Transcript - Working Fathers Episode 4 – Give dads a break.

00:00 **Dan**: Welcome to Working Fathers, a podcast about dads, families and work. We look at the many different roles fathers play in contemporary Australian families and society and how policy can better recognize value and support.

I'm Dan Halliday. I'm an Associate Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Melbourne. But more importantly, I'm also the father of four wonderful children. And I'll be your host. In what ended up as a rather unusual study of a professional services firm, three social science researchers interviewed 107 consultants and five HR personnel in depth about women's stalled advancement in that firm.

And they got the same answer from everyone that they labelled as the work-family narrative. And the answer goes like this: *Women's family commitments conflict with the long hours demanded by the job.* And yet, in these interviews, the researchers found that fathers were also experiencing deep conflicts.

01:09 One father said, “I wouldn't characterise myself as unhappy. It's more overworked and under-familied. If I were a betting man, I'd bet that a year from now, I'm working somewhere else.” And indeed he was.

Yet when they reported this back to management, there was little interest. Why? The researchers, Irene Padovich, Robin Ely and Erin Reid suggested that the work-family narrative served as a psychological defence.

Here's what they wrote. “A workplace socially constructed as requiring 24/7 availability gave rise to a primary anxiety, the threat of losing one's sense of wholeness, prompted by the daily forced choice between love and work.”

01:54 Ultimately, the researchers suggest, simply encouraging men to take up flexible policies will be ineffective so long as we underestimate how much psychological investment there is in masculine identities.

In this episode, "*Give Dads a Break*", we look at more of the pressures that prevent fathers from being active and equal caregivers in their children's lives, particularly the social rules in society and workplaces that dictate what it means to be a man or a good worker.

What are the experiences of men who defy these norms? What are the policies that can help shift these norms? And what are some of the benefits for fathers, partners and families?

Our first guest is Dr. Ashlee Borgkvist, research associate within the Safe Relationships and Communities Research Group at the University of South Australia. Ashlee's PhD work investigated father's uptake of flexible working arrangements, workplace culture, and the role these play in how paid work and care are managed and negotiated within families.

Some of Ashlee's research has involved interviewing fathers and managers about flexible work. This has offered fascinating insights into Australian men's understanding of masculinity, how they understand what it means to be a man and some of the tensions that kind of arise between different masculinities. We talked to Ashley about the different ways that Australian men understand what it means to be a man.

03:34 **Ashlee**: So in relation to multiple Australian masculinities, there are some theorists who suggest that fathers may enact a different form of masculinity when they're at home with their kids, as opposed to when they're in public, and particularly within organisations.

03:49 **Dan**: So a core assumption behind Ashlee's research is that gender is a relational or social construct. Now, this doesn't mean that we're all born as blank slates. What it means is that we learn what is masculine and what is feminine from the culture in which we grow up.

Developmental psychologists have described young children as being gender detectives. They can see from an early age that gender is an important social distinction, and they're highly motivated to learn what belongs to each side of that social divide.

04:21 **Ashlee**: And so the reasoning behind that is, if we think about gender as being relational, we learn how to enact our gender, we learn how we're supposed to behave, and we learn that from other people. And so throughout our lives, that gets reinforced, that message of what boys are supposed to do, what girls are supposed to do, and then eventually, what men and women are supposed to do.

And I'm sure everyone has heard the phrase "boys don't do that" or "girls don't do that" at some point in their lives. I think a pretty common one is hearing "boys don't cry" or "boys don't get emotional" and that then gets reinforced through our interactions with people.

And so we're constantly being evaluated by the people around us about how appropriately we're expressing and enacting our kind of socially acceptable gendered identities.

05:06 **Dan**: It's probably easy to assume two decades into the 21st century that gender norms are no longer very strong. And it is certainly true that they are much looser than they used to be. They no longer have the force of actual laws. But gender norms have not gone away. Gender is what sociologists call a status characteristic.

We're just more comfortable with little girls being dressed in a footy outfit than we are with little boys in a pink dress because femininity is stigmatised as a lower status. And just as women have to navigate the penalties of behaving in high-status ways, men have to navigate the penalties of behaving in low-status feminine ways.

05:50 **Ashlee**: When we think about gender as relational, it kind of makes sense that people would want to be performing gender perhaps differently in public, where other people are going to be able to see them and judge them, in a sense, on how appropriately they are doing their gender.

And so for men in particular, that idea of performing masculinity appropriately is quite a strong influence on men's behaviour. And so when we think about that and some theorists suggesting that perhaps at home, behind closed doors, men are engaging in a more caring masculinity than perhaps they would in public.

And that caring masculinity, I find that really interesting for a couple of reasons. That tells us that men are able to enact multiple masculinities, but they choose, when they are enacting those kind of differing masculine identities, depending on how they think those enactments, those behaviours will be received.

06:43 What impact is that going to have if we never see that alternative masculinity being enacted, being modelled? What impact is that going to have in progressing acceptable forms of public masculinity towards those caring behaviours?

Practically, it's really frustrating that men feel those kinds of behaviours are unacceptable to display in public. It's frustrating for fathers and for men who want to be more emotionally connected with people, and for fathers specifically, who want to be more emotionally connected with their children, it's really frustrating that they feel that's not an acceptable way for them to be and for them to behave.

07:23 **Dan**: Flexible work is also a stigmatised form of behaviour for men. Ashlee's PhD involved interviews with groundbreaking frontrunner fathers who were using flexible working arrangements either formally or informally.

She explored their decisions to do that and how they felt about it. Ashley shares her sites here, starting with men who had the courage to defy workplace norms and work flexibly in order to be more available for caregiving at home.

07:51 **Ashlee**: I think it was actually one of the participants who used the term frontrunner, which went into the title of my first paper. And they kind of just really described themselves as being at the forefront of making things easier for other men, changing things and kind of setting a path that might make other men consider using flexibility.

I think the groundbreaker dads are so important because there's research which demonstrates that fathers, men in general, but fathers specifically, when they see other fathers using flexible working arrangements within organisations, they're more likely, then, to feel comfortable requesting and using flexible working arrangements themselves when they see someone else doing it.

And so with the groundbreaker dads, they're just out there doing their thing. They've decided, this is the way I want to do things. I want to have this, it increases my connection with my children. I want to spend more time with them and I don't really care what other people think about that.

08:57 I don't care about how people think. And so theoretically then other fathers seeing groundbreaker dads doing that potentially then are more likely to feel comfortable doing that themselves.

09:14 **Vox Pop Dad (D)**: I think, in like my opinion, society is shifting towards, if not a shared workload, like, dads want to be at home. Dads, I've got mates who absolutely love being at home and supporting their children, being present with their kids, understanding that we have an incredible role to play.

I can't say it's a big blanket for the whole society, but I do feel like there's a bit of a trend going on, because at 37 years of age, I've got mates all in the same boat and are a lot more present than our fathers were.

09:53 **Vox Pop Dad (B)**: And that may be why they don't feel that they can take that time off work. They've got that pressure to succeed. They've got to show their boss that they want to always be there and they think that's the best way that they can help their family.

10:08 **Dan**: Now, one father willing to be a frontrunner is Matt Tyler. Matt is the executive director of the Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services. It's focused on preventing violence and other harmful behaviours among boys and men.

One of the goals of that project is to broaden young boys and men's definition of what it means to be a man. Matt is also a working father. He took time off for the birth of his child and he's a hands-on dad.

This immersed him in the richness of the caring masculinities that Ashlee mentioned earlier. But it also brought him face-to-face with more traditional models of masculinity.

10:51 **Matt:** I've just become a dad and I had the good fortune of having six weeks off post-birth and having that time to firstly learn together as to how we go about parenting, from the conceptual and the principle, what type of parents do we want to be, to the really practical, how do I settle little Oscar?

How do I change a nappy? How can I be of service to Sarah, who biologically, she has a really critical role to play so far as breastfeeding is concerned. But not getting left behind at the outset is something that I'm tremendously grateful for, because now that he's three months, I can continue to play that role.

But, gee, it's rewarding to be able to make a contribution. Take a little bit of the load off Sarah. And also we've laid down those foundations in terms of my relationship with little Oscar, and it's a juggle, it's challenging.

11:44 This is one of the things that I think as a society we've got to grapple with, to say, well, if we want men and we know it's in the interests of men and also all of us, for men to be playing a greater role at home, there's a fair way to go, I think, in terms of some of the underlying cultural norms that have to shift to facilitate that.

I've had friends who are on parental leave at the moment, have older males say to them, well, what are you going to do with all that time? And sort of saying, "*Look after my child, provide love, compassion, do all the practical things that are required to actually bring a human into this world.*" And so a shift in mindset is required.

12:27 **Dan**: Part of Matt's work as part of the Men's Project has led to the conceptualization of the man box. This continues the theme of the pressures on men to conform to societal views of how men should be and how they should behave. Matt explains.

12:44 **Matt**: So, put most simply, the man box is a set of beliefs or norms that place pressure on men to be a certain way. So to be tough, to not show any emotions, to be the breadwinner, to always be in control, at the more extreme end, to use violence, to get respect, to have as many sexual partners as possible. And so one of our very first pieces of work was to survey 1000 young Australian men between the ages of 18 and 30.

And just to give you a feel about some of the questions we asked and the idea that men should really be the ones to bring money into the home to provide for their families, not women.

So 56% of respondents shared that they perceive social pressure to adhere to that idea, or a man shouldn't have to do household chores, 39% perceive social pressure. It's not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, to clean the house or take care of younger children, 38% said that they perceive social pressure to adhere to that particular idea.

13:53 **Dan**: So this is pointing to significant proportions of young Australian men sensing quite old-fashioned gender norms around their role in the family. But do they subscribe to those beliefs themselves?

14:08 **Matt**: We also sought to understand the extent to which men personally endorse those same ideas. And so you can perceive social pressures from peers, from the media, but there's quite another sort of question as to whether or not you personally believe those ideas.

And what we found was still a considerable portion of men subscribed and personally endorsed these ideas, but far fewer. And for us, that's a reason for hope. It's not too often we get to understand what other people think about some of these ideas.

And almost every time we do this survey, the number of men who perceive social pressure is much higher than the number of men who personally endorse these ideas themselves, their social constructions.

14:51 **Dan**: This survey data may be a bit of a surprise to those who think that Australian culture is pretty gender-egalitarian, particularly in the younger generations. More than a third of young men thought that men, not women, should be responsible for earning income.

One in four think that men shouldn't do domestic chores and a similar number don't think boys should be taught how to sew, clean or take care of their younger kids. Still, Matt's point that men overestimate how much others endorse traditional masculinity is an important one.

In fact, continuing the theme of the difference between private lives and public performances, managers need to be aware that more fathers may want to work flexibly than are willing to say so publicly. For example, studies have found that men overestimate other men's negative attitudes towards flexible work, including paternity leave.

15:49 **Matt**: There is some really positive trends as it relates to both the expectations of fathers and their role in the home, whether raising children or whether it relates to domestic labour and helping out around the home.

And yet, I also think we've got a huge way to go. In Australia we know that only one in 20 men are taking parental leave in a sort of a primary carer capacity. We know that women continue to do the lion's share of the lifting as it relates to domestic labour and work in the home and that's in spite of increased female workforce participation, but also being left to continue to carry that stereotypical role in the home. And yet we know that men who play a role at home, many, oftentimes love it.

16:42 **Vox Pop Dad (A)**: It was a bit surreal. You put this very small thing into a baby seat and I think we checked about 85 times to make sure he was in properly. And then we got home, but we were worried about him eating, worried about breaking him, and then I was worried about the dog because the dog was standing there.

Once he realised there was another creature in the house, looking at the cot, salivating, but we were sort of like, oh, my God, so how's all this going to work? And there were just things that needed to be done.

The dog needed not to eat the child and the child needed to eat its milk. And then things fell into place and the dog started to sort of settle down and just glum about the situation rather than be hungry. But, yeah, there was no light bulb moment.

17:42 **Dan**: While Matt's professional work offers insights into the man box, his experiences as a father have offered him insights into the reality that parenting skills are learned on the job by both mothers and fathers.

And he suggests there are ripple effects through the family, potentially including the next generation of parents. From a manager's perspective, that would mean that when you enable one father to work flexibly, you're also setting the groundwork for future fathers as well.

18:12 **Matt**: I am in the thick of learning how to be a dad for the first time and my partner Sarah is in the thick of learning how to be a mum. It's not as if there are some predisposed talents that either of us have as we embark on this big, hot mess of parenting.

And so we're learning together. And I think there's a risk in the idea that somehow whether man, woman, any gender, that somehow you've got to do things perfectly because none of us do things perfectly, certainly not all the time, even some of the time.

I tell you what, we are not doing things perfectly. We're scrapping and we're finding our way. And I think as soon as there's this idea of a bumbling carer, then it just has the potential to put up barriers, particularly when we're talking about tackling stereotypes that date back centuries.

19:10 We want men to have a go. I think it's particularly important because we're at the early stages of seeing some really important shifts. And what we're seeing is that men are starting to engage more in caregiving, starting to engage more around the house.

And that's not just good for men and their partners. It's also good for the little ones in their lives. Whether it relates to that attachment to a parent or whether it relates to seeing a role model who's challenging some of these stereotypical ideas.

We're in really early stages of understanding how these man-box ideas manifest amongst adolescents. And we've developed an age-appropriate survey to understand the extent to which adolescent boys conform to some of these man box ideas.

19:57 And what we're starting to find, and again, I'll stress it's early stages is that adolescent boys who self-report that they've got a dad who chips in around the home are less likely to subscribe to these adolescent man box ideas.

And we know, as I touched on earlier, we know that these man-box ideas are not in the interests of men and boys themselves. And so if there are role models in young people's lives who are living, breathing examples of diverse masculinities, playing a diverse role around the home, I think that's in the interests of young people who are always watching parents as they go about their business.

20:33 **Dan**: But what about the challenges of being a primary caregiver dad when it's still the exception rather than the norm?

20:43 **Matt**: I've got two friends who are on primary carer's leave at the moment and we catch up. They've found it quite isolating in many respects because they haven't had many other males in the environments they're in, whether rhyme time at the library, swimming lessons, parents' groups, which mostly are not called mothers' groups now, but are predominantly frequented by women.

And we will catch up and go for a walk together, each of us, with our little ones in carriers, and every time we will get stopped, say, oh, isn't this amazing? Isn't this wonderful? And I actually think it's problematic, not just because it sort of undermines that norm that, well, no, it's not wonderful.

21:25 In some respects it is. We love it, we love spending time with our little ones, we love connecting as friends, but it's not extraordinary. Like, if that's extraordinary, then we're not making any progress in terms of undermining some of those norms around caregiving.

And it also sets the bar so low, like this idea that you got three men who are out with their little ones in baby carriers, like, yes, that's the role that you play as a dad.

21:50 **Dan**: Matt's experiences bring to life the abstract concept of alternative masculinities and the difficulty of constructing a caring masculinity in a society that still doesn't quite expect it. Matt reflects on what might mainstream more equal parenting.

22:08 **Matt**: I think we see a continued adherence to traditional gender norms. Those norms won't change without concerted investment in public campaigns and community-by-community work to challenge these ideas and raise awareness about these ideas.

Because we can be like fish and water if we are not identifying some of the social pressures that I touched on that apply both to men and women, then it's very difficult to sort of push back against some of these stereotypical ideas.

22:39 And then I think the final thing I'd say is the gender pay gap, the lack of value we put on caregiving professions, which, as it stands today, dominated by women, nursing, teaching, early childhood education, aged care, I think there is a moral imperative to improve the pay and conditions of those professions, given the contribution they make.

And in doing so, we would see a decline in the gender pay gap, which would change the economics, as households are determining who should play a greater role at home, who will continue to progress in their career.

And so, although not directly related to parental leave per se, I think closing that gender pay gap, noting that there are different participation rates of men and women across different industries, I think is a really important piece of this puzzle.

23:30 **Dan**: Back in episode two, we looked at how gender norms were once deliberately embedded into the male breadwinner wage, which was supposed to be sufficient to keep a whole family with three dependent children.

But men's breadwinner role was also once explicitly embedded into women's wages, as it was assumed that they would have a breadwinner to rely on. Sociologists and economists have found that there continues to be a wage penalty associated with the female-dominated caring industries. But it's not all just economics. Matt says we also have to look at the cultural message boys are receiving.

24:08 **Matt**: We've got to promote positive alternative to the man box. Men can't be it if they can't see it. We've got to increase visibility on men's caregiving roles. Humans are innately social creatures, and so we perceive, we learn from each other. And so the power of role models to demonstrate positive alternatives to the man box is a really critical part of this work.

24:39 **Dan**: Both Matt and Ashlee have offered insights into the ways that private and public masculinity shapes men's choices around fatherhood. And in our modern economies, workplaces play a powerful role in shaping meanings of what it means to be a man.

Traditionally, in the managerial and professional classes, good men are devoted to their careers. For blue-collar men, a good man provides for his family, those meanings are changing. But there is still a lot of uncertainty.

In interviews with 15 white-collar Australian fathers, researchers Alina Ewald and Rachel Hogg found that they experienced several different kinds of barriers to flexible working. One was their perception of conflicting masculine identities.

What is it exactly that society expects from men? What does it mean to be a good husband and a good father? While these might seem like very personal dilemmas, laws and policy express very powerful norms.

25:37 So what do our parental leave policies say about what we expect of fathers? And what could they say? Our next guest is Dr. Linda Barclay, a senior lecturer in political philosophy at Monash University. Her work has applied the principles of justice and equality to the issue of parental leave policies.

Linda begins by noting that when compared with some other developed countries, Australia pushes fathers pretty hard towards the traditional breadwinner role.

26:06 **Linda**: So there's large international differences, partly because of cultural reasons, partly because policy settings are different. But I think it's fair to say in Australia that the overwhelming majority of primary care for very small children is done by women.

Despite the fact that the kind of leave arrangements we have in Australia permit that to be done equally by fathers than mothers, nonetheless, it's overwhelmingly done by mothers. With fathers, if they take any leave at all, they tend to take that one or two weeks of leave at the beginning or, you know, when the child is born. And that's pretty much it. So it's very skewed, it's very gendered, I suppose we would say.

26:47 **Dan**: Linda has argued in favour of a "use it or lose it" parental leave scheme. A proportion of parental leave is reserved for fathers alone. She explains why she thinks this kind of policy is desirable from a philosophical perspective.

27:00 **Linda**: I think it's a great thing that in Australia, as with other wealthy nations, with the exception of the United States, that we do have a raft of policy measures aimed at trying to buffer the impacts for people's workforce participation and therefore their ongoing economic position from having small children, from choosing to start a family.

And now, of course, this has partly been driven by an equality of opportunity agenda. So because it is overwhelmingly women who take care of small children, the knock-on effects for them can be quite significant in terms of their economic independence and well-being if they drop out of the workforce for a long time.

But I think these policy settings, those subsidised child care, parental leave, they're not only driven by equality of opportunity, there are also very significant economic consequences for a society when you have a large percentage of the adult population marginalised from the workforce.

27:59 And in wealthy countries, we've become very used to a standard of living that's high. We're constantly demanding improvements to that standard of living, for example, to aged care, health care. And that's just not sustainable without very high levels of workforce participation.

So therefore, governments have gotten into the business of assisting families to defray some of the costs of having children. But I think governments are required to ensure that those policy interventions do actually address the problem that they're seeking to address and don't, in fact, sometimes make the problem worse.

And what we've seen from Scandinavian countries is that very high levels of parental leave for young parents have, in fact, exacerbated discrimination against women in the workforce and at the same time have done very little to open up opportunities for men.

28:53 **Dan**: We often think of Scandinavian countries as being real success stories when it comes to gender equality. But as Linda explains, it's not quite that simple.

29:00 **Linda**: So, for example, an employer in Scandinavian countries, a parent to a newborn usually gets a year at full pay on parental leave. Now, take an employer, they're deciding whether to employ a 28-year-old woman or a 28-year-old man. They know that 95% of that parental leave is taken by mothers, not fathers.

They're looking at the prospect of that 28-year-old female employee maybe not being part of their team, taking paid parental leave for two, three years at a time. So because of high levels and long periods of paid parental leave, many people, particularly in the corporate sector, don't see female employees as such a great prospect.

So women, whilst they're not bearing such strong economic costs from raising a family as they do in other countries without paid parental leave, they're nonetheless clustered in lower paid, lower status public service roles where acceptance of these practices is higher.

30:05 So they're falling behind with respect to career progression compared to men, and they're still being paid much less than men and so on. And equally, even though on paper men are entitled to take leave instead of the mother to care for a young infant, employers typically frown on them doing so.

Such that men can often, quite rightly, fear a backlash within their career if they do so. So, in short, high levels of paid parental leave can be great at defraying the costs of caring for small children and be good at keeping women tied to the workforce.

But the promises of a broader equality between men and women in terms of wealth and in terms of their career, haven't materialised. And arguably, paying women to leave the workforce for many, many years has, in fact, exacerbated those broader inequalities.

30:51 So, in response, a number of European countries have modified paid parental leave to try and ensure it's more gender-neutral, not only in its explicit legislation, but also in its outcomes. So here's the thinking.

The government says to any person who is a parent to a small infant, you are entitled to a period of leave to care for that infant or young child, with the restriction that only one parent at a time can take this entitlement.

Now, in the Netherlands, they have a very straightforward approach. Each parent gets six months leave each. They can decide which order. Each of the parents will take that leave. Of course, no one is forced to take it if they don't want to.

31:28 But if they do want to stay home for six months and care for their infant child, they'll receive compensation. And as with any other welfare income or support entitlement, one's individual entitlements can't be transferred to another individual.

In Scandinavian countries, they've been a little more timid because of some backlash. So what happens in most Scandinavian countries is not quite as ambitious. Sometimes a small portion of the leave is reserved for the birth parent at the beginning of the period.

But other than that, usually another larger period is tagged for the father. It might be six weeks, it might be three months. And that is a use it or lose it kind of tagging. The father has to use it maybe at the end of the mother's leave, or he doesn't get the leave at all, he can't transfer it to the mother.

32:16 And then all the rest in the middle might be eight months or so can be divided amongst the parents as they see fit. Again, unfortunately, the vast majority of that leave is still taken by the mother rather than the father.

So in other words, tagging some of that leave for fathers is thought to go some way to addressing that sort of problem I was talking about, that it will help kind of reduce women's marginalized from the workforce.

It will help protect fathers who do want to take leave from employer backlash because it's now something they're essentially required to do. They can't transfer it to the mother. And I think the idea is that it will hopefully chip away at that gendered assumption, which it has done in northern European countries, that caring for small children is somehow exclusively or primarily women's work.

And if that all works, to some extent it has, then you're providing a very strong foundation for women to enjoy economic security throughout their lives and to enjoy career progression throughout their lives that comes a little closer to equality with men on those scores.

33:24 **Dan**: But what about the objection that earmarked daddy leave means that parents end up with less choice because the policy is specifying how much leave each parent gets to take? Should we be worried that "use it or lose it" daddy quotas are a form of social engineering? Back to Linda.

33:42 **Linda**: None of us make choices in a vacuum, right? Our choices are always determined by a whole host of factors around us. So, for example, when women still earn significantly less than men, which they do, because women remain sort of heavily clustered in lower-paid public service roles, and when employers continue to punish men, or who choose to take longer periods of parental leave, just to name two such factors, then it's hardly surprising that it's women who take most of the leave.

So none of us who are having young children are making our choices in a vacuum. We make our choices in response to the policy settings, in response to the culture around us, in response to what we think our employers and our colleagues will or won't tolerate.

Putting aside paid parental leave for fathers only is partly a pushback against employers. It is partly a response to the fact that women remain, including in Scandinavian countries, significantly poorer than men in terms of income and wealth.

34:42 The second thing to say is that we have long experience now of leaving the choice up to couples. So in Northern European countries, they were quicker to move away from maternity leave to parental leave.

They were quicker to move away from the requirement that it be mothers who take all the leave. But nonetheless, what we experienced was that leaving the choice up to couples just continued to result in women's marginalisation from the workforce.

In other words, what we found out was that unless a certain part of parental leave was tagged for fathers, they overwhelmingly won't take that leave. And as I've said, government is entitled insofar as it decides to get into the business of things like subsidising child care, providing for parental leave or providing policy settings for parental leave, then I think the government is entitled to ensure that those policy measures don't actually make the problem worse that they were aiming to fix in the first place.

35:39 **Dan**: But earmarked paternity leave isn't just good for women's economic participation. We heard earlier from Matt about the joys of intimate early fatherhood as well as the conflicts faced by dads in the study of the professional services firm.

Daddy quotas mean more men have that experience, and this can have repercussions years later, particularly if the parental relationship ends. Linda explains.

36:04 **Linda**: So we know that about 50% of relationships dissolve in divorce or otherwise break up. And we all remember or we have some associations, some idea of the old days where women would just take the children. Often men lost contact with their young children altogether or had very, very little contact.

One of the reasons that people are also in favour of tagging parental leave for fathers is because it does help secure intimate, I guess, and familial relationships between fathers and their very young children.

And that seems to have had some kind of protective effect for the relationship, the closeness of the relationship between fathers and children in the case of marriage or relationship breakup later on.

36:54 So we see that also in Scandinavian countries it's much more common for there to be a kind of 50-50 split between parents when relationships break up. It's much less common to see the woman have primary care for the children with the father having at most the occasional weekend visit.

And fathers having been involved in the care of small children from a very young age, seems to very much be part of the explanation for that. They're competent parents. They're competent caregivers. They're confident caregivers.

They know what this is all about and they know how to do it. So there's simply no reason to assume that they wouldn't continue that role even when the couple themselves is no longer together.

37:39 **Dan**: Remember that study of the professional services firm? One of the consultant fathers in his interview described his feelings when his first child was born. He said, "I got to carry her from the delivery room to the nursery. It's almost like I could feel the chemicals releasing in my brain, I fell so chemically, deeply in love with my daughter, I couldn't imagine a world without her.

I mean, here it was in the first eight minutes of her life." But as the researchers pointed out. The father then cut off his own feelings. "How can I possibly give this up and go back to work?" he said, and projected those feelings onto mothers. It seems like one of the breaks we need to give dads is to allow them both to have those feelings and act on them.

While we might think of government policy and organisational norms as being very distant from such intimate feelings like parental love, in fact, they're closely connected.

If you enjoyed this episode and you're keen to support Working Dads and to influence policy, please share it with others. And if you haven't already, have a listen to other episodes in this series that explore dads, families and work and ask how policy can better recognize, value and support fatherhood. Thank you for listening to the Working Fathers podcast. I'm Dan Halliday.

Many thanks to our guests, Ashlee Borgkvist, Matt Tyler and Linda Barclay. This podcast was created by Cordelia Fine and Dan Halliday from the University of Melbourne, Melissa Wheeler from Swinburne University of Technology, and Annabelle Baldwin.

It received support from our external partners, Women's Leadership Institute, Australia and the Trawalla Foundation. It was funded by the Faculty of Arts, with additional support from the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. And thank you to our podcast production team from Podcast Services Australia.