Research over the past four decades reveals how fatherhood has evolved in the modern era. This talk will summarize how social scientists have measured father involvement based on content analysis of academic journal articles published since the 1980s. I describe how fatherhood research has become more plentiful and more diverse. Whereas earlier family research tended to ignore fathers or focus on simple measures of father presence/absence, more recent studies have attempted to measure both the quantity and quality of father-child interaction and responsibility, as well as taking account of personal characteristics, interpersonal relationships and social context. Fatherhood research has broadened our understanding of whether and how men care for children and what difference such practices make for children, mothers, families and society. I end with a short analysis of emerging debates over family policy and offer tentative predictions about the future of fathering.

The public is invited to three lectures by leading family scholars to be held as part of the international symposium on Involved Fatherhood and the Work-Family Interface: Attitudes, Barriers, and Incentives for Promoting Gender Equality.

Monday, May 27th 16:00-17:30 Feldman Building 301, Senate Hall

Kathleen Gerson, New York University
*Why Men Can’t Have It All: Men’s Caretaking Strategies in the New Economy*
Discussant: Orly Benjamin, Bar Ilan University
Joint event with the Men Studies Center at the Gender Studies Program

As jobs become more precarious, intimate relationships more fragile, and public-private boundaries more porous, American men face intensifying conflicts between earning a living and caring for others. How are today’s men responding to these conflicts? What are the implications for gender and class inequality? And how do these new insecurities influence the prospects for more egalitarian work and family options? Drawing on extensive interviews with a broad cross-section of residents in the Silicon Valley and New York areas, Kathleen Gerson will present a framework for mapping and explaining the strategies men are pursuing—in varying ways and with varying degrees of success—to resolve the conflicts between building work ties and caring for children in increasingly uncertain times.

Tuesday, May 28th 14:00-15:30 Feldman Building 301, Weisfeld Hall (ground floor)

Joan Williams, University of California, Hasting
*Placing Gender Pressures on Men at the Center of the Work-Family Conversation*
Discussant: Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, Bar Ilan University
Joint event with the Rackman Center, Bar Ilan University

A quarter century of work-family activism has produced some truly weird results. The ideal worker remains unchanged in many organizations, driven by gender pressures on men, newly morphed into tech’s romance with work obsession. Because the workplace has not changed, families have. It is now more common for women in high-stakes, high-status jobs to be the ideal worker, while their partners shape their work around family responsibilities in the manner of the traditional wife. This represents a sharp change in ideals of masculinity, as does the fact that many younger fathers now see being part of the daily lives of their children as part-and-parcel of being a good father. Given the intransigence of conventional organizations, both men and women seeking work-family balance are turning to entrepreneurship and the gig economy. Is this the answer, or merely a more modern form of the marginalization of caregivers?

Wednesday, May 29th 14:00-15:30 Feldman Building 301, Weisfeld Hall (ground floor)

Scott Coltrane, University of Oregon
*How Do Fathers Matter? Reflections on Four Decades of Research*
Discussant: Shira Offer, Bar Ilan University

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