

Company man or family man? Fatherhood and identity in the office

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There is no "one size fits all" image of how men view their role as fathers within the context of the workplace. However, fatherhood is becoming a more serious and time consuming role for men to fulfill. Therefore employers must acknowledge that many fathers want to be more than just traditional "organization men" who dedicate their life to their work. These insights come from Beth Humberd of the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, in the US, one of the authors of a study about how professional men experience fatherhood in the context of their workplace. The article appears in Springer's *Journal of Business and Psychology*.

Humberd and her colleagues conducted in-depth interviews with 31 fathers who all have working spouses. The team found that men juggle four primary images of themselves as fathers, depending on the norms and expectations of their work and home lives: provider, role model, partner and nurturer. These images reflect the more traditional expectations surrounding the "breadwinning" father, as well as more recent expectations of being an involved parent. These ideas are influenced by how men perceive their work demands, and the flexibility of their working hours. Also, these ideals reflect the way in which men interact and converse with their colleagues about [fatherhood](#), and how they view their childcare responsibilities relative to that of their spouse.

New mothers often use various tactics to resolve identity conflicts or tension between work and family life. In contrast, it appears that working fathers do not seem to grapple with identity tensions in the same

way as working mothers do. The team posits that men do not spend as much time intellectually analyzing such potential tensions because they are not held to the same set of traditional parenting expectations as women. Although living at the nexus of these multiple images may help a man to adequately meet all expectations of fatherhood, it does not help with changing the image and conditions of the so-called "organization man" within the workplace.

"While work-life policies and programs can be designed to be gender neutral, often organizational cultures are not. There is still a strong cultural perspective that when men become fathers, little will change for them on the work front," the team writes. They also believe that organizations, managers, and co-workers still do not fully recognize and openly appreciate men's caregiving roles. "As [fathers](#) take on more responsibility for care giving, [workplace](#) norms may inhibit the development of a true involved sense of fathering for these [men](#)."

More information: Humberd, B. (University of Massachusetts, Lowell), Ladge J.J. (Northeastern University), Harrington, B. (Boston College Center for Work & Family). (2014). The "New" Dad: Navigating Fathering Identity within Organizational Contexts. *Journal of Business and Psychology* [DOI: 10.1007/s10869-014-9361-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-014-9361-x)

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