

Privileging the Privileged: Evaluations of Fathers in the Professional Workplace by Level of
Involvement with Children and Race

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Abstract

Survey research shows that the extent of the “fatherhood wage premium” varies by men’s level of involvement with their children and their race/ethnicity. Variation is thought to be driven, in part, by employer discrimination, though scant experimental research exists to effectively assess this claim. I conduct a vignette study on a representative sample of employed U.S. adults that examines evaluations of fathers in the professional workplace by involvement and race. Results suggest that being highly involved with children is evaluated more favorably for fathers overall, but this differs by race. Highly involved white and Asian fathers -- but not African-American and Latino fathers -- are evaluated significantly more positively than their childless counterparts in terms of character, commitment, and salary. Childless African-American men, on the other hand, are evaluated significantly more favorably than other childless men in terms of behavior, character, and hirability. Findings shed light on previously obscured patterns of workplace inequality as well as call into question current conceptualizations of the ideal worker standard.

Introduction

Scholars consistently demonstrate the existence of a motherhood wage penalty in the workplace (Benard and Correll 2010; Benard et al. 2008; Budig and England 2001; Correll et al. 2007; Loughran and Zissimopoulos 2007). Research is now mounting which suggests that not only are fathers not penalized in the same ways as mothers for being parents, but men's parental status is instead *privileged* at work (Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2010; Keizer et al 2010). All else being equal, fathers earn more on average than men who aren't fathers and women who are mothers and non-mothers in the professional white-collar workplace (Hodges and Budig 2010; Keizer et al. 2010; Koslowski 2011; Lundberg and Rose 2000). The extent of the premium varies by study, where most research finds wages of fathers between four and nine percent higher than non-fathers controlling for a range of factors.

Although fathers are advantaged in the workplace relative to women and men who are not fathers, recent research shows that the extent of that advantage varies based on several father characteristics, including level of involvement with children and race. In other words, fatherhood is a privileged status in the professional workplace, but the effect of that privilege erodes depending on with which other status characteristics it intersects. Recent evidence suggests that extent of involvement with children affects fathers' earnings advantage in a perhaps surprising way; Koslowski (2011) finds that highly involved European fathers earn *more than* less involved fathers when controlling for work hours. Survey analyses also show that white fathers experience the greatest advantage, followed by Latino and then African-American fathers (Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2010).

What accounts for fathers' earnings advantage in the workplace and variation in that advantage by these and other characteristics? Three explanations are common in the existing

literature – productivity, positive selection, and discrimination. These explanations maintain that fathers earn more than other types of workers because a) they work harder, b) they are the same men likely to do better in the labor market anyway, and/or c) employers prefer fathers and consciously or unconsciously favor them in terms of promotions and earnings. Survey research shows that neither the productivity nor the selection explanations can fully account for the fatherhood premium separately or together. In fact, some studies show counterevidence for these explanations. Consequently, scholars posit that fathers' earnings advantage is at least partially attributable to employer preference and discrimination (Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2011; Lundberg and Rose 2000). Although there is growing speculation that employer discrimination plays an important role in the fatherhood wage premium, limited empirical research exists that effectively documents a preference for fathers in the workplace and/or variation in that preference by father characteristics.

The current study examines evaluations of fathers in the context of the professional workplace to better assess how fathers are perceived at work based on their level of paternal involvement and race. Rather than rely on the proxy indicator of earnings as is done in survey research, this study contributes to the fatherhood premium literature by more directly assessing regard for fathers in the workplace using an experimental vignette design. Findings are based on how a representative sample of employed U.S. adults evaluated a fictitious male job applicant who varied on both his paternal involvement (childless, less involved, highly involved) and race/ethnicity (white, African-American, Latino, Asian).

Review of the Literature

Variation in the Fatherhood Wage Premium: Results from Survey Research

The extent of the premium varies by study with most research documenting wages of fathers between four and nine percent higher than of non-fathers, controlling for a range of factors (Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2010; Lundberg and Rose 2000). However, among fathers, the extent to which men's earnings benefit from their fatherhood status vary by a variety of characteristics. Existing survey research shows that only married, residential fathers in the white-collar occupational sector appear to receive the fatherhood premium (Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2010; Killewald 2013; Lundberg and Rose 2000; Percheski and Wildeman 2008).

Moreover, a recent study of European men showed that fathers' earnings advantage may vary by their reported level of involvement with their children. Using the European Community Household Panel, Koslowski (2011) found that men who spent more time with their children spent less time at work but earned more on average than men who spent less time with children and more time at work.¹ In other words, the most involved fathers experienced the greatest premium despite being at work less, a finding which runs counter to the expectations implied by the "ideal worker" literature (Williams 2000).

Survey research also shows that earnings of fathers vary by their race/ethnicity (Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2010).² These studies use NLSY data to show that the advantage is greatest for white fathers and narrowest for African-American fathers. Glauber (2008) finds that for married African-American men, annual earnings increased by nine percent from their childless years to the years following the birth of their first child but the increase was larger –

¹ The involvement measure was crude. Level of paternal involvement is a respondent-reported measure of the amount of time respondent spends caring for his children in a typical week with the following four response categories: none (no care or not applicable), low (0 – 14 hours), medium (15 – 28 hours), and high (more than 28 hours).

² See Killewald (2013) for an exception.

about 14 percent – for white men across the same period. This margin only widens as men have more children; the annual earnings of African-American fathers with three or more children increased approximately 15 percent compared to their childless years, whereas the increase for white men was nearly double that (29 percent). Latino fathers' earnings advantage fell in between that of white and African-American men.

In short, results from these survey analyses demonstrate that not all fatherhood premiums are created equal. The greatest wage advantage is reserved for white, married, highly involved fathers working in the professional occupational sector. The extent of the bonus diminishes for non-white and less involved fathers. The question is, *why?* Why do fathers earn a premium overall and why does that earnings premium vary by certain characteristics, namely level of involvement and race?

Explaining the Variation: The Role of Employer Discrimination

To answer these questions, scholars of the fatherhood premium focus on three primary explanations: a) productivity, b) positive selection, and c) employer bias (Benard et al. 2008; Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2010; Koslowki 2011; Lundberg and Rose 2000). These explanations maintain that fathers earn more than other types of workers because a) they work harder, b) they are the same men likely to do better in the labor market anyway, and/or c) employers prefer fathers and favor them in terms of promotions and earnings.

Scholars conclude, based on analyses of large-scale survey data, that productivity and positive selection are unable to fully explain fathers' wage premium (Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2011; Killewald 2013; Kmec 2011; Lundberg and Rose 2000). First, existing research provides only weak evidence that men earn more upon becoming fathers because their

productivity, typically measured as work hours, increases.³ These studies show that fathers, in fact, continue to earn more than non-fathers even when they report spending the same or *less* time on the job than their childless counterparts (Keizer et al. 2010; Koslowski 2011; Lundberg and Rose 2000; Percheski and Wildeman 2008). For example, Percheski and Wildeman (2008), using data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, found that married fathers, unlike their unmarried and cohabiting counterparts, experienced a wage increase upon becoming fathers but neither increased their work hours nor their annual weeks worked. The unmarried and cohabiting fathers in their study, on the other hand, saw no such bonus even though their work hours increased.

Furthermore, there is little support for the explanation of positive selection with some studies actually showing evidence of negative selection (Hodges and Budig 2010; Lundberg and Rose 2000) -- those men most likely to have the poorest employment outcomes (i.e., those with the least human capital) are the ones most likely to enter into fatherhood (see Koslowski (2011) for an exception). Although neither productivity nor selection is disregarded in the literature, scholars now recognize employer bias as a potentially important factor accounting for fathers' workplace advantage.

A bias or discrimination explanation maintains that fathers do better in the labor market than equally credentialed others because there is something about fathers that employers prefer, either consciously or unconsciously. Employers may prefer fathers, leading to better evaluations, more frequent promotions, and higher wages. Results from existing experimental research show evidence of such preference (Correll et al. 2007; Etaugh and Folger 1998; Fuegen et al. 2004). Correll and colleagues (2007) asked a sample of undergraduates to evaluate a set of application

³ More diverse and nuanced measures of productivity are needed to gain a fuller understanding of the relationship between productivity and the fatherhood premium (Killewald 2012; Kmec 2011).

documents (resume, cover letter, etc.) that varied on gender and parental status and found that fathers were considered more committed than mothers and childless men and were offered significantly higher salaries. Employing a similar design, Fuegen and colleagues (2004) show that fathers were held to more lenient hiring and promotional standards than were mothers in the entry-level attorney market. Finally, Etaugh and Folger's (1998) vignette study found that full-time employed fathers were rated as more professionally competent than full-time employed mothers. Although there is growing speculation that employer discrimination plays an important role in the fatherhood wage premium, additional research is needed on how such preference varies by certain key dimensions of difference among fathers, namely paternal involvement and race.

Conflicting Messages: Can a Father be an Ideal Worker?

Results from the fatherhood wage premium literature suggest that fathers are a privileged group at work. How, then, does this square with the widely held standard of the "ideal worker" (Hochschild 2003; Williams 2000)? According to ethnographic and qualitative research, the ideal worker is theorized as the "unencumbered worker" (Fuegen et al. 2004: 740) who is "unreservedly devoted to work" (Benard et al. 2008: 1364). How can it be that fathers – and not childless employees – are the most privileged members of the workplace if the aforementioned understanding of the ideal worker standard is, in fact, accurate?

Fathers, by definition, have children, so how can they be seen, and thus privileged, as "unencumbered workers?" The answer lies in assumptions about gender and involvement. Although an ostensibly gender-neutral standard, scholars argue that the ideal worker in the gendered American workplace is actually a married man with children whose involvement in

family life does not penetrate the workplace (Hochschild 2003; Williams 2000). In short, employers prefer what Hochschild (1997) refers to as “‘zero drag’ employees” who, despite being fathers, are highly dependable with few perceptible external conflicts (Holzer 2005; Williams 2000). Based on this definition, fathers involved in family life would be considered un-ideal in the workplace, much like mothers. The extensive motherhood wage penalty literature suggests that mothers are, in fact, considered the least ideal employee. The empirical basis for such an ideal worker characterization, however, derives largely from ethnographic studies of select organizations and from experimental studies which do not specify level of involvement with children. The current study will provide a better understanding of how paternal involvement -- overall and by race -- is evaluated in the workplace, which will, in turn, provide a sturdier foundation for our theoretical understanding of the ideal worker.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Survey research indicates that fathers out-earn non-fathers and women but that the extent of the earnings advantage varies by fathers’ reported level of involvement with children and their race/ethnicity. The mechanisms responsible for perpetuating the fatherhood premium in the workplace, however, remain elusive. This study focuses on the potential role of employer discrimination in perpetuating this pattern of wage inequality in the workplace by investigating how fatherhood is evaluated in the context of the professional workplace and whether evaluations vary by father’s level of involvement and race. This paper addresses the following two research questions and proposes attendant hypotheses:

Research Question 1: How do evaluations of fathers vary by men’s level of involvement with their children?

Signal of Weak Commitment. We might expect high father involvement to signal weak work commitment given a) the ideal worker standard and b) the notion of normative discrimination. Based on the ideal worker standard, fathers' high involvement would be negatively interpreted because it signals the potential for distraction. Further, a normative discrimination perspective would suggest that fathers' involvement with children would be negatively interpreted because caregiving is inconsistent with normative expectations of masculinity or what men *should* do (Benard and Correll 2010).

Hypothesis 1a: As a signal of weak work commitment, highly involved fathers will be evaluated less favorably and less involved fathers will be evaluated more favorably relative to childless men.

Signal of Strong Commitment. Koslowski's (2011) earnings study suggests that rather than being penalized, father involvement may be a positive attribute in the workplace. It may be that rather than signaling greater potential for distraction, fathers' involvement with children acts as an indicator of a man's deeper commitment to the father role; deeper commitment to the father role, in turn, conveys a deeper commitment to the worker role given the strong intertwining of father and breadwinner statuses in American culture (Levine and Pittinsky 1997; Townsend 2002).

Hypothesis 1b: As a signal of strong work commitment, highly involved fathers will be evaluated more favorably and less involved fathers will be evaluated less favorably relative to childless men.

Research Question 2: How is level of involvement with children evaluated for fathers of different racial/ethnic backgrounds in the workplace?

Little can be surmised from existing literature as to how race may interact with father involvement status to affect evaluations. Experimental studies of father preference in the workplace do not explicitly specify the race of the fictitious individual, but the men's names often used imply that he is likely to be white (e.g., Alan Davis and Scott Myers). Because of this, existing studies may really only inform us about white fathers in the workplace, providing little evidence about the role of race. However, I speculate that specifying level of involvement may benefit Latino and African-American men, in particular, given the pervasive "deadbeat dad" stereotypes which assume that minority fathers are uninvolved or under-involved in their children's lives (Tamis-LeMonda and McFadden 2010). When involvement information is provided, African-American and Latino fathers may benefit most from being identified as highly involved because it counteracts existing stereotypes about their fathering. In other words, Latino and African-American fathers may get a "boost" from involvement being specified where white and Asian men may not because they are already assumed to be "good" and involved fathers. Although very little information exists on the perception of Asian fathers, they are categorized here with white fathers as members of a privileged racial group relative to Latinos and African-Americans. Based on this, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a (Within race) : Highly involved African-American and Latino fathers will be evaluated more favorably relative to their childless counterparts than highly involved white and Asian fathers.

Hypothesis 2b (Across race): Highly involved African-American and Latino fathers will be evaluated more favorably than highly involved white and Asian fathers.

Data and Methods

Vignette Design

To assess evaluations of men based on their involvement level and race, I conducted an experimental vignette study to assess the extent to which these employee characteristics influence judgments of a fictitious job applicant using a nationally representative sample of employed adults. Respondents acted as hiring managers of a marketing firm who received a memo drafted by the hiring company's human resources ("HR") department summarizing an interview with the fictitious applicant. Instructions to participants, a brief description of the fictitious job, and the HR memo are included in Appendix A.

The experiment is a four (race: African-American, Latino, Asian, and white) × three (involvement level: non-father, low, high) between-subjects design. For the race manipulation, I follow precedent (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Kleykamp 2009) and signal applicants' race using "ethnically identifiable names" (Pager 2007: 609). The white applicant's name is "Greg Baker," the African-American applicant's name is "Jamal Washington," the Latino applicant's name is "Victor Rodriguez," and the Asian applicant's name is "Samuel Wong."

Level of father involvement is varied within the experiment using a set of three status indicators. The non-father or childless signal indicates that the applicant "lives with his wife and doesn't have any children." The low involvement signal indicates that the applicant "lives with his wife and their two children (seems as if he is not very involved with his children)." The high involvement signal indicates that the applicant "lives with his wife and their two children (seems as if he is very involved with his children)." The parenthetical clauses about involvement are intended to be interpreted as an HR interviewer note to the employer as if the candidate had discussed his home life during the interview and the interviewer is conveying his/her impression

of that discussion. Moreover, no particular form of involvement is specified in the condition because father involvement is defined as a multi-dimensional construct in the literature, consisting of interaction with, accessibility to, and responsibility for children (Lamb et al. 1985). Given this multidimensional definition, the involvement condition is purposefully non-specific so as not to restrict respondents' conceptualization of involvement.

As previously mentioned, existing survey research shows that only married, resident fathers in the white-collar occupational sector appear to receive the fatherhood premium (Glauber 2008; Hodges and Budig 2010; Lundberg and Rose 2000). Consequently, the proposed vignette specifies that the candidate is married, lives with his children (within father conditions), and that he is applying for a professional job in the white-collar occupational sector (marketing firm).

Sample

The vignette experiment was administered to a nationally representative sample of 1,733 employed U.S. adults between the ages of 18 and 65 through a TESS (Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences) grant.⁴ TESS contracts with KnowledgeNetworks, a government and academic research company, to field TESS studies online. KnowledgeNetworks administers TESS studies to a representative sample of U.S. households (the 'KnowledgePanel'). Households are recruited into the sample randomly through address-based sampling (ABS). Households selected into the sample without Internet access are provided both Internet access and the necessary computer equipment in order to participate in the Panel. The sample selection process employed by KnowledgeNetworks results in a representative sample of the U.S.

⁴ The KnowledgePanel contains young adult participants (ages 13 – 17), but the sample consists only of employed adults who are between the ages of 18 and 65 years old to maximize my sample of the "typical" working age population.

population, including representation of “difficult-to-survey” populations, such as racial minorities and cell phone-only households (KnowledgeNetworks 2012).

Dependent Variables: Evaluation Items

Participants completed an eight-item evaluation of the applicant based on their reading of the HR memo. These items, which are drawn from previous experimental studies on this topic, include a two-item behavioral index (hardworking and responsible), a two-item character index (trustworthy and likability), anticipated number of late days, level of perceived commitment, likelihood of hire, and a starting salary offer (Correll et al. 2007; Fuegen et al. 2004; Gungor and Biernat 2009).⁵ Each item is listed below.

- (1) “How hardworking do you expect [candidate name] to be, relative to other employees in similar positions at the company?” Ratings range on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “not at all hardworking” and 5 is “extremely hardworking;”
- (2) “How responsible do you expect [candidate name] to be, relative to other employees in similar positions at the company?” Ratings range on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “Not at all responsible” and 5 is “Extremely responsible”;⁶
- (3) How trustworthy do you expect [candidate name] to be, relative to other employees in similar positions at the company?” Ratings range on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “Not at all trustworthy” and 5 is “Extremely trustworthy;”
- (4) “How likable do you expect [candidate name] to be, relative to other employees in similar positions at the company?” Ratings range on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “Not at all likable” and 5 is “Extremely likable”⁷;
- (5) “How many times per month would you expect [candidate name] to arrive late or leave

⁵ The questionnaire design addresses the issue of shifting standards (Biernat and Kobrynowicz 1999) by including an objective behavioral expectation item (anticipated late days) in addition to subjective trait ratings (Bridges et al. 2004) and by phrasing trait rating items in relative terms.

⁶ Responses to items 1 and 2 form the composite “Behavior Index” (alpha = 0.81).

⁷ Responses to items 3 and 4 form the composite “Character Index” (alpha = 0.75).

early?” Ratings range on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “9+ times” and 5 is “0 times;”⁸ (6) “How committed do you expect [candidate name] to be, relative to other employees in similar positions at the company?” Ratings for this item range on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is “More committed than 0-9% of other employees” and 10 is “More committed than 90-99% of other employees;” (7) “How likely are you to hire [candidate name] for this position?” Ratings range on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “Not at all likely” and 5 is “Extremely likely;” and (8) “In the event you end up hiring [candidate name], what would you offer him as a starting salary?” Ratings range on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “\$60,000-\$65,000” and 5 is “\$80,000-\$85,000.”

Control Variables

In addition to answering the eight evaluation items associated with the experiment, respondents also answered a battery of demographic profile items. These include their: race/ethnicity, the presence of children under 18 in the household (proxy for parental status), sex, age, education, household income, marital status, occupational sector, self-employment status, and region.

Personal statuses that may influence how respondents rate the fictitious applicant include their race, sex, age, educational status, and marital status. Respondent race/ethnicity is measured with a series of five dummy variables, including white, African-American, Latino, Asian, and Other. The white group serves as the reference category in the regression analysis. The parental status proxy is measured as a dummy variable for the presence of children in the household under the age of 18 (1 = yes, 0 = no). Respondent’s sex is coded as a dummy variable (1 = female; 0 = male). Respondent’s age is included as a linear variable and ranges from 18 to 65. Respondent educational attainment is a series of dummy variables indicating the highest level of

⁸ This item was reverse coded for analysis.

education completed: some high school, high school diploma, some college, and college degree (reference category). Marital status is measured using a series of dummy variables, including married (reference category), divorced or separated, never married, widowed, and cohabitating.

Given the occupationally specific nature of the fatherhood wage premium and of the vignette instrument itself, I also include a set of work-related control variables, including respondents' occupational sector and self-employment status. Occupational sector is a series of three dummy variables indicating whether the respondent works in the white-collar sector (reference category), blue-collar sector, or other sector. All respondents in the sample are currently working for pay, but a minority is self-employed. Self-employment status is included as a single item (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Finally, to control for any regional differences, I include a series of four dummy variables to measure geographic location: whether the respondent lives in the Northwest (reference category), Midwest, South, or West region of the United States.

This study design has some limitations. First, I am not able to examine the category of "fathers" overall. Because highly involved and less involved fathers are evaluated so differently, combining them into a single category of fathers to compare to a single category of childless men is not feasible. Thus, I am not able to fully examine how fathers as a whole group or by race are evaluated differently from childless men as a whole group or by race. Second, I am not able to know how respondents interpreted the phrases "not very involved" and "very involved" with children in the vignette. Not restricting respondents' conceptualization of involvement is an intentional feature of the design given the multi-dimensional nature of the construct (Lamb et al. 1995), but the broadly worded conditions allow for a range of interpretation from respondents.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis. The majority of the sample is white and middle-aged with some college experience. Over half are married and working in the white-collar occupational sector. Fewer than half (40 percent) are parents as defined here (have children under 18 living in the household).

[Table 1 about here]

Table 2 shows the distribution of the experimental conditions. The conditions were randomly assigned to respondents and are fairly equally distributed. The “Greg Baker” condition was completed by the fewest respondents ($n = 424$) as was the “High Involvement” condition ($n = 558$); the “Victor Rodriguez” conditions was completed by the most respondents ($n = 444$) as was the “Low Involvement” condition ($n = 588$).

[Table 2 about here]

Table 3 addresses the first research question: How do evaluations of fathers vary by men’s level of involvement with their children? Table 3 shows results of each evaluation item regressed on the involvement conditions (childless omitted) and all control variables using weighted Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. Overall, results provide support for Hypothesis 1B, which predicts more favorable evaluations for highly involved fathers relative to childless men and less favorable evaluations for less involved fathers relative to childless men. Controlling for respondents’ personal, work-related and regional statuses, highly involved fathers overall are rated as having statistically significantly better character ($p < 0.01$) than the childless applicants. Central to the fatherhood wage premium literature, highly involved fathers are also offered significantly higher starting salaries than childless men ($p < 0.05$). Counter to predictions posed in Hypothesis 1A, less involved fathers are not evaluated more favorably relative to

childless men. Compared to childless applicants, less involved fathers are rated significantly lower on both the behavior and character indexes ($p < 0.001$), and are rated as significantly less committed ($p < 0.05$) and less likely to be hired ($p < 0.001$) than their childless counterparts. Both highly involved and less involved fathers are expected to have significantly more late days than childless men. This represents a convincing manipulation check for the involvement conditions because we would expect fathers, regardless of involvement level, to be late to work more often given their parental status than men with no children.

[Table 3 about here]

Tables 4 and 5 address the second research question: How is level of involvement with children evaluated for fathers of different racial/ethnic backgrounds in the workplace? Table 4 presents within-race results and shows each evaluation item regressed on the involvement conditions (childless omitted) and all controls separately for each of the four racial/ethnic categories. Table 5 presents across-race results and shows each evaluation item regressed on applicant race (white omitted) and all controls separately for each of the three involvement categories. Results in both tables are based on weighted OLS regression analysis.

Table 4 shows that highly involved and less involved fathers are evaluated differently by race relative to childless men. Among whites and Asians, highly involved fathers are evaluated significantly more positively than their childless counterparts in terms of character and commitment (for whites) and salary (for Asians)⁹, whereas highly involved African-American and Latino fathers are not evaluated significantly better than their childless counterparts on any dimension. In fact, highly involved African-American fathers are evaluated *less* favorably than their childless counterparts on certain dimensions; they are the only category of men to be expected to be late to work significantly more often than their childless counterparts and are

⁹ The association between highly involved white fathers and salary rating is significant at the 0.10 level ($p = 0.06$).

rated lower on the behavior index and likelihood of hire item than childless applicants, although these negative associations do not achieve statistical significance.

Low involvement is poorly regarded relative to childlessness for all four race groups, but especially so for Latino men. Whites experience the least disadvantage for their low involvement; less involved white fathers are given significantly lower ratings on the character index than their childless counterparts but no other relationship achieves statistical significance, and the salary rating is even in the positive direction. Less involved Latino fathers, on the other hand, are rated more negatively than their childless counterparts across the board, with four of the six associations reaching statistical significance at the 0.05 level. These results suggest that Latino fathers, in particular, may struggle with a “lose-lose” situation at work where being highly involved does not confer much benefit, at least relative to childlessness, and being less involved is very poorly regarded.

[Table 4 about here]

Table 5 shows few statistically significant differences across race in terms of how involvement is evaluated. Without regard to fatherhood status, African-American applicants are rated significantly higher on the behavior ($p < 0.05$) and character ($p < 0.01$) indexes compared to whites, potentially evidence of the shifting standards phenomenon where respondents may have rated the African-American applicant relative to other African-Americans and not to whites or applicants in general (Biernat and Kobrynowicz 1999). Given that the fictitious applicant is educated, employed, and married, respondents likely rated him more positively relative to their image of a “typical” or “stereotypical” African-American man.¹⁰

¹⁰ Running the regression models on the component parts of the behavior and character indexes shows that African-Americans are rated as significantly more likable, trustworthy, and responsible than whites; they are not rated as significantly more hardworking, however (data not shown).

Among the childless applicants, African-Americans continue to experience an advantage in evaluations relative to whites. Childless African-American men are given significantly higher ratings on the behavior and character indexes relative to white childless men and are seen as significantly more likely to be hired. Among the less involved fathers, African-Americans are once again rated significantly higher on the character index than less involved white fathers, and less involved Latino fathers are offered significantly higher salaries than less involved white fathers. There are no statistically significant differences in evaluations of highly involved fathers across race.

[Table 5 about here]

Figures 1 and 2 show descriptive results graphically for the character index item and likelihood of hire item, respectively. These graphs provide a visual summary of several of the main patterns of findings from the regression models. First, African-American childlessness is positively regarded in evaluations of subjective trait ratings (likability and trustworthiness), as well as future work success (hirability), especially compared to childless whites and Asians. Being less involved with children is also more positively regarded for African-American men compared to low involvement among fathers of other races, especially in terms of their character rating. High involvement is fairly positively regarded across race groups, although there is evidence that high involvement is more advantageous for the more privileged groups of white and Asian men.

[Figures 1 and 2 about here]

Discussion

Survey research indicates that fathers are privileged in the workplace in terms of earnings, leading to speculation that employers in the professional sector consciously or unconsciously prefer and reward men for being fathers. The little experimental work that exists examining this claim supports such speculation -- that fathers are evaluated more favorably than mothers and childless men and women in the workplace (Correll et al. 2007; Etaugh and Folger 1998). This paper contributes to this ongoing investigation into positive discrimination toward fathers in the workplace by examining how and to what extent such preference varies by fathers' level of involvement with children and race.

Are all fathers privileged equally? Findings from the current study suggest that they are not. Fatherhood appears to signal something different both by level of involvement with children and by race. Overall, when involvement level is made explicit, a representative sample of employed U.S. adults evaluates highly involved fathers more favorably than childless men and less involved fathers. Findings provide support for the "Signal of Strong Commitment" hypothesis, which suggests that, when involvement is specified, highly involved fathers are evaluated more favorably than either less involved fathers or childless men. Consistent with Koslowski's (2011) survey finding and counter to expectations established by the ideal worker standard, fathers' high involvement with children may not signal distraction as much as it does commitment or dependability. Highly involved fathers may be interpreted by employers as "good people" and thus "good workers."

Results from this study do not provide much empirical support for current conceptualizations of the "ideal worker" (Williams 2000). Based largely on insights from ethnographic and qualitative studies, our existing image of the ideal worker is a father (e.g.,

dedicated breadwinner) but one with little perceptible family involvement who can commit their undivided attention to work. Results from the current study, however, suggest that high involvement among fathers may not be as un-ideal as has been theorized. In fact, highly involved fathers are seen as having better character and offered significantly higher salaries than childless applicants (Table 3) and their less involved counterparts (data not shown).

These findings also suggest that father involvement may be interpreted fundamentally differently than mother involvement in the workplace. The extensive motherhood wage penalty literature indicates that mothers incur a wage penalty, driven in part, by both their actual and perceived distractions from the workplace (e.g., Budig and England 2001). In short, when involvement level is not specified (and it is not in most existing experimental work on the topic) mothers are likely assumed to be highly involved with children. Thus, unlike what we observe for fathers here, we may assume that high involvement among mothers signals “uncommitted” and thus, is negatively evaluated. If this is the case, such a fundamental distinction in interpretations of involvement by gender is a key dimension of workplace inequality that likely fuels the mother-father wage gap in the workplace and deserves increased scrutiny.

In addition to differences by involvement, this study shows that fathers are privileged differently by race, as well. Within-race results (Table 4) indicate that high involvement is advantageous for whites and Asians but not for African-Americans and Latinos. Among white and Asian men, highly involved fathers are rated significantly more positively on character, commitment, and salary offer than their childless counterparts. High involvement does not, however, confer the same benefits to Latino and African-American men relative to their childless counterparts. Moreover, low involvement is highly penalized relative to childlessness among Latino and African-American men but less so among whites. If high involvement is not

rewarded and low involvement is penalized, what is the preferred parental status for Latino and African-American men in the professional workplace?

Results show that childlessness among African-American men is perceived positively, especially compared to childlessness among white men (Table 5). Respondents may have relied on pervasive cultural stereotypes about African-American fathers being “deadbeat dads” (Furstenberg 1988; Tamis-Lemonda and McFadden 2010) when making their evaluations, despite the presence of disconfirming evidence in the vignette itself which states that the father applicant is married and living with his children. The stereotype that African-American fatherhood automatically implies African-American single motherhood may well have penetrated the thinking of the vignette sample, leading them to prefer and more favorably evaluate childless African-American men than childless men of other races.

Latino fathers appear to occupy a precarious position in the professional workplace where high involvement is not especially privileged like it is for whites and Asians and where low involvement is particularly poorly evaluated relative to childlessness. Accordingly, within- and across-race results do not support either hypothesis associated with the study’s second research question: rather than providing a boost to African-American and Latino fathers, high involvement appears to privilege the already privileged groups of white and Asian men. Additional qualitative research on the meaning of fatherhood in the workplace, and especially the meaning of fatherhood by race, is needed to better interpret these empirical patterns.

Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the fatherhood premium specifically and to employer discrimination more broadly, a topic essential to study given that employers’ differential preference for and treatment of employees leads to gender- and race-based variation in rewards, status, and power within the workplace and, consequently, variation

in life chances and well-being outside of the workplace. The current study is situated within this larger body of literature but with the unique objective of examining the reproduction of inequality within a privileged gender group. In doing so, this research recognizes the potential for meaningful variation within the social category of *fathers*, consequential for outcomes both within and outside of the workplace.

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Appendix A: Vignette Form

Instructions

Imagine you are the hiring manager of Innovative Marketing Solutions, Inc., a mid-size marketing firm. You are in the process of hiring a new employee to increase your staff and increase your chances of acquiring more clients. Below is a brief description of the position along with a memo sent to you by the human resources (“HR”) department summarizing its interview with a recent applicant. Please review the job description and human resources memo and answer the questions on the next few pages.

Job Description

Position title: Business Development Analyst

Role: Analyst, Mid-Level

Hours: Full Time

Starting salary range: \$60,000 - \$85,000

Innovative Marketing Solutions, Inc. is seeking a proven Business Development Analyst. Key responsibilities will include:

- Analyzing client needs to win new business
- Performing in-depth financial analyses of existing clients and presenting the results to the representative team
- Targeting and contacting potential clients to build relationships in a proactive manner

Human Resources Memo

Our department has completed its interview with [Greg Baker] for the position of Business Development Analyst. His relevant professional experience includes three years as assistant director of marketing at SALVO, Inc., a small private marketing firm in Buffalo, New York. Before that he worked as an analyst in the marketing and community outreach office for the city of Buffalo. When asked whether he preferred working in the public or private sector, he mentioned benefits associated with each. He received a bachelor’s degree in business administration with a concentration in finance from Ithaca College and served on various clubs and committees at school.

The candidate also shared a few personal details during the interview - he was born and raised in Albany, and he lives with his wife and [doesn’t have any children].

In all, the interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
HR

Name conditions: Greg Baker, Jamal Washington, Victor Rodriguez, Samuel Wong
Fatherhood signal conditions: “doesn’t have any children”; “their two children (seems as if he is not very involved with his children)”; “their two children (seems as if he is very involved with his children)”.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for All Variables in Analysis (N=1733)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
<u>Dependent Variables</u>			
Behavior Index	7.55	1.39	2 - 10
Character Index	7.36	1.39	2 - 10
Committed	6.68	2.10	1 - 10
Late Days	1.78	0.83	1 - 5
Likelihood of Hire	3.71	0.83	1 - 5
Salary	2.13	1.04	1 - 5
<u>Respondent Characteristics</u>			
Age	41.56	12.38	18 - 65
Gender (1=female)	0.47	0.50	0 - 1
<i>Race</i>			
White	0.67	0.47	0 - 1
African-American	0.10	0.30	0 - 1
Latino	0.15	0.36	0 - 1
Asian	0.04	0.21	0 - 1
Other	0.03	0.17	0 - 1
Parental Status (1=parent)	0.40	0.49	0 - 1
<i>Education</i>			
Some High School	0.08	0.28	0 - 1
High School Diploma	0.27	0.45	0 - 1
Some College	0.30	0.46	0 - 1
College Degree	0.35	0.48	0 - 1
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Married	0.57	0.49	0 - 1
Divorced/Separated	0.10	0.30	0 - 1
Never Married	0.21	0.41	0 - 1
Widow	0.01	0.09	0 - 1
Cohabiting	0.11	0.31	0 - 1
<i>Occupational Sector</i>			
White-Collar	0.52	0.50	0 - 1
Blue-Collar	0.30	0.46	0 - 1
Other	0.18	0.38	0 - 1
Self-Employed (1=yes)	0.11	0.32	0 - 1
<i>Region</i>			
Northwest	0.18	0.39	0 - 1
Midwest	0.22	0.42	0 - 1
South	0.37	0.48	0 - 1
West	0.23	0.42	0 - 1

Note: Percentages and means are weighted.

Table 2. Experimental Conditions Matrix, Distribution of Conditions

	White <i>Greg Baker</i>	African-American <i>Jamal Washington</i>	Latino <i>Victor Rodriguez</i>	Asian <i>Samuel Wong</i>	Total N
Childless	153	142	138	154	587
Low Involvement	137	138	166	147	588
High Involvement	134	152	140	132	558
Total N	424	432	444	433	1733

Table 3. Evaluation Variables Regressed on Applicant Involvement Conditions and Controls

	Behavior Index		Character Index		Commitment	Late Days		Hire		Salary
<u>Applicant Involvement Status</u> (Childless omitted)										
Less Involved	-0.16	***	-0.16	***	-0.08 *	0.09 **	-0.20 ***			-0.01
Highly Involved	0.05		0.10 **		0.06	0.08 *	0.02			0.09 *

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Showing weighted standardized beta coefficients, controlling for participant race, parental status, gender, age, education, marital status, occupational sector, self-employment status, and region

Table 4. Evaluation Variables Regressed on Applicant Race and Father Status and Controls, Within Race Comparisons

	Behavior Index	Character Index	Late Days	Commitment	Hire	Salary
White (<i>childless omitted</i>)						
Less Involved	-0.10	-0.15 *	0.08	0.00	-0.14	0.11
Highly Involved	0.12	0.18 **	-0.02	0.19 **	0.05	0.15
African-American (<i>childless omitted</i>)						
Less Involved	-0.17 *	-0.12	0.16 *	-0.14	-0.23 **	-0.09
Highly Involved	-0.06	0.02	0.14 *	0.00	-0.11	0.01
Latino (<i>childless omitted</i>)						
Less Involved	-0.23 **	0.23 **	0.15 *	-0.12	-0.20 **	-0.08
Highly Involved	0.02	0.08	0.11	0.03	0.05	0.03
Asian (<i>childless omitted</i>)						
Less Involved	-0.16 *	-0.16 *	-0.03	-0.07	-0.19 **	0.02
Highly Involved	0.08	0.09	0.04	0.00	0.09	0.19 **

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Showing weighted standardized beta coefficients, controlling for participant race, parental status, gender, age, education, marital status, occupational sector, self-employment status, and region

Table 5. Evaluation Variables Regressed on Applicant Race and Father Status and Controls Across Race Comparisons

	Behavior Index	Character Index	Late Days	Commitment	Hire	Salary
All Men (<i>white omitted</i>)						
African-American	0.09 *	0.12 **	0.01	-0.01	0.05	-0.04
Latino	0.04	0.02	0.00	-0.01	-0.03	-0.06
Asian	0.00	0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.03	-0.02
Childless (<i>white omitted</i>)						
African-American	0.16 *	0.15 *	-0.07	0.08	0.13 *	0.07
Latino	0.11	0.08	-0.05	0.06	0.01	0.03
Asian	0.04	0.05	0.07	0.05	0.05	-0.01
Low Involvement (<i>white omitted</i>)						
African-American	0.08	0.18 **	0.02	-0.06	0.03	-0.13
Latino	0.01	0.01	0.02	-0.04	-0.05	0.15 *
Asian	-0.03	0.02	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	-0.09
High Involvement (<i>white omitted</i>)						
African-American	0.00	0.02	0.09	-0.09	-0.02	-0.06
Latino	0.03	0.01	0.07	-0.08	0.00	-0.08
Asian	0.00	-0.01	0.11	-0.12	0.08	0.03

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Showing weighted standardized beta coefficients, controlling for participant race, parental status, gender, age, education, marital status, occupational sector, self-employment status, and region

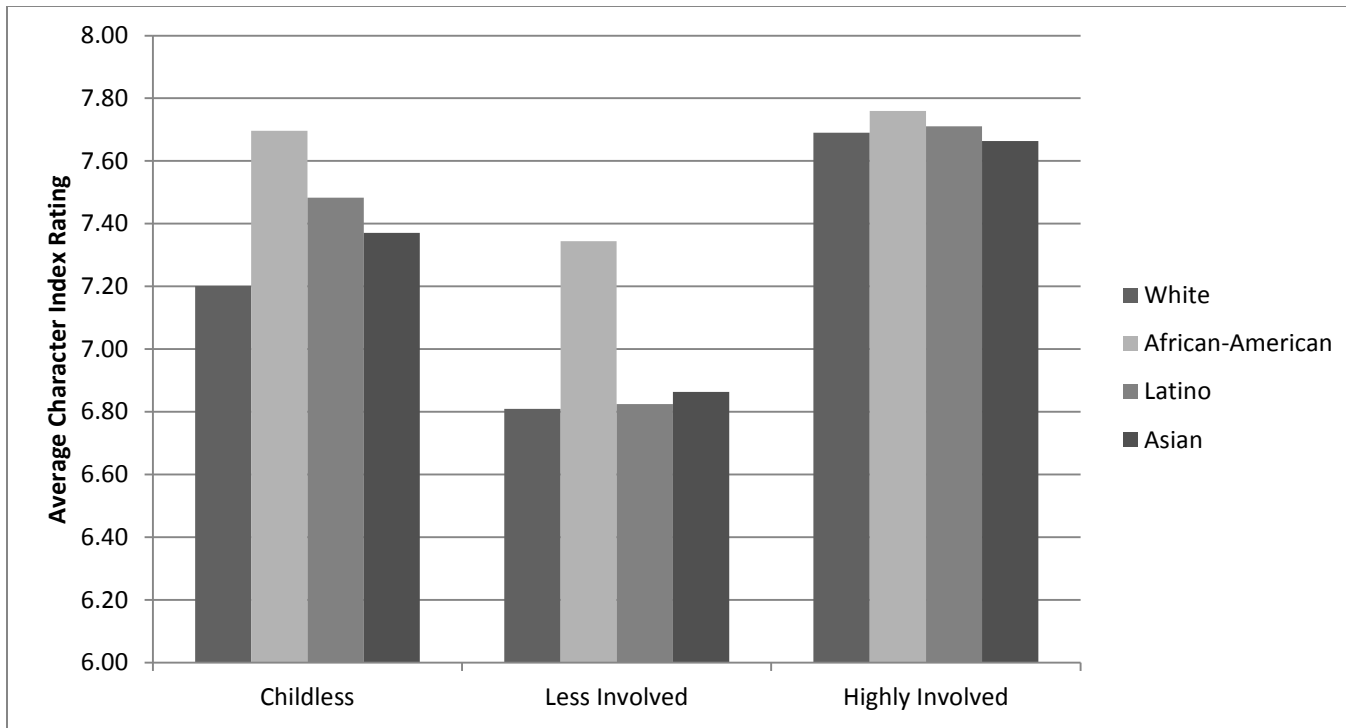


Figure 1. Average Character Index Rating by Race and Involvement Level

Note: Statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between:

- Childless white and childless African-American
- Childless white and childless Latino
- Childless African-American and childless Asian
- Less involved white and less involved African-American
- Less involved African-American and less involved Latino
- Less involved African-American and less involved Asian

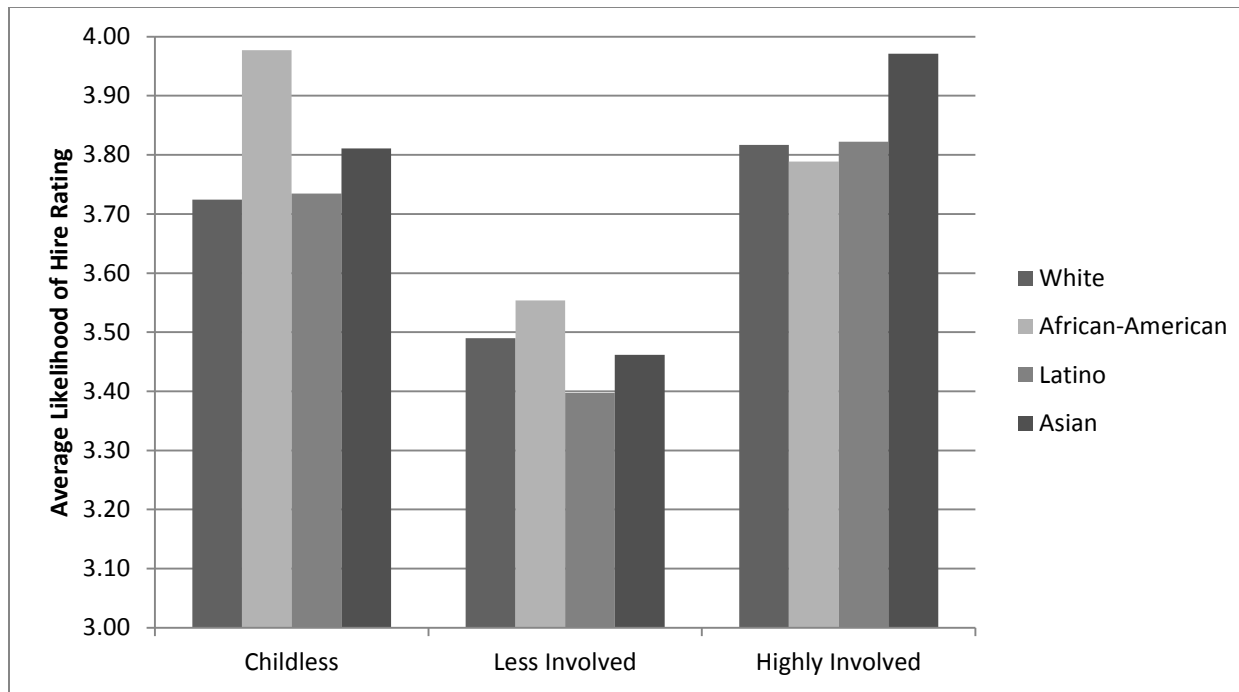


Figure 2. Average Likelihood of Hire Rating by Race and Involvement Level

Note: Statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between:

Childless white and childless African-American

Childless African-American and childless Asian

Highly involved African-American and highly involved Asian