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Author: Anastasia H. Prokos

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Changing Fatherhood in the 21st Century: Incentives and Disincentives for Involved Parenting

Anastasia H. Prokos*

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*Anastasia H. Prokos is a post-doctoral researcher at the Center for Working Families, University of Califonia, Berkeley.

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Abstract

Based on in-depth interviews with fathers in two-parent households in the San Francisco Bay Area, this paper explores how fathers' perceptions of different aspects of workplace and family encouraged and discouraged their involvement in child rearing. Disincentives included: (1) assumptions about complementary marriage and intensive motherhood; (2) families' financial needs; (3) workplace structures, including inflexible, long hours and fathers' perceptions of their ability to be replaced by another worker; and (4) workplace cultures that ignored workers' family lives and defined work as the most important aspect of life. Incentives included: (1) advanced scheduling of care work; (2) a critical stance on marriage as an institution; (3) workplace structures including flexible schedules and the ability of fathers to take advantage of them; and (4) workplace cultures that encouraged talk about family at work and that equally valued family and workplace matters.

In the contemporary United States, the term "fatherhood" conjures up two contradictory ideas. One popular perception is that fathers are more involved with their children than ever before. This "new father" spends quality time with his children, is nurturing and caring, and prioritizes family over all else. Popular media increasingly portray fathers as actively involved in their children's lives, as creating organizations centered on fatherhood (including those geared toward helping fathers win custody cases), and employers as increasingly offering "parental leave" rather than maternity leave. At the same time, the public seems to have a growing concern for "deadbeat dads," who fail to support or spend time with their children. Thus, on one side exists the popular conception that many fathers are more involved with their children than ever before; on the other side is the realization that many fathers virtually "abandon" their children. How do these disparate views coexist in U.S. society?

The reason these two contradictory orientations exist is that there is truth to both of them. Fathers spend more time caring for children than they did just three and a half decades ago (as do mothers)(Bianchi 2000). Overall, however, fathers still spend less time caring for children than mothers (Bianchi 2000; Yeung et al. 2001). Fathers are also unlikely to take parental leave, even when it is offered (Pleck 1993). And it is true that most noncustodial fathers spend very little time with their children (Lareau 2000; Maccoby and Mnookin 1992; Marsiglio et al. 2000).

Recent research has pointed out the need to pay attention to what fathers do rather than where their presence is lacking. Although research finds that fathers do not have a central role in child care, it shows they are important in families and in networks of care (Hansen 2001; Laureau 2000). The questions remain, what inspires fathers to be more involved in child care? And what keeps them from participating in child care as much as they might?

How men define and participate in family life reflects how they see themselves in relation to larger organizational contexts. That is, men's *perceptions* of external influences affect how they participate in fatherhood. "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928:571-572). For example, different aspects of workplace culture act to either reinforce fathers' involvement in care work or diminish it. Workplace culture is not simply an objective reality separate

from fathers' experiences of it. Fathers' subjective experiences of workplace culture—and contributions to it—also influence how it will affect their behavior.

This paper examines how men's experiences of different aspects of the workplace and family can act as disincentives and incentives to fathers' more active involvement in child care. Disincentives included: (1) assumptions about complementary gender roles in marriage and intensive motherhood; (2) families' financial needs; (3) workplace structures, including inflexible, long hours and fathers' perceptions of their ability to be replaced by another worker; and (4) workplace cultures that ignored workers' family lives and defined work as the most important aspect of life. Incentives included: (1) advanced scheduling of care work; (2) a critical stance on marriage as an institution; (3) workplace structures, including flexible schedules and the ability of fathers to take advantage of them; and (4) workplace cultures that encouraged talk about family at work and that equally valued family and workplace matters.

Methods

This research is based on in-depth, face-to-face, semistructured interviews with fathers from two-parent households living in the San Francisco Bay area. A purposive sampling strategy maximized the diversity of the participants. Specifically, I recruited participants through personal contacts, a local computer bulletin board, word-of-mouth advertising, and snowball sampling. I made special efforts to interview a diverse set of fathers, paying close attention to demographic, racial/ethnic, and cultural diversity. Interviews were approximately one hour and focused on fathers' own definitions and explanations of their beliefs and practices about fatherhood and on how fatherhood affects and was affected by their jobs and other community contexts. These interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for analysis.

I used the grounded theory method to analyze the data and generate theory. The goal of grounded theory is to use data to develop theory rather than to test existing theory. When one is using grounded theory, the processes of data collection, coding, and analysis are simultaneous (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Thus, data analysis began at the onset of the project. Interview questions solicited data about

fathers' perceptions, experiences, and practices of fatherhood, work, and community. My approach to the research is guided by previous theory and a sense of pertinent issues, but the grounded theory approach means that I was open to unanticipated concepts during the interviews as well as during the analysis process.

I conducted interviews during the winter of 2001 and the spring of 2002. During this time—while the whole nation was experiencing an economic downturn—the effects of the lagging economy were particularly noticeable on the West Coast. This was due in part to the particularly vulnerable high-tech industries that were concentrated there. Thus, although the respondents were all employed, it was in a labor market characterized by uncertainty. In addition to job insecurity for many workers, at the time, the area had one of the highest housing costs and lowest home ownership rates in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau 2002). Thus, although salaries were often high, many families found themselves in a precarious financial and housing situation.

Fatherhood and Employment

Previous research on fatherhood has examined many issues, which include situating fatherhood in social and historical context, evaluating the outcomes of fatherhood patterns on children, and documenting recent changes in the time men spend with their children (Yeung et al. 2001). A recent stream of sociological literature has examined the relationship between fatherhood and work. This relationship may present conflict or stress for many men (Berry and Rao 1997). The research on fatherhood and work tends to focus on either the ways that work affects fatherhood (Berry and Rao 1997; Yeung et al. 2001) or how fatherhood affects work (Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000).

In regard to how work affects fatherhood, researchers often examine how fathers balance work and family demands, especially the demand for time with children (Berry and Rao 1997; Moen and Yu 2000; Yeung et al. 2001). This research shows that fathers say they would like to spend more time with their children than they do (Galinsky 1999; Polatnick 2000) and that many are spending more time with their children than in the past. In general, the more time fathers spend at work, the less time they spend

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with their children (Yeung et al. 2001). Another variant of this literature attempts to provide men with knowledge to help them balance work and family life (e.g. Levine and Pittinsky 1997).

In regard to how men's family demands affect their work, in general, fathers do not alter their work activities in response to family demands (Hyde, Essex, and Horton 1993), although this varies by age. Specifically, younger men tend to have more egalitarian attitudes and express a desire to spend more time with their families. Younger fathers with egalitarian perspectives spend fewer hours per week at work than their counterparts with traditional perspectives (Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000).

Investigations of how fathers themselves explain the relationship between fatherhood and work are sparse. Employment traditionally has been the mechanism culturally prescribed for what appropriate father involvement is. In this "good provider" model, men show their commitment to family by providing an acceptably high income to support it (Bernard 1981). Employment is part of a "package deal" for men that includes marriage and children and is central to men's understanding of what it means to be a father (Townsend 2002).

This good provider role for men reinforces women's position in the family as the default parent who mediates relationships between fathers and their children (Townsend 2001). In general, mothers are more involved in children's activities, although fathers are able to "appropriate their wives' work as their own" (Gerstel and Clawson 2001: 376; Lareau 2000). Similarly, other research has found that fathers feel involved in their children's lives despite knowing relatively little about them (Lareau 2000).

Qualitative research on fatherhood can help researchers develop a richer understanding of the "cultural context and interpersonal processes associated with how fathers construct and negotiate their self-images as fathers and are directly and indirectly involved in their children's lives" (Marsiglio et al. 2000:1179; Marsiglio, Hutchinson, and Cohan 2001). This type of in-depth understanding of fathering would contribute to a clearer perception of how fathers interpret their work and family demands, as well as what fathers themselves view as incentives and disincentives to prioritizing family over other social institutions and relations. An important issue for future research is "how to provide real possibilities and stronger incentives for fathers to make family-friendly choices" (Polatnick 2000:4). Understanding what

fathers perceive as incentives and disincentives is key to developing successful alternatives for them regarding choices about family and work.

This paper explores fathers' perspectives and experiences of how cultural and structural factors at home and at work provided incentives and disincentives for them to make family-friendly choices. I define "family-friendly choices" as fathers' attention to and time spent with children. I also pay special attention to how mothers' presence affects fathers' relationships with their children. Mothers' presence does not invariably lead to a lack of fathers' involvement, but it may if mothers mediate relationships between fathers and their children.

Findings

Contextual aspects of the family and the workplace acted as disincentives and incentives for fathers' involvement as parents. Table 1 summarizes these factors. The interviews do not reflect one group of men who had only incentives and another who had only disincentives, but men who found both in their work and family lives. For example, the same workplace offered both incentives and disincentives.

Table 1. Workplace and Home Contextual Disincentives and Incentives for Fathers' Involved Parenting.

Institution	Disincentives	Incentives
Family	? Ideology of complementary marriage/ fathers' appropriation of mothers' care work ? Financial need	? Intentional sharing of care work (planning) ? Critical stance on institution of marriage
Work	? Nonflexible, long hours ? Culture ignores family/deems as unimportant	? Flexible scheduling ? Talk about family while at work/deems family as important

Family-Based Disincentives

The ideologies of complementary marriage and intensive mothering can lead to fathers' appropriating women's care work and relationships with children. Complementary marriage indicates the ideology that the two people in the marital dyad complete each other and that this combination constitutes a wholeness. When fathers thought of themselves as part of a couple—a mere piece of a whole—this allowed them to appropriate their wives' care work.

Interviews revealed the phenomenon that Gerstel and Clawson (2000) referred to as the appropriation of wives' work. These fathers claimed that responsibility for children was completely shared, and they used the word "we" when talking about things that either they or their wives had done with the children. They viewed child rearing as one of many joint enterprises taken on in their marriage. Interestingly, activities performed by the wife or husband became "marital property" to which either could lay claim. So, for example, when a child got driven to school every day, it was an accomplishment of the couple, not only of the specific person who drove. Indeed, the specific person who drove the child to school was irrelevant. This construction of family activity renders irrelevant the identity of the specific person doing the task. The foundation for this orientation is the ideology of marriage that is a melding of two people into one complementary unit. Thus, husbands were able to appropriate wives' work as their own. For example, Nic, one of the respondents, saw his wife's experiences with their child as tantamount to his own.

> Nic: You just might miss that, the rolling over, sitting up, crawling, or things like that. There's a million things that will last, you'll never forget, and I'd just tell her, "I don't want us to miss that. If I'm going to miss it, I don't want you to miss it!"
> I: Are you kind of disappointed that you'll miss it, though?
> Nic: No, no, because I know Victoria is there. She'll tell me about it. Whereas, with day care, you don't know what goes on there; you really don't.

If Nic were going to miss experiencing particular events with his child, it would be all right because his wife would not, and thus, the complementary parental unit would be involved. As long as his wife experienced important events, it would be almost like he had not missed them.

Another respondent, Paul, showed a similar reaction when he thought about the child care done at home. Paul, the father of two young children, held two jobs at the time of our interview. He taught teenage children part-time, and he worked as a stage manager for film and theater part-time. His initial reaction to one of my questions was to think of his wife's actions as his own, although he realized his error while he was talking. Unlike most respondents who appropriated their wives' care work, Paul "caught himself," caught what he was doing and corrected his rendition for accuracy.

> I put him to bed. I mean we kind of put him to bed together, but primarily Jen puts him to bed. I myself read him a story and actually put him to bed probably two nights out of the week.

In some cases, fathers interpreted the "you" in my questions as asking about the plural. This never occurred when I asked them questions such as "What do you see your role as a father?" Instead, when questions alluded to the care of children, the respondents interpreted the question as a plural "you." For example, a Chinese immigrant working in the high-tech industry automatically assumed that my question about part-time work applied to his wife, and not himself, even though she was equally well employed. When I asked him if he ever considered working part-time, he explained:

> Not really. The first few months my wife [returned] to work [were] very difficult. At that time, I actually thought about asking my wife to ask her manager [if] she can work part-time. But as she said, [of all the employees] nobody actually works part-time. And if you did that, that would make your work very special, not very comfortable.

Similarly, when I asked him about time he had taken off during childbirth, he spoke of himself only as an afterthought.

> My wife had two months, I guess about two months. I don't know what's common.… She also [took] some of her vacation. And I took about two weeks off.

The conflation of his time off for childbirth and his wife's is typical of the complementarity he experienced in other aspects of his marriage. This family did almost everything together in their everyday routines. For example, rather than using separate cars, he picked his wife up from work, and they picked up the child together and went home.

At one extreme, complementarity in marriage is portrayed by the breadwinner/homemaker model, in which fathers are in the labor force and women take care of the home and children. Nic, an American man of Filipino descent raised in California, was a network administrator with a two-month-old daughter. Prior to giving birth, his wife had worked full-time and had planned on returning, but had changed her mind when the baby was born, a decision that pleased Nic. When she asked him his opinion about her desire to stay at home, he replied:

> I said, "Well, I want you at home [spoken quietly], but I am not going to hold you back if you want to work. If you want to continue to work, go ahead." Every time I come home from work, I see Victoria holding her; she's feeding her. I open the door and I just see that, that, *that picture*. You know, on the couch, watching TV, she's holding the baby, and, Zoe, eyes are wide open looking around…. It's a matter of personal preferences. If I can afford it, the mommy staying home, the baby staying home, and home learning [is better]! I would take two full-time jobs just to have that, because I don't believe in day care…. This is my priority, whatever it takes. If it boils down to her working, if she really has to work, it would be [a] really, really desperate measure if she has to work. If that happens, my heart will be broken.

Although Nic is an extreme in the valorization of the full-time, stay-at-home mother, almost all the fathers in this sample alluded to mothers' special relationships with children. The other fathers, however, did not hold as fast to a strict breadwinner/homemaker ideology.

In sum, fathers' assumptions of complementarity in the division of labor underlay their participation in child rearing. By accepting an ideology of complementarity in marriage and parenting, in which they and their spouse act as one unit rather than two individuals, they were able to experience parenting somewhat vicariously through their wives.

Another family-based disincentive to fathers' involvement was their perception of their role as the family breadwinner. All or most fathers invoked the breadwinner ideal in explaining why they did not

spend as much time with their families and children as they would like. Most fathers said that it was essential that they work in order to support their families. When asked, "What kind of father are you?" Paul replied,

> I spend a lot of my time sort of running around trying to make sure that there is money to cover the needs of the family. In the process, [I end up] not spending as much time as perhaps I should with the family.

One reason they work so hard is the threat of job loss. Worried, they need to save. Huey, who worked in the high-tech industry, spoke for many of the fathers I interviewed in describing the potential for job loss.

> [We] both like go to work because we *can* work. If we [were] laid off, probably we [wouldn't]. If we wanted, [only] one [would] work full-time…[emphasis mine].

At least one man would have preferred to stay home and spend time with his family if financial necessity did not force him to work. In response to a question about whether he would continue to work if he were independently wealthy, he said emphatically,

> Yeah, definitely, I would stay home. Ha ha. That's a dream right there; that's something I really want to happen. If I could retire at the age of 40, or right now, I mean, let's do it! I mean, yeah, if I had that luxury, I would. I really would. And I keep, when I talk to Zoe…. I can't believe I am like that [wanting to stay home].

Fathers felt a need to act as "good providers" for their families. They responded to the very real necessity to contribute financial support to them. Men in a less precarious financial positions might be more inclined to spend time with their families because they can afford time off work. However, professionals, those more likely to be making a living wage that would offer them more financial flexibility, are often salaried workers, whose employers and managers expect them to work more than a 40-hour week (Schor 1991).

Workplace Disincentives

Workplace structures—and fathers' perceptions of them—often limited their time, thus preventing them from spending as much time with their children as they otherwise might have. The fathers I interviewed recognized this constraint in their lives and the lives of other men and described it as appearing in rigid work schedules and difficulties in finding workers to replace themselves. Whether fathers who said they could not be replaced at work were truly irreplaceable is unclear. It was the perception that they were not replaceable that influenced them.

Employers' expectations about men's commitment to their jobs and their schedules were a strong restriction on men's ability to be with their children. The fathers with whom I spoke expected to work more than 40 hours a week and accepted this as what it meant to be employed. For example, Huey, an engineer, described as "normal" his former 11-hour workday and as "reduced" his current 9-hour day, plus extra time at home to finish his work. This meant that Huey worked at home at night and on the weekends, cutting into time with his family. He tried to work after his daughter was asleep at night, but sometimes on the weekends this was difficult if not impossible.

For Paul, the demands of his job reached into the weekends as well. According to Paul, the film industry operated in such a way that, in order to be a part of it, he had to work on weekends. He explained,

> I just signed up to do a project. It's only a two-week project, but it's rehearsing two
> Saturdays. So it's kind of a bone of contention between Jen and myself. Because the
> economy given what it is, I have to pick up work whenever I can. But also given the nature
> of the [film] business, and it's kind of sporadic, and because it doesn't really pay anything,
> you very often have to rehearse on the weekends. So it does cut into the weekend.

One of the most common structural conditions that men felt restricted their ability to take time off was that their work could not be done by other workers. For example, Paul, who also taught part-time, explained that as a teacher he was irreplaceable:

> I am responsible for a group of students, and if I'm not there, then they are left to their own devices, which cannot be! If it were a total last minute emergency, I am not sure what I would do…. As far as the administration…I think…it would be frowned upon.

Nic, the network administrator, also believed that he could not be replaced at work for very long. It is clear that he can be replaced, at least for short periods of time, but he felt that, because he still had to be available by phone, the work could not be done without him. When I asked him if anyone else could do his work in his absence, he answered,

> No. Well, good example, yesterday I had the day off. Lance [the boss] was leaving to [have a day off]. So I just showed Mike [a coworker] the barest bones of what you need to do in case there is something wrong, you know, with the servers or the backup tapes. And I told him, "If there is anything else, call me on my cell phone. I can just tell you what to do." That is pretty much, I guess you would say Mike would be the backup.

Nic felt that he could be replaced temporarily and for short-term situations. However, he believed, perhaps correctly, that nobody else could perform his job—without his help—over the long term.

Fathers' perceptions of the inflexibility of their work schedules, and their feeling that their work contributions were irreplaceable, limited their ability to spend time with their children. It is arguable that other employees could have replaced these men at work, but these fathers believed no one could, and that is what influenced them.

Workplace culture was another factor that acted as a disincentive for fathers' involvement with family. Employer's and coworkers expectations that men prioritize work over family responsibilities influenced fathers' perceptions about how much time they could take from work. Subtle cues influenced their decisions about taking time for family.

One respondent explained that, in his work on a major motion picture, although it was technically allowable to take leave from work, it reflected poorly on people's sense of his work commitment.

> I started [a major Hollywood] film shoot the last week of March, and then the first week of April was when my daughter was born. So I had to take a week off. And I told him [the boss] in advance, "Look, I'll do this. I want to do this, but I have to take a week off." So I started one week, then took a week off. They said it was cool, *but it was not cool. I*

mean, it was not. I really got the vibe that they understood and that was all right, but if I was really serious about the film business, I wouldn't be having kids and really taking this time off. Every time they say okay like that … you become a little weaker. There is an unwritten mark that goes down next to your name in that person's mind: "Oh, that person is weak because he has a family."

Reflected in his story is a particular masculinity construction. The people, he notes, who are punished for lacking career commitment in this context meant men. The culture he referred to reinforced and reflected the idea that work was more important than private and family life. People who were dedicated to their careers would not sacrifice them by spending time in any other way. What is important is his perception. Perhaps others in his workplace would have disagreed with him and felt that taking time off for family was perfectly acceptable. But this respondent felt hesitant to take too much time off, fearing damage to his reputation. Indeed, he explained, had he felt his employers were more sympathetic, perhaps he would have taken more time off when his daughter was born.

The culture at Huey's office embodied a different kind of masculinity, a new high-tech masculinity. Like other research of men in the high-tech industry shows, masculinity is produced through long working hours (Cooper 2000). For Huey, full-time work meant nine hours at the office followed by more work at home when it was needed. Huey may not have defined this culture as a masculine one, particularly because his wife did similar work in a similar company. In any case, Huey felt it was more important for him to conform to these standards than it was for his wife.

Workplace cultures that reinforced the prioritization of work over other aspects of life compelled fathers to spend more time at work than they otherwise might. Generally, the more time fathers spend at work, the less time they spend with their children (Yeung et al. 2001). Employers and coworkers contributed to workplace cultures that sometimes compelled fathers to work longer hours than they may have in other situations.

In sum, disincentives to fathers' participation in child rearing and family life centered on their assumptions about marriage and motherhood, families' financial need, workplace structures such as inflexible schedules and a lack of replacement workers, and workplace cultures that reinforced long

hours. Again, fathers' perceptions, particularly about rigid workplace structures and hostile cultures, were key to their responses.

Family-Based Incentives

Having a set schedule and agreed-upon plan served as incentives for fathers' participation in child rearing. The men I interviewed had little spare time for acting spontaneously with their children. When fathers built time with children into their schedules, they spent more time with their kids. For example, Paul explained that his partner pressured him to spend more time with his family, and they worked to arrive at agreements about his work hours. Their specific agreement was that he would limit the number of major projects he engaged in to two per year. This advanced planning limited Paul's work time, making him available for his family more often. Indeed, Paul spent time with his family on the weekends as long as he was not involved in a major project.

Another aspect of planning that reinforced men's participation in care work was a set care schedule. Lee, a pastor, and his wife had what I found to be a complicated child care schedule, although to him it seemed straightforward.

> We try to model for our [congregation] members a kind of healthy way to be a family. So everybody knows that I take, often will take days when my wife is working and spend time with the girls. I have all day on Monday and Wednesday I have with them, all day. Wednesday I come in and we do a switch, so we are pretty *intentional* about that. I take Carrie to her gymnastics things, and I have started to take Laura more, too [emphasis mine].

When such schedules were integrated into routines, they went almost unnoticed by fathers, who simply accepted them as part of their everyday lives. Like Lee, though less extensively, Huey's daily routine included time focused on his daughter.

> Once we get home and my wife begins to cook dinner, I play with my daughter. And then I only work after my daughter [goes to bed].

Whether due to a partner's pressure or an explicit agreement, making clear plans and instituting a set schedule acted as major motivators for fathers' participation in the care of their children. When child care was incorporated as part of the rhythm of their everyday lives, fathers needed no further inducement to provide the care. Of course, fathers who scheduled time to spend with their children were probably predisposed to doing more child care than those who did not. I am unable to distinguish cause and effect from these data and simply want to point out what this kind of planning means in fathers' lives.

Another family-based incentive associated with fathers' greater participation in child care was holding a critique of marriage as an institution. Consciously rejecting a breadwinner/homemaker model of family both reflected and encouraged fathers' participation in child rearing. Lee and his wife, for example, who were among the most father-participative couples in the sample, had a strong critique of the institution of marriage, particularly when they were younger. This is not to say that unmarried parents reject the complementary division of labor. Many do not. Paul did not see any reason to marry, but he and his partner still engaged in a breadwinner/homemaker relationship that had all the trappings of a complementary marital one.

Workplace Incentives

Flexibility in work schedule was key to these men's ability to devote time to their families. Nic, for example, felt that he had much freedom to take time off for child care.

> Not a problem. We have paid time off. And if an emergency or something has happened, and we weren't able to reserve the day off beforehand, it's flexible enough over here. If that happened, I could go to the appointment or [any other emergency]. So, for instance, I get a call from my wife, [the] "doctor wants to see Zoe tomorrow at 9 o'clock, and you need to be there." I am sure that wouldn't be a problem. And I, I feel grateful about that.

Another respondent also credited his employers' flexibility for helping him balance his family and work responsibilities.

> When I came here, the manager told me the schedule was sort of flexible. Three months after my daughter was born, my wife went [back] to work. I already talked about this with the boss, and we agreed I can leave early, assuming I come [in] early, too. I come in early; I leave early. And also I got a network connection in my home, so I can work sometime later, when I want, or over the weekend. I mean, I can work substantial time from home.

The reality is that had his employer been inflexible, this respondent would not have spent time with his daughter every night as his wife cooked dinner, as he did at the time of the interview.

Other fathers actively constructed flexible schedules to accommodate their child care responsibilities or create time in their lives to spend with their children. Lee, the pastor mentioned previously, and father of two young girls, intentionally created an egalitarian relationship with his wife. He and a partner started a congregation partly to increase their autonomy and flexibility.

> I probably work about 50 hours a week or so, but they're fun hours. I get to choose when they are. Probably 25 [hours] of that [time] is administrative work here, but the rest of it is out time [for example, going to lunch with a member of the congregation]. What we are trying to do is model flexibility here.

Although the sheer number of hours fathers worked generally had a negative influence on their time doing care work, their ability to manipulate their schedules—no matter how many hours they were—also mattered. But what is flexibility in employment? It appeared differently for each father, because some jobs were simply more flexible than others. In general, fathers highlighted to me and took advantage of whatever flexibility there was, be it a little or a lot. Thus, flexibility was a key issue that all fathers appreciated in their jobs and that offered them the opportunity to spend time with their families when they needed to. In order for flexibility to really make a difference for fathers, they had to be in a position to use or create flexible hours.

In addition to the structure of the workplace, the organizational culture also acted to encourage fathers' involved parenting. Workplaces in which employees talked openly about family and children reinforced fathers' (and perhaps mothers') commitment to family responsibilities. For example, Nic worked in a small company with a casual, informal feel. The employees discussed family and children when they socialized at work, thus reinforcing the cultural importance of families.

> We are so small; we are so close-knit. We're just like an extended family. [Our former marketing manager] was here when Victoria was pregnant, and we were just talking and talking and talking and talking. She was telling me about her experience with two kids, and it was, you know, and we'd [be] going back and forth [on] e-mail about it.

Merely being able to discuss children and child rearing at work reinforced the idea that these are important parts of life and that it is acceptable to use "company time" to discuss them. In addition, having a work group reify the importance of family and children also meant that it was easier for fathers to leave work for care responsibilities. For example, Paul explained how his coworkers' "respect for families" led to an understanding in his workplace that they worked together to make sure that the work was done but left room for employees to have time away from work.

> The guys are very cool. A lot of them have families, or if they don't, then they have a healthy respect for families. And if something were to come up, I would immediately be allowed to leave, and they would cover for me without any questions asked. So they would be very supportive like that.

Further, at least one father worked to create a workplace culture that was open to congruence with care work. Lee (with two other pastors) had started a congregation partly so that he could have control over his work. Lee helped to create a workplace culture that was not only accepting of care work, but embodied it. Lee's older daughter was able to spend time in his office with him, partly because the pastors' office space, a small library, and a playroom occupied the same office space.

> She's the five-year-old. So she comes here, very comfortable here in the church, um, sometimes a little too comfortable; she feels like she owns it. So Sundays roll around and we have to kind of talk about what the difference is between coming during the week and coming on Sundays. I have found that one of the reasons I do what I do is because I, I, family is so important to me…. So it is not in the profession necessarily, but it's a, I guess the same as secular work, a thing of the organization.

In sum, the culture of the work organization can reinforce fathers' involvement with their children when workers openly display their commitment to their families. These displays can range from openly discussing family matters, covering for others who have family care needs, to specifically constructing a

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workplace that allows for the presence of children. In these workplace cultures, fathers feel freer to both discuss their family lives and prioritize their family over their work (at least on some occasions). Of course, fathers must participate in family-friendly workplace cultures and desire them in order for them to make a difference in their behavior. Even if workplace cultures are amenable to family concerns, if fathers are not interested, a family-friendly culture may make little or no difference.

Discussion and Conclusion

Interviews with fathers in the San Francisco Bay area showed that workplace and family factors acted both as disincentives and as incentives to fathers being more actively involved in family care work. Conventional assumptions about marriage and motherhood and families' financial needs discouraged fathers from being actively involved parents. Also, rigid workplace structures and cultures deterred fathers' participation in everyday family life. Advanced planning motivated fathers to engage more immediately with their children, as did a critical stance on marriage as an institution. Flexible workplace structures and family-oriented cultures also acted as incentives for fathers to be more directly involved in child rearing.

These finding have implications for scholars doing research on the links between work and family. First, this research points to how the role of fathers in the United States is changing to include more of their direct involvement in family life. Second, it highlights the importance of recognizing complexity between fathers and within individual fathers' lives. Finally, this research points to questions about potential social class differences between fathers and comparisons between men's and women's responses to similar sets of incentives and disincentives.

The ideology of a breadwinner/homemaker model seems to be changing to include some aspects of "the new father." Because the fathers in my sample were all somewhat young and tended toward egalitarian gender beliefs, they were especially likely to exemplify the changing father role. However, they did not generally embody all of these new ideals. I suspect fatherhood cannot completely change until the ideology of intensive mothering disappears as well. Intensive mothering refers to the ideology that appropriate child rearing is "emotionally demanding, financially draining," and "labor-consuming"

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and that it is mothers who should be primarily responsible for the task (Hays 1996: 4). Intensive mothering is the foundation on which the lack of fathers' involvement is built. As long as someone else is available to do care work, fathers are not compelled to do it (Berk 1985). Of course, intensive mothering may already be in the process of changing to "intensive parenting," and this may be precisely what currently induces fathers to be more involved in child rearing than they were in previous generations.

These data reveal complexity in fathers' lives that do not allow them to be assigned to different mutually exclusive categories. It is important not to divide fathers into groups based on types. The fathers from two-parent families I interviewed were all involved with their children, albeit in different forms and to different degrees. Labeling fathers can help us understand various ideologies about fatherhood, but it may not be the best way to learn what motivates them to do more child care. Our culture so often reifies dualism and influences us to create "types," often binary types in opposition to each other (e.g. the "new father," the "traditional father"). Instead, it is important to recognize the complexity and range of fathers' behaviors and ideas.

This research brings up important questions about social class implications that cannot be addressed with these data. Are white-collar fathers in a better position to be involved parents than blue-collar fathers, for financial and workplace reasons? Or do men who work in white-collar jobs simply experience a different kind of pressure to put in hours at work? These data are also unable to address important questions about whether women and men respond similarly or differently to the same incentives and disincentives. Do women experience the same pressures as men, both from the family and from the workplace?

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