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and replace the video game or the remote control with a book once in awhile.

"We should be making it easier for fathers who make responsible choices and harder for those who avoid them. We should reward fathers who pay that child support with job training and job opportunities and a larger Earned Income Tax Credit that can help them pay the bills."

The involvement of fathers in the raising of their children has, indeed, increased significantly. Fathers worldwide still contribute far less time to direct care of children than do women, but fathers' participation in caring for their children is increasing. Although there are significant variations across societies, studies from diverse settings find that, on average, fathers contribute about one-third as much time to direct childcare as they did a few decades ago (especially in Europe and North America) (Barker, 2009). For example, in the US, in the 1960s, fathers participated in caring for their children about 25% as much as mothers – by the late 1990s that had risen to between 55% and 70%. In Canada, the increase between 1986 and 1996 was from 50% to 65% (Fatherhood Institute, 2005). In the UK, fathers now provide about a third of parental childcare, according to the Equal Opportunities Commission (Engle, 1997). Also, after divorce, non-custodial fathers now spend substantially more time with their children than they did in earlier decades. According to recent studies, 35% to 40% of children have weekly contacts with their fathers, and there are fewer occurrences of fathers' absence or shirking of responsibility than in previous decades (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Engle (1997) claims that men still control most of the family resources, and when they are more involved in raising their children, there is more money, time, food and caring directed to children's needs.

Moreover, studies in the past decade confirm that men, too, benefit from involved fatherhood. For example, research shows that men's psychological well-being is higher the more time they spend caring for a child: they are more relaxed, report greater life-satisfaction and so forth (Haas & Hwang, 2008). In addition to the obvious gains for themselves and the apparent benefits for their children, fathers' involvement has societal advantages as well. Storey et al. (2000) claim that highly involved fathers-to-be show changes in hormonal levels (decreased levels of testosterone and increased levels of prolactin) around the birth of their infants, and this may somewhat decrease the levels of aggression in society. The

advantages for women of a more equally shared family burden are obvious. However, it seems that not all women are thrilled to see their men spend more time at home.

Moreover, men are not considered caregivers in many third-world countries (DeWolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997). Many children in the world miss years with their father because of parents' separation, migration of a parent to seek work, death, and other factors. Percent of childhood years spent without a mother only: Ecuador 7%; Mali 8%; Peru 9%; Brazil 9%; Colombia 13%; Dominican Republic 14%; Senegal 16%; Kenya 27%; Ghana 29%; Zimbabwe 30%; Botswana 36% (Barker, 2009). Between 10% and 30% of developing country households are officially defined as female-headed. In countries with the highest rates of men's migration and/or low marriage rates, such as the Caribbean, the proportion can reach 50%.

Still, a review of studies of 156 societies found that only 20% promoted men's close relationships with infants, and only 5% with young children. Fewer still provide prolonged leave or financial considerations for fathers on the birth of their children.

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The New Father

Dahlia Moore

“New fatherhood” is becoming a well-known term. It refers to involved, caring fathering, leading to stronger bonds between men and their children. The importance attributed to the issue in the last decade is apparent in the many studies published in books, journals, conferences and websites.

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The intensive parenting norm that became apparent at the beginning of the 20th century affected fathers as well as mothers; researchers (e.g., Griswold, 1997; Stearns, 2003) have increasingly asserted that fathers need to spend more time parenting. Evidence that men are aware of this norm is evident in both the increase in the time that fathers spend with their children and the fact that fathers, more than mothers, report feeling that they do not spend enough time with their children (Milkie, Mattingly, Nomaguchi, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004).

“New fatherhood” is based on the many studies that show how important fathers are in the lives of their children. Infants form attachments to those who regularly take care of them and their needs, claim attachment theorists (Lamb, 2002a). The sensitivity of caregivers varies, and individual differences (which transcend gender boundaries) in sensitivity and responsiveness affect the quality of the attachment relationships (DeWolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997). Moreover, fathers are as competent to care for their children as are mothers, given opportunity and experience, even when the children are young (Lamb, 2002b).

Furthermore, researchers have clearly demonstrated that, on average, children benefit from being raised in two-parent families rather than in separated, divorced, or never-married, single-parent households (Clarke-Stewart, Vandell, McCartney, Owen, & Booth, 2000). Children who are deprived of meaningful relationships with one of their parents are at greater risk psycho-socially, even when they are able to maintain relationships with their other parent (Amato, 2000).

Children growing up in fatherless families are disadvantaged

relative to those growing up in two-parent families with respect to psycho-social adjustment, behavior and achievement at school, educational attainment, employment trajectories, income generation, involvement in antisocial and even criminal behavior, and the ability to establish and maintain intimate relationships. Stated differently, there is substantial evidence that children are more likely to attain their psychological potential when they are able to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with both of their parents (Kelly, 2000).

Barak Obama’s speech on fatherhood (January 24th, 2009), launching his new fatherhood program, emphasizes these themes:

“Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded today that family is the most important. And we are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation. They are teachers and coaches. They are mentors and role models. They are examples of success and the men who constantly push us toward it.

“But if we are honest with ourselves, we’ll admit that what too many fathers also are is missing — missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it.

“As fathers and parents, we’ve got to spend more time with them, and help them with their homework,