

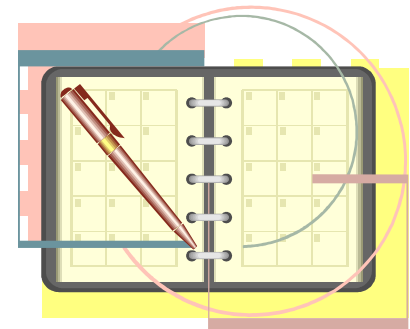
The New Dad: Right at Home



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Outline of Today's Session

- Introduction, changes in working families
- Our sample and study participants
- Fathers as caregivers
- Feedback from working wives
- Recommendations
 - For Employers
 - For Fathers and families



Gender roles are changing in American families

- In US, women earn: 62% of associates, 57% of bachelors, and 60% of masters degrees
- 75% of married couples with children under 15 are dual-career couples. In those, 25% of time, the woman earns more than her spouse (BLS)
- Women in dual-earner couples contributed 44% of family income, up from 39% in 1997 (NSCW, 2008)
- Of 15 the jobs with largest projected growth rate in next decade, 12 are “women roles”
- During recession, men experienced $\frac{3}{4}$ of job losses in the US (6 of 8 million jobs)



Recent headlines:

- **“Behind Every Great Woman: As more women earn high-level corporate roles, more husbands are staying home, raising the kids, and changing the rules”**, *BusinessWeek*, January, 2012
- **“Young Women are More Career Driven than Young Men”**, *New York Times*, April, 2012, based on a study done by Pew Research Center
- **“Men Choosing Fatherhood Over Careers”**, *Forbes*, May, 2012
- *The New Yorker*, May, 2012, **Cover art depicts a woman with a stroller entering a playground and every other parent in the playground is a man**
- **“Are Dads the New Moms?”**, *Wall Street Journal*, May, 2012

Background: The New Dad

- 2009: Center for Work & Family conducted a qualitative study of 33 fathers
- First-time fathers, children's age ~11 months
- Became *The New Dad: Exploring Fatherhood within a Career Context (2010)* which garnered tremendous media attention
- We wanted to increase our sample and broaden the research to more fathers
- We also wanted to better understand and quantify what was happening



Background: The New Dad, Phase 2

- Quantitative study: 963 respondents, 4 large companies, national sample
- “White collar” group: 60% were managers, 37% salaried workers, 3% were paid hourly
- Virtually all work full-time and well educated:
- 53% agreed that: “If my spouse made enough money for our family to live on comfortably, I would feel okay if I didn’t work outside the home.”
- This statistic, and the attitudinal shift it implies, suggested that further exploration of men who had already made this choice was warranted.

The New Dad: Right at Home

Reasons for studying this population to explore:

- Growing number of at-home Dads
 - 81,000 in 2001 to 176,000 in 2011
- Understanding fathers' role as caregiver
- Impact on women in the workplace
- Impact on fathers in the workplace

The New Dad: Right at Home

31 in-depth interviews with at-home fathers
Sample description:

	Average	Range
Father Age	39.15	28.48
Child Age	5.43	6 months-16 years
Number of years at home	5.28	1-17
Work Satisfaction	7.18 on a 1-10 scale	2-10 (one response=15, coded as 10)
Fatherhood Rating	4.12 on a 1-5 scale	3.5-5

Decision to become an at-home dad

- 30% of dads in the study had been laid-off
- Long work hours/large workloads prompted some
- Two major considerations
 - Financial circumstances
 - Values regarding how children should be raised

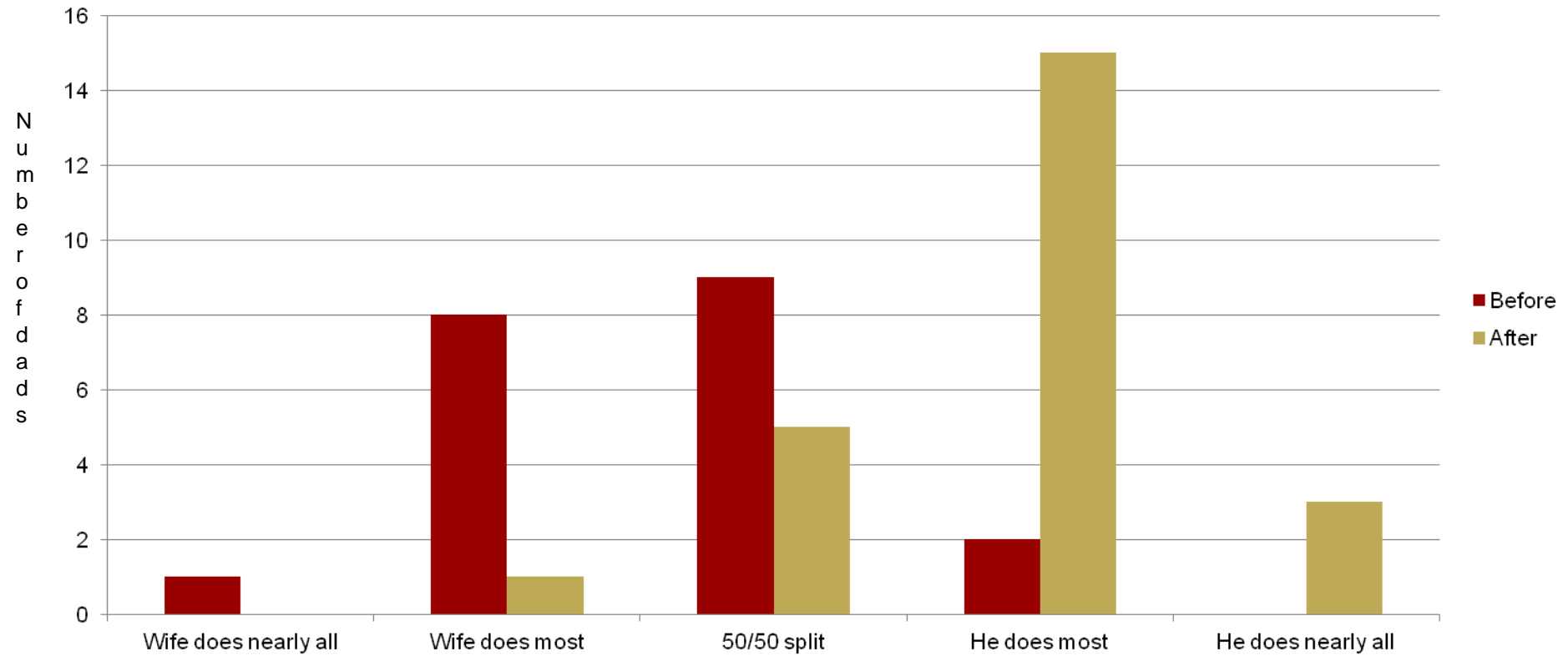
“We realized it made sense for me to stay at home with [our] son. And because my wife made a lot more money than me, so she could be the single working parent, but I couldn’t be the only working parent. So it almost wasn’t planned, it just kind of came into that.” -Drew

At-home Father Identity

- Transition can be challenging
- Most happy with their role
- Social isolation can be difficult

And so I switched from 70-hour weeks, and constant stress, and forever thinking about stuff that other people wanted of me, to this, where you have this little person who desperately needs you, and nothing in the world is more important to you. And I felt blessed, for want of a better word, that I was in a position where I could just allow that feeling to happen to me. Because most men don't get to do that, which I feel profoundly sorry for them. -Anthony

Division of Childcare and Housework Responsibilities Before and After Becoming At-home Dads



Definition of a good father

- **Presence/involvement** (19): “not just being there, but emotionally and psychologically [being] present for your children” [Gerald]
- **Shaping character/leading by example/teaching** (10): “it’s important to understand them and help them become the person that they want to be; you need to model the behavior you want to see” [Drew]
- **Love/emotional support** (6): “the measure of my success as a father is bound up in loving my children and my wife, and receiving love from them in truly reciprocal, mutual, growing relationships” [Ryan]
- **Fostering development** (4): “being there for the emotional and psychological development of your child is very important” [Jesse]
- **Safe environment** (4): “creating a place at home where you, your wife, your kids can all feel like they are safe” [Charles]
- **Childcare** (2): “contributes to the day-to-day chores and tasks of raising a child” [Grant]

Reactions of others

- Temporary situation: not a long-term commitment
- Concerns about family finances
- Judgement about men's incompetence
- Perception as “suspicious”
- Excluded from “mother” activities

“I get kudos just for doing it from the people that I care about... And I don't actually care what the men think, because I think most men don't know jack when it comes to this stuff. You know? They have missed out on something that I have been privileged to experience”. -Anthony

Career Implications

- Professional work plans for future unclear
- Desire to integrate roles as caregiver and breadwinner
- Re-entry will be a challenge (like at-home moms)

“I'm worried that this long break will prevent Grant from working again, which is a difficult thought. He's young, smart, talented and well-educated. I really hope that this sacrifice doesn't jeopardize his future career prospects.” -Wife of at-home dad

Impact on Family

- Families are thriving
- Special father-child bonds developed
- Spouses jealous at times
- Relationships are stronger

“The peace of mind that comes with having Frank home is as I expected it to be. What has surprised me is the unwavering dedication Frank has to parenting. He's not just making sure the kids don't kill themselves; he's committed to what I would call real, "old fashioned" parenting. The kind of parenting that I think most people envy, he does it every day and - thanks to him - our kids are awesome! “ -Wife of at-home dad

Impact on spouses' careers

- Allowed their partners to have flexibility and increased focus at work
- Diminished their worries about the quality of care that their children were receiving

The good thing about our situation is that she can go to work and feel one hundred percent confident that the kids are going to get fed lunches and if they need to go the doctor they'll be there, if there are any appointments it will get taken care of. So I think because of that she is better able to be a working woman and know that she can tell her boss and co-workers that, "Hey, I'm here for you. I'm not going to have to leave." -Gerald

Spouses' perspective

- E-mail survey to spouses: 74% responded
- Spouses highly positive about having their partner at home full-time: "grateful", "fortunate", "blessed"
- Struggles for some re: traditional gender roles
- Freedom to pursue career

I'm proud to tell people that I have an at-home-dad for a husband and that I'm the breadwinner. I'm also really happy that we each are so good at what we do. There's no competition over which role is more important, or even regret that we each aren't doing what the other one does. We're genuinely happy in our respective roles and content with our division of labor. -Wife of at-home dad

Conclusions

1. In spite of media “hype” regarding laid off fathers who re-invent themselves as full-time caregivers, this image does not match the data or our experiences in speaking with the at-home fathers.
2. Men from widely varying backgrounds make the choice to be at-home fathers and indeed, may flourish in the role.
3. Feelings of social isolation and stigma regarding the role of at-home parent are even greater for men than women.
4. At-home dads make very good parents.
5. At-home fathers are not simply stepping up to their responsibilities; they are increasing the fundamental sense of meaning in their lives.

Conclusions

Related to women:

1. The overwhelming response from wives was that having an at-home spouse had enabled these women to pursue their careers in a much more assertive fashion without the limitations that virtually all working mothers experience.
2. Until women and men share equally in caregiving in their families, or until an equal number of men decide to play the role of primary caregiver or at-home dad, it is unlikely that women will achieve parity at the most senior levels of organizations.

Recommendations for employers

- Recognize fathers' increasing role in family caregiving
- Provide flexibility to enhance employee engagement, loyalty, productivity and wellness
- Understand that women's ability to ascend to the highest ranks within organizations is often dependent on the critical role of an at-home spouse



Recommendations for fathers and families

- Be aware of isolation, career derailment, and even social stigma are often attached to being an at-home parent-develop support systems!
- The decision for the father to stay home and become the primary caregiver can be beneficial for both spouses.
- Don't be reluctant to try being an at-home dad. It may be the most meaningful job, you've ever had!

