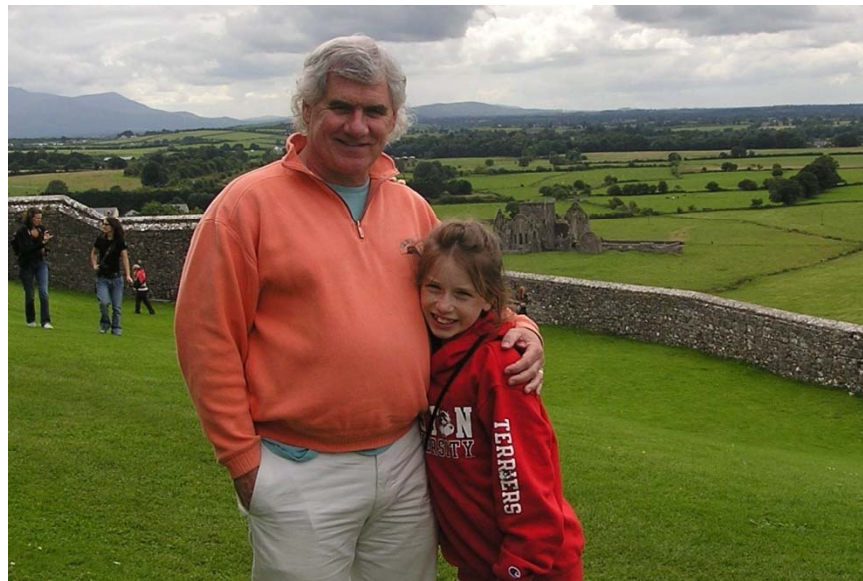


# The New Dad:

Is there really a new breed of fathers in the US?



Prof. Brad Harrington  
Boston College Center for Work & Family Webinar  
November 16, 2010

# Outline of today's session

- Introduction
- A few poll questions
- Those changing demographics
- Changing roles and challenges for men
- Our research study
- The Protean career model
- Discussion and summary



It is rarely easy. There are plenty of days of struggle and heartache when, despite our best efforts, we fail to live up to our responsibilities. I know I have been an imperfect father. I know I have made mistakes. I have lost count of all the times, over the years, when the demands of work have taken me from the duties of fatherhood. There were many days out on the campaign trail when I felt like my family was a million miles away and I knew I was missing moments of my daughters' lives that I'd never get back. It is a loss I will never fully accept.

President Barack Obama, June 21, 2009



## Are Work-Life Issues Relevant for Men?

What percentage of men today see work-life issues as having a high degree of personal relevance to them?

- A. 0-25%
- B. 26-50%
- C. 51-75%
- D. 76-100%



## The other gender...

- Women now 50% of US workforce
- In the United States, women earn:
  - 62% of associates degrees
  - 57% of bachelor's degrees
  - 60% of master's degrees
  - ~50% of professional degrees and PhD's
- In 1970 women earned <10% of professional degrees & PhD's
- Of 15 jobs with greatest growth rate in next decade, 12 are dominated by women
- So gender roles are changing in the workplace...

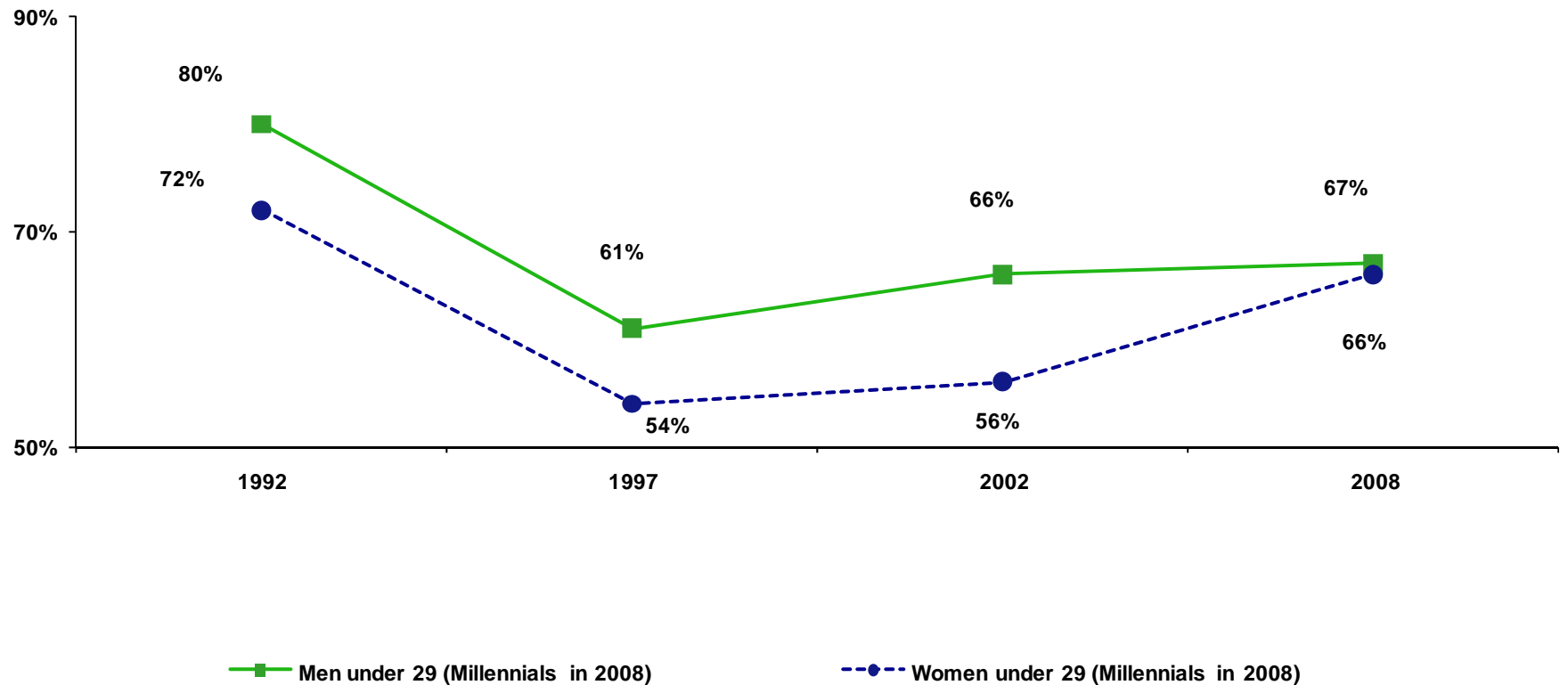


## Changes in working families...

- 75% married couples with children <15 are dual-career couples (US Census, 2008)
- 25% of women in dual-career couples earn more than their spouse
- Today, 29% of families are headed by a single parent (US Census, 2008)
- Women are primary breadwinners in 38% of American households (BLS, 2007)
- Men experienced  $\frac{3}{4}$  of job losses in recession (6 of 8 million US jobs)

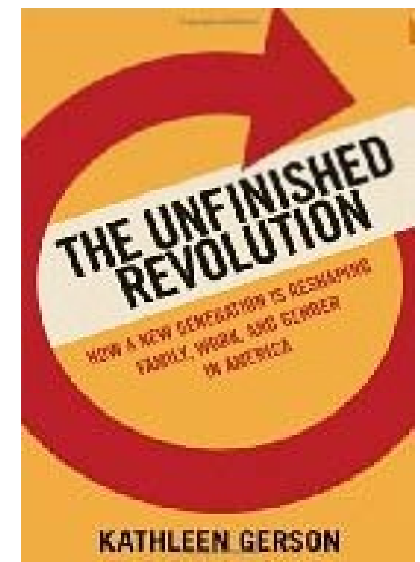


# Young Women / Men Don't Differ in Desire for Jobs with More Responsibility (1992 – 2008)



Sources: 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW), Families and Work Institute (FWI)

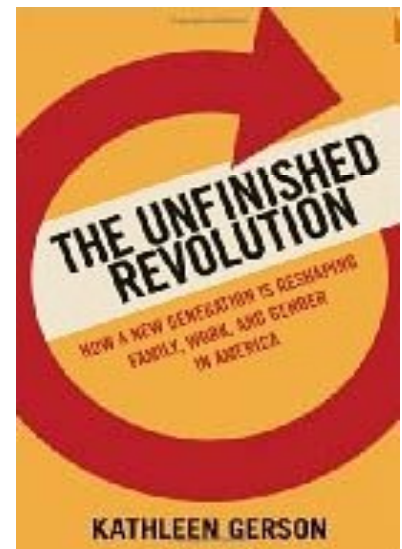
“Regardless of their own family experiences, today’s young women and men have grown up in revolutionary times. For better or worse, they have inherited new options and questions about women’s and men’s proper places. Now making the transition to adulthood, they have no well-worn paths to follow... Most women no longer assume they can or will want to stay at home with young children, but there is no clear model for how children should be raised.”



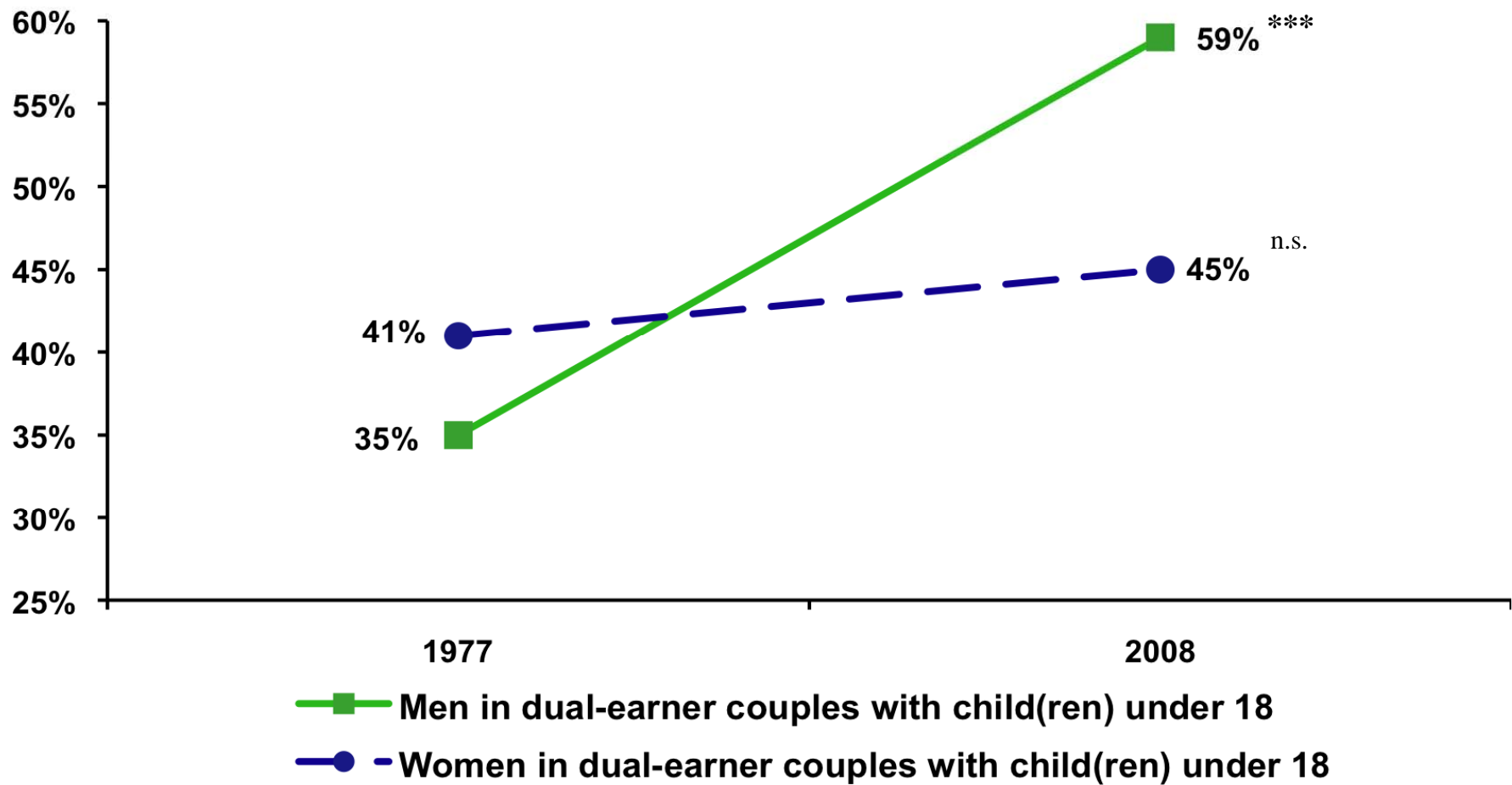
“Most men no longer assume they can or will want to support a family on their own, but there is no clear path to manhood. Work & family shifts have created an ambiguous mix of new options and new insecurities with growing conflicts between work and parenting. Amid these conflicts and contradictions young women and men must search for new answers and develop innovative responses.”

Prof. Kathleen Gerson (2009)

*The Unfinished Revolution: How a New Generation is Reshaping Family, Work, and Gender in America*



# Fathers feel more w-l conflict than mothers



## Background of our study

- 2009: Center for Work & Family conducted a qualitative study of 30+ father
- Recent fathers, children average age: 17 months
- All have men 5+ years professional experience
- All college grads, nearly half have masters degrees, a few have doctoral degrees
- Focused on career & paternal identity as well as organizational responses and support (both formal and informal)



	Average	Median	Range
Father age	34.13	33	28-47
Child age	11 months	10.5 months	1-48 months
Job satisfaction	7.87	8	6-10
Paternity time off	10.84 days	10 days	3 days – 3 months
Imp. of career to identity	3.59	4	2-5
Involved In care giving	4.17	4	2-5
Father rating	4.03	4	2.5-5
Hours worked per week	49.47	47.5	40-65
Hours spent with child on workday	3.31	3.25	1-9
Partner hours worked per week	35.97	40	0-60+
Years married	5.02	5	1-9

## Questions we'll discuss today

- Did you consider being a stay-at home father?
- Did becoming a father change the way others viewed you in the workplace?
- Is your boss supportive of work-family issues?
- How do you and your partner share care?
- What does it mean to be a good father?
- How has being a father changed you?
- Has being a father impacted your career / your career aspirations?



# How Many Men Consider Stay-at-Home?

What percentage of men who are expecting children in 2010 do you think seriously consider being a stay at home dad?

- A. 0-25%
- B. 26-50%
- C. 51-75%
- D. 76-100%



## Stay at home dad?

- Many stated that being a stay-at-home dad was a possibility they had considered however ...
- ... only 2 of 32 considered this a realistic option
- For most, family finances were a major stumbling block to this option
- For many it was difficult to see themselves in the role, or accept how others might perceive them
- In the US, still 96% of stay-at-home spouses are women, but men's percentage is increasing in past year

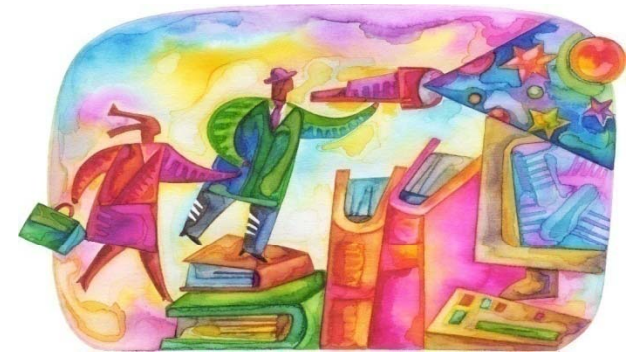


## Considered staying at home?

- “I never considered that no. Would I like to? Sure. It just wasn’t financially feasible. There was no way.
- “As appealing as it sounds, spending a lot of time with the children, there’s a certain point, I’d say of embarrassment or stigma, if I were to become a stay-at-home father just because that’s not the norm. Part of me could see myself doing this, but the other part would be like, what will friends say, what will the family say?”

## Change how others viewed you?

- Most fathers felt that becoming a father had impacted how others saw them in the workplace
- About half said the difference was very minor and half felt it was more significant
- Typically the differences reported were about:
  - Seen as whole person, more approachable
  - Maturity, more responsible
  - Member of the club
- There were no real negatives (professionally but...)

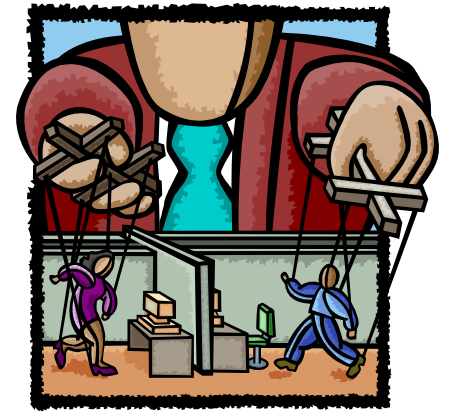


## Change how others viewed you?

- “I think it does have a little impact. You put a picture on your desk and it encourages people who probably would never have stopped by to say, oh, tell me about your son. It’s a social thing, it’s only a positive.”
- “It definitely feels like people would be more apt to give me more responsibility.”
- I think it lends, in general among your peers and co-workers, it lent credibility, a sort of maturity.”

## Is your boss supportive of work-family?

- A surprising number of the fathers spoke of how supportive their manager was on work-family issues, only a handful did not feel supported.
- That said, it seemed that in many cases the use of flexibility was informal rather than formal
- Due to the large number of managers dealing with their own work-family challenges, may be seeing a generational shift where lower-middle level managers all can empathize with the issues.



## Is your boss supportive of work-family?

- “My boss is extremely understanding, has had no problems with me taking time to do all the stuff I needed to do. We have both men and women in my area who work 3-day work weeks or work from home on Mondays.”
- “Absolutely. He’s got three kids and he understands the balance necessary. He’s had an epiphany, handling a lot with the company shrinking, feeling a little overwhelmed. He bought a house on the Cape that he uses as a refuge. I think he and his family have re-discovered themselves basically.”

# How Many Men Want an Equal Share of the Child-rearing Role?

What percentage of men today aspire to an equal share of child-rearing responsibilities?

- A. 0-25%
- B. 26-50%
- C. 51-75%
- D. 76-100%



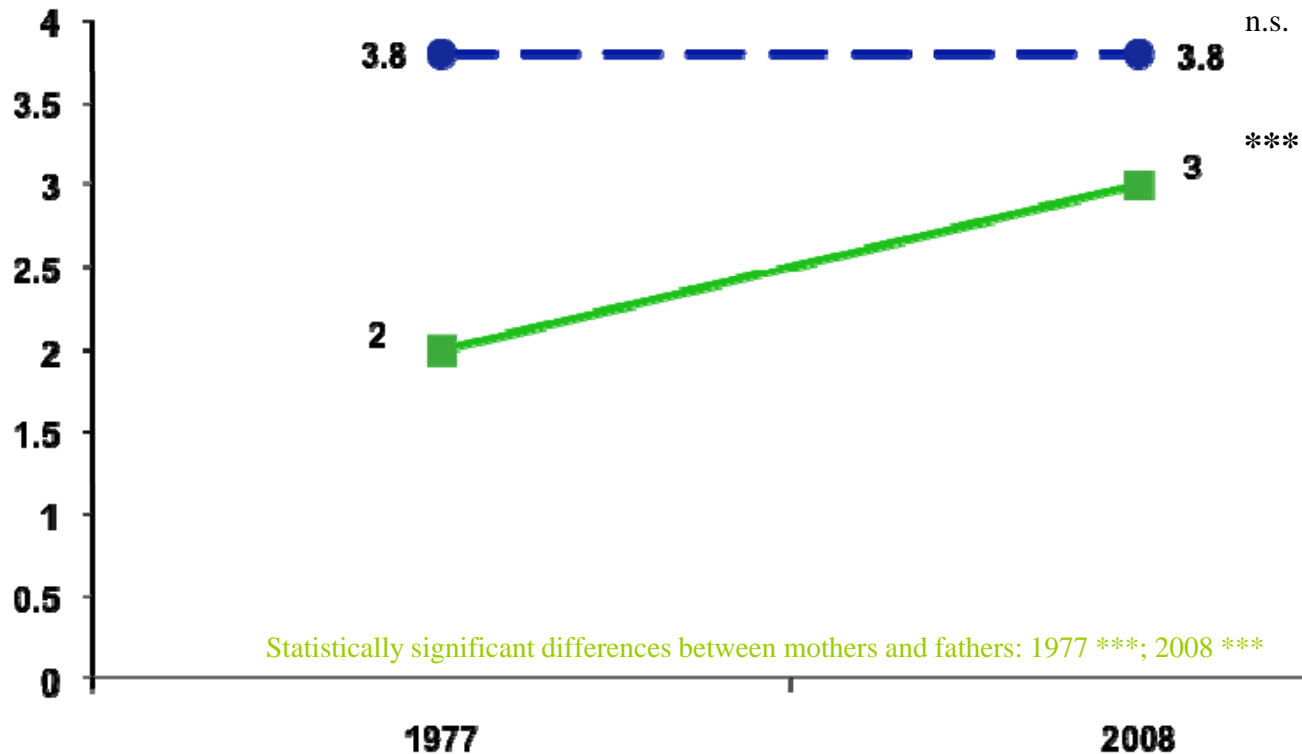
## How do you and partner share care?

- Found these results surprising and encouraging
- Most fathers were aiming to achieve a 50/50 split in terms of responsibilities for care giving
- Where they fell short of this, they stated that they were striving to address this
- Average ratings and numbers:
  - Care-giving: 4.17 out of 5
  - Hours per workday: 3.31
- Caution: We didn't get spouse's view.



## Men's Roles & Behaviors Are Changing Too

1977-2008: mother's time with children <13 has remained same while father's time has increased 50%



Sources: 1977 QES, 2008 NSCW, FWI

—■— All fathers

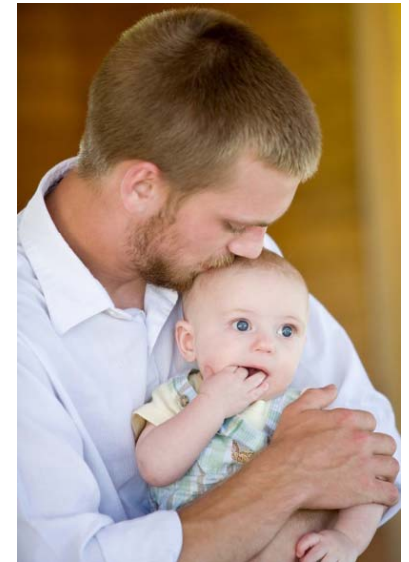
—●— All mothers

## How do you and partner share care?

- “We try to be close to 50 / 50 in terms of responsibilities. We generally alternate pretty evenly on all of that stuff.”
- “It’s a lot of give and take. I wake my daughter up, get her dressed and I get her out the door. [My wife] picks her up, she takes care of her while she’s cooking, and when I get home we feed her together, sit down as a family for dinner as much as possible. She takes care of her while I do the dishes and we play for a while. I put her to bed.”

# What does it mean to be a good father?

- The overall themes that emerged here were:
  - Listening, understanding, compassion
  - Being a role model
  - Less disciplinarian, more a friend
  - Provider, yes, but ...
  - Just as important to provide emotional support as financial
  - Being present, spending time, being accessible, just “showing up”



# What does it mean to be a good father?

- “Being a good provider is important. Knowing he has what he needs. Just enjoying life is a generic way of saying it. ‘You want to go outside? Let’s go outside. I don’t care if it’s raining or snowing out, let’s go outside. You want to hang out with the dogs? Let’s hang out with the dogs.’ it’s not on my terms, this is our time together.”
- “It means a lot of things. It means love, demonstrating your love for someone and a commitment to them at all costs. So supporting them, nurturing them, being there, and not only as a father, but as a friend, as a guide, as a mentor.”

## How Has Being a Father Changed You?

- For most, a growing, maturing experience that left them with higher level of patience & empathy
  - *“I think I’ve always been a patient person but I’m more patient, more understanding with people in general.”*
- Some found increase in focus, clarity of priorities
  - *“I’m more focused on those two priorities, work and family.”*
- Fatherhood increased the meaning in their lives, their sense of purpose



## Anticipate / impact on career?

- Most fathers assumed that having a child would impact their career ranging from moderately to dramatically
- Most stated they underestimated the degree of impact it would have on their work and lives
- While most hadn't dramatically lowered their career aspirations, most were clear that becoming a father had profoundly changed their views on what constituted success.



## Has fatherhood impacted your career?

- “When the baby was born, I was asked to travel to ten different offices around the country. And I was like ‘You know my kid is a month old. My wife is getting used to being a mother. I’m getting used to being a father.’ So, I had to make a decision. Luckily, I was able to get out of it but I realized that there will probably be a lot more moments where you have to pick one or the other.”
- “I knew I wasn’t going to be as productive, I knew I wasn’t going to have my mind on it 100% of the time. If my daughter’s sick one day, obviously my mind is going to be on that, but to be honest that was the part that excited me. I didn’t want to think about my job 24/7.”

## Impacted your career aspirations?

- “I think it’s just strengthened my focus on wanting to do meaningful work that allows me to have balance. If anything, I might want to consider scaling back on my hours in the future.”
- “I’m not so ambitious. I could keep moving up ... but I know that will come with other requirements as well. I’m happy where I am now. I don’t want the pendulum to swing back in the other direction where it was before, where it’s going to encroach on my ability to spend quality time with my family.”

# Traditional vs. Protean Career

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Traditional Career</i>	<i>Protean Career</i>
<b>Who's in charge?</b>	▪ <b>Organization</b>	▪ <b>Person</b>
<b>Core values</b>	▪ <b>Advancement</b>	▪ <b>Freedom and growth</b> ▪ <b>Work-life integration</b>
<b>Degree of mobility</b>	▪ <b>Lower</b>	▪ <b>High</b>
<b>Key attitudes</b>	▪ <b>Commitment to organization</b>	▪ <b>Commitment to profession</b> ▪ <b>Work satisfaction</b> ▪ <b>Work to live not live to work</b>
<b>Success criteria</b>	▪ <b>Position level and title</b> ▪ <b>Salary</b>	▪ <b>Psychological success</b> ▪ <b>Meaningful work</b>

# Some Striking Contrasts

- Mothers
  - All of the mothers took from 2-6 months leave from work
  - All negotiated some form of formal flexible work arrangement
  - Most mothers felt they received mixed messages on combining career and motherhood
- Dads
  - Only one of the fathers took leave. Most others took 5-10 days off
  - Only one of the fathers had made a formal request for FWA
  - The fathers received universally positive feedback on fatherhood

## Summary

- Women's tremendous educational and economic progress are leading to:
  - Greater gender equality at work and...
  - Greater gender equality at home
- Young fathers we spoke with are embracing this new norm both out of economic need and the positive psychological benefits of fatherhood
- They still sense an unreceptive workplace culture
- They are searching for new definitions of what it means to be a good father and a good man



# Learn more

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