

Father/daughter relationships lead to more girls following dad's career path

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A new study co-authored by a researcher from North Carolina State University says the relationship between fathers and daughters is leading to an increase in the number of daughters who are pursuing careers in the same field as their dads.

Good news, dad! All those times your daughter appeared to be tuning you out? She was probably paying more attention than you thought. In fact, a new study co-authored by a researcher from North Carolina State University says the relationship between fathers and daughters is leading to an increase in the number of daughters who are pursuing careers in the same field as their dads.

The study shows that women born in the mid-1970s are over three times more likely than women born at the beginning of the 20th century to work in the same field as their fathers. Much of this is attributable to changes in societal norms - after all, a century ago women were unlikely to have any kind of job outside the home. However, study co-author Dr. Melinda Morrill says that approximately 20 percent of that increase is due to an increase in the transmission of "job-specific human capital" from fathers to daughters. In other words, dads and daughters appear to be paying more attention to each other.

Morrill, a research assistant professor of economics at NC State, explains that, due to changes in society, the researchers knew there would be an increase in the number of women entering into all kinds of men's jobs - including their fathers' jobs. In order to determine how

much of that increase was attributable to changes in how fathers and daughters interact, as opposed to general societal changes, the researchers evaluated the number of women who entered into the occupation of their fathers-in-law. The percentage of women who worked in the same field as their fathers-in-law - who had invested no human capital on the women - created a baseline showing the percentage increase that could be attributable just to changes in society.

The researchers then evaluated the number of women who went into their fathers' line of work. By comparing the number of women who followed in their fathers' footsteps against the number of women who worked in the same field as their fathers-in-law, the researchers found that 13 to 20 percent of the overall increase was attributable to the increased transmission of job-related human capital. "Put simply," Morrill says, "dads are passing on some job-related skills to daughters."

Morrill says the study does not show exactly how the father/daughter relationship has changed over the course of the 20th century. For example, Morrill says, "We don't know if fathers are more likely to talk to their daughters about work because the daughters are now more likely to enter the workforce. It could be that daughters are simply paying more attention to what their fathers have to say about work because the daughters can now consider pursuing this type of career. Or both."

Source: North Carolina State University

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