-family issues and allowed for other areas of conversation depending on the father's interest and experiences.

In order to be considered for my study, men had to be employed and reside with at least one child under 18 years of age. Children did not have to be biological. Single fathers had to have custody of their children on at least some workdays, though most had 50/50 custody. Although the men currently reside in one of two states, about 40 percent grew up in a different region from where they now live. The average age of the sample is 40, with 81 percent of fathers in their 30s or 40s. The sample is relatively diverse, with 19 minority fathers (13 black, 4 Asian, and 2 Hispanic). While a majority are college educated (24 with bachelor's degrees and 20 with graduate degrees), another 26 have not completed college (18 with some college and 8 with a high school diploma). Fifty-five are married and 15 are single, most of whom are divorced. Only one father openly identified as gay. The average number of children is two, though 20 men were first-time fathers. Twelve fathers had stepchildren or children with multiple partners. There was a wide range of children's ages, with 57 percent of fathers having their youngest child under 6, 31 percent having their youngest child between 6 and 12, and 11 percent having their youngest child 13 years or older.

About This Book

The rest of this book tells these fathers' stories about work-family conflict and their attempts to balance these two important domains. It draws heavily on direct quotes from the fathers themselves. Chapter 2 focuses on the transition to fatherhood. It presents the experience of becoming a father, focusing on both changes in attitudes about the importance of work and decisions regarding family leave around the time of birth. In becoming a father, men considered this transition to be more than simply having a baby. Rather, many fathers expressed how being a dad is a choice, a role that is not simply passive but requires active involvement. This realization often changed men's attitudes concerning the relative importance of work versus family. Decisions regarding family leave are most notably affected by what is available. Because the United States does not offer paid leave, most fathers use accumulated vacation days, which favors men in occupations with benefits such as paid vacation days and sick leave. Other fathers rely on the goodwill of their immediate supervisor and informal practices, and yet others experience resistance from employers and co-workers. The discrepancy between employer-offered maternity leave and paternity leave is noted, and the chapter ends by describing California's paid family leave policy and the experiences of men who have benefited from this policy.

Chapter 3 explores men's work-family dilemmas and feelings of stress in trying to balance work and family. It presents the struggles that men face in combining their roles as father and worker. There are subsections on multiple roles and role strain, feelings of imbalance, conflict due to work, and conflict due to family. Since fathering has become a more involved role, several fathers consider themselves as having two full-time jobs, one as worker and one as father. Other fathers add the role of husband, which often takes a backseat. The attempt to take on these roles fully and the reality of working full-time often lead to feelings of imbalance. While it can be difficult to disentangle a single cause of stress, fathers often point the finger at work requirements and less often turn the blame on family.

The next four chapters go into detail about the three types of dads described earlier in this chapter and the strategies they use to balance work and family. Chapter 4 describes the experiences of the old dads, who often meet the dictionary definition of workaholics and are compulsive about work. This chapter focuses on those men who work long hours and fit (mainly) into more traditional notions of fatherhood. Old dads' work decisions are based mainly on financial obligations rather than childcare aspects of fathering. The chapter further breaks down these fathers' reasoning, considering work as rewarding versus work as a means to supporting one's family. Many of these old dads are characterized by a high work commitment and experience feelings of stress more from not getting work done than from not being with family. There is a definite emphasis on the provider role, particularly for those with stay-at-home wives and for blue-collar workers who have increased financial need. There is also a sense of responsibility to family, with some fathers increasing their work hours in order to make it possible for their wives to stay home. Because of their long work hours, most rely on wives to care for their children either because they do not want their children in daycare or because they think it does not make sense given the cost of daycare. When it comes to wives' ambitions, if the wife works or wants to go back to work, there is an assumption that his career is more important than hers. Many old dads do not feel a lot of conflict between their work and family roles, and some who acknowledge an imbalance have accepted it. These fathers often focus on the positive, for example, that they are at home nights and weekends. Finally, there is limited talk of change.

Chapter 5 describes the experiences of the new dads and their partial solutions. New dads do not identify themselves solely, or even mainly, as breadwinners and are often intentional in their efforts to avoid work consuming them. In fact, several new dads describe themselves as not being career driven, and others talk of moderation in their career ambitions. New dads draw their identity more from their role as involved dads. Although they are not completely indifferent to the breadwinner role and the importance of their financial contributions, they are more likely than old dads to also embrace their wife's career, which often means making adjustments to their own schedule. New dads tend to struggle more than old dads or superdads in their pursuit of work-family balance. This is due to the fact that they emphasize family involvement more than old dads but make fewer work adjustments than superdads. These fathers make other attempts at

balancing work and family through either their separation or blending of these two domains. Fathers who separate work and family talk about the physical and mental separation of these roles and their decision not to bring work home. Fathers who blur the lines between these two domains often bring work home and occasionally bring children to work. Those who keep a strict separation between work and family argue that they are equal partners when at home, while those who blend their roles as worker and father argue that they are maximizing their time with family. Finally, some men make little change to their work lives but talk about how their job is already well suited to being a dad, while others find themselves as new dads after an unanticipated change at work.

Chapters 6 and 7 highlight the new phenomenon of superdads. Chapter 6 focuses on married superdads, while chapter 7 focuses on single superdads. Superdads are those fathers who go above and beyond to spend as much time with their children as possible, making changes to their work lives *because* of their father role. Each chapter presents several case studies that illustrate different strategies these superdads employ in order to balance work and family. Chapter 6 provides examples of superdads who quit their jobs, changed their careers, changed their jobs or positions within a work organization, became self-employed, assembled flexible working arrangements including part-time work, arranged shift work, and started to work from home. All of these work adjustments allowed these fathers to spend more time with their children, which underscores the theme of rearranging priorities and kid-centered decision-making. These fathers often took on the primary caregiving role or shared caregiving equally with their partners. Married superdads arrange their work schedules around their children's schedules and wife's work schedule. Some trade off with their wives in order to reduce or eliminate daycare costs. These fathers generally see these adjustments as a good resolution to work-family dilemmas, although there are some financial costs. Also, class becomes important in determining fathers' strategies, as professional men are better able to take advantage of flexible work arrangements, while working-class men more often use shift work to balance work and family demands. Chapter 7 shines attention on residential single fathers, an often neglected group in the work-family literature. Single fathers face unique challenges as they

attempt to gain custody or raise children on their own. Like married superdads, these single superdads view their father role as central. However, both their need to provide economically and their need to care for their children are more expansive as they take on these roles alone. Therefore, single superdads often differ from married fathers in their route to becoming a superdad and their performance of the role. Several of these fathers were not superdads when they were married but rather took on more traditional roles. For these men, divorce directly led to career changes. Some fathers made decisions about work based on being physically close to their children. Others realized they needed to change their work lives in order to be a good single dad. This chapter describes how single superdads make it all work. The need for daily management of work and family schedules is critical for single fathers, and this shows in the ways these single dads actually handle day-by-day work decisions regarding work hours, workplace, and work effort. There is a general sense of satisfaction with the work changes that these fathers have made, though a couple of fathers note a greater sense of sacrifice. In enacting the role of single superdad, gender lines sometimes blur as these fathers take on tasks traditionally associated with mothers.

The final chapter summarizes the main findings of the book and explores the policy implications raised by these findings. Most workplace policies are drafted with an emphasis on retaining female employees who become mothers. This study provides a greater understanding of fathers' needs and therefore can be used to suggest policy changes that might be more relevant to men.

tional support as work, it becomes more acceptable for men.[31] In this sense, fathers can step into this role when called on.

Conclusion

Single superdads are a unique group of men. While many single fathers disappear from their children's lives, there is an increasing number who want to be involved on a regular basis, including holding joint custody. Single superdads provide a window into what might be. Not only do these fathers choose to stay in their children's lives, but they make every effort to be the best dads they can be, which generally means making changes at work. While single custodial fathers may face fewer problems adjusting postdivorce than single mothers do, fathers still express some difficulty in managing their time and thus their ability to move beyond their two roles as father and worker.[32] Single superdads differ from married superdads in a few important ways. First, the pathway to becoming a superdad often differs for single and married fathers. Single superdads often become superdads in the process of their divorce. Being faced with limited contact with their children and the possibility of being a "one-day-a-week daddy," these fathers make substantial, and sometimes abrupt, changes to their work lives. These may involve similar changes to the ones we saw among married superdads in chapter 6, namely, changing jobs or positions or making adjustments to work schedule or place. But single fathers are faced with a more drastic decision as they try to be involved dads. Second, single fathers must deal with custody settlements and sometimes battles. They face assumptions about fathers' expected roles and in some cases are steered away from equal custody by lawyers or judges. These fathers would argue that they are equal parents and that joint custody is fair to the parents and children. There is, in fact, mounting evidence that joint custody is beneficial for children's adjustment as well as fathers' emotional well-being.[33] Third, single fathers face different issues on a daily basis in trying to make it all work. When they have their children, they have sole responsibility for their care, education, and other activities. Most of these fathers simply claim that they are doing what is necessary, but this can lead to a renegotiation of masculine identity.

EIGHT

Conclusion

Fathering roles and relationships have the potential to encompass most of a man's adult life.[1]

Twenty years after Arlie Hochschild proclaimed that there was a "stalled revolution" when it came to women's rights and gender equality, Paula England spoke of an "uneven and stalled" revolution.[2] Both suggest that the change in gender roles that has occurred has been asymmetrical. Women's roles have changed dramatically, as they currently earn more college degrees than men do and compose about half the workforce.[3] Yet, while women have entered previously "male" spheres, there has been much less movement of men into "female" spheres. Thus, gendered roles continue to inhabit relationships between men and women, and England states, "Women are most likely to challenge gender boundaries when there is no path of upward mobility without doing so, but otherwise gender blinders guide the paths of both men and women."[4] She argues that the asymmetry in the gender revolution is due to asymmetric incentives for men and women to make changes and to gender essentialism. First, it is clear that in a society that values masculinity and masculine activities while devaluing feminine activities, women will have more incentive to engage in masculine activities than vice versa. For example, women have a strong incentive to enter the labor force because of its economic rewards. On the other hand, men have little incentive to leave the labor force in order to take on the un-

paid task of caregiving. Second, gender essentialism, the idea that women and men are fundamentally different, is still prevalent in our society. Therefore, ideas about what men can and cannot do shape our notions of proper family roles.[5] Yet fathers are also expected to be more involved with their children, and there is increasing evidence that fathers' own desire for involvement is real. And while change has been slow, the trend is definitely under way, as fathers today spend more time with their children than did fathers of the past. Men are not the only ones to notice this change. Almost one-third of wives report that their husbands take on equal responsibility for childcare.[6]

In order to better understand men's experiences as working fathers, I talked with 70 fathers who represent a diverse range of demographic and occupational characteristics. These men's stories provide a picture of the work-family struggles and strategies of fathers in the early 21st century. What lessons do they provide? First, it is clear that today's men experience a profound change in their attitudes and priorities regarding work and family upon becoming fathers. Confirming survey data from the Families and Work Institute, more fathers are family-centric than work-centric.[7] While fathers in the past certainly experienced life changes when first entering this new role, today's fathers now face the challenge of how to best combine work and family. The first challenge new fathers face is arranging time off around their child's birth. Consistent with other recent studies, most fathers I talked with took one to two weeks off work following the birth of a child, though this varies by class. Particularly important to understanding men's decisions regarding paternity leave is that very few fathers have access to paid leave. Under the Family and Medical Leave Act, leave is unpaid, and very few fathers work for companies that offer paid paternity leave. As a result, new fathers often use vacation days or informal practices in order to take time off. There is some possibility for change, as witnessed by some of the California fathers in my study, and this is expanded on later in this chapter.

Second, and following from the first point, most fathers experience some kind of work-family conflict or imbalance. Again, the numbers are evident in larger-scale survey research, which shows that men are actually more likely than women to report work-family conflict.[8] Understanding this phenomenon requires that we listen to men's stories about this conflict. Men today do not go about business as usual once they have kids. Rather, in addition to the continued pressure they face to provide for their families, there is an added meaning placed on their role as father that emphasizes time with their children. The conflict occurs when fathers are expected to work long hours but are also expected to be highly involved with their children. In their stories, there is a real sense of stress and tension. For many fathers, the result is that they feel as if they do not spend enough time with their children. Added to this is the lack of time with their partners and by themselves. Yet some fathers also feel conflict because they are spending more time at home and think they could be doing more work. The common theme across all those facing work-family conflict is their lack of time. What distinguishes these fathers is how they respond to this conflict.

Most fathers today can be classified as what we have come to call "new" or "involved" dads. These fathers want to spend more time with their children, and they often make some effort to tweak their work schedules in order to be there for important events. Many set aside family time in order to avoid work interference, though this may mean doing work tasks after their kids are in bed. When they are at home with their families, they pride themselves on being highly involved and sometimes equal parents. These new dads have largely replaced the more traditional fathers of the past, what I refer to as "old" dads. While old dads are much fewer in number, they are likely to persist as a category, as some men continue to view their primary role as breadwinner and others simply define themselves as workaholics. However, though these fathers do not spend an enormous amount of time with their children, they also do not generally fall into the "read the paper and drink a cocktail" stereotype of the past. The little time with their children is seen as quality time. Therefore, even this group of fathers is qualitatively different from the providers of the past. Finally, a third group has developed out of the evolving roles of fathers, and these are what I call "superdads."

Twenty years ago, demographers Frances Goldscheider and Linda Waite asked whether changes in male-female relationships would lead to "new families" or "no families."[9] At the time, increasing female employment

without a corresponding change in men's family roles, à la Hochschild, suggested that people might opt out of family life altogether. Yet Goldscheider and Waite were obviously pulling for "new families" and suggested there were several trends that supported the growth of these families, from changing gender-role attitudes to pressure on men to share in domestic work to a reversal in the marriage squeeze.[10] The dominance of new dads and the emergence of superdads provides support for the "new families" Goldscheider and Waite were hoping for.

Are Superdads the New Supermoms?

In the introduction, I compared the term *superdad* to *supermom*. Certainly when women, and especially mothers, were entering the labor force in great numbers, there was an effort to label this new phenomenon. They were not content with the traditional female role of staying home, nor were they fully satisfied with focusing solely on work. They wanted to be caring moms at the same time as taking on the added worker role. Similarly, the Families and Work Institute refers to the "new male mystique," in which men try to do it all.[11] This is an explicit comparison between men's and women's work-family transitions. In this way, men's increased participation in the family realm can be seen as parallel to women's earlier increased participation in the workforce. At a most basic level, new dads can be seen as the male equivalent of the supermom. New dads are indeed trying to "have it all" by combining work and family. And like supermoms before them, they are experiencing a great deal of stress as they attempt to balance these two realms. This is because new dads add the active dad role without getting rid of their work role, much as supermoms added the work role without getting rid of their mom role. Perhaps it is new dads who are the new supermoms.

If this is the case, where does that leave us with superdads? Like new dads, superdads have added the caregiver role to their worker role. But unlike new dads, superdads have made changes at work that put their father role ahead of their worker role. This does not mean that new dads are less committed to their families. It means that new dads try to make room for their families largely within the constraints of the workplace, while superdads fit work around their family life.

I should note that there is an important difference between working mothers and superdads, and that is in how their actions are judged. In 2003, Lisa Belkin wrote a piece for the *New York Times Magazine* called "The Opt-Out Revolution." Setting the scene with eight Princeton-alumnae book-club members, Belkin described how college-educated, professional women were choosing to abandon (at least temporarily) their careers.[12] Many social scientists were dismayed at both the unscientific approach of this "research" and the misleading storyline, and this prompted a number of studies that examined the phenomenon of "opting out." Among them, sociologist Pamela Stone found that women were being pushed out of their jobs by inflexible employers rather than choosing to leave. Using national survey data, Princeton PhD student Christine Percheski found that only a small percentage of professional women left the labor force for a year or more during their childbearing years and that labor force participation rates were actually becoming more similar between mothers and women without children.[13] Nevertheless, the image of mothers "opting out" became widespread, and thus working mothers who might have been labeled supermoms lost this moniker when they "chose" to quit, work part-time, work from home, or in other ways shift to more family-friendly hours. Instead they were now seen as "downshifting" or "opting out." So how can we label men superdads when the same actions they are taking would be seen as capitulation among women? As alluded to earlier, the answer is that men and women are making different changes and, rightly or wrongly, are applauded for different actions. Women are celebrated when they make progress in the more public realms of work and politics. So it should not be too surprising when men are applauded for making progress in the more private realm of home life. After all, I would argue that superdads are making progress. Their actions may not be seen as "opting out" because they are not reverting back to a more traditional role when they spend time with their kids. Rather, I claim that these men are "opting in" to family. Superdads are making changes that move them away from work and toward family life.

The Case for Superdads

All the dads I talked with, in their way, are super dads. They are all completely devoted to their families, whether they show it through working extra hard, trying to have it all and share work and family burdens equally with their wives, or fitting their work around their families. But only superdads point the way toward a future for society as a whole of saner work and family policies. Superdads are highly involved, like the new dads, but what distinguishes them is that they specifically make changes to their work lives in order to accommodate their family lives. In this sense, they are like working mothers, who are often the ones to sacrifice career advancement for their families. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, superdads view their caregiving role as more important than their provider role. In becoming superdads, their priorities have shifted to their children and what they view as their children's immediate needs for parental presence. This in turn places father as the primary identity for these men, which means that they gain a sense of confidence and accomplishment from their superdad role. This is good for men's own personal growth and development. Second, superdads move toward gender equality. Superdads have views and experiences of parenthood that are more similar to women's. By highlighting their caregiver role and making adjustments to their worker role, they are making the changes that so many sociologists, gender studies scholars, and feminists have called for. Since Arlie Hochschild talked about the stalled revolution and men's lagging role in the gender revolution, researchers have waited for signs that men are changing. Here is a big sign. Third, superdads offer children another caregiver, someone deeply invested not only in providing or playing but also in caring for daily needs. This is good for children. Finally, superdads are not only good for individual men, women, and children but for the larger society as well.

Benefits to Men

It is important to consider the impact of fathering on men as this role has evolved and become more central to men's identities. Becoming a father may be the biggest transition of men's lives. Yet it is not simply a single transition but offers the possibility of multiple transitions and changes as

men adapt to their role as father. When men were primarily expected to be economic providers, stability was crucial to being a good father. With today's emphasis on fathers as nurturers, there is greater potential for transitions within fathering.[14] In this book, I have focused on transitions or adjustments to men's work lives in response to fatherhood.

Thirty years ago, sociologist and feminist scholar Jessie Bernard pointed to the negative psychological costs of the provider role for men. Bernard argued that men had all their eggs in one basket, and that one basket was being a good provider. If a man was a good provider, he would be able to get away with a lot of other things, not to mention sit around and drink beers instead of doing housework. The problem was that if he was not a good provider, there was no way he could compensate for this failure.[15] But even among marriages in the 1950s, role specialization increased the likelihood of "empty shell marriages," ones in which couples stay together but are less and less happy with their relationship.[16]

There is a sizeable development literature that draws largely on psychology studies on the relationship between parenting and adult development. German American developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, noted for his theory on social development in which he proposed eight stages of development throughout the life course, asserted that parenthood is a major developmental marker that encourages personal growth.[17] At a time when childhood and adolescence is extending later and later, becoming a father may signal one's full transition to adulthood. While being a father may facilitate personal reevaluation and growth, being a more involved father, and certainly a superdad, is likely to expand opportunities for growth in ways not experienced by less involved fathers. Because being an involved father means caring for a child, with attention to their physical and emotional needs, there is a growth curve when it comes to achieving the goals of involved fathering.[18] In becoming involved fathers, men have the opportunity to learn about themselves. In teaching and caring for children, they learn more about their own values and feelings, and they build important life skills.[19] Involved fathers engage in more self-reflection and self-evaluation, become more oriented toward the needs of others, and embrace Erikson's notion of generativity, which is the task of caring for the next generation.[20] In turn, fathers who are very involved with their children experience

greater self-assurance and psychological well-being than less involved fathers do.[21]

In addition to psychological and developmental benefits, there is evidence that father involvement is associated with better physical health and well-being. For example, more involved fathers are less likely to engage in substance abuse, have fewer accidents, have fewer hospital admissions, and have lower rates of early death.[22] There is even a recent study of Swedish fathers that found that fathers who take longer paternity leave have lower mortality rates.[23] Being more involved and having priorities that center around family also have the potential to improve work-family balance. More involved fathers have greater marital happiness and stability. More involved fathers also experience less work-family conflict.[24]

Benefits to Women

Superdads also have the potential to make women's lives easier, both at the individual couple level and in the aggregate with regard to gender equality. Fathers who make work adjustments for their families enable their female partners to focus on their own career goals more. It seems like a fairly clear trade-off; mothers who do not need to take full responsibility for childcare but rather have a partner who shares childcare tasks will have more time and energy to work. Often employed mothers, especially those with very young children, do not fully commit to their careers because they are concerned about their children. This is likely why women are more likely than men to make work adjustments in order to care for children.[25] While we already know that mothers spend more time on childcare than fathers do, it is telling that mothers also spend a greater percentage of their childcare time on their own without their spouse present, compared to fathers, who spend relatively little time alone with their children.[26] Therefore, if men take on more responsibility for childcare, especially on their own time, while their partners work, it will ease mothers' concerns. Indeed, there is evidence that fathers can help working mothers by increasing their own involvement with children. A British study found, "The children of working mothers receive no less active parental interaction than the children of non-working mothers because the involvement of fathers rises to offset lower maternal involvement. This is an important result because it indicates that perhaps

the most intuitive mechanism through which we might expect maternal employment to be harmful to children, i.e. a reduction in parental inputs, is simply not in evidence. In addition, it seems that the greater involvement of fathers in child rearing in households where mothers work has strongly beneficial effects on children's cognitive development."[27] In other words, fathers who are highly involved in caregiving eliminate any negative effects of full-time maternal employment. In instances in which mothers work and fathers take over care for children, whether it involves feeding children or playing with children, this involvement has a positive effect on child outcomes. This positive influence outweighs the potential negative effects of reduced maternal involvement due to employment.[28]

Supporting superdads may also have a larger impact on gender equality. In studies of nonindustrial societies, there is a link between the strength of father-child relationships and female status. For example, when fathers engage in more routine childcare, females participate more in community decision-making and have greater access to positions of authority.[29] As with mothers' employment, it just makes sense that mothers will be able to do more nonfamily activities, including community and political activities, if their partners are taking more responsibility for childcare. On the other hand, when fathers focus primarily on breadwinning, as with old dads, and leave mothers to do all the childcare and household tasks, women will have less time and energy to get involved in workplaces, community, and larger public roles. Indeed, there is some evidence that the largest factor in determining the gender pay gap is the unequal division of caring tasks between women and men.[30] In a study of 20 OECD countries, political scientists found that female representation in government and maternal employment are positively related to each other, which suggests that men's participation with children may ultimately expand opportunities for women in both employment and politics.[31] As Scott Coltrane envisioned, fathers who are fully involved in childcare and housework have the power to transform not only themselves but also American society in a way that promotes gender equality.[32]

These ideas go back to prominent psychoanalytic feminist Nancy Chodorow's theory that gender is reproduced in the home, that a gendered division of labor in childcare produces a gendered division of labor (or gen-

der inequality) in the greater society.[33] There are three ways in which greater father involvement may promote greater gender equality. First, when men and women share tasks in one domain (e.g., at home), they are more likely to share tasks in another domain (e.g., in government). This is the basic premise that equality promotes equality. Second, as noted, men's greater participation in home life frees women to participate in public life. Third, men who are more involved with their children are likely to raise girls and boys who have a greater sense of gender equality. In particular, boys will see that they can take on nurturing roles just as effectively as girls can. Boys would see their fathers engaged in nurturing, and they would learn that fathers and mothers share responsibility for the caring of children. This model also suggests that father-child relationships might develop independently of father-mother relationships, allowing more possibilities for father involvement regardless of marital status.[34]

Benefits to Children

When fathers' main role was breadwinner and involvement in daily care was limited, there was an assumption that they would have little direct impact on their children's development.[35] As the rates of divorce and nonmarital births increased, there was much concern over the effects of father absence. Much of the literature does suggest that a child's academic performance, social behavior, and emotional well-being fare better when a father is present. But now that more and more fathers take on the role of nurturer and some become superdads, there is more reason to pay attention to the potential effects of father involvement on child outcomes. While living with a child may be beneficial in itself, all residential fathers are not necessarily highly involved in shaping their children's development. The interactions and relationships between fathers and children are also important. When fathers are more involved in caregiving tasks, the potential benefits to children's cognitive and social development may be even greater.[36] In fact, there is some evidence that paternal employment when children are young, though having a smaller impact than maternal employment, is negatively related to child outcomes.[37]

It seems likely that father involvement may have an impact from very early ages. Several researchers have found that parental leave is positively

associated with children's health. On the other hand, mothers who return to work within 12 weeks of giving birth are less likely to breastfeed and less likely to take their infants for regular checkups at the pediatrician, which can affect infant health. Also, infants of these early-returning mothers are less likely to have complete immunizations and more likely to show signs of behavior problems.[38] Among fathers, those who take longer leaves are more likely to continue to be involved in their children's lives even after returning to work.[39]

Eirini Flouri and Ann Buchanan, researchers at the University of Oxford, assert that father involvement should have a positive impact on children's education for three reasons. First, involved fathers tend to actively play with their children, and this contributes to children's emotional and cognitive development. Second, when fathers are involved, mothers also tend to be involved, resulting in two highly involved parents. Third, involved fathers provide a more positive family environment.[40] Studies that have tested the relationship between father involvement and children's educational outcomes have largely shown positive results. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, children whose fathers are more involved are more likely to take part in educational activities such as museum trips. Highly involved fathers promote children's inquisitiveness and exploration, which leads to better problem-solving skills. In addition, a study of Head Start children showed that children with involved fathers had higher mathematics readiness change scores than those with less involved fathers.[41] Effects of father involvement may be long lasting. A study of achievement through middle school found that fathers' equal participation in child activities was associated with a high level of achievement among girls. At the same time, girls from traditional families with less involved fathers experienced lower performance in math and science.[42] Using the National Child Development Study, Flouri and Buchanan went further by looking at the effect of father involvement and mother involvement at age 7 on educational attainment by age 20. Confirming previous studies, they found that father involvement at a younger age positively influences educational attainment later on. Importantly, the effect of father involvement was independent of mother involvement and had the same effect on daughters and sons.[43]

These benefits extend to children's psychological well-being. On the one hand, Michael Lamb, a child-development specialist, speculated that father's involvement would have a similar influence on child development as mother's involvement.[44] On the other hand, fathers might influence their children differently because of differences in father-child interactions. For example, fathers spend more time playing with their children, especially in physical activities, than mothers do. This might encourage children to develop more competitiveness and independence.[45] Several studies have shown that father involvement contributes to positive child outcomes, including psychological adjustment. Children with involved fathers have greater self-confidence and self-esteem than children with less involved fathers. One study even found that when both father-child and mother-child relationship measures were examined simultaneously, only a positive father-child relationship reduced a son's levels of distress. Adolescents who have a close relationship with their father have lower levels of depression than do adolescents who do not have a close relationship.[46] Other studies have shown that the impact of father involvement extends into adulthood. Having a close relationship with one's father during childhood is positively associated with children's psychological well-being as adults. A longitudinal study based on the National Child Development Study found that daughters whose fathers were highly involved at age 16 have lower rates of psychological distress at age 33 than those with fathers who had medium or low levels of involvement at age 16.[47]

Father involvement also has the potential to affect other child outcomes. Children with involved fathers are less likely to demonstrate antisocial behavior and more likely to conform to accepted values and ethics than are children with less involved fathers. They are also more likely to develop supportive social networks and positive peer relations.[48] When fathers are involved, mothers report less problem behavior among children. This positive influence may be even greater for sons.[49]

Benefits to Society

Finally, superdads have the potential to create a healthier, more gender-equal society. David Eggebeen, a professor of human development and sociology at Penn State, argues that fathers have a stronger stake in children's

welfare issues than do men who remain childless.[50] It follows that fathers who engage more directly with their children on a daily basis will have more knowledge and interest in promoting all children's well-being. This focus may be encouraged by fathers' increased interactions with extended family.[51] But fathers also extend their networks beyond family members to other social institutions, including schools and churches, and participate in more community-service-oriented activities. In a study of middle-aged American men, sociologists found a positive relationship between father involvement and community involvement. More specifically, fathers who were more engaged with their children as they were growing up were more likely to develop altruistic social relationships and get involved in organizations with a service component.[52]

It is already clear that Americans support gender equality. In fact, attitudes concerning marriage and gender equality in marital roles experienced major shifts in the 1960s and 1970s, with smaller changes since the 1980s. When asked whether married couples should share household tasks on the basis of ability and interest rather than presumed gender roles (i.e., certain tasks should be done by the husband, while other tasks should be done by the wife), about half of Americans agreed in 1961, whereas almost 90 percent agreed in 1978. By the mid-1990s, almost everyone agreed with sharing tasks. A similar transition occurred in attitudes regarding equality between husbands and wives in family decision-making.[53]

In earlier work, I argued that more egalitarian attitudes among men promote stronger marriages, as egalitarian men are less likely than their more traditional counterparts to get divorced.[54] When egalitarian attitudes are translated into behavior, it is beneficial for marriage, as men who do more housework are more likely to have stable marriages. Indeed, a more equal division of paid and unpaid work reduces the likelihood of divorce, compared to marriages characterized by a single breadwinner.[55] This may be why the negative relationship between women's education and marriage has turned around.[56]

Creating More Superdads

While I have emphasized the differences between old dads, new dads, and superdads, there is one similarity that could stall the further evolution of fathers' work-family balance. The one thing they all have in common is that they do not expect much from employers or government. Almost all the fathers I talked with shared a typically American emphasis on individualism, focusing on their own personal situation and difficulties. For the most part, old dads were content with their work-family balance and did not talk of major changes. They liked being the primary or sole breadwinner, and they hoped to advance further in their careers in order to provide more resources and opportunities for their families. The few who thought they might want to cut back faced other constraints that made change unlikely. Yet, even among this more traditional group, there are signs of change. For one, the old dads are not uninvolved fathers. They generally spend as much time with their children as they can, and though this falls short of the new dads and superdads, it is still more than fathers in the past. Second, Matt's story shows us that it is never too late to change. As he makes plans and engages in training to change his career from delivery driver to firefighter, there is hope for greater involvement with his children. In addition, some of the new dads and even superdads in this study used to be old dads. While I have categorized fathers according to what they were doing when I talked with them, their diverse work and family histories demonstrate the dynamic nature of these categories. Unlike old dads, new dads emphasized their provider and nurturer roles more equally and made some attempts to better balance work and family. Nevertheless, these were largely minor adjustments made within the system, and these fathers still experienced quite a bit of work-family conflict. The fact that many of these new dads achieved balance by separating their work and family roles, both physically and mentally, shows that some of the adjustments were more mental than structural. The sense that there was not a lot the fathers themselves could do because "the job I have is the job I have" was quite common among new dads and emphasizes again the individual as the focal point of any change. Unlike new dads, superdads have taken matters into their own hands in order to effect change in their lives. The uniqueness of superdads that I have

sought to highlight in this book is not simply that they make work adjustments or are particularly good at balancing work and family but that they respond to their family's needs and change their work lives because of the type of father they want to be. Nonetheless, while superdads may possess a greater awareness of structural constraints on fathers who try to balance work and family, their solutions are still largely individual ones. And so while I propose changes that individual fathers (and mothers) can make, my larger focus is on the institutions that maintain these constraints and are therefore better targets for large-scale change.

What Men Need to Do

In order to create more superdads, we need more fathers who are willing to put their families ahead of their work. Men need to see themselves as equal participants in family life, sharing caregiving and household tasks with partners, regardless of whether they are married to or cohabiting with or living apart from their children's mother. While most fathers today want to be involved in raising their children, they cannot accept a secondary role in which they "help" mothers. Rather, they need to be equally engaged, equally accessible, and equally responsible for their children. When fathers become equal parents, they will be more likely to question the workplace structures that impede parental involvement. There is already evidence that in Sweden, men are more likely than women to challenge workplace culture that conflicts with their family priorities. Furthermore, men's increased focus on fatherhood has been a critical factor in Sweden's changing workplace culture.[57]

What Women Need to Do

Although I would like to emphasize the role of government and employers in creating change, I cannot overlook the role of women in supporting superdads. By support, I mean that mothers and partners need to allow fathers to take on a more equal role. There has been quite a bit of literature on maternal gatekeeping and its part in suppressing father involvement. Here I refer to mothers who are reluctant and sometimes downright unwilling to hand over half or even some of the responsibilities of childcare. Gatekeeping may come in the form of setting inflexible standards for child-

care, defining family roles in gender-specific ways, and looking for external validation of one's mothering practices. It generally results in a more unequal division of family work, with women who act as gatekeepers putting in about five more hours of family work each week. The good news is that maternal encouragement has even stronger effects on father involvement than criticism does.[58]

What Employers Need to Do

Early research on the impact of family-friendly workplace policies on men's work behaviors found that men were often reluctant to use these policies. This reluctance stemmed from a fear that employers and co-workers would think they were less committed to their job than men who did not take advantage of these policies.[59] While women are not immune to these concerns, the fact that men are still seen as providers means that employers often assume they will be even more committed to work when they become fathers.[60] This is unfair to fathers and in the long term to all employees who want to have a life outside work. Therefore, workplace norms need to change, and one of the biggest changes should be the acknowledgment that men have family responsibilities. This will pave the way for more men to make changes in how they prioritize work and family.

Of course, changing the workplace culture is not the only thing that needs to happen. There should be more concrete policies that help all employees balance their family responsibilities with their work responsibilities. The first step is to recognize that working fathers may have particular needs in relation to managing work and family. Therefore, a plan should be implemented to assess these needs, and this should include talking directly with workers about their needs and how the workplace could better accommodate these needs. Second, policies should be designed to meet the needs of working fathers as well as other employee needs.

These policies should include family leave, comparable benefits for reduced or part-time work, and more flexible options for work time and place (see next section on government policies). Family leave should apply to all workers who have been with the company for a certain amount of time and should provide equal amounts of time for men and women. Ideally, it should be paid family leave, at least for a minimum number of

weeks. Reduced hours or part-time work should be available to all employees and should result in prorated pay and benefits. Employers should make flex-time available to employees. Given an agreed-on number of hours for an employee, the employee should be able to arrange this time in whatever manner suits his or her family schedule. When appropriate, employees should also have access to flexibility in workplace. Most work can be accomplished from a variety of settings, including the home. If employers are concerned about productivity, they can utilize a results-only model in which employees are compensated and judged based on their performance rather than time clocked. A recent study found that the implementation of a results-only workplace (ROWE) increased employees' control of their work schedule, which, in turn, improved work-family balance.[61] Instead of focusing on "face time" in the workplace, fathers can use this opportunity to have more "face time" with their children.[62]

Finally, in order for these policies to be effective, there should be an effort to publicize these new benefits. Unless workers actually know they exist, policies will not be very helpful. These efforts should be aimed equally at male and female employees. Furthermore, employers should encourage workers to take advantage of existing and new family-friendly policies. Again, there should be an extra effort to let male as well as female employees know that they will not be penalized for using the policies.

Family-friendly policies are good for employers, too. There is evidence that family leave increases retention and morale and decreases turnover.[63] Furthermore, flexible working also can benefit employers by attracting and retaining highly qualified employees. Flexible working may further enhance productivity.[64] In Sweden, a forerunner in family-friendly policies (see the next section), some companies actually offer men financial rewards for taking parental leave, with the notion that these policies improve recruitment and retention. Indeed, there is no evidence that fathers who take leave experience any negative long-term impacts on their career prospects, a sign that Swedish employers are supportive of working fathers.[65]

What Government Needs to Do

Government support of families has the potential to ease much of the stress that working families face. If these policies are implemented with attention

to gender equity at work and home, women would be able to increase their financial contribution, while men could increase their family involvement. Here I discuss four areas for policy changes: family leave, work-hour regulations, part-time work, and custody and child support.

Family Leave

The Project on Global Working Families recently released the Work, Family, and Equity Index. Based on data from 177 countries, this report provides a comparative view of the United States in matters related to work and family. According to this report, the United States lags behind other countries in leave around childbearing, among other family-related policies. The United States is one of only four countries that do not provide any paid maternity leave. What are the other three countries? Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland. In fact, 66 countries also guarantee fathers paid paternity leave or paid parental leave. Obviously, the United States does not offer fathers any paid leave.[66] As mentioned in chapter 2, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) offers up to 12 weeks of *unpaid* leave for new mothers and fathers but is infrequently used because most eligible employees cannot afford to take unpaid leave. A few states offer paid leave (see table 8.1), but the majority of American employees must rely on employer policies. Less than 10 percent of employers provide paid paternity leave.[67]

Sweden provides an excellent example of government policies that support both families and gender equality. This is achieved by special attention to men's early involvement in childrearing. Sweden was the first country to introduce parental leave (replacing maternity leave), back in 1974. Then, in 1995, Sweden introduced "daddy leave," in which one month of leave was reserved for fathers only (i.e., if fathers did not take the month, the family lost that leave), and in 2002, the daddy quota was increased to two months. Now 85 percent of Swedish fathers take parental leave, and their share of the total 13 months leave is increasing.[68] The Swedish government also considers the ability for new parents on leave to improve certain skills, such as multitasking, communication, and interpersonal skills, which will transfer to the workplace, making parents better parents, workers, and citizens.[69] It is clear that policies, particularly those aimed directly at fathers, can be effective in increasing men's time with infants.

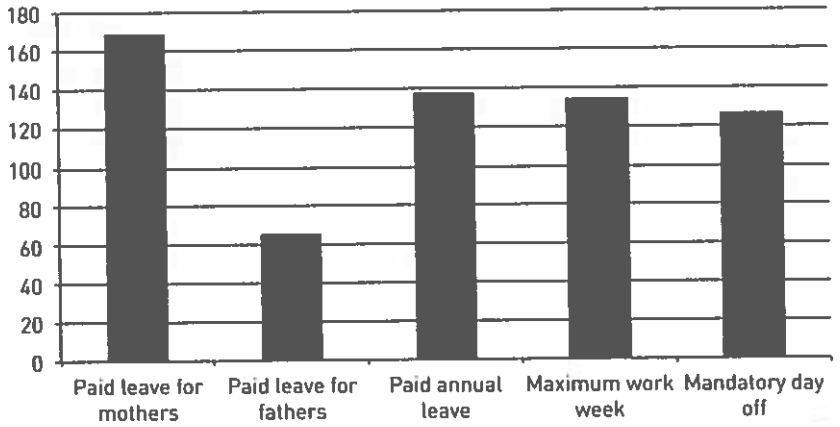

Fig. 8.1. Number of countries with family-friendly work policies. Source: Work, Family, and Equity Index, Project of Global Working Families

While it is preferable for the federal government to pass legislation that will provide benefits to all workers, there are a number of state policies that offer some benefits. The federal government may take some lessons from a few of these states. Five states offer partial wage replacement to new mothers through state temporary disability insurance (TDI) programs (see table 8.2). These states are California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. Most states allow six weeks of pregnancy-related disability, though this may vary based on birth experience and health conditions. Wage replacement differs by state but is generally based on a percentage of weekly wages. Most of the funding for TDI programs comes from employee contributions, though some programs also rely on employer contributions in addition to employee contributions. These programs mean that much of the required infrastructure for family leave is already in place.[70]

California was the first state to offer paid family leave, passing the law in 2002 and implementing it in 2004. California's Paid Family Leave Insurance Program offers up to six weeks of leave in order to care for a newborn or adopted child (it also includes caring for sick family members—child, spouse, parents—or domestic partners). Wage replacement is partial, with workers receiving 55 percent of weekly earnings up to a maximum of $959 per week (the maximum amount is updated annually based on the state's

Table 8.1: State Laws That Offer Additional Job Protection or Benefits for New Parents Who Are Private-Sector Employees

	STATES	PROTECTION/BENEFIT
Family leave benefits	California, New Jersey, Washington	Up to 6 weeks paid leave
Medical/disability leave benefits	California	Up to 4 weeks before and 6 weeks after the birth of a child
	Hawaii	Up to 26 weeks
Flexible use of sick days	California, Connecticut (75+ employees), Hawaii (100+ employees), Washington, Wisconsin (50+ employees)	Use of sick days to care for newborn, adopted child, or spouse with pregnancy or birth-related disability
Job-protected family and medical leave	Iowa (4+ employees), Massachusetts (6+ employees)*	Up to 8 weeks of leave for pregnancy-related disability
	California (5+ employees), Connecticut (75+ employees), Louisiana (25+ employees), Tennessee (100+ employees)	Up to 4 months of leave for pregnancy-related disability
	New York	Up to 26 weeks of leave for pregnancy-related disability
	Rhode Island	Up to 30 weeks of leave for pregnancy-related disability
	Connecticut (3+ employees), Hawaii, Montana, New Hampshire (6+ employees), Washington (8+ employees)	Reasonable leave of absence for pregnancy-related disability
At-home infant care	Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico	Benefits to low-income parents to care for infants at home
Other	Colorado, Maryland	Employers that provide parental leave must offer equivalent to employees adopting a child
	Kentucky	6 weeks of parental leave for adoption
	Maine	Up to 10 weeks of family and medical leave (15+ employees)
	Minnesota	Up to 6 weeks leave (21+ employees)
	Oregon	Up to 12 weeks of unpaid family and medical leave (25+ employees)
	Rhode Island	Up to 13 weeks of parental leave (50+ employees)
	South Carolina	Prohibits employers from firing an employee who takes leave for pregnancy disability (15+ employees)
	Vermont	Up to 12 weeks of parental leave (10+ employees)
No additional protection or benefits	Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming	

* Recommends similar leave for male employees

Source: National Partnership for Women and Families, www.nationalpartnership.org

Table 8.2: State Temporary Disability Insurance Wage Replacement

STATE	PERCENT	BASE	MAXIMUM
California	55	Highest quarterly earnings	$959
Hawaii	58	Average weekly wages	$510
New Jersey	66	Average weekly wages	$524
New York	50	Weekly wages	$170
Rhode Island	4.62	Highest calendar quarter wages	$671

Source: Fass 2009; http://www.paidfamilyleave.org/pdf/PaidLeaveinStates.pdf

average weekly wage). California's program is an improvement over the federal Family and Medical Leave program because it (1) offers paid leave and (2) covers nearly all employees, including those working for companies with fewer than 50 employees and part-time workers. These two criteria are crucial. First, remember that only about 60 percent of employees are covered under FMLA. Second, based on evaluation studies, a majority of employees who needed leave but did not take it said they did not take leave because it was not paid, and most of these employees said they would have taken leave if it was paid. Therefore, we might expect many more workers to take leave if there were no restrictions based on company size and if the leave was paid. Nevertheless, California's program does have a couple of drawbacks. One is that it does not provide job protection for employees who take paid leave under this program. For those employees who also meet the requirements of FMLA (50 or more employees, working for company for at least one year, worked at least 1,250 hours), they can take paid leave and know that their jobs are protected. However, employees working for smaller companies or working part-time must take a chance that their job will not be there upon their return from leave. A second drawback is that California's program does not require employers to extend benefits, including health insurance, to employees on paid leave. Again, those employees also covered by FMLA will continue to receive benefits, but other employees may not. Therefore, it is important that any paid leave program also offer job protection and continued benefits.[71]

New Jersey passed a very similar law as California's in 2008, with implementation in 2009. Under New Jersey's Family Leave Insurance Program, employees are eligible for up to six weeks of paid leave to care for a new-

born (or ill parent, child, spouse/partner). Wage replacement is 66 percent of weekly earnings, up to a maximum of $546 per week (adjusted annually). As with California, New Jersey's program also builds on its disability program in funding the program via a payroll tax. It is also more inclusive than FMLA, covering employees in small companies and part-time workers. However, this state program does not offer job protection.[72]

Washington passed a paid family leave law in 2007 but was delayed in implementing this program. Washington's Family Leave Insurance Program would offer five weeks of paid leave to care for a newborn or adopted child. Washington's program differs from California's program in who is covered and what the benefits are. Under the program, employees who work 35 hours per week or more would receive a flat payment of $250 per week, while part-time workers would receive prorated benefits. Washington's program does offer job protection to those employees working for companies with 25 or more employees who have worked at least 1,250 hours in the past year. Because of budget issues, this program is not scheduled to go into effect until October 2015.[73]

We know that men's use of family leave is positively associated with child and family well-being. Furthermore, longer leaves for fathers promote father involvement even after returning to work.[74] Family leave also benefits women. Employed mothers who postpone going back to work after giving birth are less likely to experience depression than mothers who return sooner.[75] At the same time, women who have access to parental leave are more likely to return to employment and more likely to return to the same job than those who do not have such access. Parents' labor force attachment increases economic security for families.[76] Public-policy researchers Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers propose three strategies for increasing fathers' use of parental leave. The first strategy is to offer high wage-replacement rates. Since men tend to make more money than women do, when low or no wage replacement is offered, it is more likely for mothers to take leave or to leave the labor market than for fathers to take leave. The second strategy is to provide separate parental leave for each parent. If leave will be lost if not taken by the father, it is more likely for fathers to take leave. The third strategy is public campaigns to increase awareness of parental leave and to change public perceptions about men's role in caregiving.[77]

Regulations on Work Hours

The United States provides little regulation of work hours. The Fair Labor Standards Act established a maximum number of hours above which employees must be paid overtime wages. This was originally 44 hours in 1938 and was reduced to 40 hours in 1940. Since 1940, this threshold has not been changed. In addition, an increasing number of workers are not covered by these provisions. Over one-quarter of full-time employees are exempt, which means there is no limit on their hours and no extra pay for any hours over 40.[78] Furthermore, there is a growing culture of long work hours. A recent report by the Center for American Progress finds that professionals often see a 40-hour workweek as part-time and potentially "career suicide." This may be the reason an increasing share of professional men and women work 50 hours or more, on average, per week.[79]

The U.S. policy is in contrast to most European countries that set normal full-time work below 40 hours. Regarding actual hours, 134 countries have laws concerning the maximum workweek, and 126 countries mandate one day off each week, while the United States has no such regulations.[80] The EU Directive on Working Time sets a maximum workweek of 48 hours over each seven-day period, and this includes overtime. As such, there are normal full-time hours and maximum hours. For example, France has a workweek of 35 hours, with maximum working hours of 48. The Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, have set both normal working hours and maximum working hours at 40.[81]

Beyond regular working hours, there is a discrepancy between the United States and other countries on vacation time. While 137 countries require employers to provide paid annual vacation leave, and 121 of these countries guarantee at least two weeks of paid vacation leave, the United States does not have any requirements regarding vacation.[82] There is no minimum number of vacation days employers must offer and no requirement to pay employees for vacation days. In fact, American workers average around 11 paid vacation days per year. In contrast, the EU Directive on Working Time, in addition to regulating work hours, requires that employers offer at least four weeks of paid vacation each year. About half of the EU countries have gone further, requiring five weeks of paid vacation.[83]

Part-Time Work

In the United States, there is no policy on part-time employment, and most part-time work is limited to certain jobs that pay less, have fewer benefits, and provide less job security. Again, the United States differs from its European counterparts. The EU Directive on Part-Time Work has the goal of improving the quality of part-time work by requiring that employers treat part-time employees similarly to full-time employees. It seeks to address equity in training, pay, benefits, and promotions. The Netherlands provide a good example of favorable government policy regarding part-time work. Dutch law allows employees flexibility in increasing or decreasing their work hours. Its intention is to promote more equal sharing among couples, with the ultimate goal of each partner working a three-quarter-time schedule.[84] A comparable policy in the United States would encourage more superdads like Sean, the lawyer who arranged a three-quarter schedule alongside his wife.

Child Custody

For much of this country's early history, fathers were awarded custody in the rare event of divorce because children were seen as property belonging to fathers. Starting in the 19th century, the "tender years" doctrine, with its emphasis on mothers' superiority in parenting infants and children, dominated custody law. This resulted in a legal preference for maternal custody. Most recently, states, while varying in details of their laws, favor a "best interests of the child" doctrine.[85] While this doctrine is gender neutral in language, gendered assumptions about parental roles still exist. As professor of social work Edward Kruk suggests, "decisions prevalent in the arena of family law have reflected the presumption that only one parent, usually the mother, is to care for children, while the other, usually the father, provides financial support."[86] Other studies show that mothers are awarded sole physical custody more often than fathers are and that ideas about traditional gender roles still influence judicial decision-making. For example, interviews with trial-court judges reveal that many judges possess "a worldview that mothers and fathers are fundamentally different and provide different kinds of support and role models for their children." As

a result, judges may think a child's best interests are served by awarding mothers custody.[87]

While legal practice seems skewed toward mothers, mounting evidence demonstrates that joint physical custody may be in the best interests of children and parents. First, a majority of children of divorce say they want equal time with their parents and believe shared custody is the best arrangement for children. Second, children in joint-custody arrangements experience better adjustment to the divorce than do children in sole-custody arrangements. Third, the living arrangements of children in joint-custody arrangements are as stable as or are more stable than those of children in mother-custody arrangements. Fourth, children of divorce who spend equal time with both parents have better relationships with mothers and fathers after divorce than do those who spend more time with one parent than the other. Fifth, divorced parents who share custody experience improved cooperation and decreased conflict over time compared to parents in sole-custody arrangements.[88]

Policy Suggestions

Based on my findings and the accumulated knowledge we now possess about men, work, and family, I recommend the following changes:

1. Parental leave should be paid, and it should offer job protection. All employees should be covered, including those who work for smaller companies and part-time workers. At least one month each should be set aside for fathers and mothers.
2. There should be regulations regarding the maximum workweek and paid vacation.
3. There should be more options for part-time work, and this should be paid at the same rate with the same benefits as full-time work.
4. Joint custody should be the default, and there should be more equal child support for single fathers.

Conclusion

Families are always changing, and people's expectations for families change, too. As recently as the early 1980s, newly marrying couples ranked sharing, caring, and responsibility for children number 11 out of 15 values they wanted to bring into their marriages. By the late 1990s, sharing was ranked number 2.[89] It is clear that today's couples want to share the caregiver role. This may explain why couples in which roles are more traditionally divided experience more conflict than do couples who more equally share providing and caring.[90] The change keeps happening. Today's fathers spend more time with their children than ever (at least for the time period for which we have data), and there are more and more families in which childcare is divided equally.[91]

This change may be particularly salient at a time when the economy is stagnant. Even before the current economic troubles, men's position in the labor market had been diminished by the decline in relatively high-paying and male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing.[92] The result is that more and more men are unable to fulfill the provider role. While men's diminished economic role may create instability for men and their families, it also offers an opportunity to reconsider strict gender roles that not only place the burden of housework and childcare mainly on women but also restrict men's time with children. Indeed, more egalitarian relationships can be developed when women step up to provide income for their families and men step up to take care of children and household needs.[93]

Just as we saw the trend toward more involved fathering and the proliferation of new dads, we may yet see the continued evolution of the role of fathers as more men become superdads. These superdads more closely resemble working mothers in their efforts to combine work and family. What happens to a society where family values and gender equality are long-term goals, one in which superdads are the norm rather than the exception? Men, women, children, and the society at large benefit. But fathers need help along the way. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, there has been much talk of a "stalled revolution" in which women were changing roles quickly while men (and workplaces) were lagging behind. I think today's "stalled revolution" has more to do with workers versus workplaces

than men versus women. As I have tried to make clear, there are a growing number of men who are choosing family over work. These fathers have the potential of making work and family needs a parent issue rather than a women's issue. However, the problem lies in the fact that many dads see conflict between work and family as "personal troubles" rather than structural and systemic constraints. Without public policies that protect work-family balance for either fathers or mothers, men, like women, are left to figure things out on a case-by-case basis. So while fathers should do their part, government and employers need to take the lead role.