



Nurturing Dads: Fatherhood Initiatives Beyond the Wallet (The American Sociological Association's Rose Series in Sociology)

William Marsiglio, Kevin Roy

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American fathers are a highly diverse group, but the breadwinning, live-in, biological dad prevails as the fatherhood ideal. Consequently, policymakers continue to emphasize marriage and residency over initiatives that might help foster healthy father-child relationships and creative co-parenting regardless of marital or residential status. In *Nurturing Dads*, William Marsiglio and Kevin Roy explore the ways new initiatives can address the social, cultural, and economic challenges men face in contemporary families and foster more meaningful engagement between many different kinds of fathers and their children.

What makes a good father? The firsthand accounts in *Nurturing Dads* show that the answer to this question varies widely and in ways that counter the mainstream "provide and reside" model of fatherhood. Marsiglio and Roy document the personal experiences of more than 300 men from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and diverse settings, including fathers-to-be, young adult fathers, middle-class dads, stepfathers, men with multiple children in separate families, and fathers in correctional facilities. They find that most dads express the desire to have strong, close relationships with their children and to develop the nurturing skills to maintain these bonds. But they also find that disadvantaged fathers, including young dads and those in constrained financial and personal circumstances, confront myriad structural obstacles, such as poverty, inadequate education, and poor job opportunities.

Nurturing Dads asserts that society should help fathers become more committed and attentive caregivers and that federal and state agencies, work sites, grassroots advocacy groups, and the media all have roles to play. Recent efforts to introduce state-initiated paternity leave should be coupled with social programs that encourage fathers to develop unconditional commitments to children, to co-parent with mothers, to establish partnerships with their children's other caregivers, and to develop parenting skills and resources before becoming fathers via activities like volunteering and mentoring kids. Ultimately, Marsiglio and Roy argue, such combined strategies would not only change the policy landscape to promote engaged fathering but also change the cultural landscape to view nurturance as a fundamental aspect of good fathering.

Care is a human experience—not just a woman's responsibility—and this core idea behind *Nurturing Dads* holds important implications for how society supports its families and defines manhood. The book promotes the progressive notion that fathers should provide more than financial support and, in the process, bring about a better start in life for their children.

A Volume in the American Sociological Association's Rose Series in Sociology

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