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Dads Who Do It All? The Division of Labor in Lead-Dad Households

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Dads Who Do It All? The Division of Labor in Lead-Dad Households

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Natasha Hagaman-Cummins

Committee in charge:

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2022

The Dissertation of Natasha Hagaman-Cummins is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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University of California, Merced

2022

This dissertation is dedicated to both of my parents, who always emphasized the importance of a formal education as well as of being a student of life.

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It was also made possible by the all-around support, encouragement, and care provided by my partner, Jeff Hagaman-Cummins (the best kind of lead dad), and the inspiration provided by our son, Keegan.

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Van Dyke, Nella, **Natasha Hagaman**, Irenee R. Beattie, and Hala Alnagar. 2021. "Coming Out (or not) on College Applications: Institutional and Interpersonal Dimensions of Disclosing LGBQ+ Identities." *Socius* 7: https://doi.org/10.1177%2F23780231211054641

Works in Progress

Articles

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Dads Who Do It All? The Division of Labor in Lead-Dad Households
Natasha Hagaman-Cummins
Doctorate of Philosophy in Sociology
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Professor Laura Hamilton, Chair

One of the factors which perpetuates gender inequality is the inequitable division of household labor, and particularly the division of child caretaking labor. Even when women are employed outside the home, many remain primarily responsible for household duties and child caretaking. This research utilizes individual interviews (N=40) with heterosexual, married or cohabitating parents of children 5 and under where fathers do the majority of child caretaking. I explore how lead-dad households are similar to and different from those with a traditional lead-mother arrangement, as well as what motivates lead-father families to choose this arrangement, and how they explain it to others. This project also considers the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on lead-dad households and whether it has disrupted household roles in these families. This project uses atypical or negative cases to better understand the issue of gender identity of both mothers and fathers in atypical households.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"I definitely look at it as charting a path for… a system that works, as compared to trying to look at an established model and match it." (Scheiber, Cody)

One of the factors which perpetuates gender inequality is the inequitable division of household labor, and particularly the division of child caretaking labor. Even when women are employed outside the home, many remain primarily responsible for household duties and children (Bianchi et al. 2012; Sayer 2005; Wharton 1994; Hochschild 1997; 1989). This difference in the performance of gender roles also varies intersectionally, with racial differences in gender roles and parenting expectations (Rochlen et al. 2008; McAdoo 2007; Wingfield 2013; Lamont 2000). An examination of the gender division of household chores and child caretaking is necessary to see the full picture of gender inequality in the home (Bianchi et al. 2012). Overall total work hours – paid (at work) and unpaid (at home) – of men and women are similar, but vary in a fundamental way; women spend more time on unpaid household labor, while men spend more in the paid workplace (Bianchi et al. 2012). Gender is the primary factor which drives Americans' ideas about who should be performing different household chores and various child caretaking tasks (Doan and Quadlin 2019). What happens when these gender roles are upended? This project considers what happens when women are not primarily responsible for their children. How are gender atypical households different than and similar to gender-normative households? What causes lead-dad couples to contravene gender identity norms and how do they make sense of their roles? How has the pandemic impacted these households differently than traditional (lead-mom) households?

We are all shaped by society and the expectations of others. Some couples, by choice or circumstance, are raising their children in atypical households. While ideas about what makes a "good" mother and a "good" father are clearly not equivalent to each other in the United States today (Preisner et al. 2019), we don't know a lot about parents that choose an atypical parenting path. When fathers prioritize child-rearing, they are often viewed as bad providers, which in the past has been the main expectation of good fathers (Solomon 2014; Chesley 2011). Conversely, when women prioritize providing for their family through outside employment, they are often viewed as bad mothers (Newman and Henderson 2014; Hays 1996).

However, more mothers are the primary breadwinner in their family today than at any other time in history (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013). The share of married mothers who earn more than their husbands has gone up from 4% in 1960 to 23% in 2011 (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013). One reason behind this increase is the rising employment rate of women, which has resulted in more dual-earner families (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013). Another factor in more women out-earning their spouses may be the increasing education levels of women (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013). These "breadwinner moms" also tend to be highly educated, white, and somewhat older (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013). In families where the mother out-earns the father, 71% have dual-earners, while mothers are the sole earner in 22% (Wang, Parker, and Taylor 2013).

The number of stay-at-home parents has stayed roughly the same from 1989 to 2016, but the share of those parents that are dads has increased somewhat, starting at 4% in 1989 and increasing to 7% in 2016 (Livingston 2018). The number of stay-at home moms has stayed roughly equivalent over the same time period, going from 28% to 27% (Livingston 2018). However, we know that many parents who are primarily in charge of the household and child caretaking also work outside the home to varying degrees, so this number does not adequately capture those primary parents. For the purposes of this project, the term lead parent (father or mother) refers to a parent, with or without an outside job, who takes primary responsibility for the household and children.

For this project I explore the differences in mothers and fathers with an atypical division of child caretaking responsibilities and those with a traditional lead-mother arrangement, as well as what causes lead-father families to choose this arrangement, and how they explain it to others. This project also considers the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on lead-dad households and whether it has disrupted household roles in these families. This project uses atypical or negative cases to better understand the issue of gender identity of both mothers and fathers in atypical households.

Gendered Parenting Expectations

> No one in the world looks at a mother who's at the grocery store with their kids in the middle of the day and goes, "Oh my God, I can't believe you're doing such a good job with the kids." But when a dad does it, everybody fawns over us, and they think that that's a good feeling. And in the end, it really is insulting because it implies that because I'm a man, I am somehow incapable of nurturing or care. (Shanley, Mike)

Gender identity in gender atypical households is likely influenced by gendered parenting expectations. Norms about parenting are gendered and racialized based on a historical moment for straight middle-class white women (Coontz 1992). During the postwar era, the United States experienced a unique economic and political period which was fueled by real income growth and government programs which facilitated upward mobility (Coontz 1992). However, these gains were not enjoyed equally; people of color were excluded from these gains through racism and discrimination, while white women were either consigned back to the household after their wartime employment, or relegated to lower-paying “female” jobs (Coontz 1992).

In the United States, we see that both men and women today spend more time taking care of their children than at any time since the 1960s (Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie 2006). This accompanies an increase in intensive parenting expectations (Craig and Mullan 2011; Hays 1996), including concerted cultivation (Lareau 2003). However, it is overwhelmingly mothers who still perform the majority of child caretaking and household labor (Bianchi et al. 2012; Sayer 2005; Wharton 1994; Hochschild 1997). Research has found that the household arrangement with the most equal division of child caretaking labor is one with an at-home father and breadwinning mother (Chesley and

Flood 2017). Dad being primarily responsible for the children combined with "the preferences and pressures breadwinning mothers…feel to remain highly involved with their children's care," it results in a more equal level of involvement in child-caretaking between parents despite the hours spent by the mother in paid work (Chesley and Flood 2017:530). Working fathers spend more time caring for their children when their wives work, spend more time in the labor market, and make more money than they do (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012).

Additionally, cultural norms around what constitutes a "good mother" and "good father" are not the same (Preisner et al. 2019). The hegemonic expectations of the "intensive mothering" ideal require women to be the primary caretaker of children; to spend "extensive time, energy, and material resources" to develop the child's full potential; and to remain out of the workforce in order to properly devote themselves to their children (Newman and Henderson 2014:474; Hays 1996). Clearly, this ideal type is not available to every mother. While this model is based on middle-class, heterosexual, white ideals, women from all social classes, races, and ethnicities are held to this standard in the United States today (Le-Phuong Nguyen, Harman and Cappellini 2017; Hays 1996; Romagnoli and Wall 2012). This mothering ideal ignores the variety of perspectives and realities that exist for women, including women of color and working women (Newman and Henderson 2014; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 1990). Even discourses which offer alternative forms of mothering, such as Christopher's "extensive mothering," are engaging with the standards imposed by intensive mothering (2012; Newman and Henderson 2014). Extensive mothering attempts to redefine what is considered "good" mothering, making it compatible with being employed (Christopher 2012). Under this framework, good mothering includes acting as the family manager and remaining "ultimately responsible for their children's well-being," despite delegating much of the day-to-day work to others (Christopher 2012:73).

Scholarly characterizations of fatherhood have provided several ideal-type levels of father involvement. The traditional fatherhood ideal type includes a breadwinning father who views their fathering contribution as the income they provide to support their family – providing is involvement for these fathers (Solomon 2014; Chesley 2011). The involved father remains in the workforce, and also provides hands-on care to his children (Solomon 2014; Lamb 2000; Pleck and Pleck 1997). The engaged father includes "egalitarian beliefs about mothers and fathers, emotional closeness with children, hands-on involvement in day-to-day routine care, primary responsibility for childcare, a voluntary exit from the labor force, the instrumental supports for wives' careers, and a view of family as having primary importance in one's life" (Solomon 2014).

Parenting choices do not take place in a vacuum and are strongly gendered and racialized (Preisner et al. 2019). "Ideas, norms and expectations about what is and is not masculine" inform the fatherhood choices men make (Cooper 2000). However, as times change it is more challenging to negotiate between former and currently evolving views of masculinity (Petts, Shafer, and Essig 2018). Gerson points to the emergence of a new fatherhood ideal, which posits that "…men should be highly involved in parenting,

contribute significantly to housework, and be an engaged and equitable spouse, partner, or coparent" (Petts, Shafer, and Essig 2018:705; Gerson 2010). Other research has identified a "caring masculinity…in which [men] reshape their masculine identity to allow for more active caregiving than is expected within hegemonic masculinity (Petts, Shafer, and Essig 2018; Elliot 2016; Lee and Lee 2016). Another study found that Black men develop a "caring self" as a result of their own experiences with racism and discrimination, and identify this concern for others as a "critical component of their masculinity" (Wingfield 2013:125; Lamont 2000).

Whiteness and Parenting

Having a majority White sample, as this project does, brings up the question of what role race might play in non-normative gender arrangements. First, the racial difference in income and wealth in the United States (Fryer, Pager, and Spenkuch 2011; Altonji and Blank, 1999; Oliver and Shapiro 1995) fundamentally shapes the choices available to people – including how they will organize their households. Racial discrimination and job segregation have significantly impacted the financial position of non-white workers, resulting in a racial wage gap (Huffman and Cohen 2004; Altonji and Blank, 1999). Most of the interracial couples in this study included a White woman married to a man of color, perhaps a reflection of the differences in opportunity available to each partner.

Secondly, whiteness, along with other forms of privilege such as class, is incorporated into cultural ideas about gender roles and what masculinity and femininity should look like. There are racial differences in gender roles and parenting expectations (Rochlen et al. 2008; McAdoo 2007; Wingfield 2013; Lamont 2000). "Specifically, socio-historical differences in Black and White women's options for work, family, and domestic labor, as well as experiences of discrimination and stereotyping, have created a set of race-related gender norms" (Settles et al. 2008). People of color have to contend with racism in addition to sexist assumptions when they violate gender norms. One multiracial father (married to a White woman) alluded to the importance of multiple social locations when he referenced what caregiver mothers versus caregiver fathers cope with in multiracial families. He mentioned that he hasn't been called the nanny yet, unlike some caregiving mothers of color that he knows.

The experiences people have and their ability to push back against normativity are all impacted by a person's gender and race. Standard North American Family (SNAF) norms prevalent in the United States are classed and raced. The father is the primary breadwinner, and while the mother might work outside the home, she is mainly responsible for the household and children (Smith 1993). The family is racially homogenous and fits the nuclear family ideal. A White couple may be more likely to meet (or appear to meet) some normative gender expectations simply because they are white. They also may have more leeway to violate normative gender expectations. However, not everyone can meet this middle-class White family model – if they even want to. Under what circumstances are households willing to break gender norms?

Perhaps when a household has rejected or is unable to fulfil the SNAF model they are more willing to violate other norms.

Finally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, race and class also made a difference as far as who was able to work from the safety of home (professionals) and who could not (essential workers and health care workers). Black and Hispanic workers were disproportionally employed by businesses that were deemed "essential" and their work could not be performed remotely (Rogers et al. 2020). While this project does include health care workers (such as doctors and nurses), there are no essential workers in the sample. Most of the other (non-health care) participants were able to telecommute during the pandemic.

Gender Identity

> I think that's the big thing, making that mental transition from the workforce, where you get your identity, to being a dad and getting your identity through that…I knew that it was the kind of thing I wanted to do [being a lead parent], but I think the messages our culture gives us are so strong, that a man isn't really a man unless he has a job and he's the breadwinner. So even choosing it voluntarily, it took a while to get that stuff sorted out. (Parri, Leon)

One important social identity is a person's gender identity. Gender identity is generally described as a person's inner sense of themselves as masculine or feminine, or "both, or neither" (Garvey and Rankin 2015:190; Morrow and Messinger 2006). "Individuals are born sexed but not gendered, and they have to be taught to be masculine or feminine" (Lorber 1994:57). Society labels certain traits and behaviors as masculine or feminine, and "people are supposed to act in ways that line up with their presumed sex" (Pascoe 2008:13; Butler 1990; Stets and Biga 2003:405; Stets and Burke 2000; Burke and Cast 1997; Burke 1991; Burke and Reitzes 1981).

Masculinity. Scholars of masculinity help us think about these questions. The concept of hegemonic masculinity proposes that there is a model masculinity that, although many men are not able to embody it, is held up as the ideal version (i.e., straight, white, Protestant, and wealthy) that men strive to achieve and that they compare themselves and other men to (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Connell proceeds to argue that there are multiple masculinities, each of which has a different degree of power. In addition to hegemonic masculinity, she outlines characteristics of subordinate, complicit, and marginalized masculinities ([1995]2005); other, "lower-status ways that manhood is enacted by males with fewer resources" (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009:280). The relationship between hegemonic masculinity and other forms of subordinate masculinities are key to the gender order of a patriarchy (Connell 1987).

Hegemonic masculinity practices facilitate the subordination of women and have a class component as well, with the "domination of…privileged men over lower-class

men" (Pyke 1996:544; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). However, subsequent research has argued that there is not a single masculinity that all men enact; for example, men with fewer resources (monetary and social) develop alternate forms of masculinity (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Some scholars have found a connection between working class men who "emphasize a hypermasculine provider role" while at the same time significantly sharing family work – all the while "insisting their wives were the primary parents" (Shows and Gerstel 2009:163). Other work has found that middle-class cohabitating couples tended to have a more equal division of household chores, while cohabitating working class men refused to do housework (Miller and Carlson 2016). Social location, including social class and occupation, can be a key determinant in which of the "multiple masculinities" are enacted (Shows and Gerstel 2009:179; Cooper 2000).

Some scholars emphasize the relational component of gender identity. Connell and Messerschmidt point out that gender is relational – not just between men, but also in relation to women (2005; Connell [1995]2005; Connell 1987; Kimmel and Davis 2011). In his intersectional study of the gender achievement gap, Morris found that boys were viewed as naturally smart, regardless of their academic performance (2012). If they didn't perform well, they were simply lazy, and if they did, it was due to their innate superior intelligence – not hard work or effort. This exhibited their "male superiority," and was a key venue through which they could establish their masculinity. However, girls – while viewed as less naturally smart than boys– were able to visibly try to achieve academically without threatening their femininity. Morris observes that masculinity is really a response to femininity; how boys construct their masculinity is in opposition to what is associated with the feminine and viewed as superior.

We also see that structure matters; not everyone is able to simply adopt any gender identity they choose. "Different masculinities are constituted in relation to other masculinities and to femininities—through the structure of gender relations….and through other social structures" (Connell 1992:736). These social structures, or systems of difference, are defined in relation to each other (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). The freedom to challenge these social structures varies depending on an individual's positionality. A middle-class white woman in the United States is likely to have more freedom in adopting a non-normative gender identity than a working-class Latinx man. A general problem with the concept of multiple masculinities is that it reinforces the gender binary: all male behaviors are considered a form of masculinity, and female behaviors are considered a form of femininity. Men exhibiting "feminine" behaviors are seen as performing subordinated masculinity, versus performing femininity (Francis and Paechter 2015). Men are never viewed as performing femininity.

Masculinity in all forms is not static, but rather is formed through interactions not only with other men, but with women as well, and can change situationally and over time (Shows and Gerstel 2009; Cooper 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). For example, hybrid masculinity theory argues that masculinities are the result of combining various elements of masculine identity typically associated with marginalized and subordinated masculinities, and sometimes femininities, into "privileged men's gender performances

and identities" (Bridges and Pasco 2014:246). Cooper posits development of a "new masculinity" based on interviews with white-collar workers in Silicon Valley which coalesces around the unique way work is organized there (2000:380). This masculinity is focused on meeting workplace expectations, which leave little room for their personal responsibilities, yet the majority of fathers expressed a desire for involved parenting and an egalitarian worldview, whether these were actually enacted in their lives or not (Cooper 2000). Other fathers, who choose to prioritize child caretaking while also maintaining connections with work, are challenging our current understanding about what constitutes masculinity and "creating new kinds of masculinities that join together varied configurations of masculinities and femininities" (Doucet 2004:293). Are these emerging masculinities a sign the gender order is changing? According to Bridges and Pascoe, hybrid masculinities are not a sign of moving away from the dominance of hegemonic masculinity, but rather a new version which actually reinforces the gender order while making it harder to notice that it is continuing (2014). This research identifies a weakness in the concept of hegemonic masculinity and its multiple subordinate masculinities; it is difficult to identify social change.

Femininity. Femininity in general can be defined as "ways of 'doing girl or woman'" (Paechter 2006:255). According to Lucal, markers of femininity are used to distinguish females from the default gender category of male (2008). Everyone is considered male until proven otherwise by these symbols of femininity, such as nail polish or long hair (Lucal 2008). Interestingly, these indicators of femininity often take a substantial amount of time to produce (Lucal 2008). Although femininity is framed in relationship to masculinity, it is not viewed as equal to it; instead, it is seen as "a lack, an absence of masculinity" (Paechter 2006:256; Kessler and McKenna 1978).

Connell expands the gender order perspective by arguing that there are no hegemonic femininities, since subordination of women to men is a key component of all femininities (1987). Rather, the counterpoint to hegemonic masculinity is emphasized femininity, an exaggerated form of femininity focused on "accommodating the interests and desires of men" where women trade power for protection and support (Connell 1987:183). Messerschmidt expands on this concept, arguing that emphasized femininity "is practiced in a complimentary, compliant, and accommodating subordinate relationship with hegemonic masculinity" (2004:26-27). However, unlike hegemonic masculinity, women who engage in emphasized femininity are giving up their power rather than being empowered through its display (Charlebois 2010). This exemplifies the "monocategorical approach" to gender, which does not consider that different types of femininity may provide key support to hegemonic power relations (Hamilton, Armstrong, Seeley, Armstrong 2019).

Doing Gender

> I think people definitely…form a snap judgment about you whenever you mention that you're a stay-at-home parent. Because it, yes, it does get

> asked a lot, especially when I'm doing some of these other gigs. Like, what's your full-time thing? I say, well, I stay at home with my kids full time, but then I also do all this other stuff on the side. So…you can definitely tell that…I think a lot of people still are just kind of surprised…that a male is doing that. (Green, Roger)

Gender identity influences how people perform gender roles. Some argue that gender identity develops through performances aligned with the gender we identify with, rather than gender identity resulting from masculine or feminine behavior (Butler 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987). West and Zimmerman argue that gender is a product of everyday interactions rather than a component of identity which individuals take into those interactions (1987; Chafetz 1997; West and Fenstermaker 1993). Instead of being something we naturally are, it is something we do (perform) - and others hold us accountable for how we "do" gender (West and Zimmerman 1987).

West and Zimmerman's "doing gender" theoretical framework argues that gender is "an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements," and a way to make divisions between the genders seem legitimate (1987:126). Studies have found that men and women perform different tasks and spend very different amounts of time on household labor, even when they are both employed outside the home (Berk 1985; West and Zimmerman 1987). However, using this framework points out that more is being produced by this labor difference than the work itself: women and men are producing gender (West and Zimmerman 1987).

As West and Zimmerman point out, "The sex category / gender relationship links the institutional and interactional levels, a coupling that legitimates social arrangements based on sex category and reproduces their asymmetry in face-to-face interaction" (1987:147). West and Zimmerman argue that there is a "self-regulating process" to reinforce the gender order, where people "monitor their own and others' conduct with regard to its gender implications" (1987:142). When we don't perform in interactions in ways that are seen as "gender-appropriate," then we are held accountable. Are atypical couples held accountable for doing gender in ways that are seen as gender-inappropriate, and if so, in what ways? How does this impact their own gender identities?

In "Gender Trouble," Judith Butler argues that gender is "performative," and that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender" (1990:34). According to this framework, gender identity performance actually constitutes gender, which is then said to be its result (1990). Butler argues that we perform gender, while West and Zimmerman argue that gender emerges through our interactions. Both theories posit that gender is socially created, and once created it is used as a basis for differential treatment. When men and women are performing atypical roles in the household, how do they signal their gender identity in interactions? I examine how atypical households explain why they have adopted these non-normative roles to those they interact with to better understand this question.

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

> So I do think, long-term impact, I 100% believe that my relationship with my kids will be improved…This new role and being able to work remotely has just changed the relationship, where my kids see me more, I get to interact with them more, and so that bond has very much improved. And I wouldn't want to go back into a situation where I only see them a few hours in the evening again, which is what it was pre-pandemic. (Norman, Carly)

During the course of this research project, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the globe and shut it down. This exogeneous shock could have provided an impetus to correct gender disparities at work and home (van Tienoven et al. 2021; Craig 2020); it completely upended the way many of us work and, for many, caused the boundary between work and home life to disappear. The gendered division of household labor could have become a thing of the past as work and home lives were rewritten in new ways. Alternatively, exogeneous events also have the potential to reinforce traditional gender roles (van Tienoven et al. 2021; Power 2020). When you are fighting to survive, it may become too much work to fight gender norms as well. What happened in lead-dad households under these circumstances? Did non-traditional household arrangements stay non-traditional, or did they revert to normative roles in the face of the exogenic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Dissertation Roadmap

The following chapter (Chapter 2) outlines the research design of this study. I provide an overview of the sample, recruitment process, and study procedures, including the analytic plan. Project limitations are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 3 explores how lead-dad households operate. In this chapter, I ask how a lead-father arrangement is dissimilar and similar to what we know about lead-mother households. I situate this chapter within the context of differing parenting expectations for mothers and fathers. I include cognitive labor when looking at the division of labor in lead-dad households, as well as whether breadwinner moms still have a second shift when they get home from work. I find that lead-dads are bi-modal: there are some dads that "do-it-all" – and those that don't.

Chapter 4 looks at the deciding factors that lead to the decision to adopt an atypical household arrangement, contrary to gender identity norms. Specifically, it asks what causes couples to choose a lead-father arrangement. I find that while economic and financial considerations are important factors for most couples, they are not the main deciding factor. Couples consider a variety of factors when they are evaluating adoption of a lead-ad arrangement, and if they can make the finances work, that eliminates the final obstacle. Additionally, while almost all of the households preferred to have an at-home parent, most of the moms were not interested in doing that work themselves.

Chapter 5 considers how lead-dad couples make sense of their roles. This chapter asks how lead-dad households explain why they've adopted these atypical roles. I situate this chapter in the literature on "doing gender," and find that some couples are actively, and sometimes purposefully, undoing gender, while others have simply adopted a new framework within which they're doing gender in traditional ways. This chapter also identifies a developing discourse where men, and sometimes their partners, are identifying as "more than just a dad." These couples adopt a variety of strategies to differentiate dad from ideas about lead moms and their associated gender role and responsibilities.

Chapter 6 examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on lead-dad households. I explore how COVID-19 disrupted household roles in families with lead fathers. I situate this chapter within the context of how households respond to an exogenous shock – do they become more or less traditional? I find that atypical arrangements do remain atypical. Lead-dad households have simply added mom in to more of their day-to-day lives, when possible. Dad remains responsible for the majority of child caretaking, including virtual schooling, and household chores are what get cut due to the time pressures all families are experiencing due to the pandemic.

Chapter 7 provides an overview of the findings of each chapter, situates the results within existing literature and provides suggestions for future research on lead-dad households, the gender division of household labor, and child caretaking. Finally, I outline the implications of this study for gender equity, focusing on the gender division of labor at home.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH DESIGN

RESEARCH DESIGN

This project examines the differences in how mothers and fathers with a non-normative division of child caretaking responsibilities construct their gender identities. How is a lead-father arrangement dissimilar or similar to a lead-mother arrangement? What causes couples to choose this arrangement? How do lead-dad households explain why they've adopted these non-normative roles to others? And finally, how has COVID-19 disrupted household roles in families with lead fathers? This project uses atypical or negative cases to better understand the issue of gender identity of both mothers and fathers in non-normative households. Below I discuss sampling, study and analysis procedures and limitations of the study.

The Sample

Data for this study come from 40 individual interviews with heterosexual, married or cohabitating parents (over 18), who had children in the household five and under, where fathers were identified by both partners as the lead parent. Whenever possible I interviewed both parents in the same family, although there were two cases where it was only possible to interview one parent. I include non-dyad interviews in the overall sample (N=40), but they are excluded from within-household comparisons (N=38). Some demographic information may not equal 20 couples due to this (i.e., 21 total households are represented in this sample). Mothers and fathers were interviewed separately and their responses compared. This is key for several reasons: to ensure that one parent did not dominate the conversation, to reveal discrepancies in each partner's understanding of household arrangements, and to encourage honest responses.

Studying couples with these particular characteristics was important for several reasons. First, young children require the most parental time and attention, thus highlighting household labor distribution most clearly. In order to compare parental workload relative to each other, both parents needed to reside in the same home. Second, I also required that both partners agree that the father was the lead parent, as this project does not focus on households with an equal (or unclear) division of labor. Third, I limited the sample to heterosexual couples because I was particularly interested in the comparison between fathers and mothers in households where normative gender assumptions were disrupted in some way.

I recruited interviewees from a variety of sources. This included recruiting through the At-Home Dad Network membership through online outreach as well as attending their annual in-person conference. I also recruited through a variety of online outreach efforts. I asked friends to post on Facebook as part of my recruitment drive, and shared my flyer with online social media groups whose membership aligned with my study criteria – heterosexual partners with children age five or younger in households where the father acts as the lead parent. Recruitment materials utilized images of fathers from a variety of racial backgrounds, including African American, Asian American, Latinx and white, each interacting with their child. I also employed snowball sampling to

identify potential interviewees that respondents knew who fit the study criteria. All respondents resided in the United States.

Sample Characteristics

At the end of each interview, I verbally collected individual demographic data. Table 1 provides key individual participant demographic information. The majority of respondents are white (N=32), with six interracial couples and one African-American couple. Participants live in 14 different states located in all regions of the United States. Most couples have two children (N=13), while three couples have three children and five have one child at the time of the interviews. The youngest child being cared for in the household was five months old, and the oldest child in a household was eight years old. All households had at least one child that was five or younger.

Table 2 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the overall sample at the individual and couple levels. On average, women were 38 years old and men 40 years old in the overall sample. The majority of respondents were white, with the next highest group identifying as multiracial (two or more races/ethnicities). Women on average worked 45 hours per week, and men worked 4 hours/week. However, there was a significant range in work hours for both women and men, with the low for women at 35 hours/week and the high 75 hours/week, and for men the low was 0 (not working) and the high 30 hours/week. All the women in the sample had a BA or higher, and 42% of the women had more education than their partners. Only 10% of the men had more education than their wives and the rest of the couples had equal levels of educational attainment.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Overall Sample

2.1 Individual-Level Data	**Women**	**Men**
Mean age*	38	40
Race[1]		
White	86%	67%
Black	5%	5%
Asian	0%	10%
Multiracial	10%	19%
Median work hours/weekly*	45	4
Employment status		
Full-time	100%	0%
Part-time (>10 hrs./week)	0%	30%
Part-time (<10 hrs./week)	0%	30%
Not employed	0%	40%
Education level*		
Some college	0%	15%
Bachelor's degree	30%	35%

[1] Total more than 100 percent due to rounding.

Master's degree	45%	45%
PhD/Medical degree	25%	5%
Partner with more education**	42%	10%

N=42 except as indicated *which excludes 2 partners that were not interviewed (*N=40*, 20 women, 20 men).
**Remainder have same level of education

2.2 Couple-Level Data	
Mean number of children	1.9
Mean child's age	4
Median income	$145,000
Interracial couple	29%

N=21 couples

A subsample was created using data obtained in interviews that took place after the addition of interview questions about the impacts of COVID-19. Information regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on lead-dad households is used in Chapter 6. The characteristics of this subsample varied in some ways from the larger project's sample (see Table 3). This sample only included 1 family that met the criteria for daytime-dad households. Forty percent of the breadwinner wives in this sample (6/15) work in the healthcare field, so they were uniquely impacted by the pandemic. Other characteristics mirrored those of the larger sample. The class breakdown of this sub-sample includes 2 lower-middle class household, 6 middle class households, and 7 upper-middle class households, similar to the larger sample. Thirty-three percent of the couples in this subsample were in an interracial/interethnic marriage (N=5), which is slightly more than the larger sample (29%).

Study Procedures

This project was specifically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews were conducted during two time periods: January to the start of April 2020, and June through July 2021. Eleven interviews (of 40) had been completed before COVID-19 was declared a national emergency on March 13, 2020. I added interview questions regarding how COVID impacted the household division of labor shortly after the national declaration. I was able to complete previously scheduled interviews through the beginning months of the pandemic (N=9) but had difficulty recruiting new participants. Understandably, many couples who met the study criteria were in the throes of intense pandemic pressure on their time, leaving little time remaining for discretionary use. I resumed recruiting efforts in June 2021, after vaccines became widely available in the United States and life began slowly returning to a new normal. I stopped my recruitment efforts after saturation of major findings and themes became apparent.

The final version of the Interview Guide is included in Appendix A, which includes the additional questions regarding impacts of COVID-19. Information specific to interviews with 28 of the overall project's total respondents (those that included the additional COVID-19 questions) are included in Chapter 6, representing one or both members of 15 households (N=28 individuals, 15 couples).

Overall, I conducted open-ended, in-depth, semi-structured telephone interviews with 40 participants that lasted from 30 minutes up to two hours. The majority of interviews were about one hour. There was a noticeable difference in interview time length between the father and mother interviews. The mothers interviewed tended to be concise and to the point. The fathers tended to have more detailed responses, seeming to have thought about the issues raised by my questions in more depth, and, for some, to be processing their feelings as they responded.

Phone interviews were particularly useful after the advent of COVID-19, allowing me to continue interviewing during the beginning phases of the pandemic and, later, as things started to open again. It also allowed me to include in my sample couples from throughout the United States, rather than restricting it to those in a limited geographic area. In some cases, mainly for the fathers, they were squeezing our interview in around their child caretaking responsibilities. Many interviews happened during naptime, and, for some, were paused when a child woke early or had a dirty diaper.

Respondents were asked questions about who generally performs a variety of child caretaking-related labor in the household, the decision process and future plans for fathers acting as the lead parent, ideas about "good" mothers and fathers, community reception from others, and individual and family demographic and household data (N=20). The Interview Guide was revised at various points based on interviewee responses. As interviews took place, I identified areas of interest to probe more deeply on, and added additional questions to the Guide for subsequent respondents.

My own personal characteristics likely impacted the interview interactions and content. As a highly educated, middle-class white woman with one child, I initially assumed that I would have an easier rapport with female respondents. However, during the interviews I found that the male respondents had much more to share than their partners. Some fathers may have been made more comfortable when they inquired about my own situation and I disclosed that my partner has always been the lead parent in our household.

ANALYSIS

Before interviews commenced, respondents provided verbal consent to be interviewed and digitally recorded. All interviews were transcribed in their entirety, with transcripts then loaded into Atlas.ti. Data collection and analysis occurred congruently. I coded the interview transcripts using grounded theory inductive coding, starting with line-by-line coding of interview transcripts to begin identifying, labeling, and classifying the interview data. Then I conducted axial coding to group the open codes into categories that related to each other. Finally, I used selective coding to identify a central category

that explains the patterns identified. I took extensive notes during the interviews, and also added post-interview field notes immediately after completing each interview considering emerging themes and findings. Periodically I wrote thematic memos, exploring patterns I was identifying in the data and integrating specific examples from various interviews. In order to further explore patterns in the data I identified the major household tasks and child caretaking duties that came up in the interviews, in addition to the child caretaking that occurred while mothers were at the workplace. I then tracked which parent was responsible for the task or child caretaking duty (dad, mom, both/alternate/split) and used color coding in an Excel spreadsheet to help visualize patterns of participation by both parties. Using inductive analysis, I looked at the color-coded data and then began to formulate an explanatory theory based on the emerging patterns that showed a split among the households in how child caretaking and household chores were completed, and by whom.

To protect confidentiality, each respondent was assigned a pseudonym and I changed any potentially identifying information, such as names of children and partners, names of resident cities, and names of employers.

Class designations were made based on a combination of parents' education, occupation, and household income, often used in research in various combinations to indicate class status (Hamilton 2016; Hout 2012). In the case of discrepancies in income reporting, I calculated the average of the couple's two reported numbers (which were typically close) and categorized accordingly.

- Upper-middle class households (52%) in my sample typically had mothers with at least a college degree, and fathers with at least some college. In these households, mothers typically held jobs requiring professional training such as physicians, professors, engineers, or accountants. A few held jobs as consultants or account managers. Four fathers in upper-middle class households held side jobs and/or were in school.
- Middle class households (33%) in my sample had both partners with at least a college education. Mothers typically had jobs in nursing, project management, or retail management. All of the middle-class fathers had side jobs in addition to their lead parent responsibilities.
- Lower-middle class households (10%) also had both partners with at least a college degree. One mother worked in nursing and the other as an analyst for a community college. Interestingly, the two lower-middle class households in my sample both had fathers who did not have side jobs.
- The working-class household (5%) in my sample had a mother with a college degree and dad with some post-graduate work. The mother was employed in the service industry, and the lead parent father taught yoga classes as a side job.

Based on self-reported information, respondents are grouped into the class designations specified in Table 4.

Table 4. Typical Characteristics of Class Categories

Class	Mother Education	Father Education	Mother Occupation	Father Occupation*	Income Category	*N*
Upper-middle	≥ College degree	≥Some college	Professional	FTLP=7 Side job(s)=4	$125,000-$525,000	11 (52%)
Middle	≥ College degree	≥ College degree	Professional	FTLP=0 Side job(s)=7	$80,000-$124,999	7 (33%)
Lower-middle	≥ College degree	≥ College degree	Professional	FTLP=2 Side job(s)=0	$40,000-$79,999	2 (10%)
Working	College degree	≥College degree	Service work	FTLP=0 Side job(s)=1	<$40,000	1 (5%)
21(100%)						

*FT lead parent (FTLP) or lead parent plus side job(s) and/or student

Participants ranged in age from 31-50, with 38 years the average age of mothers, and 40 years the average age of fathers. Three fathers' highest education level is an Associate's degree, although two are working on their Bachelor's while also taking on lead-parent responsibilities. Participants are very highly educated, with ten of the fathers having a graduate degree (Master's or PhD level), while 14 of the mothers have advanced degrees (MA, MBA, MD or PhD). Eight of the mothers have a higher level of education than their partners. Two fathers have a higher level of education than their wives, and one father has two Master's degrees while his wife holds one Master's. The remaining nine couples have an equal level of education.

Having a majority White sample brings up the question of what role race may play in households with non-normative gender arrangements. In my sample, most female participants are White (86%), compared to 67% of male participants. A relatively large number of couples are interracial or interethnic (29%) compared to the national average of 10% (Rico, Kreider, Anderson 2018). As we know, White racial privilege confers multiple benefits, such as increased wealth and income (Oliver and Shapiro 1995). Perhaps in interracial or interethnic couples a White female partner has more income and career growth potential than her husband of color, making the decision to have a non-normative gender arrangement more likely for these couples. For couples where both partners are White, perhaps their dual White racial privilege enables them to contravene a traditional gender arrangement due to all of the other privileges they enjoy. Additionally, the national at-home dad support group membership is overrepresented by White fathers, despite efforts to diversify. This presents a model of at-home fatherhood that normalizes White lead dads rather than showing the full spectrum of what lead-parent dads actually look like. Many fathers described the loneliness and isolation of being a male lead-parent

until they found the at-home dad support group; fathers of color may not feel like they fit in there, either.

LIMITATIONS

This project does include some limitations. First, the sample does not include same-sex partners. This is intentional because I examine the gender identity of women and men in households where the father is the lead parent, compared to each other and compared to couples in households where mothers are the lead parent. I was particularly interested in the comparison between cisgender fathers and cisgender mothers in households where traditional gender assumptions were disrupted in some way. Second, there are few working-class families in the sample. Research has shown that working class families are a location of particular interest relating to the gender division of household labor due to potential conflicts between gender ideology and employment opportunities (Legerski and Cornwall 2010). However, I was able to find and recruit few working-class respondents. Third, the sample does not include households without at least one child that is age five or younger. Child caretaking responsibilities diminish significantly as children get older, and particularly once children enter school. Fourth, there may be bias in those who elect to participate in this project. While I employed snowball-sampling and attempted to interview couples from a variety of backgrounds, families with fathers acting as lead parents (and who agree to participate in this study) do not reflect a diverse cross-section of race and class intersections, although every attempt was made to include families from a variety of demographic groups. Fifth, having a majority White sample results in the representation of a limited perspective and experience of lead-dad households. Future research should further investigate the experiences of families of color and interracial and interethnic families.

Table 1. Individual Participant Demographics – Overall Sample (N=40)

Name	Household Income	Educ.	Occupation	#(age) of Kids	Type of Household
Peter Bedford	$292,500	MA / ABD	Lead parent	3 (2, 5, 7)	Do-it-all Dad
Katherine Bedford		MD	Physician		
Jacob Blanchard	$165,000	AA	Lead parent / student	2 (2, 5)	Do-it-all Dad
Kyla Blanchard		BA	Accountant / CPA		
Ben Butler	$350,000	BA	Lead parent	2 (1, 3)	Daytime Dad
Alice Butler		MD	Physician		
Gary Cox	$180,000	PhD	Lead parent	3 (1, 6, 8)	Daytime Dad
Fay Cox		MD / PhD	Physician		
Anthony Davis	$28,500	BA	Lead parent / yoga instructor	2 (4, 7)	Daytime Dad
Heather Davis		BA	Housecleaner		
Roger Green	$95,000	BA	Lead parent / side jobs	3 (5 mos., 2, 4)	Divide and Conquer Dad
Annabel Green		MA	Genetic counselor		
Maxwell Hartley	$58,000	MA	Lead parent	2 (1, 3)	Divide and Conquer Dad
Claire Hartley		BA	Nurse		
Jasper Holden	$91,500	MA	Lead parent / side jobs	2 (5, 6)	Divide and Conquer Dad
Erin Holden		MA	Nurse		
Bevan Hollins-Bisi	$80,000		Lead parent / side jobs	1 (3)	Do-it-all Dad
Tracey Hollins-Bisi		PhD cand.	Professor		
Skyler Howell	$62,500	BS	Lead parent	1 (1)	Do-it-all Dad
Courtney Howell		MA	Analyst		
Mark Johnson	$290,000	MBA	Lead parent / realtor	1 (5)	Divide and Conquer Dad
Lucy Johnson		MD	Physician		

Jeff Manning	$140,000	AA	Lead parent / side jobs / student	2 (6 mos., 3)	Do-it-all Dad
Bridget Manning			Nurse		
Marcus Mattis	$185,000	MA	Lead parent	1 (10 mos.)	Divide and Conquer Dad
Rennie Devon Mattis		MBA	Account manager		
Kevin Napier	$110,000	BA	Lead parent / side jobs	2 (5, 7)	Do-it-all Dad
Lila Napier		BA	Retail store manager		
Sigmund Norman	$147,500	MA	Lead parent	2 (4, 6)	Divide and Conquer Dad
Carly Norman		BA	Engineer		
Leon Parri	$111,500	MA	Lead parent / side work	2 (4, 8)	Do-it-all Dad
Gwen Parri		MA	Nurse		
Nikolai Roemer	$82,500	BA	Lead parent / restaurant partner	2 (10 mos., 5)	Divide and Conquer Dad
Kinsley Roemer		MA	Fundraiser at non-profit		
Thad Salaman	$132,500	MA (2)	Lead parent	2 (5, 6)	Do-it-all Dad
Krystal Salaman		MA	Teacher		
Cody Scheiber	$142,500	MA	Lead parent / property manager	1 (2)	Do-it-all Dad
Abby Scheiber		MA	IT consultant		
Mike Shanley	$220,000	AA	Lead parent	2 (4, 7)	Do-it-all Dad
Audrey Shanley		MD	Physician		
Jon Sloane	$90,000	BA	Lead parent / side job	2 (2, 3)	Daytime Dad
Camille Sloane		BA	Project manager		

Note: All names are pseudonyms.

Table 3. Individual Participant Demographics – Post-COVID-19 Sample (N=28)

Name	Household Income	Educ.	Occupation	#(age) of Kids	Type of Household
Peter Bedford	$292,500	MA / ABD	Lead parent	3 (2, 5, 7)	Do-it-all Dad
Katherine Bedford		MD	Physician		
Jacob Blanchard	$165,000	AA	Lead parent / student	2 (2, 5)	Do-it-all Dad
Kyla Blanchard		BA	Accountant / CPA		
Maxwell Hartley	$58,000	MA	Lead parent	2 (1, 3)	Divide-and-Conquer Dad
Claire Hartley		BA	Nurse		
Jasper Holden	$91,500	MA	Lead parent / side jobs	2 (5, 6)	Divide-and-Conquer Dad
Erin Holden		MA	Nurse		
Tracey Hollins-Bisi	$80,000	PhD candidate	Professor	1 (3)	Do-it-all Dad
Courtney Howell	$62,500	MA	Analyst	1 (1)	Do-it-all Dad
Mark Johnson	$290,000	MBA	Lead parent / realtor	1 (5)	Divide-and-Conquer Dad
Lucy Johnson		MD	Physician		
Marcus Mattis	$185,000	MA	Lead parent	1 (10 mos.)	Divide-and-Conquer Dad
Rennie Devon Mattis		MBA	Account manager		
Kevin Napier	$110,000	BA	Lead parent / side jobs	2 (5, 7)	Do-it-all Dad
Lila Napier		BA	Retail store manager		
Sigmund Norman	$147,500	MA	Lead parent	2 (4, 6)	Divide-and-Conquer Dad
Carly Norman		BA	Engineer		
Leon Parri	$111,500	MA	Lead parent / side work	2 (4, 8)	Do-it-all Dad
Gwen Parri		MA	Nurse		

Nikolai Roemer	$82,500	BA	Lead parent / restaurant partner	2 (10 mos., 5)	Divide-and-Conquer Dad
Kinsley Roemer		MA	Fundraiser at non-profit		
Thad Salaman	$132,500	MA (2)	Lead parent	2 (5, 6)	Do-it-all Dad
Krystal Salaman		MA	Teacher		
Mike Shanley	$220,000	AA	Lead parent	2 (4, 7)	Do-it-all Dad
Audrey Shanley		MD	Physician		
Jon Sloane	$90,000	BA	Lead parent / side job	2 (2, 3)	Daytime-Dad
Camille Sloane		BA	Project manager		

Note: All names are pseudonyms.

CHAPTER THREE

DO DADS DO IT DIFFERENTLY? LEAD-PARENT DADS AT HOME

DO DADS DO IT DIFFERENTLY? LEAD-PARENT DADS AT HOME

There is ample research on how households divide chores and parenting responsibilities (Chelsey and Flood 2017; Bianchi, Sayer, Robinson and Milkie 2012; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robinson 2000; Coltrane 2000) and the inequities that this division is both built on and perpetuates. However, one area that has not been examined as fully is what happens when fathers are the lead parent (for exception, see Doucet 2006). This chapter considers how lead-father households are different and how they are similar to what we know about lead-mother households. When the domestic sphere is dad's domain, do things operate differently? What is mom's role at home when she is the main breadwinner? This chapter considers these questions, and I conclude that lead-father households are bimodal: either dads do-it-all—or they don't. Mom's role at home varies depending on which type of household she lives in.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Domestic Expectations - It Depends on if You're Dad or Mom

Research has found that the gap between how much time women and men are spending on child caretaking and household chores has narrowed over time: this is partially due to men increasing their time, but mainly due to women's time decreasing (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, and Robinson 2012; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robinson 2000). Lead-parent mothers are viewed as being in charge of everything related to the domestic sphere, including child caretaking and household chores, in order to support fathers' work outside the home (Chesley and Flood 2017; Kaufman 2013). However, this labor division does not necessarily carry over when the lead parent is dad (Daminger 2020; Chesley and Flood 2017; Latshaw and Hale 2016).

Men participate more in childcare when their wives are employed outside the home, spend a significant amount of time at work, and make more money than they do (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012). In non-normative households where women are the primary earners, dads do perform more child caretaking than their spouses – on days that their partner is at work (Chesley and Flood 2017). However, this doesn't lead to dad performing the majority of child caretaking on the whole. "Overall, the time at-home fathers spend…with their children coupled with the preferences and pressures breadwinning mothers may feel to remain highly involved in their children's care may lead to more equal child-care involvement in these families." (Chesley and Flood 2017:530). When men are the lead-parent and mom is the breadwinner, expectations change; rather than performing the majority of child caretaking duties, these dads do about half.

Additionally, a more traditional gender breakdown of household chores persists even in many of these gender atypical households with lead-parent fathers. Household chores, like cleaning, are viewed as less enjoyable than child caretaking activities (Bianchi, et al. 2000; Robinson and Godbey 1997). This reversion to gender traditionalism in households that violate gender norms in other ways is perhaps

compensation for men earning less than their wives (Bridges and Boyd 2016; Bittman, England, Folbre, Sayer and Matheson 2003).

A study of stay-at-home fathers identifies a divide: "reluctant fathers" participated less in household chores, while "resolute fathers" saw their performance of housework and childcare as "part of the job" (Latshaw 2015). Other research on at-home fathers finds that dads do the majority of household chores and child caretaking when mothers are at work, but a "domestic handoff" occurs after work and on weekends when mom takes over in both realms (Latshaw and Hale 2016; Doucet 2006). Different lead-parent fathers appear to view the scope and timing of their responsibilities in very distinct ways.

The Gender Division of Household Chores

Domestic chores are sex-typed, with different jobs seen as falling under the purview of men or women. Jobs considered to be female-typed include cleaning, cooking, grocery shopping and laundry, while male-typed include yardwork, car maintenance, and home repairs (Bianchi et al., 2000; 2012). Doan and Quadlin (2019) find that among heterosexual partners, gender is the most important predictor of who does what at home in terms of chore type and form of child caretaking (physical, emotional, disciplinary) expected. However, a study of stay-at-home dads found that the type of chores (feminine- or masculine-typed) performed by the dads depended on if they were "reluctant" or "resolute" – which varied based on the reason they were at home and their future plans (Latshaw 2015). Although these dads were defying gender norms by being the lead parent, not all of them were willing to challenge the gender division of labor.

Middle- and upper-class households have the option to hire out their gender inequality. These families are able to avoid confronting an unequal gender division of household labor by hiring low-income women to clean the house or provide childcare services (Bridges and Boyd 2016; Sayer 2015; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). However, who manages the housekeeper or daycare provider when these services are hired out?

Mental Labor

One of the areas which contributes to household labor inequality in gender-traditional households is cognitive labor. Cognitive labor is the –usually invisible— work of thinking about future needs, identifying how to meet them, making decisions, and tracking progress (Daminger 2019). This is a key component of the work required to keep a household running. Who is it that thinks the kids should be in soccer? Who finds a soccer team that fits with the family calendar, is age-appropriate, and nearby? Who signs the kids up? This also includes things like meal planning, paying bills and tracking finances, managing services (like housecleaning), as well as social relationships. Previous research has shown there is "a distinction between the cognitive work of managing household chores and the physical work of helping with those chores" (Daminger 2019: 611; Coltrane 1996; Allen and Hawkins 1999). In normative households where women

are the lead-parent (whether working outside the home or parenting full-time), women tend to do more of the cognitive labor than their partners (Daminger 2019). The exception to this is in the area of decision-making, which tends to be shared (Daminger 2019). However, when women make more money than their partners, they do the decision-making as well (Treas and Tai 2012). When fathers take on the role of lead-parent, do they also take on the burden of this unseen labor, and who handles the decision-making aspect of cognitive labor in these atypical households?

Do Breadwinner Moms Get a Break?

Hochschild found in her landmark study that employed women came home to a "second shift" of housework and child caretaking activities because their employed husbands were unwilling to share that burden (1989). When mom is the lead-parent, she takes on the domestic duties of household chores and child caretaking to support her partner's work outside the home (Chesley and Flood 2017; Kaufman 2013). When dad is the lead-parent, do their breadwinner wives ever get a break, or do they have a second shift as well?

FINDINGS

My research question sought to comprehend in what ways the lead-father arrangement is different from and similar to what we know about lead-mother household arrangements. Other research has found that the gender division of household labor is difficult to overcome despite women's increased presence in the workplace (Raley et al. 2012; Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie 2006; Hochschild 1989). Even among dads that are fully dedicated to the domestic sphere (stay-at-home dads), Latshaw (2015) finds that their scope of work at home varied depending on their motivation (why) for being home in the first place. My project's contribution is an examination of how lead dads do their job at home and what this means for their wife's workload. This is a different dimension than what has been considered in previous work.

Lead dads have a lot of similarities to each other simply due to the fact that all of them are in charge of taking care of their children while their wives are at work. However, the approach these dads take to their role and the extent of duties they take on in the household varies greatly. I find that there are two main approaches in lead-dad households which differ primarily in the level of involvement expected from mom when she's not at work. This is not limited to the direct care of children: as we know, running a household requires more than simply having someone who has eyes on the kids and keeps them alive. Someone has to buy and cook the food, launder the clothes, clean the house, and keep track of doctor appointments and gymnastics classes. How lead-dad households approach all of these elements is where they diverge.

Lead-dads are Bimodal: Some Dads "Do-it-all" – and Some Don't

As with lead-mother households, lead-father families have a variety of ways they design – or default– their division of labor. Almost half of the couples I interviewed had a

"do-it-all" dad: a father who took care of the kids and also the majority of household chores (N=10). This choice is intentional and viewed as freeing mom up to enjoy the kids when she's not at work. In these households, dad's involvement with the children doesn't end once mom arrives home. These dads tend to partner with their spouse to complete child caretaking chores together after her workday ends.

The other half of the households in my sample operated differently (N=11). These couples included mom fully in household chores and child caretaking labor from the time she woke up in the morning to her arrival home from work. This group has two ways they implement this, though mom is heavily involved in both versions (see Table 1 for a summary of the characteristics of household types). One set I refer to as "daytime-dads" (N=4). These couples used dad as the lead-parent during the daytime (or whenever mom is at work), and when she's home from work, she is on duty and takes over with the kids on her own. In these households, dad is still mostly responsible for household chores, but mom is the one who does bath, bedtime, and the overnight shift on her own. The other set of these couples had a "divide-and-conquer" approach, where dad may be the lead-parent, but both partners are responsible for substantial child caretaking and household chore responsibilities (N=7). In divide-and-conquer households, chores are the responsibility of both partners (not necessarily at the same time), and child caretaking duties are split, alternate, or are performed together. Dad is not viewed as being responsible for running of the household in the same way as in the other groups. Among this group, his main focus is on taking care of the kid(s).

Do-it-all Dads

In general, some dads enthusiastically adopt household duties as part of their lead-parent identity. In these households, dad (and mom) view the scope of lead-parent responsibilities as extending to indirect care. About half of the households I studied include do-it-all dads (N=10). These dads prioritize their role at home and take on the bulk of both household and child caretaking duties. Katherine, an upper-middle class mom of three, says, "So [for] household tasks... I always have a feeling I should be doing more, but he kind of just takes care of everything and keeps things going…he pretty much does most all of that kind of stuff" (Bedford, Katherine). Kyla, whose husband takes care of their two children (ages 2 and 5), as well as a 2-year-old nephew, observes, "He takes care of almost everything, both inside and outside" (Blanchard, Kyla).

These do-it-all dads make the conscious choice to take care of the entire household, not just the kids, recognizing that it frees up their partners to enjoy the kids when they are home. Mike, an upper-middle class father of two, says, "Yeah, well, I'm the one who has the time to do that [household chores]. I mean, that's basically what the stay-at-home parent does so that the working parent can do what they do without having to work [at home too]" (Shanley, Mike).

Every household starts the day with waking up in the morning. Most of the do-it-all dads in my sample roust the kids and get them ready for the day on their own (N=7). In some cases, mom is up and out of the house before the kid(s) even wake up. "I start

work at 7:00am, and so I get up at around 6:00am and just get up, get dressed, fix my lunch, go to work" (Howell, Courtney). In three of the do-it-all dad households, mom shares to some degree in the kid(s) morning routine. In one of those cases, it depends on how much the father has been up with their two-year-old daughter the night before:

> Usually, my wife will wake up like around 6:30am and 7:00-ish or so, for a little personal time. And I'll usually wake up around 7:00am but that varies. If my daughter is awake during the night a lot, then I might sleep in a little bit longer and then my wife would take care of her more in the morning. (Schrieber, Cody)

In another family, mom's degree of involvement in the morning depends on her variable work schedule as a doctor (Shanley, Audrey).

Dinner is prepared by dad in all of the do-it-all dad households I studied (N=10). In many of these households, dinner is ready and on the table when mom arrives home from work. "I typically finish work around 4:00 or 5:00 pm. And my husband has made dinner by then, and we eat dinner as a family" (Scheiber, Abby).

For all types of households, baths tend to include mom to some degree. This is generally viewed as an opportunity for mom to connect with the kids after being gone at work. For many children in the age range of my study (baby to 5 years old), daily baths aren't necessary. In do-it-all dad households, four couples have mom doing bath-time on her own. Three indicate that both mom and dad give baths together, or alternate bath nights. For the three households that have dad doing bath time on his own, two take care of it while mom is at work, and one does it out of consideration for his wife's preferences: "She does not like bath time, so I do it. They're very loud in the bath" (Napier, Kevin).

Do-it-all dads are on duty until the kids are tucked in for the night. Even in households with only one child, dad and mom participate in the bedtime routine and story time together in do-it-all dad households. In households with multiple children, bedtime is sometimes split between parents. There are no cases among the do-it-all dad families where mom takes care of bedtime on her own. One dad covers bedtime solo for his two children due to the fact that his wife works in the evenings as a nurse.

The "third shift" happens overnight, when children wake up and need a parent to comfort them, or to take care of them when they're not feeling well. In do-it-all dad households, it is predominantly dad who covers the overnight shift (N=7). One father shares,

> So this morning, at 5:30 in the morning, [he] came into our room and said he had an accident. And so, I cleaned that up, and I do all of that. If there's any kind of accident, anything that needs to be cleaned up in the middle of the night, that's my job. If, in those rare cases, when the kids are sick and

> throw up in bed…my wife can't stand the sight of vomit or the smell, and so I do all of that. (Salaman, Thad)

Another father who covers the majority of the overnight shift stated, "…I would stay up until two to three in the morning, in order to make sure that my wife got at least five or six hours of continuous sleep" (Howell, Skyler). Another father attempts to cover the overnight shift, but one of their two children is still breastfeeding and so requires the involvement of his wife (Blanchard, Jacob). However, it is not a given that do-it-all dads will cover the night shift, even when mom is working the next day. Cody expressed surprise when his wife said she couldn't do the overnight shift during the work week. He said, "I mean, [my wife], essentially, she refused to do nights, which was a surprise because that was not what we'd talked about. But she basically just decided that because she has to work that she shouldn't have to" (Scheiber, Cody). The only do-it-all couple who has mom covering the overnight shift on her own says that she has always been viewed as the "night parent" because, when the children were younger, dad was gone in the evenings through the early morning hours working as an Uber driver to bring in extra income (Napier, Kevin).

The division of household chores, like cleaning, laundry, and grocery shopping, are a good indicator of how both spouses view their roles and responsibilities on the home front in addition to taking care of the children. Among the do-it-all dad households, only two employ a housekeeper to take care of the major cleaning tasks, despite 6 of the households being upper-middle class ($125,000+) and 3 being middle-class ($80,000-125,000). In eight households, dad is responsible for cleaning the house. While mom may contribute to keeping things picked up day-to-day, she is not the one who is responsible for things like vacuuming or cleaning the bathroom. Laundry is the main household chore that do-it-all dads don't necessarily take care of on their own. While five dads are solely in charge of getting the laundry done, the other five share this duty with their partner. One of the households that share laundry duty has dad taking care of his own and their child's laundry, while leaving his wife's business clothes for her to handle. "… I wash my work clothes because I just don't trust him not to shrink my sweaters" (Howell, Courtney). Grocery shopping is another household chore that do-it-all dads take charge of. Nine of these dads are responsible for grocery shopping, while in the remaining household mom sometimes joins dad and they make it a family outing. "So, we almost always [go] grocery shopping as a family together. If [it's] in the summer, sometimes that mean[s] going to the farmer's market also, but it definitely…mean[s] go into the grocery store in the morning" (Salaman, Krystal).

One do-it-all dad household had a dad that did virtually everything: he took care of getting the kids ready in the morning on his own, did baths while mom was at work, and had dinner ready when his wife got home. He covered the overnight shift, did the laundry, and took care of the majority of grocery shopping. However, all this was made easier because he got substantial outside assistance and support (Salaman). His two children were in all-day preschool three days a week, and his mother-in law took both

children for a full day every week as well. The family also used a housekeeper to take care of major cleaning tasks, and he did not have any side jobs or work responsibilities outside of the home. All of these resources and support made it easier for him to be a do-it-all dad.

Do-it-all dad households clearly regard dad's role as encompassing more than simply taking care of the children while mom is at work. Do-it-all dads also take on the majority of household chores because they consider it to be part of their job.

Dads That Don't Do-it-all

Daytime-Dads. Another group of lead-dads I studied have dad in charge of the kids when mom is working, take care of some household chores, and their partner takes over with the kids after she gets home from work. I call this group daytime-dads – they are the lead-parent during the daytime, or when mom is at work (N=4). Most of these dads experienced substantial involvement by their wife– usually in a way that prioritized her getting time with the children. One mother in a daytime-dad household observed:

> Gary handles most of their day-to-day stuff when he's home, and then in the evenings, I kind of take over when I get home and do bedtime and those sorts of things. And then on the weekend, I end up doing most of the childcare on the weekends. (Cox, Fay)

A daytime-dad also commented,

> I think it takes a lot of pressure off Alice to just be able to do her job and then when she's home … just be a mom and enjoy that part of it and not worry about all the other stressful things that sometimes go into making sure your house is in order and your kids are safe and happy. (Ben Butler)

The key differences between daytime-dads and do-it-all dads are that daytime-dads do fewer household chores, and they largely disengage from child caretaking when mom is home. While mom takes over with the kids, these dads typically use that time to accomplish other household duties such as dinner preparation or clean-up.

In three of the four daytime-dad households, mom's involvement starts before work. While she's getting herself ready for work, she's also getting the kids up and helping them start their morning. One mom shares how her day begins:

> I wake up at about 6:30 in the morning and I spend about 15 minutes on my own, getting my own breakfast and [my]self awake. And then I wake [my daughter] up at about 7:00 in the morning. And I spend about 45 minutes with her, waking her up, getting her on the potty, getting her some food. And then my husband gets up about 7:45am so that I can get on my first phone call, usually typically around 8:00 am. (Scheiber, Abby)

A daytime-dad talks about how he and his wife split the mornings, "…[on] a typical day my spouse wakes up and does breakfast with them, and then I do the getting them out the door and to school" (Davis, Anthony). Another daytime-dad details his mornings: "A lot of mornings, my wife will get up, get dressed, take the kids downstairs, that gives me time to sort of get a shower and get dressed…get myself ready for the day. And she'll make them breakfast" (Sloane, Jon).

Daytime-dads generally consider dinner preparation to be part of their duties.

> …I do lunch, and snacks and dinner, dinner seven days a week now. She was doing Sunday roasts, but we…just sort of moved to me doing everything -which is fine. Sometimes I joke that she's kind of…pawning every single little food thing off on me, because I've gotten better at it over time. (Sloane, Jon)

One father, who often makes dinner while his wife practices medicine at the ER, made the distinction that while he feeds the family, it is his wife that cooks:

> My meals are much more economical, and…utilitarian. I want to make sure my kids are eating something healthy and are…fed, but I'm all about efficiency because I have something else that I need to be doing as well. So…Alice really…enjoys cooking. And so she will put way more into it. (Ben Butler)

Ben feeds his children out of necessity when his wife is working, but doesn't view cooking as part of his parenting responsibilities.

Baths and bedtime are generally turned over to mothers in daytime-dad households. Moms do all the baths, and 3 of the 4 moms usually do bedtime as well. In one family, the couple alternates putting their two children to bed. An exception is the household where mom is an ER doctor and occasionally absent in the evenings, in which case dad covers bath and bedtime rather than her.

Once the kids are in bed, the overnight shift begins. In daytime-dad households, mom covers the overnight shift despite having to work the next day. Daytime-dad Jon stated that his wife gets up with the kids if they wake up during the night because "I'm oblivious." He adds, "if she asks me, I'll get up," but did not see it as his responsibility to cover the overnight shift (Sloane, Jon).

Daytime-dads do perform many of the household chores. Half of the daytime-dads are in charge of cleaning the house (N=2). The other half of these households hire a housekeeper to take care of major cleaning tasks. Dad does the laundry in two of the households, while two households have the couple sharing laundry duty. Interestingly, daytime-dads do one or the other: if dad cleans the house, laundry is shared with mom; if dad does laundry solo, then a housekeeper cleans the house. Grocery shopping is

universally included in the daytime-dad repertoire, with all four of the dads performing this household chore.

One dad describes how he and his wife divide duties when she's not at work:

> I would say it's pretty 50:50 when she's home, as far as those [household] tasks go. Occasionally…I do more around the house…like I shoveled the driveway today…And so I was outside for an hour doing that this morning at seven o'clock, and she handled feeding the kids this morning. I will do those tasks around the house, and she will typically take over, then, on the childcare stuff, which actually works out pretty well…because it…gives me a chance to do work that's not childcare related, because that's what I do most of the time. And then vice versa, it also gives her a chance to spend some time with the kids and, granted, it's childcare, so, sometimes it's not always…the most enjoyable, depending on what mood the kids are in, but it gives her a chance to spend some time with the kids, that, obviously, she doesn't get nearly as much time with them as I do. (Ben Butler)

Daytime-dads' primary focus is on taking care of the kids while mom is at work, and they perform the majority of household chores in addition to that. However, once mom returns home from work, child caretaking duties are turned over to her.

Divide & Conquer Dads. In general, divide-and-conquer households have dads relying on their spouses for significant household and parenting support whenever she is not at work (N=7). One mom describes her role: "…I'm usually relief for him. Whenever I get home, I take over" (Mattis, Rennie Devon). Chores are the responsibility of both partners, with dad taking on few household responsibilities on his own. In divide-and-conquer households, the majority of household chores and child caretaking time are divided between partners, alternated, or sometimes performed jointly. Dad is not viewed as being primarily responsible for the running of the household in the same way as in the other groups. Among this group, his main focus is taking care of the kid(s) when mom is at work. One mom described her expectations:

> We made an agreement when we first were going to have kids in terms of what were our priorities between the two of us…And really the traditional clean house and dinner ready, those didn't really matter at all. It was just a matter of if everybody stayed, at the end of the day…somewhat happy, healthy, alive, those were the key things. Those are very basic minimum things. (Norman, Carley)

Another mom reveals,

> There are times that I think…because Mark definitely is not the stereotypical, what one would expect [from a] stay at home mom, if that makes sense… But I think we both have accepted how things are different. And yeah, I think at times, I get frustrated that the kitchen is a complete and total mess if he hasn't done the dishes all day long after he's made meals, but then they'll be done and that's okay. (Johnson, Lucy)

These divide-and-conquer households expect dad to keep the kids healthy and happy until mom gets home; anything else that gets done is a bonus.

Some divide-and-conquer dad households do include dad covering the morning shift with the children on his own (N=4). However, three of these types of households have mom playing a large part in getting the kid(s) ready for the day.

> I feel like my wife and I are very good at tag teaming in trying to get things done. So, her strength is mornings, mine is not. And so typically in the morning, she's with [the five-year-old] and with the little 10-month-old...She wakes them up and gets their breakfast started. And I slowly wake up through the day. She makes me coffee, which is really great. So, I wake up to some coffee to get me properly motivated and it takes me a while to wake up. By the time eight o'clock rolls around, my wife has already gotten ready for her day to leave to take the train -and a bus- to get to her work. (Roemer, Nikolai)

In one household, mom and dad alternate duties:

> So, a typical day really begins with our schedule. So, our day I would say probably starts the night before. And so whoever's on night duty kind of mans the ship overnight and then the next person takes the morning duty, which starts usually whenever my son wakes up...So, the person that takes the morning duty is responsible for feeding him, getting him ready for the day, getting him cleaned up and his clothes on until the next person gets up. (Mattis, Rennie Devon)

Divide-and-conquer households do not assume that dad will take the lead on dinner preparation. Four of these couples alternated dinner preparation between spouses, or jointly prepared dinner once mom arrived home. "…depending on how their day is going, either I will jump in and throw something in the oven for us to eat, or sometimes my husband has the capability and the mental energy and the time to start dinner" (Roemer, Kinsley). In one household mom prepared the family dinner after she got done with work. Her husband says, "There's one or two foods I will do…if we have breakfast

foods, like eggs and waffles or whatnot, I'll prepare that, or in the warmer months, I'll do grilling as well, but otherwise it's mainly Annabel" (Green, Roger). Two divide-and-conquer dad households include dinner preparation in dad's scope of work. The Johnson household has an explicit divide-and-conquer arrangement, with dad acting as the lead-parent (including dinner preparation) Monday through Thursday, and mom taking over as lead-parent in the evenings after work and Friday through Sunday. During her time as lead-parent, her husband works as a realtor or enjoys some free time.

Unlike daytime-dads, divide-and-conquer dad households mainly split or alternate bath time (N=5). In one household, dad does bath time for their three children while mom is at work. One divide-and-conquer household has mom take care of baths, with dad explaining, "I do not like doing bath time…it's the end of the day, it's a long day being with them for 10, 12 hours and I'm exhausted, and they're screaming and it's almost like bathing cats or something" (Hartley, Maxwell).

The majority of divide-and-conquer households do the bedtime routine together (N=6). These households either read stories and tuck the kid(s) in together, or sometimes divide bedtime between them if they have more than one child, each taking one (or 2) kids to put to sleep. One mom among the divide-and-conquer households is solely in charge of bedtime for her five-year-old. This is also the household where she is the lead-parent in the evenings and on the weekends.

The overnight shift is another dual domain among divide-and-conquer households. There is no single parent that covers middle of the night wake-ups. Instead, this is a responsibility that alternates: "Mark does Sunday night through Wednesday night…And then me, since I don't work the next day" (Johnson, Lucy). Another couple swaps the overnight shift with a schedule of duties that they alternate every other day (Mattis).

One of the biggest areas of difference between divide-and-conquer households and the other categories is that dad does not perform the majority of household duties. For example, three of these households have housekeepers, and in two other households cleaning house is a joint responsibility shared by both partners. Only two divide-and-conquer dads are responsible for cleaning the house on their own. Two divide-and-conquer couples assign laundry duty to mom. Four of these households do laundry jointly, with two of these dads not including their wife's laundry while they take care of their own and their child(ren)'s. One father indicated that his wife's laundry "had too many instructions," so he left it for her to take care of herself, while he did his own and their child's (Mattis, Marcus). One Dad thinks his wife "wants" to do more (i.e., laundry), which he attributes to her wanting to be more involved with day-to-day duties related to caring for their kids (Roemer, Nikolai).

> I remember when Lincoln was first born, I felt as if I was trying to do more of the laundry, but at some point, I also felt like Kinsley [mom] wanted to do more of it, like she wanted to be more participatory in some of these ancillary caretaking activities, and because - she would beat me to

> the laundry, whereas I was actually doing it myself, for a good while. She just sort of usurped my position as the laundry doer. (Roemer, Nikolai)

Grocery shopping is something both partners do jointly or alternate for most of the divide-and-conquer households. Three of these dads are in charge of grocery shopping on their own. One dad talked about the discrepancy between what his wife would like him to do around the house and reality:

> I think she describes it as stay-at-home dad and messy. I know for a fact, I'm not even going to say think. I know for a fact she'd like it if I cleaned more and picked up things and folded the laundry, more of the traditional stay-at-home parent stuff, had dinner ready. Dinner's always ready. When those dishes get done, that's the issue. It could be done tonight or tomorrow afternoon or tomorrow evening, too. I'll just let them soak. (Johnson, Mark)

No matter which approach a family adopts, all lead-dad households viewed dad as the primary parent, at least while mom was at work. What varied between these types of households (Do-it-all dads, Daytime-dads, and Divide-and-conquer dads) is how much of the ancillary work of running a household they considered to be in dad's purview, and how mom's role with the kids was regarded. Does mom's time at home prioritize her ability to enjoy the kids, does she take the kids over from dad to give him a break, or do mom and dad team up on kid care when she's not at work?

Table 1. Characteristics of Household Arrangement Type

Type of Household	Cleans house	Fixes dinner	Does laundry / groceries	Child caretaking when mom is home	Dad has side job / responsibilities
Do-it-all Dad (N=10)	Dad (80%) HK (20%)	Dad	Mostly Dad	Both	60%
Daytime Dad (N=4)	Dad (50%) HK (50%)	Dad	Mostly Dad	Mom	50%
Divide & Conquer Dad (N=7)	HK (42%) Dad (29%) Both (29%)	Both	Both	Both	60%

*HK indicates housekeeper

But Lead-Fathers Share Some Traits

Lead-dads don't do certain jobs. Lead-dad households do not necessarily do the same work as lead moms. One important component of running a household is being the "household manager": making sure that things get scheduled (such as doctor appointments and dance classes), meals are planned, and people get where they need to be. In all three of the household arrangements, I found that women perform the majority of cognitive labor, even among do-it-all dad households. Interestingly, the household type where cognitive labor shifted the most to dad was in daytime-dad households. Many couples I interviewed describe the mother as the planner/organizer, while the father is the implementer. This aligns with research distinguishing between the cognitive work of managing the household and actually doing the chores (Daminger 2019; Coltrane 1996; Allen and Hawkins 1999).

Cleaning the house can be a time-consuming – and thankless—job. Among all three types of dad households, many higher incomes families hire out household chores (housecleaning in particular) rather than expecting the father to take care of these responsibilities as part of his duties as lead parent. This aligns with research that finds that middle and upper-income families often hire out household labor, thereby minimizing the inequality in their own household by passing it on to low-income women (Bridges and Boyd 2016; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Sayer 2015). Families that don't hire a housekeeper do not necessarily expect the lead-parent dad to pick up these duties as a component of his household responsibilities. Some couples divide housecleaning between both parents fairly evenly, even though dad spends more time at home – this is seen mainly in divide-and-conquer dad households. The household arrangement where we see dad personally cleaning the house the most is in the do-it-all-dad households.

They continue to do "dad" work. There are other jobs in lead-dad households that dad continues to do. Breadwinner moms do not perform all of the tasks that breadwinning dads typically do, such as yardwork. In all three lead-dad types of households, dad was primarily in charge of the outdoor domain. If mom participates at all, it's viewed as therapeutic and she sticks to weeding or gardening for relaxation and/or enjoyment. The only mom that takes care of the yard on her own does so due to her partner's severe allergies. One daytime dad observed,

> …the stay-at-home moms that I talk to…I don't think I know any of them that…take care of the stereotypical male things like mowing the lawn, or…shoveling snow or whatever…their husbands still do that even though their husbands are working full time. And all the dads that are stay-at-home dads still do…some of those things. (Butler, Ben)

They hold side jobs. Regardless of the type of dad household, it is not uncommon for lead dads to have side jobs or other responsibilities. Over half of the fathers in my sample (12) have significant outside responsibilities in addition to their work as lead

parents (See Table 3 in Research Design, Chapter 2). These range from rental property management and repairs, home renovation projects, helping run a family restaurant, holding a part-time job(s), or continuing their education. Two upper middle-class do-it-all dads in this study juggled furthering their education while also acting as lead parents. These dads view their work as the lead parent as their priority, but additional duties and expectations are often squeezed in around their parenting obligations.

They don't give moms a complete break. Whether moms are lead earner or lead parent, they usually don't get a break. It's been established that in two-career heterosexual households, women face the "second shift" where they take on the majority of household responsibilities when they get home from work (Hochschild 1989). Men are not expected to take on these domestic duties after their day at the office ends. The second shift also applies to some households where women are the primary earner and men are the lead parent. In daytime-dad and divide-and-conquer-dad households, the mom still has a second shift – meaning she still comes home from work and chips in or takes over for whatever duties remain for the day (with the kids and/or household chores). Often the lead dad is viewed as needing a break from his day as a solo parent. A divide-and-conquer wife describes how she prioritizes her husband's free time:

> I feel like he deserves being able to do what he needs to do when I'm off work, and that I can and should be the one responsible for Freddy during my off times. [Interviewer: So when you say he should be able to do what he needs or wants to do, are you talking mainly about scheduling appointments related to his work [as a realtor]?] Lucy: Yeah. Like mainly work or just things that he wants to do. Like watch a basketball game, watch a baseball game. Johnson, Lucy)

Lucy does not enjoy the same free time herself – she's either working or watching their child. The exception to this is in the do-it-all households, where dads take care of the children and the household chores. In these households, mom does get a break.

Clearly, there are a lot of different ways people choose to handle child caretaking and household labor – even among lead-dad households. However, a universal theme among all the dads I talked to was expressed well by do-it-all-dad Peter:

> I just think it's important that they [the kids] see that I'm showing up. And I think there are probably a lot of dads where … they're just making sure that the kid has all the things that they need, but what if what they need is just for me to be there? (Bedford, Peter)

Dads from all three types of household arrangements were intent on being there for their children.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study is one of few to consider the similarities and differences between lead-dad and lead-mom households. I analyze 40 in-depth interviews to discover how lead-dad households divide the labor of child caretaking and household chores when mom is the breadwinner. I find that lead-dad households are bimodal; some dads do-it-all, and other dads do not.

My findings regarding do-it-all dad households challenge the idea that lead dads don't view themselves as being in charge of the domestic sphere to the same extent as lead mothers do (Daminger 2020; Chesley and Flood 2017; Latshaw and Hale 2016). Do-it-all dads are the primary parent during the time mom is at work, and also take care of almost all of the household chores in order to free mom up to enjoy quality time with their children when she is at home. However, these dads don't check out when mom returns from work; instead, they participate jointly in the evening routine of baths, bedtime, and then cover the overnight shift so mom can get some rest.

My findings regarding the other group of dads – who don't do it all – partially align with research which has found that at-home fathers do most of the domestic work while mom is at work, but that a "domestic handoff" occurs when she is at home in the evenings and on weekends (Latshaw and Hale 2016). Daytime dads do hand over the kids when mom gets home from work – but they continue to do the majority of the household chores, differing from Latshaw and Hale's findings where at-home dads hand over the entire domestic sphere (kids and household chores). Also contrary to Latshaw and Hale's findings, divide-and-conquer dads do not do a domestic hand off; instead, they shift into dual coverage mode with both partners taking care of the kids and the household chores (2016).

The mental labor required when operating a household is divided differently than expected between the types of households. Do-it-all dads do not tend to take on the mental load to the degree they take on everything else in the household. Do-it-all dads rely on mom to take the lead regarding logistics / scheduling, as well as paying the bills / finances. Do-it-all dad households share the role of social manager, with both parents setting up playdates and planning birthday parties. Dad does take on the cognitive labor of meal planning in these households, which goes along with these dads' tendency to handle grocery shopping and dinner preparation. Surprisingly, dads who take on the most cognitive labor are daytime-dad households. Daytime-dads perform the cognitive labor of meal planning, which aligns with their usual jobs (like do-it-all dads) of doing the grocery shopping and fixing dinner. However, daytime-dads also do the majority of logistics / scheduling and act as social manager, either solo or jointly with their spouse. As expected, divide-and-conquer dads are split in the area of cognitive labor. Meal planning is either shared or dad-led, while mom takes the lead on logistics / scheduling and dad is the social manager. This aligns with the divide-and-conquer arrangements typical way of operating, with mom and dad splitting the work that needs to get done.

It has been well established that when both partners are employed, it's mom who comes home to a second shift (Hochschild 1989). My research shows that even in

households where dad is the primary parent, mom may still have that second shift. Do-it-all dad households are the only arrangement where mom gets a break. When she comes home from work, household chores are done and her husband joins her in the child caretaking responsibilities that remain for the evening. The dads who don't do it all – daytime-dads and divide-and-conquer dads – both expect mom to return from work and start her second shift at home.

In summary, the present study establishes that there is no single approach to how lead-dad households divide child caretaking and household labor that applies universally. The household arrangement that likely frees mom up the most to dedicate time to her job is the do-it-all dad type. While dad may be the lead parent in the other types of households, mom still retains substantial responsibility for the domestic sphere – children and/or chores.

These findings have important implications for the study of the household division of labor and parenting expectations of mothers and fathers, regardless of whether they are primary earners or lead parents. We see that gendered expectations about household chores and child caretaking responsibilities do not necessarily swap when lead-parent roles are reversed. Even in the household type where dads "do-it-all," mom is still heavily involved in the cognitive labor required to operate a household.

This research also suggests several avenues for further study. First, the sample for this study had too few non-white respondents, and future research should consider if lead-dad arrangements look different among various racial groups. Second, one quarter of my sample are in an interracial marriage. Additionally, the average age of the sample for both parents is higher than is typical for parents of young children.[2] This brings up the question of whether people are more willing to violate gender norms if they are already violating other social norms. Finally, another avenue for future examination is if lead-dad households vary (do-it-all dads versus those that don't) depending on the decision factors influencing the adoption of the lead-dad arrangement. Are financial factors less significant to the decision in do-it-all households? Evaluating the considerations that factor into the decision to adopt an atypical household arrangement will help us understand these households better.

[2] Average age at first birth in the United State is 26 years old for women, 31 years old for men (National Center for Health Statistics).

CHAPTER FOUR

MOTIVATIONS

MOTIVATIONS

One of the factors which perpetuates gender inequality identified in the literature is the inequitable division of household labor, and particularly the division of child caretaking labor. Even when women are employed outside the home, many remain primarily responsible for household duties and children (Bianchi et al. 2012; Sayer 2015; Wharton 1994; Hochschild 1997; 1989). Under what circumstances do we see fathers taking on the majority of child caretaking and domestic duties?

The share of stay-at-home fathers has grown over recent years, with a Pew Research Center (PRC) report identifying stay-at-home dads increasing from 4% in 1989 to 7% in 2016. According to PRC, dads made up 17% of all stay-at-home parents in 2016, up from 10% in 1989 (Livingston and Parker 2019). It's important to note that this is likely a significant undercount because stay-at-home dads (and moms) in this report were identified based on their unemployment status. Many primary parents work part-time or opposite shift from their partners in order to care for their children (Doucet 2006; Latshaw 2011).

One facet that has received limited attention is what causes couples to choose a lead-dad household arrangement. What factors lead families to adopt this non-normative model? This chapter explores the reasons that couples identify as the motivating factors in deciding to adopt a lead-dad household arrangement. These range from the expected (financial) to the less expected (wanting an at-home parent and mom says "not her" with varying degrees of vehemence). I conclude that while economic and financial considerations are significant for most couples, they are not the main deciding factor. My research indicates that couples considered multiple factors when they are evaluating a lead-dad household arrangement, and if they can make the finances work, that eliminates the final obstacle. Another significant finding of this study is that, while almost all of the households (95%) preferred an at-home parent, most (65%) of the moms were not interested in doing that work. Finally, parents in this sample commonly mentioned the detriments of paid childcare (health, safety, attention) and the advantages of having an at-home parent (quality of life, values, and time) as motivating factors, which previous research has not examined.

As discussed in Chapter 3, lead-parent dads take care of the domestic sphere to varying degrees. All lead-dad households entail dad taking care of the kids while mom is at work. Beyond that, some dads do it all, and some dads don't. Do-it-all dads cover almost all household chores and split child caretaking when mom is home from work. Among the dads that don't do it all, there are two main approaches to how this is implemented. Daytime dads do the majority of household chores, and turn the kids over to mom when she gets home from work. Divide-and-conquer dads split everything when mom is home from work: household chores and child caretaking are split, divided, alternated, and/or performed jointly.

Unlike some other research on this subject, this project interviews both the mothers and the fathers in lead-dad families. Additionally, in this project a lead-dad household is defined as one with a female breadwinner and a father who is acknowledged by both partners as being the lead-parent (doing more than 50% of the child caretaking), who may or may not work outside the home to some extent. In today's economy, it is realistic to include fathers who may be involved with the workforce even though their main responsibilities are at home.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The persistence of gendered labor patterns in the family has been explained using exchange theory, time availability, and gender ideology theories (Kramer et al. 2015; Braun et al. 2008; Bianchi et al. 2000; Coltrane 2000; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010). Exchange theory explains how families will be better off when the partner with the highest income potential is the primary breadwinner (Kramer et al. 2015). This theory suggests that when women have more education than their partners, these families would choose to have a female breadwinner/lead-dad household (Kramer et al. 2015).

The time availability approach argues that the more time a partner spends at work, the less time they will spend on domestic labor (Braun et al. 2008). This means the lead parent will be the person who works least or doesn't work at all, regardless of gender.

Additionally, other studies have shown that family decisions around how to divide household chores and child caretaking are strongly influenced by traditional gender expectations, or "doing gender" (Bianchi et al. 2000; Bianchi et al. 2007; West and Zimmerman 1987). This perspective argues that the determination of who takes care of the domestic front is about more than a rational decision about who makes (or has the potential to make) more money or has more education (Kramer et al. 2015). Couples are "doing gender" when they are performing household tasks, with men performing their masculinity when they take out the trash and women performing their femininity when they clean the house. Under the doing gender approach, women with traditional beliefs will be more accepting of an inequitable division of labor, while nontraditional women will strive for a more egalitarian division of labor at home (Braun et al. 2008).

Motivating Factors

There are a variety of motivating factors behind why families choose to have a lead-dad household arrangement. Some studies of stay-at-home dads with breadwinning wives find that there are two types of stay-at-home households – caregiving and unable-to-work (Kramer et al. 2015, Chesley 2011; Kramer and Kramer 2016). Caregiving households include fathers who self-identify as lead parents because they're taking care of their children, and unable-to-work households include fathers who have left the workforce involuntarily and are unable to find employment or are disabled (Kramer et al. 2015).

Financial. Financial considerations are a major deciding factor in studies of lead-dad households, particularly in terms of how mom's income or longer-term career prospects compare to dad's (Kramer and Kramer 2016; Kramer et al. 2015). In Doan and Quadlin's work on Americans' normative beliefs around who should perform housework and child caretaking, they find that relative income predicted ideas about who should stay at home if couples want an at-home parent (2019). This supports the exchange theory perspective on the household division of labor.

Dad's Job. Research has found that job conditions – especially dad's – play an important role in many families' decision to adopt a lead-dad household arrangement (Chesley 2011). This work finds that some dads become the lead parent due to adverse work conditions at their previous workplace (Chesley 2011). Other research on gendered differences after a job loss finds that class matters, with middle class men and women having greater "gender flexibility" after a job loss (Damaske 2020). This allowed middle-class men to take a break from being the breadwinner after losing their job and middle-class women to deliberately search for a new job without getting mired in traditional gender caretaking responsibilities at home – unlike what happened to the working class (Damaske 2020). However, other research finds that some male and female employees with class privilege use it to better meet traditional gender expectations (Gerstel and Clawson 2014).

Mom's Career. Some couples make the choice to adopt a lead-dad household arrangement based on mom's career. Couples where the mother has more human capital (relative education, and likely better earning potential and career outlook) are more likely to have dad acting as the lead parent (Kramer and Kramer 2016). Mothers in stay-at-home-father families have significantly higher levels of education than their partners, and higher income than women in other household arrangement types (Kramer et al. 2015). Again, this supports the exchange theory perspective on the household division of labor.

One study of female breadwinners, asking why they adopted a non-traditional household arrangement, found that in addition to financial considerations, the fact that the mothers enjoyed their jobs was another key factor (Dunn et al. 2013).

Preference for an At-Home Parent. Some research has found that female breadwinner families with an at-home dad strongly preferred to have a parent raising their child(ren) versus a paid caregiver (Dunn et al. 2013; Lee and Lee 2018; Rushing and Sparks 2017). This research also found that female breadwinners saw the lead-dad arrangement as convenient and contributing to a better quality of life (Dunn et al. 2013), supporting the time availability perspective.

FINDINGS

My research question for this chapter asks what causes couples to choose a lead-father household arrangement. I examine the main motivating factor(s) that cause couples

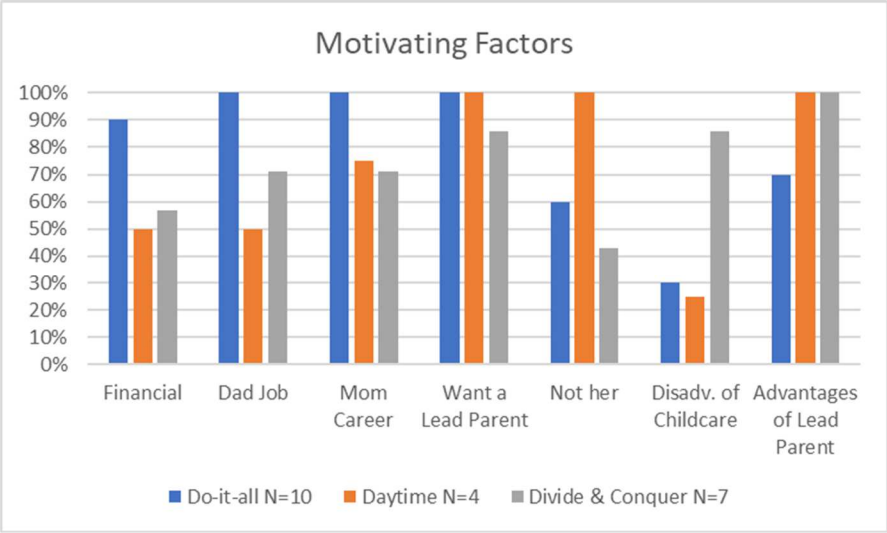
to choose to have dad take the lead at home. In addition to reaffirming the motivating factors previously identified in the literature (economic, career considerations, and preference for an at-home parent), some new factors emerged in this study. Interestingly, wanting an at-home parent was usually paired with the mother stating "not her" with varying degrees of vehemence. Additionally, households in my sample frequently brought up the detriments of other care arrangements (usually focused on health, safety, and attention) and the advantages of a lead-parent household (mainly around quality of life, values, and time) as significant motivating factors.

For the analysis below, the total number of households in this sample is N=21. The percentages and totals in the subsequent text (i.e., N=5) are based on household responses, not individual partners, unless specifically stated as such. The text identifies if percentages are in relation to a type of household (i.e., percent of do-it-all dad households) or all household types together.

Motivating Factors

What causes couples to choose a lead-dad household arrangement? Among the couples that I interviewed, there were a variety of motivations. While most couples named finances as a significant factor in their calculus, it was usually paired with other reasons that were viewed as at least equally important. These reasons ranged from wanting to have an at-home or lead parent, to issues with dad's job, and/or a decision to prioritize mom's career.

Table 1. What Causes Families to Choose an Atypical Arrangement



***Percentages across categories may total more than 100% due to respondents expressing multiple answers**

Financial. Many lead-father households (76%) of all three types of households (do-it-all, daytime, and divide & conquer dad) named financial considerations as a key

motivating factor in how they came to have lead-dad households (N=16). Do-it-all dad households (where dads take care of the kids and do the majority of household chores) talked about financial considerations being a deciding factor more than the other two household types (see Table 1). Specific financial concerns ranged from the cost of childcare, sometimes relative to dad's low salary, and mom's greater income or income potential. While financial concerns were typically mentioned with another deciding factor(s), only five couples did not mention finances as a consideration at all. For these couples, a variety of other factors led them to choose a lead-dad household arrangement. Surprisingly, while three were upper-middle class families, one was middle class, and one was working class with the lowest income in my sample.

Daytime dad Jon, who is middle-class, indicates that relative income was the deciding factor for him and his wife:

> It was definitely more the income difference, of her earning potential versus mine. If she could just focus on her career than she'd be able to earn quite a bit of money, and if I tried to reenter the workforce, I'd be at [a] very low wage and we would have to let our kids suffer so that we could both be trying to work. (Sloane, Jon)

Another daytime dad, Ben, says that financial and personality considerations both were a factor in the decision for him to be lead-parent. "I'm a better fit personality-wise to be the stay-at-home parent. And then financially, as a physician, she was…making much, much better money than I did. So it made that easy" (Butler, Ben). One do-it-all dad family started out with both parents working and found it wasn't worth it for them.

> Financially, what he was getting paid and what we were paying [for childcare], it just didn't make a whole lot of sense, and at that point I had completed my [medical] training, so I was making a higher income... He still kind of looked for jobs for a while, but there just wasn't a good fit that outweighed staying home. (Bedford, Katherine)

Wanted an at-home lead parent. Many households (95%) also discussed the benefits of having a dedicated lead parent (N=20). This appeared to be a major factor in the decision to adopt a lead-dad household, as long as they can make the finances work. Do-it-all dad Leon appreciated being able to "raise our own kids":

> …if I went back to work, I'll be working for about as much as it would take to pay for childcare. And would we really want to do that for just a little bit of extra money and have the consequences of me paying someone

> else to raise our own kids? We valued one of us being able to be there for the kids. (Parri, Leon)

Coming from a daytime dad household, Fay, an academic physician, said, "Neither one of us wanted to turn our kids over to a third party for the primary raising of the child. We both felt like that was something that we wanted to keep as parents" (Cox, Fay).

Interestingly, of the 20 households that prioritized having a dedicated lead parent at home, 13 of the mothers (65%) stated that they did not want to be the lead parent themselves. One father also indicated that he wasn't interested in being the lead parent on a long-term basis, despite assuming that role at present. In his case, he and his wife switched at-home roles due to the COVID pandemic and his concerns about getting infected at work due to a lack of precautions, rather than him actively choosing to be the lead parent (Hartley, Maxwell).

All of the mothers (100%) from daytime-dad households (where dad covers child-caretaking until mom gets home from work, and does the majority of household chores) were not interested in being the lead parent. Sixty percent of do-it-all-dad household mothers said "not me," and in 43% of divide-and-conquer household mothers (dad is lead parent, but both partners responsible for substantial child caretaking and household chores) did not want to be the lead parent themselves (see Table 1). One mom from a divide-and-conquer household said,

> …there's…benefits to a stay-at-home parent getting to be with the children as well. So when we were talking through it all…my husband was more firm on he wanted someone to stay home. He never said he wanted me to stay home necessarily, but someone to stay home…I think I volunteered almost immediately saying, 'Well, it won't be me.' I didn't feel at the time, [and] I still don't feel like I would thrive as just a stay-at-home parent. (Norman, Carly)

Abby, from a do-it-all dad household, is also clear on her preferences:

> …as far as picking who would do it, I was never interested in the idea. And so, when he put out the idea, for me, it was just getting my head around, how would that work financially…just doing that math. And…he had always made more money than I had…But…since I was transitioning to a time where I really loved my job, it was paying really well, and he had this idea…It was never a question who would do it. The idea…of not having one person with an income was more of the question, not…who would do it… (Scheiber, Abby)

Another do-it-all household mom says,

> I've never been interested in being a stay-at-home parent. Because I like my job. And then once I had kids, I didn't enjoy being home with them full-time and even on maternity leave, I was very, very ready to get back to work. (Salaman, Krystal)

Some parents who wanted to have a lead parent at home focused on the detriments of other types of childcare, while others discussed the advantages of having a lead parent at home. The detriments of daycare that parents brought up ranged from concerns about health and safety, to the amount of attention and care the child(ren) would receive in a daycare environment. The advantages of having a lead parent at home included an improved quality of life, the ability to instill values, or simply being able to spend time with their children.

Detriments of other care arrangements. When parents evaluated what child caretaking arrangement would work for them, 48% of all types of households were concerned about what they viewed as the drawbacks of putting their child(ren) in daycare full-time. Eighty-six percent of divide-and-conquer households named this as one of their deciding factors, much higher than the other two household types (see Table 1). In general, the major concerns named were around health, safety, and attention.

Some households (19% of all 3 types of households) noted their children's health as a factor in opting out of daycare. Skyler, a do-it-all dad, noticed a difference after he became an at-home lead parent.

> The big thing that's really nice for us is she is a lot healthier. Even though she was only going to daycare for about three months, she was already constantly having a cold, coughing, runny nose, things like that. She hasn't had really any sort of medical issue since I've been a stay-at-home dad and she hasn't had to go to daycare at all. (Howell, Skyler)

Divide-and-conquer dad Marcus also considered the health of his 10-month-old son as a benefit to his being home as a lead parent. "You know what happens in daycare…you get sick every two weeks, and it's just crazy. I enjoy the fact that…he's healthy… He's just not exposed to a lot of stuff early on" (Mattis, Marcus).

Some households (29% of all 3 types of households) mentioned concerns about their child's safety in daycare settings. One do-it-all dad, a former police officer, had had experiences which made him wary:

> …when you work in a policing environment you can ... I think it unveiled to me some problems with childcare. You trust somebody [with] the thing that's most important. And [seeing] scenarios where I didn't care for what's going on, and I just had a hard time trusting somebody else with my kid.

> So it really came down to I wanted one of us to stay home. (Blanchard, Jacob)

Courtney, from a do-it-all dad household, says,

> I just feel better. It's nice knowing that your child is safe all day…There's an element of trust you have to have with your daycare, and I liked our daycare, but it's still a little uncertain how that's going to go, whereas in your own home you are pretty sure they are okay. (Howell, Courtney)

Another concern of a few lead-dad households (10% of all 3 types) was the type of care and attention offered in a childcare setting. Divide-and-conquer dad Mark talked about the pivotal moment that helped him decide to become a lead parent:

> So I just left work one day, picked him up from home, and then took him to the daycare for a visit and it was just the end of nap time. And one kid started screaming, and the other kid started screaming, and then all the kids were screaming. And that's just how they wake up from nap and I'm like, 'Where does my kid fall in the priority of the caregiver?' They could be the greatest people in the world, but is my kid their least favorite, so they're the third one to get comforted, or are they the favorite? They're human too, right? They're just dealing with fires at this point with screaming children everywhere. (Johnson, Mark)

Rennie, a working mother in a divide-and-conquer household, said,

> I did not want him in with people who are not his family. I have a very affectionate little boy who likes to be held and cuddled and I just didn't think that he would get what he needs. And I just thought it was too early to start compensating or making compromises on what he needs. (Mattis, Rennie Devon)

Advantages of having a lead-parent arrangement. Many lead-dad households (86%) also considered the advantages of having a lead parent at home when determining whether to adopt a lead-parent household arrangement. A significant majority of all three household types named this area as a key deciding factor. These advantages include an improved quality of life, the ability to impart values, and having more time with child(ren).

Quality of life challenges faced by two-parent working families were frequently brought up as a deciding factor in adopting a lead-dad household arrangement (52% of all 3 types of households). These included the morning time crunch and unpredictable work hours.

Courtney, from a do-it-all dad household, voiced the difficulty of mornings when she and her partner were both working:

> When I first started this job, my husband and I were both working, and so not having to do the morning routine of trying to get her dressed, and making sure that she has enough diapers for daycare, and making sure she has all the food that she's supposed to have, and not having to do that dance is really nice. (Howell, Courtney)

Several parents talked about how the unpredictable hours of either partner made it difficult to impossible for them both to continue working and care for their child(ren). They viewed the flexibility offered by having a dedicated lead parent at home as ample compensation for the lost income. In one do-it-all-dad household, dad's previous job (as a teacher in a remote rural area) required him to work two weeks on and two weeks off. When he was working, he was living at his worksite and away from home for those two weeks. His wife, Kyla, an accountant and CPA, states,

> … from my perspective, we didn't need his money, and it would make my life a lot easier with not having to do transportation of her, and …trying to take care of her when I have a very demanding job. During the January through April/May timeframe, I'm usually working 70–80-hour weeks. I have a lot of time off in the summertime, but it was very difficult during those busy months to essentially take care of her with just me in the house while I was extremely busy. (Blanchard, Kyla)

Daytime dad Ben talks about the challenges of his physician wife's work schedule:

> So it really makes it so that having a stay-at-home parent -not that it would be impossible to have two working parents with her job- but…it would be a challenge with the shift work, especially since it's not steady shift work. It kind of bounces all over the place -overnights, weekends- there's not a set shift schedule that she works. (Butler, Ben)

For some households (29% of all 3 types of households), the opportunity to pass on personal values to their child(ren) is another important factor in the decision to have a parent take the lead at home. Divide-and-conquer dad Maxwell notes,

> To me, I have pretty progressive opinions as far as…politics and things like that. So, to me, it's about really just supporting my kids no matter what...Basically just being there for them physically, emotionally, whenever they need me and showing them that a man is not defined by his masculinity. I'm not an alpha male. I'm pretty sensitive. So…sharing those

> values that I find important with my kids, I would say is probably my top priority as a father. (Hartley, Maxwell)

The mom from another divide-and-conquer household also weighs in on the importance of transmitting your own values to your child:

> I've always known that I wanted to have a husband that was a stay-at-home dad and never could convince Mark to do it, but finally, seeing little baby Freddy... I think maybe the political world helped him make that decision…it probably played a little bit of a part in it because, we voiced...What is being a parent? …It's supposed to be teaching your child what the important things are in life…for a kid to go to daycare, they're there teaching your kid what's important. Not you, the parent. They're spending more time with your kids than you are. I mean, why do you have a child if you're going to send them to daycare? ...So, we get an hour and a half with him at night? That's crazy. I have no idea why anyone says that's okay. Or why anyone says, "Hey, I think I should allow some other adult…to provide the core values to my child. (Johnson, Lucy)

The simple ability to spend time with child(ren) is a significant benefit appreciated by couples from all 3 types of households (48%), particularly fathers, with lead-dad arrangements. One do-it-all dad of three remarked that, "I like going to the doctor's appointments, I like going to dance class or gymnastics, I enjoy being an active participant in the things that my kids are doing" (Bedford, Peter). Divide-and-conquer dad Marcus talks about how spending time together helps his son: "I have nothing to do but my son, which…benefits him greatly…I think it's just a big benefit, because…I know a lot of kids don't get that at-home time and that nurturing time, which I feel they really need" (Mattis, Marcus). Another do-it-all dad considers the best part of being a lead parent is time with his daughter: "…if you're looking at…everything involving looking after the child, obviously the most enjoyable thing is just being able to spend time with our daughter. Having that time when you see her and stuff like that" (Scheiber, Cody).

Career Considerations. Other deciding factors couples considered before adopting a lead-dad household arrangement was the status of both dad's and mom's job or career. For some dads from all 3 types of households (85%), they either didn't like their previous jobs for a variety of reasons (hours, manager, dangerous), or their jobs didn't pay enough to cover childcare (80%). All 3 types of households often paired an evaluation of dad's career prospects with an assessment of mom's – her current position as well as her potential growth in her career path of choice. In light of these evaluations, a decision is made at some point to prioritize mom's career (90%).

For the majority of all 3 types of households in my sample (85%), dad either did not enjoy his previous jobs, or the jobs didn't pay enough to cover childcare costs. One

do-it-all dad, an engineer, thought parenthood provided a welcome escape hatch from his work situation: "I was at a place in my job where – I was pretty much done with the job, for multiple reasons. So, it was a good opportunity to kind of check out of that" (Scheiber, Cody). Another father in a divide-and-conquer household had multiple issues with his previous job, despite the good pay.

> Well, one of the reasons is…it just makes sense. Cost of daycare was just…crazy. [And] I didn't love my job…I was in car sales. I did really well in it, but it was…I was working 60 hours a week, and it was always a grind. (Mattis, Marcus)

One mom from a do-it-all dad household describes the elements that factored into the decision to have dad become the lead-parent.

> So, part of it was money. Part of it was that I liked my job, and he didn't really like his job…he'd gotten a boss that he didn't get along with as well as the old one. And they'd added a lot of night and weekend hours. And we had a barely two-year-old and an infant…we were basically never home together at the same time and our kids were too young to make that work. I mean, obviously, we would've done it if we had to, but because he wasn't enjoying the work and we didn't need the income, it made sense for him to quit. (Salaman, Krystal)

A majority of all 3 types of lead-dad households (90%) considered mom's current job or anticipated career trajectory as a significant deciding factor. One mom in a do-it-all-dad household discussed how her career had been the priority in their relationship from the start.

> Everything we've done as far as where we've moved and what we've done, has been driven by my education….my masters and then my PhD and then my post academic jobs. It's just kind of been the default… that's always happened, and…since his entrepreneurial endeavors have allowed him to work from home, that default was reinforced. So, we didn't even really talk too much about it, it was just the way it was. (Hollins Bisi, Tracey)

One daytime-dad couple had both invested a lot in their educations (MD/PhD mom, PhD dad) and still performed this evaluation:

> So, me staying home was not an option. And he was at that point working as an adjunct, and could more easily put that on hold, and so he said that

> he wanted to do that. And then when I finished [medical] residency, both of us knew that my career was…on a track to be higher powered, more demanding…it was more consuming, it was more demanding, and I wanted it more. (Cox, Fay)

Abby, from a do-it-all-dad household, demonstrated how multiple factors all played in to the decision to become a lead-dad household.

> …my work is actually home-based, so I work from home about 70% of the time. And then the other 30% I actually travel to other states, which would have been much more difficult to continue to do with a child, managing daycare and stuff, and so, because I like my job, and it paid very well, we thought it made sense for him to stay home. (Scheiber, Abby)

Abby's husband also did not like his job as an engineer at the time, which was another factor they considered.

All of the do-it-all-dad households (100%) considered dad's job issues and decided to prioritize mom's career. Of the daytime dad households, 50% indicated that dad's job was a deciding factor in the decision to have a lead-dad household arrangement, and 75% indicated that mom's career was. Seventy-one percent of divide-and-conquer dad households said mom and dad's career considerations were important deciding factors in their decision to have dad become the lead parent (see Table 1).

Additionally, a couple's racial composition likely shapes their motivating factors and how gender plays out in the sample. Interracial couples have an additional calculus to incorporate when evaluating employment and careers. White women have more income earning potential than Black or Hispanic men (Patten 2016), so identifying dad's employment prospects and/or the decision to prioritize mom's career is more likely. Among the six interracial couples in this sample, four include white women married to men of color. The other two include partners that are both mixed-race. In examining the motivations for adopting an atypical household arrangement for these couples, two were motivated due to dad's employment issues, two were motivated by mom's career prospects, and two indicated that both were deciding factors. All six named mom's career prospects and/or dad's employment as significant motivating factors in adopting the lead-dad household model, indicating that race as well as gender shapes these choices.

Combining Factors

Families from the three household types varied in which motivating factors they identified as key to their decision to choose a lead-dad household arrangement, and what combination of factors mattered most to them (see Table 1). However, some general patterns emerged for each of the household types. All of the do-it-all-dad households want a lead parent at home, and take both dad's employment and mom's career prospects into account. Most of the do-it-all-dad households also name finances as a motivating

factor. All of the daytime-dad households also want a lead parent at home, and all the moms say "not me." They are also consistently motivated by the advantages of having a lead parent at home, such as quality of life, time, and ability to pass on their values. Many of the divide-and-conquer households are motivated both by the disadvantages of childcare (health, safety, attention) as well as the advantages of having a lead parent at home. A majority of divide-and-conquer households are also equally motivated by both dad's employment and mom's career prospects.

Overall, most families (76%) mentioned finances as a motivating factor among all 3 types of households. However, finances were always paired with another deciding factor(s), and never provided as the sole motivation. Financial considerations centered around the cost of childcare, often compared to dad's low wages along with mom's greater income and/or career potential, consistent with other research. While a consideration of relative income (or potential income) aligns with exchange theory, respondents never identified this as the only motivating factor. Interestingly, 24% of households (N=5) did not mention finances as a motivating factor at all – one of which had the lowest income in the sample.

A major deciding factor for almost all couples in the sample was the desire to have a lead parent at home (95%). If they could make the finances work, this was their preferred household arrangement. Notably, 65% of the mothers from all 3 household types were not interested in being the lead parent themselves, and they very clearly (and for some, strongly) stated that preference during their interviews.

While households in my sample frequently brought up the detriments of other care arrangements (usually focused on health, safety, and attention) and the advantages of a lead-parent household (mainly around quality of life, values and time), I have found little consideration of these factors in other research. Couples in my sample weighed these factors – particularly the advantages of having a lead parent – significantly in their calculations about the type of household arrangement they preferred. Only three couples in my sample did not have at least one partner mentioning one of these areas as a significant motivating factor in their decision to adopt a lead-dad household arrangement. Daytime and divide-and-conquer dad households all named the advantages of having an at-home parent as a key motivating factor (N=11). Those that mentioned time as an advantage of having a lead parent might match the time availability perspective, in cases where the lead parent is performing the bulk of household chores as well as child caretaking duties. This is most likely to match the workload distribution in do-it-all and daytime-dad households.

Other studies have found that career considerations are an important factor in couples' adoption of the lead-dad household arrangement. Chesley (2011) found that dad's job conditions were particularly important, which aligns with my finding that a deciding factor for some dads was that they didn't like their previous jobs due to a new boss, inconvenient shifts, long hours, or because the job was dangerous. However, dads in my sample also evaluated how much their jobs paid in comparison to childcare costs, and considered the trade-off insufficient.

Previous research has found that couples adopt the lead-dad model based on relative human capital – when mom has more education (and career growth potential), dad is more likely to stay at home (Kramer and Kramer 2016; Kramer et al. 2015). My sample overall is highly educated, with 60% of individual respondents having a graduate degree (N=24). Of those, five mothers and one father have a MD or PhD. Only 3 dads have less than a BA, with two of those dads currently working on completing their BAs. While a slight majority (52%) of the mothers in my sample have more education than their partners, 38% of couples have an equal amount of education, and 10% of the mothers have less education than their partners. Clearly, relative education is not a reliable predictor for lead-dad households.

Consistent with other research (Kramer and Kramer 2016; Kramer et al. 2015), lead-dad households in my sample also evaluated if mom's current job or career trajectory had more income or earning potential relative to dads. For some couples, they had negotiated and agreed to the prioritization of mom's career before they had children. For these couples, exchange theory applied from the start. Another aspect brought up by some couples, similar to Dunn et al. (2013), was that mom enjoyed her job or career, or "wanted it more" (Cox, Fay).

The doing gender perspective likely accounts for households that persist in an unequal division of labor despite dad acting as the lead parent. An unequal distribution of labor is most likely to be found in divide-and-conquer households, where dad and mom split domestic chores and child caretaking when mom is not at work. Perhaps mom and dad are doing gender in traditional ways despite having a non-traditional arrangement in a lead-dad household.

CONCLUSION

While there were not strict divisions between the three lead-dad household typologies in terms of what they named as key deciding factors, they did tend to be most concerned about certain areas. For do-it-all dad households, four main factors were typically mentioned: financial, dad's job, mom's career, and wanting a lead parent. Daytime-dad households were most focused on wanting a lead parent, the wife said, "not her," as well as the advantages of having a lead parent. Divide-and-conquer households were almost equally concentrated on the detriments of other care arrangements and the advantages of having a lead parent at home.

I conclude that while economic and financial considerations are significant for most couples, they are not the main deciding factor. This research indicates that couples consider multiple factors when they are evaluating a lead-dad household arrangement, and if they can make the finances work, that eliminates the final obstacle. Another significant finding of this study is that, while almost all of the households (95%) preferred an at-home parent, most of the moms (65%) were not interested in doing that work. Finally, parents commonly mentioned the detriments of paid childcare (health, safety, attention) and the advantages of having an at-home parent (quality of life, values, and time) as motivating factors, which previous research has not examined.

This research suggests several avenues for further study. First, the sample for this study had few non-white respondents, and future research should consider if lead-dad arrangements look different among various racial groups. Having a majority White sample results in the representation of a limited perspective and experience of lead-dad households. Future research should further investigate the experiences of families of color and interracial and interethnic families. Additionally, this sample had an overrepresentation of upper-middle class households. Considering how both race and class impact the job options and areas of concern and priority for parents would add to the (limited) body of research in this area.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAKING SENSE OF THEIR ROLES

MAKING SENSE OF THEIR ROLES

Despite changes over time in both the workplace and parenting expectations, gendered ideas about men's primary role as breadwinner and women's role as primarily responsible for the home and children – even when she works full-time—persist (Craig and Mullan 2011; Wall and Arnold 2007). When people's work and family choices reflect normative gender expectations, it garners relatively little attention. However, those whose choices don't align with normative gender expectations can encounter difficulties, and they adopt discourses that help reconcile their non-normative roles. How do lead-dad couples explain why they've adopted these non-normative roles? This chapter explores this question by investigating the various explanations that couples in lead-dad households provide for their atypical gender roles.

My project's contribution is an examination of how lead dads explain why they've adopted these non-normative roles, and if these discourses are "doing" or "undoing" gender. This study identified a new developing discourse where men – and sometimes their spouses – are identifying as "more than just a dad." These couples focus on dad's side work, even when it doesn't bring in money or isn't his major focus of time or attention – taking care of the kids is. They discuss how what he does is different from lead moms, or how he doesn't fit the stereotypes of what a lead dad looks like. These respondents are clear in their desire to differentiate dad from ideas about lead-moms and their associated gender role and responsibilities.

As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, lead-parent dads take care of the domestic sphere to varying degrees, depending on the type of household. All lead-dad households entail dad taking care of the kids while mom is at work. Beyond that, some dads do it all, and some dads don't. Do-it-all dads cover almost all household chores and split child caretaking when mom is home from work. Among the dads that don't do it all, there are two main approaches to how this is implemented. Daytime-dads do the majority of household chores, and turn the kids over to mom when she gets home from work. Divide-and-conquer dads split everything when mom is home from work: household chores and child caretaking are divided, alternated, and/or performed jointly. This chapter will examine how the three types of lead-dad households explain why they've adopted these non-normative roles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many different ways that families do gender, and even more ways that families use to explain why they do gender a certain way. Additionally, gender identity is intrinsically linked in our society with masculinity, femininity, and gender role expectations. Ideas about parenting – and specific parenting expectations society places upon each gender, are part of this gender package.

"Doing Gender" Differently, or "Undoing" Gender?

West and Zimmerman's "doing gender" theoretical framework argues that gender is "an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements," and a way to make divisions between the genders seem legitimate (1987:126). Gender is reproduced in situations as well as in practices, such as housework and child caretaking, or manual labor and working overtime (Preisner et al. 2020). When we don't perform in ways that are seen as "gender-appropriate," then we are held accountable by others (West and Zimmerman 1987). Deutsch argues that applying the lens of "doing gender" regardless of whether one is conforming to or resisting gender norms "renders resistance invisible" (2007:109). You're doing gender either way. How do couples explain why they've adopted this non-normative "social arrangement" when mom is the breadwinner and dad is the lead parent? Are they "doing gender" in different ways, or are they "undoing" gender?

There are a variety of discourses that couples offer to account for their non-normative household. These include suggesting that it suits their personalities, having competency concerns about their partner's child caretaking abilities, providing essential support to their spouse, saying that the division of labor is equal, locating it within their ideological orientation, and framing their gender identity. First, I'll situate each of them in the literature, discuss the findings of this project, and then analyze whether these couples are doing or undoing gender.

Gender Identity (Re)Framing

Gender identity and parenting expectations vary for mothers and fathers. Women and men perform masculinity and femininity that align with gender norms as part of "doing gender" and avoiding sanctions from others (West and Zimmerman 1987). Hegemonic masculinity and men's gender identities are tied up in earning money and being the family breadwinner (Doucet 2018; Latshaw 2011). Father as provider or breadwinner is traditionally seen as an essential component of a man's fathering identity and a valued form of masculinity (Hunter, Riggs, and Augoustinos 2017). Hegemonic masculinity is "the opposite of femininity" (Connell 2000:31). "Ideas, norms and expectations about what is and is not masculine" inform the fatherhood choices men make (Cooper 2000). However, as times change it is more challenging to negotiate between former and currently evolving views of masculinity (Petts, Shafer, and Essig 2018). The traditional fatherhood ideal type includes a breadwinning father who views their fathering contribution as the income they provide to support their family (Solomon 2014). The involved father remains in the workforce, and also provides hands-on care to his children (Solomon 2014; Lamb 2000; Pleck and Pleck 1997). The engaged father includes "egalitarian beliefs about mothers and fathers, emotional closeness with children, hands-on involvement in day-to-day routine care, primary responsibility for childcare, a voluntary exit from the labor force, the instrumental supports for wives' careers, and a view of family as having primary importance in one's life" (Solomon

2014). Gerson points to the emergence of a new fatherhood ideal, which posits that "…men should be highly involved in parenting, contribute significantly to housework, and be an engaged and equitable spouse, partner, or coparent" (Petts, Shafer, and Essig 2018:705; Gerson 2010). Other research has identified a "caring masculinity…in which [men] reshape their masculine identity to allow for more active caregiving than is expected within hegemonic masculinity (Petts, Shafer, and Essig 2018; Elliot 2016; Lee and Lee 2016). Doucet argues that men who are primary carers are creating new forms of masculinity that are "simultaneously embracing and rejecting both femininity and hegemonic masculinity" (2004:296). Perhaps lead dads are "in a unique position to create new forms of masculinity," as Doucet (2004:296) suggests.

Being a mother is "central to the feminine accomplishment of gender" (Christopher 2012:74; Preisner et al. 2020). Ideas about typical feminine qualities are integrated with ideas about appropriate mothering behavior (Preisner et al. 2020). The dominant mothering ideology in the U.S. today is "intensive mothering," which frames good mothering as time-consuming, child-centered, and self-sacrificing (Hays 1996). Class and race privileges are inherent in these expectations because this ideology takes for granted that the basics are taken care of. Dow finds that hegemonic mothering ideologies vary by race and class, identifying an "integrated mothering" which African-American middle- and upper-middle-class employed mothers subscribe to (2016). Integrated mothering assumes mothers will work outside the home, be self-reliant economically, and get assistance from relatives and community with child caretaking (Dow 2016). Christopher finds that working women expand their definition of what a good mother is (2012). Married mothers in her study describe an "extensive mothering," where they delegate day-to-day care to others but still see themselves as "ultimately responsible for their children's well-being" (Christopher 2012:73). These mothers also talk about the benefits of working to themselves, not just their children (Christopher 2012). Some fathers identify [their] economic support as a form of caregiving (Hanlon 2012), but other research has found that women are less likely than men to consider breadwinning an important part of being a good parent (Townsend 2002). How does a mother who is the family provider accomplish her femininity and develop her parenting identity?

FINDINGS

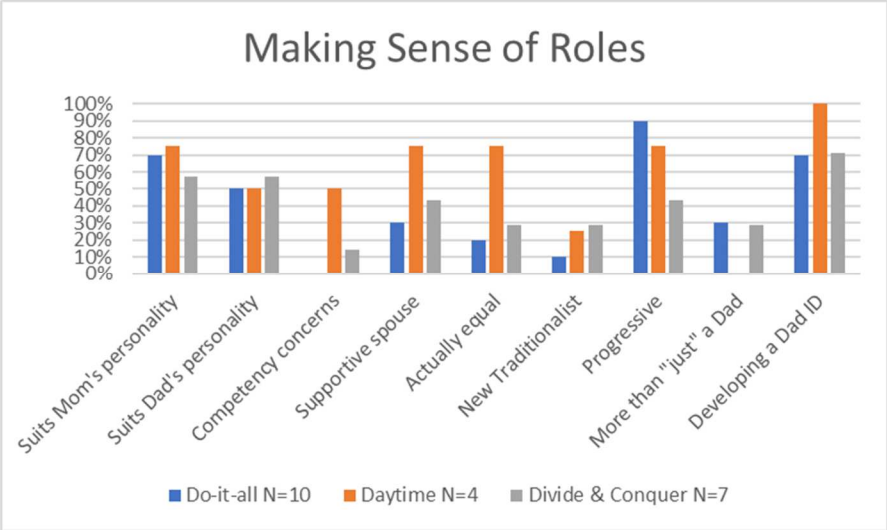
My research question for this chapter considers the discourses that lead-dad household couples use to discuss why they have adopted these non-normative roles. Other research has found that intensive mothering expectations and male breadwinning ideals can result in a lead-dad household that is "doing gender" with a traditional division of labor despite men's increased child caretaking (Chesley 2011). Pinho and Gaunt argue that "role-reversed" couples are actually undoing gender because they take care of family work based on their family role (breadwinner, caregiver) rather than gender norms (2021). When couples don't meet normative gender role expectations (mother lead parent, father main breadwinner), how do they construct their gender identity? While

some of the families in this study are actively (and for some, consciously) undoing gender, we see that there are other families that have simply adopted a new framework within which they are doing gender in traditional ways.

For the analysis below, the total number of households in this sample is N=21. The percentages and totals in the subsequent text (i.e., N=5) are based on household responses, not individual partners, unless specifically stated as such. The text identifies if percentages are in relation to a type of household (i.e., percent of do-it-all dad households) or all household types together.

My research found that lead-dad household mothers and fathers use specific discourses to discuss their roles in the household. Fourteen respondents say the atypical arrangement suits mom's personality, while 11 say it suits dad's personality. Some dads expressed competency concerns about their wife's solo parenting ability (N=3), while other respondents – male and female – see dad's work as lead-parent as essential to mom's success in the workplace (N=9). More than a few respondents claim they do an equal amount of parenting, despite dad being the lead parent when mom is at work (N=9). Additionally, couples frame their roles in the household in terms of two very different ideological orientations. Finally, some respondents – male and female – go to great lengths to define dad as more than "just" a lead-parent (N=5), while other dads are focused on embracing their identity shift (N=16).

Table 1. Making Sense of Their Roles



***Percentages may total more than 100% due to respondents expressing multiple answers**

Personality Trumps Tradition

Suiting one or both partner's personality is a common explanation for all three types of household divisions of labor. This aligns with other research has found that primary-earner mothers with at-home fathers indicated that many of the mothers said their partner was better suited to assume domestic and caregiving responsibilities (Dunn,

Rochlen, and O'Brien 2013; Chesley 2011). Daminger finds that some couples explain which household labor activities they do and how they perform them in terms of personality traits or preferences, as well as efficiency – and even when this was used "to justify a nontraditional division of labor," equality between the partners was not achieved (2020).

My research found that the reason most often cited by all 3 types of households was that their atypical household arrangement suited mom's personality better than a traditional arrangement would (N=14), and/or that it suits dad's personality better (N=11). These respondents explained that dad's personality was better suited to handling the kids, while mom's personality was more suited to the workplace. Patience was brought up as a key quality that many of the dads possessed that their wives did not. Do-it-all dad Leon says,

> But personality-wise and realistically, my wife will tell you that I have a lot more patience for a lot of the kinds of stuff that girls get into than she would…So temperamentally, I think it works out really well that way too. Of the two of us, I'm the better one temperamentally to be at home with the girls than she is. (Parri, Leon)

The wife of a do-it-all dad makes a similar observation:

> …We made the choice for the kids for him to be the stay-at-home parent for two reasons. One, my career was going better. I was going to make more money. But the other big reason was that his temperament is just better suited to be a stay-at-home parent. He has a lot more patience than I do…I don't do well with them constantly saying, 'I'm bored,' and demanding me to play with them or give them attention…I'm not good at that, so that's why I don't like being home. (Napier, Lila)

Sometimes the specific quality of patience isn't named, but personality or suitability in general. Divide-and-conquer dad Roger says, "…I think after seeing what I do, she has said…that would not work for her personality. Definitely…it's good that she's the one working full time and that I'm the one staying home with the kids, just based on personalities..." (Green, Roger). A do-it-all dad agrees with his wife, a retail manager, "…she's not a stay-at-home mother. She just could not do that" (Napier, Kevin). Kyla, a CPA and a do-it-all household mom, says,

> I'm not suited. I don't have the strong maternal instinct that a lot of women have, and my husband never would have thought he'd be a stay-at-home dad until he actually became one. And I know even then, it took probably a couple of years before he felt really good and confident about it. But he has the patience that I don't have. And he has the willingness to let the

> kids be kids and get dirty and let them fall, let them touch those paints, let them learn through a lot of tangible environmental experiences. (Blanchard, Kyla)

Mother in a daytime-dad household, Alice, observes, "[My husband] takes that role very seriously and runs our home almost as a business, you know, 'Butler Incorporated.' …He's a self-motivated person, whereas I am not…The role fits him very well and my role fits me very well" (Butler, Alice). Alice is a doctor who works in an emergency room, a position and career that presumably requires a lot of self-motivation to achieve, yet her husband is depicted as the self-motivated one and therefore more suitable for the role of lead-parent.

An exception to this pattern is the one household in my sample where dad became a lead-parent unwillingly. In this divide-and-conquer household, mom was previously the lead-parent until dad's work situation deteriorated due to a lack of health precautions at his workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic, triggering a role reversal.

> I quickly learned I'm not a natural stay-at-home parent. My wife is much better at it than I am but circumstances kind of forced us to change that. … I'm not as patient as her, but I've kind of taken on volunteer things in my time and kind of focusing my energy on things other than just kids 24/7, which can be a little mind-numbing. (Hartley, Maxwell)

However, even in this exception the pattern continues, with Maxwell naming his wife's patience as a key reason she is more suited to the role of lead-parent than he is.

Overall, the most common way many of these parents made sense of their atypical roles in the household is by viewing them as suiting their personalities, with personality trumping traditional gender roles. Divide-and-conquer households named suits personality equally (57%) for mom and dad, but half of the do-it-all and daytime-dad couples said the atypical arrangement suited dad's personality, while about 75% of these couples said it suited mom's personality (see Table 1).

Competency Concerns

Competency concerns were also brought up as a reason for a non-normative household division of labor. Other research has found that in gender-traditional households, maternal gatekeeping occurs when a mother establishes rigid standards and uses this to avoid sharing child caretaking responsibilities with the father (Allen and Hawkins 1999). This tends to happen when women get their identity from their status as mother (Gaunt and Scott 2014). Does something similar occur in non-normative households with paternal gatekeeping?

My research found that even when some dads are "off duty," a few (14%) express concerns about their spouse's ability to take care of the kids on their own (N=3).

Daytime-dad Anthony has reservations about his wife's capability, despite the fact that his wife covers baths and bedtime for their two children when she gets home from work.

> But the kind of issues of dealing with the kids, it just takes practice. I don't really feel like she accumulates practice…or she has [a] really high level of trust…that's like a double-edged sword. She trusts that I'll be able to figure out how to make things work. Which means that sometimes she doesn't know what to do and so she just punts. (Davis, Anthony)

Divide-and-conquer dad Mark says, "And Fridays…we agreed I can just be off, but there's still that guilt feeling like, 'What are they doing? Lucy doesn't know how to take care of this kid'" (Johnson, Mark). Another daytime-dad sees it as his wife's preference to co-parent the majority of the time that she is at home. "I think…in her mind she probably would prefer we're always 50:50 parenting when she's home and that…and that she's not by herself, just taking care [of the kids] by herself" (Butler, Ben).

Interestingly, none of the do-it-all dads expressed competency concerns about their partner, even though they continue their child caretaking participation with their partners after they get home from work. Half of the daytime-dads had some anxiety around their wife's ability to care for the kids alone, yet they turn the children over to their wives once they arrive home. Only one divide-and-conquer dad voiced competency concerns about his wife; however, their schedule has his wife taking care of the child on her own on weekday evenings and on the weekends (see Table 1).

Supportive Spouse

Some parents state that they/their spouse's workplace success would not be possible without the support work provided by the parent at home. What patterns of support or actions of non-support do we see in lead-dad households? Other studies have found that breadwinning mothers attribute their own success in the workplace to "their partner's role as a caregiver" (Dunn et al. 2013:16). Chesley finds that at-home-dad households generally provide more support to their wives' employment and encourage "changes in women's work behavior that may reduce inequities that stem from traditionally gendered divisions in work/family responsibilities" (2011:642). Chesley found this included things like supporting their wives' schedules, reducing their wives' domestic chores, and allowing them to not worry about child caretaking, all intended to help support their wives' success at work (2011).

My research found that some couples (42%) see dad's work at home as fundamental to mom's success in the workplace (N=9). Do-it-all dad Mike says,

> The fact is, she can't do what she does and still have a family, without either me being a stay-at-home parent to take care of all those little details or hiring someone to take care of all those little details…[it] would just seem silly. (Shanley, Mike)

Even fathers who act as "daytime-dads," turning the kids over to their wife when she arrives home, see their role as integral to their partner's ability to perform at the workplace. Three of the four daytime-dads' expressed supportive spouse sentiments. One father, Gary, married to an ambitious academic physician, says,

> I'm the primary person, which frees her up to be able to do the things that – like when she has a conference or has the opportunity to go to do something, she doesn't have to…worry about, 'how am I going to arrange childcare, how am I going to figure out what's going on here,' she can just say yes and go on with that thing that's going to move her career forward without having to worry about what's going on at home. (Cox, Gary)

His wife shares her perspective:

> …that was a conversation that we had and… even when we were dating and earlier in our relationship, he told me…I want to be the wind beneath your wings. I want to make it possible for you to be really successful and to do what you have passion for doing. (Cox, Fay)

Divide-and-conquer dads, who split the child caretaking and household chores with their wives when they are home, also prioritize their partner's success and happiness.

> That's really something that I've always wanted to be able to do, or one of the things that we've really talked about as a couple is, I want her to feel like she's fulfilled and is doing what she wants to do. (Holden, Jasper)

One mother, in a divide-and-conquer household, expressed the importance of her husband's role as lead parent to not only her own happiness, but that of their entire household:

> I try to tell my husband as much as possible [t]hat his contribution to our household is priceless, because it allows me to do and be what I need to be, which is going to make him have a better wife and it's going to make Evan have a better mom. (Devon Mattis, Rennie)

Overall, all three types of households included partners who saw themselves as important contributors to their wives' success. However, 75% of daytime dads expressed this type of sentiment most frequently (see Table 1).

It's Actually Equal

Some couples view the household division of labor as being equal, perhaps due to varying gender expectations. Other research has found that there is a different level of domestic expectations for some at-home mothers versus at-home fathers, with more involvement in child caretaking and household chores expected – or desired – by breadwinner wives (Daminger 2020; Chesley 2011). Doucet finds in her study of primary-caregiving fathers that many working mothers came home "full-fledged" and took over on the parenting front, to engage with their children and/or give dad a break (2018). Chesley and Flood find that breadwinner mothers are more involved in child caretaking than breadwinner fathers (2017). Another study frames it as the "domestic handoff," finding that some stay-at-home dads pass domestic duties over to mom when she gets home from work, giving dad time to pursue other activities (Latshaw and Hale 2016). Some female breadwinners don't give up involvement with their children, resulting in "greater convergence in their parenting experiences and…a sense that parenting responsibilities are more equally shared" (Chesley 2011).

My research found that some respondents expressed the idea that the child caretaking and household chore division is actually equal in their household, despite dad being the lead parent (33%). Couples from all three types of households conveyed this idea (N=7) but it was by far the most prevalent among the daytime-dad households (75%). This might be anticipated since mom takes over with the kids after work in these households, but I would also expect to see this sentiment expressed more often in divide-and-conquer households which rely on mom for significant household and parenting support whenever she's not at work. However, only 29% of divide-and-conquer households had a partner(s) that indicated "it's actually equal." Of the 9 individual respondents that brought up this point, only two couples had both partners express this sentiment.

Lead-dad household which divide duties (divide-and-conquer households) when both parents are both home talked about how they split the workload.

> …when we're both home, we do tend to have a divide-and-conquer sort of outlook. It doesn't work out perfectly that way, but a lot of times…it's just easier when, if there's two kids, there's two parents, then you split up the duties. (Roemer, Nikolai)

A mother in a divide-and-conquer households says,

> …pretty much through the eight to five, he's the parent on duty. And then at five, we need to switch so that he [can] go to do some of those activities [working out] or then we'd both be home doing the dinner stuff. When the kids were really little, we sort of were able to divide-and-conquer the bedtime routine. (Holden, Erin)

This attitude applies to household chores as well. One do-it-all dad shared, “On the weekends, when both of us are home, we both do equal amounts of housework” (Shanley, Mike). While Mike does the household chores and is the lead-parent during the week while his physician wife is at work, she still shares the housework on her days off. Another mom in a do-it-all dad household didn’t feel that her husband was the lead-parent.

> So, there's a lot of that mental load stuff, where I'm the one who's aware of or doing behind the scenes stuff. I'll plan all our vacations, but then he gives them all their baths and he cooks the dinner. And so, I guess it feels to me less like he's the lead parent and more like he's doing the hands-on tasks. Whereas I don't feel like I may be [lead-parent] either, but just that it's more equal than maybe it is in some families where one parent is staying home and one works full time. (Salaman, Krystal)

Other households count on mom to take over when she is not at work. They don’t discuss how mom might need a break after a long day. If anything, parents brought up how dad needs a break from the kids once mom gets home from work. Daytime-dad household mom, Fay, says,

> I very much appreciate that Gary copes with things Monday through Friday. And deals with schools and teachers and sick children and you know, anything that happens during the daytime he copes with. For his own mental health, it’s important that he gets some breaks from them…it is important to give him some breaks from them periodically…however that ends up looking. And then, I want to be involved with them, I don’t want to be this absentee parent…so, it’s important to me to do stuff with them…Gary handles most of their day-to-day stuff when he’s home, and then in the evenings, I kind of take over when I get home and do bedtime and those sorts of things. And then on the weekend, I end up doing most of the childcare on the weekends. (Cox, Fay)

Camille, from another daytime-dad household, notes the same phenomenon.

> I guess I compare it to other people that have stay-at-home parent arrangements. I think probably the one thing about being a stay-at-home dad rather than a stay-at-home mom is that... When the working dad comes home, he’s not expected to take over all…the taking care of the children responsibilities…. When a working dad comes home, I think he has more of a breather than a…working mom does. When a working mom comes home…the stay-at-home [dad] kind of shuts off [like] ‘I am done

> for the day. Now taking care of the children is your responsibility'.
> (Sloane, Camille)

Ideological Orientation – Two Approaches to Make it Fit

Does ideological orientation make a difference in how lead-dad families explain why they've adopted this non-normative household arrangement? Previous research on the U.S. homeschooling movement demonstrates a surprising ideological split which may be instructive. Stevens (2001) argues that there are two very disparate groups that make up the homeschooling family population – believers and inclusives. Believers are conservative and religious families who have "found in home schooling an effective means of updating the so-called traditional family" (Stevens 2001:72). Inclusives are not religious, are diverse and inclusive, and considered progressive (Stevens 2001). Other studies find that some couples revert to more traditional family gender roles after having a child (Kluwer, Heesink, and Vliert 2002). Is the lead-dad household arrangement a modified version of traditional family gender norms when families are unwilling or unable to meet the traditional model? Are people more willing to violate gender norms if they are already violating other social norms? Or are there two very different ideological paths—traditional and progressive— that lead couples to the same result: a lead-dad household arrangement?

What qualities, attributes, or beliefs make it more likely that a household will adopt an atypical lead-parent arrangement? Standard North American Family (SNAF) norms prevalent in the United States are classed and raced. It includes a legally married, heterosexual couple with [assumed] biological children (Smith 1993). The father is the primary breadwinner, and while the mother might work outside the home, she is mainly responsible for the household and children (Smith 1993). The family is racially homogenous and fits the nuclear family ideal. This model is very white and middle-class.

Under what circumstances are households willing to break gender norms? Perhaps when a household has rejected or is unable to fulfil the SNAF model they are more willing to violate other norms. For many couples in my sample, there are various ways they contravene social norms. For example, as noted earlier [see Research Design, Chapter 2], 29% (N=6) of the couples in my sample are interracial or interethnic, compared to the national average of 10% (Rico et al. 2018).

My use of the term ideological orientation encompasses American social norms around gender roles and values. While some might assume that households that adopt a lead-dad arrangement are progressive because they have a non-traditional household arrangement, I found that isn't necessarily the case. I find among lead-dad families a similar ideological split to Stevens' homeschooling families, with couples in my sample demonstrating two main ideological orientations they use to help explain why they've adopted these non-normative roles: what I call a "new traditionalism," and the more expected progressive orientation.

New Traditionalism orientation. My research develops the idea of a new traditionalism orientation, where couples (19%) frame the atypical lead-dad arrangement as conforming to the traditional family model – with a new spin (N=4). One do-it-all dad whose family moved to be closer to their church, expresses gender traditional beliefs about his role in the family. "…even in my family, [I] would consider myself a leader, even though my leadership doesn't involve monetarily, but outside of that, it does" (Manning, Jeff). One mom in a divide-and-conquer arrangement talks about how the lead-dad arrangement feels more comfortable because of its similarity to the traditional family model.

> …there [are] a lot of examples within my company of CEOs or VPs that are women and then their partner does the stay-at-home. So it's that reverse traditional, just like we're doing. So it never felt wrong, it never felt like something we had to overcome. It always felt like, "Sure, absolutely. I'm totally on board with you doing it. (Norman, Carly)

A (progressive) do-it-all dad sums up the new traditionalism perspective: "I noticed that…there are some people who [are a] stay-at-home dad because they believe in traditional families and raising your children yourself. It's just a different model on one working parent and one staying home" (Salaman, Thad).

*Progressive orientation***.** Other couples in my research with a progressive orientation who adopted a lead-dad household model (71%) seem comfortable with themselves, and some even welcome the idea of disrupting gender norms (N=15). Daytime-dad Ben embraces the idea of being a non-normative example:

> I think it's been really great to show some other dads who might be a little ignorant on the whole stay-at-home parent thing that…I'm just a normal guy just like them. And – I wasn't forced into this, I chose this. And I think sometimes when you get into that conversation with them, it's a little bit surprising to them that, 'Oh, wow, you are actually…similar to me,' and you hopefully are breaking some stereotypes. (Butler, Ben)

Mom in a divide-and-conquer household, Erin, talks about how the older church ladies in her congregation are surprised by her husband's dad-skills.

> …I think it's funny, because initially, they [church ladies] were, 'Oh, that's a new thing.'…[and] we live within walking distance of our church, so he'd walk them down for morning prayer on Wednesdays... And they'd be like, 'Oh, Jasper did such a good job.' Almost like they're surprised, 'He did such a good job with the kids.' Shocking. So yeah, sometimes he'll get those comments…He should, he has a lot of practice. (Holden, Erin)

Mother in a progressive do-it-all household, Gwen, points out the various characteristics of her family that don't conform to the SNAF model.

> …actually we're a little bit different because my husband is 11 years older than me, but we got married when I was 27 and he was gosh, 38, 37, something like that.... And the other thing to add in here is that I have a disability. I have MS and so he has an additional layer of responsibility in that I need care in some of the ways that my daughters needs care…not bathing and that kind of thing, but just additional support that makes it so that I have to use less energy for things at home. (Parri, Gwen)

One progressive do-it-all dad describes the challenges of relating to other parents because of his family's non-traditional characteristics: two of his three children are adopted.

> I think my kids are different, [and] then the story of how our family was built is very different for most people…I never had a toddler and a baby, I had a preschooler and a toddler, we just started at two and a half. And so I mean, part of what makes my experience as a father different is you go from you've got that lump there that sits in the chair and rocks during the day to, no, no, we just have two [kids] and they run all the time. (Bedford, Peter)

This family has other characteristics which violate the SNAF norms: the father is not a U.S. citizen (Canadian), and the family is multiracial: both parents and one child are white, and two children are from South Korea.

Other progressive parents also discussed how people in their communities respond to them, and how those responses are racialized. One daytime-dad of two (a boy and a girl), who is mixed race and married to a White woman, talked about the gendered and racialized receptions he receives when with his children out in the community.

> I have people who [feel] positive[ly] about the fact that I let my children be kind of genderless and…just be kids. And then people who look at us and they're like, that's not what a boy is supposed to be. And then I also get some pushback because it's like, 'Well, that's not what a Black boy is supposed to be.' …So, my kids are interracial and…one of them is light enough to pass and the other one isn't. So there's lots of mixed messages. So, depending on…whether I'm running into a progressive or a conservative White person or Black person really determines whether or not I'm being assessed as successful as a father. (Davis, Anthony)

A do-it-all dad talks about how his performance as a lead-dad is viewed through a racialized and ideological lens – to his benefit.

> I believe that I have straight white male privilege and that I receive every benefit of the doubt from people because of it. Yeah, and …we live in this sort of liberal bubble where I think having this identity as a stay-at-home dad is seen as a positive thing. (Salaman, Thad)

I identified few (N=4) new traditionalist households in my sample, with the majority of couples (N=15) expressing ideas more aligned with a progressive orientation. Two couples expressed either mixed or unclear orientations. Do-it-all dad households mainly fell into the progressive orientation category (90%), while divide-and-conquer households had the lowest progressive orientation (43%) (see Table 1).

Identity Work

Moms as well as dads engage in identity work to explain why they've adopted these non-normative gender roles in the household. However, the shift for moms is not as great as it is for dads since today many women work and also act as lead parents at home. My research identified two main avenues that dads follow regarding their identity shift to being a lead dad. For some households, they work hard to define dad as more than "just" dad – a new developing discourse. The other avenue is to embrace their new identity as a lead dad, which happens with varying levels of success.

Defining dad as more than "just" a dad. Some respondents (N=5 couples; 4 dads and 1 mom) go to great lengths to define the lead-dad's role as more than "just" a dad. They focus on his side work, even when it doesn't bring in money or isn't his major focus. They discuss how what he does is different from lead moms, or how he doesn't fit the stereotypes of what a lead dad looks like. About 30% of both do-it-all and divide-and-conquer dads fall into this category, with no daytime-dads defining themselves as more than "just" a dad (see Table 1).

One mom in a do-it-all dad household says that what she tells other people about her husband's role is that,

> …he's an entrepreneur who works from home and takes care of the baby…Because the reason is – and I'm sure there are all sorts of ways to talk about it, and all sorts of values that people put on these things – when I think of stay-at-home mom, I think it's a mom who's not working and so… if I were to call him a stay-at-home dad, even though he is a dad who stays at home, for me, this doesn't encapsulate all he's doing. Because he's working from home, but he's also doing so, so much for [our daughter]. (Hollins-Bis, Tracey)

Tracey detailed three entrepreneurial efforts her husband is working on, none of which bring in income at this time. Despite this, she emphasizes his work and role as an entrepreneur at least equally to that of lead dad. Cody, a do-it-all dad who does home renovations and property management repairs around his daughter's nap schedule, says,

> So…for the longest time I was using – I was basically using stay-at-home dad with an asterisk. I would say stay-at-home dad, but I would immediately go into the explanation of why it's not just that…And…part of that, it's not avoiding the stereotypes per se, it was just more of - actually, I guess, maybe it is trying to avoid the stereotypes. But more of…feeling like it's just not a full accurate description. (Scheiber, Cody)

Kinsley, from a divide-and-conquer household, also saw her husband's lead-parent role as needing an asterisk:

> I call him a stay-at-home dad…It's a little weird, he is a stay-at-home dad, but that's not – he still works, but his primary occupation is being a stay-at-home dad. So, if I'm meeting someone new it's usually yes, my husband is a stay-at-home dad, but also, I'll also put in…an asterisk, basically. He's a stay-at-home dad, but he also owns a restaurant, so he does that on the side too. (Roemer, Kinsley)

Kinsley's husband is actively working to divest himself from the restaurant so he can fully devote his attention to being a lead-dad for their two children.

Developing a "dad" identity. Most dads (76%) discussed their evolution over time in developing and embracing a "dad" identity. Sixteen dads from all three types of households (do-it-all dad, daytime dad, and divide-and-conquer dad) talked about the difficulty of shifting their identity from their previous jobs to a new identity as lead parent. Many of them pointed out how they had voluntarily chosen this role, yet the identity shift was still a struggle and occurred over some time. All of the daytime dads fell into this category, and about 70% of the do-it-all and divide-and-conquer dads (see Table 1).

Do-it-all dad Leon observed,

> It took a while to mentally make the shift…with regard to one's identity from one's job to one's vocation as a parent. Our culture as a whole has a lot of messages that a man isn't really a man unless he's got a job and he's a breadwinner…So even choosing it voluntarily, it took a while to get that stuff sorted out. (Parri, Leon)

Another do-it-all dad has come to embrace his new identity:

> …it's become an identity for me, especially since I have the [Social Dad] social media account, and my friends, sometimes, just call me [Social Dad], at the golf course or whatever. And – it slowly went from the tone of kinda funny, poke a little fun to see what my reaction will be, to now, it's more of a badge of honor…Because I know my value as a dad and I know what I've brought to my family, and I know they know it, because my kid is living proof. My older one so far, and my younger one is seeming to be just as far along and bright… (Manning, Jeff)

A divide-and-conquer dad talks about the struggles he has with his identity, or what he perceives as his lack of one now that he's out of the workforce. "This was not my plan in life, and I sort of feel a little derailed… But I also see the positive things about it. I think…my biggest dislike is just maybe my loss of identity" (Holden, Jasper).

Daytime-dad Ben talks about transitioning to his new identity as a lead dad:

> …I did this probably the first couple of months of being a stay-at-home dad…I initially [said] "well, I'm a stay-at-home dad, but before that, what I did was…", cause your job is such a big part of your identity. But now, I'm fully on board with, 'hey, I'm a stay-at-home dad' and I have no problem with introducing myself that way to people. (Butler, Ben)

Daytime-dad Gary followed the same pattern, but over a much longer period of time.

> …when my son was first born, I would talk to people and I'd be like, "Yeah, I have a PhD in economics. I'm a professor, but right now I'm staying home with my son," and that kind of evolved to "yeah, I'm a stay-at-home dad, but I also have a PhD in economics and teach in the evenings and stuff." And then three or four years in I was challenged by myself…to kind of say, you need to own this, be this. And so from that point on, if I'm introducing myself to somebody…I say 'I'm a full time stay at home dad, and I just leave it at that. (Cox, Gary)

Breadwinner and mom identity. For moms in lead-dad households, the shift in identity is not as great as for dads. Nearly all (19 of 20) of the moms in this sample were working before their husbands became lead parents. Most of them report balancing their identities as both breadwinner and mother (85%). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 62% of married women with children under 6 participated in the labor force, while 92% of married men with children under 6 did so in 2018. Clearly, the identity shift for fathers is far more extreme when they become lead dads than it is for mothers who continue to work at their jobs while becoming or continuing as the primary earners.

However, expectations of parents and their role in the household, and especially child caretaking, is strongly gendered. Mothers still face intensive mothering expectations regardless of their work hours or child caretaking arrangements.

Divide-and-conquer household mom Claire talks about how her identity didn't have to shift as much as it did for her husband.

> It was kind of hard at first, because I think it was really hard on Maxwell, the change [to him staying at home]. I don't think it was nearly as hard on me, because…I'm still getting to see the kids and stuff. I didn't have to change my identity as much. So, it was definitely harder for him that it was for me. (Hartley, Claire)

Several mothers brought up the fact that some successful professional women have partners that are lead parents or full-time stay-at-home spouses. "…my husband loves to point out situations where women who are pursuing their career, as they start to get higher up in whatever organization or company they're in, they tend to have more stay-at-home dads as their supporting partners" (Norman, Carly). Another mother talked about the lack of examples of non-traditional household arrangements.

> Before I had kids and I was looking forward in my career, there were no examples that I could look to of male/female heterosexual relationships with a stay-at-home dad, and I think that just really obviously speaks to our society not supporting a woman's career…As I've tried to develop other managers in my career, that's also been something. [They'll say], 'Well, we can't move because of my husband's job, so I can't follow my career path'. (Napier, Lila)

Other moms discussed their love for their children, yet don't want to have to give up their jobs to raise them. Mother in a do-it-all household, Krystal, says,

> I think compared to many, many parents [who] talk about being...totally enamored with their kids and not wanting to go back to work – I think that there's a pretty large segment of mothers who feel that way…I don't identify with that at all, but I know that there are lots of mothers who, like me, love their children and want to spend time with them, but absolutely want to also have jobs away from them. (Salaman, Krystal)

Divide-and-conquer mom Carly concurs:

> I felt very much in my element in the working environment, in a corporate world getting to do what I do and interact with other people the way I do. Definitely wanted kids, love kids, love to spend time with them, but as a

> full-time stay-at-home parent, I could not see myself being successful in that. (Norman, Carly)

Do-it-all dad household mother Gwen brings up the extra effort required to connect with her children and compares her own position to that of some working fathers.

> I feel sometimes [that] I have to be more intentional about seeking out that quality time with [the kids] than he does. And that's just the way it is. And I'm sure that's the way it is for dads who have to work and want to have a real meaningful connection with their children. I think it's part of the reason there's that stereotype of the aloof father…I didn't have that growing up, but that's just the part that sometimes feels like I shouldn't have to do that. I had to do a lot of work to overcome the stereotype of you're naturally supposed to be a good mom and just have these amazing moments with your kids. And I've got to work at it and that's okay. (Parri, Gwen)

DISCUSSION

As these couples demonstrate, the three types of lead-dad households vary in how they explain why they've adopted these non-normative gender roles. The ways that couples make sense of their roles do not clearly map on to the three lead-dad typologies. All three types use a mix of discourses to explain why they've adopted these roles. However, similar to other research on female breadwinner families (Chesley and Flood 2017; Chesley 2011; Pinho and Gaunt 2021), I found that the ways that lead-dad household couples explain why they've adopted these non-normative roles include aspects of both doing and undoing gender.

Overall, one frequently mentioned way these parents made sense of their atypical roles in the household is by framing it as suiting their personalities. In this case, personality seems to trump traditional gender roles—or at least provide an acceptable rationale for violating them. In some cases this was described in a way that fell back on gender-traditional ideas, such as dad's personality was seen as more suitable for "let[ting] the kids be kids and get dirty" (Blanchard, Kyla) or dad runs the home "almost as a business" (Butler, Alice). Other couples were undoing gender, saying that dad has more patience "for…the kinds of stuff that girls get into than she would" (Parri, Leon).

While competency concerns were brought up by three of the dads, maternal gatekeeping doesn't seem to be reversed in these non-normative households. These dads' concerns are not used to avoid sharing child caretaking with their partners. In terms of if these dads get their identity from their status as fathers, two of them (daytime-dads) are developing a dad identity, meaning they identify themselves to others as the primary parent. The divide-and-conquer dad identifies as "more than just a dad," meaning he considers himself to be the primary parent along with one or more other roles (that he

emphasizes to others). Ultimately, not enough dads mentioned competency concerns to identify clear patterns.

The households where dads and/or moms expressed supportive spouse sentiments when explaining why they have adopted these non-normative roles are not only enacting atypical gender roles, but they are embracing them. Consistent with other research (Chesley 2011), dads in these couples are supporting their partners in ways that allow her to be successful on the job. These husbands are conscious of how their work at home allows their wives to work demanding schedules, to travel for work, to not worry about child caretaking or domestic chores, all of which allows them to focus on their careers. This type of support is undoing gender – it is helping to "reduce inequities that stem from gender differences in work/family responsibilities" (Chesley 2011:660).

Couples who view their work at home as essentially equal are "doing gender." Other research on breadwinner fathers with stay-at-home mothers finds that the mothers in these households usually take care of all child caretaking and household chores to support dad's work (Kaufman 2013). Doucet finds in her study of primary-caregiving fathers that many working mothers came home "full-fledged" and took over on the parenting front, to engage with their children and/or give dad a break (2018), comparable to daytime-dad households. Chesley argues that parenting can become more equal as at-home dads do an increasing amount and variety of things at home and their breadwinner wives stay very involved in child caretaking (2011). However, in all of these domestic scenarios, women are doing more than similarly situated men – so it really isn't equal at all.

The two ideological approaches couples use to explain why they've adopted these non-normative gender roles are split in terms of doing or undoing gender. The new traditionalism orientation emphasizes the lead-dad arrangement's similarity to the traditional family model, simply with a twist. These couples are doing gender. However, the households with a progressive orientation often are undoing gender – in some cases, with relish. They see disrupting gender norms and breaking stereotypes as part of their job as lead parent. Many of these households don't conform to the SNAF model in a variety of ways, and this is simply one more aspect of how they are different.

Gender identity is tied up in varying parenting expectations for men and women. A majority of fathers in my sample have significant outside responsibilities in addition to their work as lead parent (N=12). Is this work shoring up their masculinity in addition to their bank account? Some of these couples (N=5) define the lead dad's role as more than "just" a dad, a new and developing discourse identified in this research. These households are doing gender, focusing on dad's side work even when it doesn't bring in money or isn't his major focus. These couples also talk about how what dad does isn't the same as what a lead-mom does, or how he doesn't fit the stereotypes of what a lead dad looks like. The majority of dads in my sample (N=16) talked about how they got to the point of embracing their "dad" identity. For most, this was a process that occurred over time, often with some difficulty. Even when dad had voluntarily chosen this role, he still

struggled with shifting his identity from his job to his "vocation as a parent" (Parri, Leon). These dads are undoing gender as they adopt a new "dad" identity.

For the breadwinning mothers in my research, the gender identity shift is not as great. Among mothers with children under 18 in the United States today, 71% are in the labor force (Zessoules et al. 2018). The shift for these women is into the role of primary family breadwinner. Consistent with other work, few of the mothers in my research identified breadwinning as a form of caregiving (Townsend 2002). However, some of the mothers in this project align with Christopher's concept of "extensive mothering," which entails the delegation of day-to-day work while seeing themselves as remaining "ultimately responsible for their children's well-being" (2012). Other mothers in this project are undoing gender, focusing on their work and career prospects knowing that dad has things covered at home. Again, some moms are doing gender, while others are busy undoing gender.

CONCLUSION

Couples explain why they've adopted these non-normative gender roles in multiple ways. While some of the couples in this project are actively (and for some, consciously) undoing gender, we see that there are other families that have simply adopted a new framework within which they are doing gender in traditional ways.

This study identified a new developing discourse where men – and sometimes their spouses – are identifying as "more than just a dad." These couples focus on dad's side work, even when it doesn't bring in money or isn't his major focus of time or attention – taking care of the kids is. They discuss how what he does is different from lead moms, or how he doesn't fit the stereotypes of what a lead dad looks like. These respondents are clear in their desire to differentiate dad from ideas about lead-moms and their associated gender role and responsibilities.

These findings may encourage a change of perspective aligned with Goldberg (2013), who argues that "… (dividing up tasks as 'feminine' and 'masculine' on the basis of who has historically performed such tasks) merely serves to reify and perpetuate gendered meanings associated with housework, as well as binary conceptualizations of gender and heteronormativity more broadly" (2013:95; Kelly and Hauck 2015). Kelly and Hauck argue that queer couples' division of labor can be seen as "an opportunity…to redo gender together" (2015:460). Perhaps lead-dad households aren't doing or undoing gender, but instead offer a similar opportunity to "redo gender together."

This research suggests other avenues for further study. First, the sample for this study had few non-white respondents, and future research should consider if lead-dad household explanations for why they've adopted these non-normative roles are different for various racial groups. Second, this sample had an overrepresentation of upper-middle class households. Considering how both race and class impact the discourses that families use to explain why they have adopted non-normative household arrangements would add to the (limited) body of research in this area.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON LEAD-DAD HOUSEHOLDS

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON LEAD-DAD HOUSEHOLDS

The COVID-19 pandemic has drawn attention to the plight of women in the United States today, where working mothers were already expected (pre-pandemic) to come home and perform the "second shift" (Hochschild 1989). The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the already significant burden on many working women with an additional layer of expectations: taking care of the kids who are home from daycare and school due to the pandemic, while continuing to perform their paid jobs and the majority of household chores. For some women, this meant giving up their paid work or reducing their hours once they realized they couldn't do it all (Landivar et al. 2020).

However, the discussion of overload during the pandemic has not considered what happens in households where dad is the lead parent, and when his job outside the home (if he has one) is the lower priority. Considering these gender atypical households and how they have handled the pandemic's increased child caretaking demands and workplace changes may be instructive as we consider the burdens families have been required to shoulder during the COVID-19 pandemic. What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on lead-dad households? How has COVID-19 disrupted household roles in families that have a lead father? Are these changes likely to last past the pandemic? Additionally, my study adds a new facet to current pandemic research because it asks parents to compare their child caretaking division of labor before the pandemic and during it – unlike most studies which only examine household parenting and chore distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As reviewed in the Research Design, this project was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Information specific to COVID-19 impacts, derived from interviews with 28 of the overall project's total respondents (those that included additional COVID-19 questions) are included here. They represent one or both members of 15 households (N=28 individuals, 15 couples). The demographics of the subsample of participants for this chapter are included in the Research Design, Table 3.

As discussed in Chapter 3, lead-parent dads take care of the domestic sphere to varying degrees. All lead-dad households entail dad taking care of the kids while mom is at work. Beyond that, some dads do it all, and some dads don't. Do-it-all dads cover almost all household chores and split child caretaking when mom is home from work. Among the dads that don't do it all, there are two main approaches to how this is implemented. Daytime dads do the majority of household chores, and turn the kids over to mom when she gets home from work. Divide-and-conquer dads split everything when mom is home from work: household chores and child caretaking are split, divided, alternated, and/or performed jointly. The patterns observed in this chapter do not appear to vary depending on which of these three typologies the household falls into. One reason why might be that in times of acute stress – such as a worldwide pandemic – people may revert to roles that require less effort to work against, such as traditional gender roles. Alternatively, when people experience an exogeneous shock it also creates an opportunity to structure things differently. For some families, this might result in a reversion to a

more traditional division of labor, while for others, it may have caused them to restructure how the family operated prior to the pandemic.

This chapter examines how the increased domestic workload (child caretaking and household chores) due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been absorbed in lead-dad households. I find that atypical arrangements remain atypical. Lead-dad households do include mom to varying degrees in their coping mechanisms to address the additional child caretaking labor. However, while moms are doing more with the kids than before the pandemic, dads are still doing the bulk of the increased child caretaking. I also find that while the household chore allocation of responsibility does not change from pre-pandemic times, they are a low priority.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic could provide an opportunity to rectify gender disparities at home and at work. Research shows that structural shifts caused by "economic and socially disruptive events" have the potential to upset the gender division of household labor (van Tienoven et al. 2021:5; Craig 2020). Alternatively, other research argues that these types of disruptive events can solidify traditional roles (Weick 1993). An example of this occurring has been found in the transition to parenthood – certainly a disruptive event in couples' lives. One study found that gender disparities in paid and unpaid work increased after having a child in dual-earner couples – equity decreased in these households (Yavorsky, Dush, and Schoppe-Sullivan 2015). Studies specifically assessing the impacts of COVID-19 have found that it is reinforcing, or "locking down," traditional gender roles (van Tienoven et al. 2021:6; Power 2020).

With the world in upheaval and many workplaces, schools, and daycares shuttered, there was the potential – at least in households where parent(s) are white collar workers who could work from home – to correct the gendered division of labor at home. As we now know, this is not what happened. Instead, for many families the pandemic increased existing inequalities at home and at work (Mooi-Reci and Risman 2021). Research has shown that what did shift during the pandemic was gendered parenting attitudes, which became more traditional (Mize, Kaufman, and Petts 2021).

For those parents whose jobs could move online, telecommuting allowed them to keep working during shelter-in-place orders, school and daycare closures, and evolving COVID-19 restrictions. However, working at home while everyone else relocated home as well (spouse and kids) served to further blur the boundaries between work and home. Some research has found that gendered parenting and household expectations mean that mothers are the ones whose work gets interrupted, or who are obliged to multitask while working remotely (Lyttelton, Zang, and Musick 2022; Offer and Schneider 2011; Yovorsky et al. 2021). Telecommuting during the pandemic meant juggling workplace responsibilities with significantly increased child caretaking and virtual schooling demands, and research has found it "reinforced an unequal domestic division of labor" (Dunatchik et al. 2021:1).

In American households where mom is typically the lead parent, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that women cut their work hours, used paid (or unpaid) time off, or even quit their jobs to care for children home from school and/or daycare due to the pandemic (Landivar et al. 2020; Miller 2021). Women have been called the "shock absorbers" of our society (Grose 2020), providing, by default, what government and (some) husbands don't or won't. Meanwhile, many working dads continued operating as usual, with no curtailment in their hours and minimal disruption to their schedule due to child caretaking responsibilities. While men working from home did more child caretaking for a period of time during the pandemic, it didn't affect their working hours like it has for their working wives (Ruppanner et al. 2021; Kitchener 2020).

However, not all dual-earner, heterosexual couples responded to the pandemic by relying on mom to be the primary child caretaker. Some fathers did take on more child caretaking, resulting in more equitable parenting (Carlson et al. 2020). One study finds that the amount of child caretaking done by men is "more sensitive to their employment" than the amount of child caretaking that women do (Sevilla and Smith 2020: S171). Women do less relative child caretaking than their husbands only when the men are taking time off work or are unemployed (Sevilla and Smith 2020). Not surprisingly, when fathers are voluntarily not in the labor force and are picking up more child caretaking duties, mothers continuing labor force participation is supported (Petts, Carlson, and Pepin 2021).

Calarco et al. (2021) finds that couples may have adopted a more equitable arrangement during the pandemic when dads were unemployed, mothers were the primary breadwinner, or if fathers could do more of their work remotely than their partners were able to do, as it could be justified as practical. Interestingly, whether these nontraditional arrangements (of an equal division of parenting labor) were maintained long-term depended on if they were justified based on "practical considerations or also on a rejection of traditional gendered caregiving norms" (Calarco et al. 2021:12). Similarly, a pre-pandemic study found that a mother's resuming work at three years' post-birth was strongly associated with either parent supporting gender egalitarian roles in the first year of parenthood (Norman 2020).

A limitation of studies done to date in this area is that they focus on dual-earner couples, where one or both started working remotely due to the pandemic. While this enabled a comparison of the impacts of the pandemic on two working parents, it does not include an examination of what happens when one parent is primarily at-home or not working outside the home at all. Previous work has found that fathers who work at home are "generally better able than mothers to protect themselves from the incursions of unpaid care work" (Dunatchik et al. 2021:10). A review of the gendered impacts of COVID-19 across the globe sums it up: "Most women in opposite-sex couples in most of the world took on more of the extra domestic work and child care during the pandemic" (Mooi-Reci and Risman 2021:6). Presumably this occurred because of the widespread cultural expectation that women are primarily responsible for child caretaking and domestic duties.

However, the discussion of pandemic parenting and its impact on mothers has not considered what happens in households where dad is the lead parent. Considering these gender atypical households and how they have handled the pandemic's increased child caretaking demands and workplace changes may be useful as we consider the burdens that families have been required to shoulder during the COVID-19 pandemic. My research question explores how COVID-19 has disrupted household roles in families with lead-father arrangements.

FINDINGS

The advent of COVID-19 caused many non-essential workers in the United States to start working from home if their jobs could be performed online. Since schools and daycares were closed for an extended time, this caused many working parents to juggle child caretaking and their professional obligations in new ways, with moms in traditional (lead-mom) families taking on a disproportionate share of the increased child caretaking burden. With the entire family home all of the time, the amount of household chores required also multiplies. When families have a lead-dad arrangement, what changed in terms of family roles? In lead-dad households, did the additional work fall to mom as it did in lead-mom households, or did lead dads take on the extra child caretaking and domestic labor?

Time Use Changes / Challenges

The pandemic changed how we spend our days, whether working for pay or taking care of the kids – or oftentimes, both. With the blurring between work and home, we also saw, particularly in early phases of the pandemic, a blurring between school and home. Virtual schooling became the new normal, while many people also tried to figure out how to maintain their own work responsibilities either in person or online. This caused many families to find new ways to make it all work. In normative (lead-mom) households where both parents worked, we saw many women exit the workforce. For lead-dad households, what strategies did they use to balance it all, and what challenges did they encounter?

Challenges for Moms. Several lead-dad households handled these pandemic changes by utilizing mom during the day to help out with child caretaking. While this strategy helped the families address the increased child caretaking demands on their household, some moms were clearly overwhelmed.

Mom was incorporated into child caretaking either because she was proximate, or to provide some help to dad. Courtney, mother in a do-it-all-dad household, elaborates on how she has sometimes been able to integrate taking care of her daughter into her work obligations:

> I work in Higher Ed, so I have a very supportive work environment. Like this morning, I was on a conference call, but I also had her with me, and

> she's babbling to herself in the background and eating bananas, and everybody is fine with it. Like no big deal. (Howell, Courtney)

Another mom from a do-it-all-dad household is also balancing child caretaking and work:

> A big change is that I now work from home. I'm a CPA, so my job lends itself very well to remote work. And so with COVID, I think early on, it helped [my husband] a lot because I could nurse [the baby] instead of him having to do a bottle and warm-up breast milk and all that. So I can't tell you how many conference calls where I quickly go off, and he'd hand me a baby, and I nurse while doing a presentation. (Blanchard, Kyla)

Simply by being present in the home, even if "on the job" via remote work, mom's involvement in child caretaking often increased. One do-it-all dad explained,

> I would say in terms of childcare, she's obviously taken on [a] bigger role just because she's here. And even times when I assume that I'm 100% in charge... It's not like she's going to ignore our children if she's in the kitchen getting a snack or something. (Salaman, Thad)

A daytime-dad talks about the additional child caretaking support he has with his wife working from home:

> …she's usually around a little bit more in the morning. If she doesn't have set meetings, she can kind of come and go – so come down for lunch and help with lunch. Take the kids out to play after lunch while I get stuff done. After dinner tonight she, she took them out and I was able to clean…So…if I know she's not on a call and I desperately needed her to come help me, I could text her and she would be able to come down …there's no specific 'you're going to do this now because you're home' sort of thing. It's just in general being there. (Sloane, Jon)

Some moms found themselves taking over child caretaking responsibilities during the workday while their partners take care of household needs outside the home to avoid exposing their child(ren) to COVID-19. Wife in a do-it-all dad household, Courtney, says:

> …it's been really different because I'm home during the day. So today, for example, he did go to the grocery store, but he didn't take [their child] with him. So he went when she napped, and so she was here with me, and then I got her when she woke up and she kind of hung around with me in the office a little bit. So we've had more of that. I think it's been a little

> more of a break for him. It is, but it isn't - because I can help, but I'm also working, so I'm shut in the office doing stuff, which she doesn't love... She just keeps busting into the room and giggling and running at me so it's like, 'yep, I guess we're taking a break'. (Howell, Courtney)

Another do-it-all dad household saw the workload at home change, requiring mom to cover child caretaking while working so dad can take care of household business without exposing the kids to COVID-19:

> …I no longer have chunks of time during the day to do my own thing. I used to... go grocery shopping while the kids were at daycare. And I mean, with COVID ... Well, for… two reasons. One is we didn't want to go out and get exposed to other people for more than once a week. So I try to only go shopping once a week. But also it…complicates things. I have to make sure my wife is going to be home and available…to watch the kids, even if it's just to put them in front of the TV or the iPad so she can do her own work. (Salaman, Thad)

Several breadwinner moms talked about how the pandemic maxed them out at work and at home, both with increased child caretaking and household chores. When this happened what was sacrificed was not time with the family, but time for themselves. A medical professional in a do-it-all dad household talked about how she isn't getting a break from work or at home: "It feels like I don't have days off. Sometimes on the weekends, but it's different work. It's childcare rather than working in the hospital" (Shanley, Audrey). A mom from a do-it-all-dad household, who is a high school math teacher and union organizer, talks about how her workload increased both at work and at home due to the pandemic:

> It made [my workload] much higher…partially my particular job was more work because of COVID, because everything had to be re-planned and renegotiated a lot…So, my job definitely was more work this year than most years. And I think in terms of kids, I'm not sure I did that much more with the kids than before, but because Thad was doing a lot more with kids, he had a lot less energy to do other stuff. So, I feel like either things didn't happen, like some of the cleaning, or I might have done a little bit more [at home]. (Salaman, Krystal)

This couple had opted to cancel their housecleaning service during the pandemic, with the understanding that the husband would take on cleaning duties.

> There were a few times when I would use a Friday morning and clean the bathroom or vacuum, but not as often as I should have. And I know it was

> stressing out my wife that our house was dirtier than she wanted it to be. (Salaman, Thad)

One mom in a divide-and-conquer household switched lead-parent roles with her spouse due to the pandemic, and now feels like she has no time off. Prior to the pandemic she was a full-time parent. Her husband's workplace was not taking safety precautions, so he quit his job and took over as lead parent after she was able to get a job as a nurse right away.

> I feel like it has increased my overall workload, because instead of just thinking and caring about, worrying about the kids... I still do that when I'm off work… but then I have the added responsibility of being on the job, too. I feel like I'm just working all the time. (Hartley, Claire)

Krystal observed that her own needs were what got sacrificed when she experienced work/family conflict:

> So, this year, the fact that I had so much more work to do [for employer] … it felt like it conflicted with…wanting to spend time with my family. But I feel like in some ways, what then was let go was not the family, but time to myself. (Salaman, Krystal)

Challenges for Dads. Lead-dad households saw an increase in workload demands for dads as well, both with child caretaking and domestic chores. Dads of all three types are generally used to incorporating child caretaking breaks into their everyday lives, either to accomplish household chores or tasks, or to have a little time for themselves. Prior to the pandemic these breaks happened when children were in daycare or preschool, with grandparents, or participating in sports or other activities that were supervised by another adult. With the advent of COVID-19, these child caretaking breaks disappeared.

Without the availability of preschool and the usual array of activities outside the home, dads were left scrambling trying to figure out how to educate, entertain, and socialize their children. Do-it-all dad Thad explains,

> We weren't taking the kids out to any indoor things. So we weren't going to libraries because it was closed. We did do parks a little bit, but over the winter, we were in Boston, so the weather wasn't real conducive to that all the time. So yeah…more than increasing [my workload], it made it a lot harder to do the regular things that I do. (Salaman, Thad)

A divide-and-conquer dad was concerned about the limited socialization options for his child:

> … it put more pressure on me to socialize Freddy, because we did have a part-time…preschool, for him. That was supposed to be in August…We had a good dads group going…And then, all that's gone, and it's just me and him in a house now, no nothing…So it put more pressure on me to figure out what we're going to do, how I'm going to socialize him so he's not ultra-weird and all that stuff. So…it just put more pressure on me to produce more events for him. (Johnson, Mark)

A divide-and-conquer father of two, a baby and a 5-year-old, notes that he no longer gets a break after preschools shut their doors early in the pandemic.

> …because Lincoln is not going to school, I'm no longer getting my sort of break time, you know? So, it's about three hours that I'm more on point with Lincoln…Kinsley's very focused on her work, as well she should be…But she does come home at five o'clock instead of six o'clock. So, that's kind of nice. But it becomes more of a marathon rather than doing two chunks of a race with a break in between. Now it's the full – from eight o'clock all the way to five o'clock, that's all me…So, she's pretty much in the home office during the workday and not involved in the household stuff, other than when she's nursing. (Roemer, Nikolai)

In this case, the only real "break" (taking care of one child instead of two) dad is getting is when mom incorporates breastfeeding into her workday – no small feat.

A do-it-all dad brought up another challenge of parenting during the pandemic:

> So one of the hardest parts for me was that I felt like during the bulk of this pandemic, that I'm not being the father that I want to be…I am so burnt out. It reaches a point where it's just, 'Kids, do whatever you want. Just leave me alone. Watch your tablets. I don't care. Nobody hit anybody and do whatever the hell else you want.' Or Audrey will walk in the door. And instantly my only thought is, 'Please take the kids because I have to have a break.' But at the same time, she just worked a hard shift at the hospital. And it's not fair for her to come home and instantly have to deal with that either. Everybody is burning the candle at both ends and it's just tiring. I just want that to stop. (Shanley, Mike)

Another health care worker could see her do-it-all-dad husband was overwhelmed with their three children, but was unable to do more than she was already doing:

> … I feel like Peter gets less support because initially, with COVID, we weren't even really having my parents over, and so we kind of lost all of his places where he maybe gets a break during the week…He used to take the kids to the Y, and they would play while he worked out, and we lost that. Things at [my] work became super ... stressful, and I know that I was worried about work things and there were a lot of unknowns and figuring things out and what's going to happen…I wasn't as present, and then he didn't have any of these normal supports and breaks that he would've had otherwise…I could see it happen, but I just didn't feel like I had the bandwidth to do it all ... (Bedford, Katherine)

Several lead dads are taking on more of the household chores than they were prior to the pandemic. The pandemic has placed an especially large burden on health care workers, so many dads married to health care professionals have picked up the increased workload at home. A do-it-all dad married to a doctor detailed how the division of household labor has changed for their household:

> I probably am doing a little bit more of the housework than I did pre-COVID, just because she's not here as much and she doesn't have as much time to get things done. I mean, I always did the vast majority of the cooking. Now I do all the cooking…but I'm finding that I'm doing all the dishes, I'm doing all the cooking, I'm doing more of the cleanup, almost all of the shopping. It increased, it changed the ratio a little bit, but we still work as a team. It's just her side of the team has less time and less energy than it did before the world exploded. (Shanley, Mike)

So while this lead-dad always did the majority of household chores, the pandemic caused the division of labor to shift even more in his direction.

One dad reported getting more input from mom on how things should get done at home. A divide-and-conquer dad talks about how having his wife work at home has actually increased her involvement in how he performs household chores:

> I think the biggest thing that since COVID has happened is that we've really had to spend more time together at home. You could say it has changed, I guess, the way things get done...Because…she's very particular about how she likes things done and the way she likes things done. And so I feel like prior to COVID, if the dishes were done or the laundry was done or things were done to the standards that she wanted, it didn't really matter. When she's home [working], she sees how things are getting done.

> So…for example, I'm not the kind of person where as soon as I'm done with something, I'll rinse it off and put it in the dishwasher. I don't mind waiting until later in the afternoon when I have a pile of stuff to do and then put it in the dishwasher. It's kind of a thing where the piling up of things really gets on her nerves. And so prior to COVID, I'd do the dishes and put them [away] and that was that. But now that she's [working at] home and she sees them like that, then she has to be a part of it. It's definitely a discussion about the day-to-day operations of when she was away [at work]. (Holden, Jasper)

Positive Effects

There have been a number of structural changes to work due to the exogenous shock of the pandemic, leading to positive effects to their work and family lives for some lead-dad families. Several moms report feeling less work/family conflict now if they can work from home. A few moms are relishing the increased family time created by COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Some dads are getting a break here and there due to mom helping as she is able to during her at-home workday.

Less work/family conflict for some moms. Some households found that the pandemic created an opportunity for less work-family conflict for breadwinner moms. Working from home allowed them the flexibility to participate more in the household during the day in a variety of ways, reducing their stress and improving their quality of life. One mom in a do-it-all-dad household found that telecommuting gave her more time to help with household chores, child caretaking, and she even had more time for herself.

> It made it easier for [Jacob] to do appointments - he didn't have to haul all three kids for one kid's dentist appointment. I'd be able to watch [the kid(s)] a little bit, even if it was just throwing on the TV while I'm working on my laptop…In my breaks during the day, I'm helping prepare food, whether it's lunch or dinner, doing that prep work, or I'm helping do a load of laundry real quick instead of going to the proverbial water cooler and talking with colleagues…I became a lot less stressed because I didn't have to commute, which saved me usually about an hour a day. And I also didn't have to get ready in the same way, which saves me about an hour a day. So I had two extra hours a day essentially where I could start exercising…and where I could help out with household duties. But he still carries most of the load. (Blanchard, Kyla)

Working remotely has provided some moms with the flexibility to take care of household duties during the workday. One mom in a daytime-dad household talks about how working from home has been positive for her:

> I would say the workload has overall decreased…for me. In my job and my role, the amount of time I was spending at the office, felt way more burdensome than…this remote job…But being at home and being able to…take care of something in the middle of the day…has felt like it's been a relief…like an extra task I would normally, pre-COVID, have had to add to my to-do list to then try to figure out how to do once I got home. (Norman, Carly)

Dad gets a break. Other households used the additional flexibility provided by mom working from home to allow dad to get a break. Lead dads have found themselves on duty most of the time during the pandemic, so when mom is able to flex her schedule or cover naptime it can provide welcome relief. One daytime-dad household mother has changed her work hours to give her husband some time off from the kids:

> …my schedule has changed a little bit…Instead of going in between 8 and 5, I try to leave around 9 until 3, and then I'll work later in the night…after [the kids] have gone to bed just so… because Jon is all on now and can't take them out of the house, so he's a bit stressed out about not having any relief from them… (Sloane, Camille)

This mom also typically travels quite a bit for her job, but COVID-19 put a stop to that.

> … [work travel] is disruptive to my children and Jon because he doesn't get any relief. I think that's why he's actually – I won't say happy about the situation [COVID-19] but it means I'm not travelling. He's getting a little bit more free time because I'm coming home, being there a little bit more. (Sloane, Camille)

A do-it-all dad used child caretaking breaks provided by his wife during the workday to take care of his personal needs, like getting a haircut or working out:

> …during the last year, obviously he (their son) was much needier and needed much more attention and having those [child caretaking] breaks, I can get sometimes even a workout in. Like a 20-minute workout in while he's napping, because you know he'll wake up and scream and he's easy to put back down. So if she's [working at home], and she's not doing anything crazy important or a meeting, she can put him back down and I can go on my way. (Blanchard, Jacob)

More family time. The pandemic has provided an opportunity for some breadwinning mothers to spend more time with their kids than usual since everyone is at home. Particularly in the early phases of the pandemic, lockdown orders caused many families to isolate – providing a lot of together time. For some breadwinner moms, this has provided a positive aspect to the challenges posed by the pandemic. A divide-and-conquer mom says, "… this is sad to say, but it's a great opportunity for us to be together and have this time together because – everyone's forced to sit down and be still. And I'm loving it" (Mattis, Rennie Devon). Similar sentiments were expressed by a mom from a do-it-all dad household: "…as terrible as this is – we're kind of enjoying the isolation. This is great. We're just gonna stay home and it's magical" (Howell, Courtney). Another divide-and-conquer mom appreciates the additional time with her children:

> They [my kids] are…very interesting and fun to be around, to see their personalities, to see the interaction, and being home working remotely has actually been a really great experience for me because I've gotten to see my kids more than I have in the last, well, all of the years of their life that I've been working in that previous job, and I've also gotten to be around my husband a lot more. So there's been some silver linings to this point for sure. (Norman, Carly)

Long term impacts. Some families anticipate long-term changes due to the pandemic. These include continuing to work remotely at least some of the time in order to maintain their improved work/family balance and improved relationships with their children. One mom plans to continue mainly working at home, even after her office opens back up:

> So COVID really had a positive impact on my family, which I feel bad about saying because I knew that for a lot of people, it hasn't even been neutral….so from a long-term perspective, for me personally, I'm going to be going more into hybrid work model…but for the most part, I plan to work from home. And so, I think from a long-term perspective, we're going to be able to keep a lot of the benefits that we personally gained as a family during the COVID timeframe. (Blanchard, Kyla)

Some of the benefits she referenced were that her family became closer to two families in their pod, they went on more family adventures and got more exercise, and she saw her kids much more – and could enjoy her time with them since she was less stressed working at home and being able to flex her work hours.

Another mom looks forward to continuing an improved relationship with her kids after the pandemic:

> So I do think long-term impact, I 100% believe that my relationship with my kids will be improved…This new role and being able to work remotely has just changed the relationship, where my kids see me more. I get to interact with them more, and so that bond has very much improved. I wouldn't want to go back into a situation where I only see them a few hours in the evening again, which is what it was pre-pandemic. (Norman, Carly)

One mom, who had swapped lead parent roles with her husband at the start of the pandemic, thinks that the switch will result in more long-term equality in their household:

> I feel like when Maxwell goes back to work, that our duties will probably shift more to 50/50 again, and that some of the things that he didn't think about pre-COVID – that's he's in charge of now that he's the stay-at-home parent – I think I'll get a little more help when the roles shift again. I think that our perspectives about different things have changed a lot. So I think that'll…continue on and …shape our future. (Hartley, Claire)

DISCUSSION

The pandemic was a major economically and socially disruptive event, with the potential to increase or decrease gender inequality. Whether moms and/or dads are doing more or less due to the pandemic depends on the household, and if it's in relation to child caretaking or household chores. It also depends on the demands of mom's job. Findings here show that most mothers in lead-dad households are not trying to protect themselves from "the incursions of unpaid care work" as fathers in traditional lead-mom households tend to do (Dunatchik et al. 2021:10). Rather, breadwinner moms are finding ways to incorporate some care work into their workday, and leaving the bulk of the increased labor due to COVID-19 impacts to dad. A coping strategy used by lead-dad families is that dad did more and mom did more too, in a new version of the second shift.

Many lead dads have taken on more child caretaking labor during the pandemic. This stems from two different causes: first, kid(s) were home more of the time, and two, the usual activities and supports were unavailable to families. Some children who had been attending either preschool or kindergarten were suddenly at home all the time, often with younger siblings. Nine of the ten lead-dad households where dad reported taking on more child caretaking due to the pandemic had at least one child of school age, which meant they took on virtual schooling – in some cases while also providing care for a younger sibling(s) (N=5). Additionally, typical activities were no longer available. Libraries were closed and indoor activities were discouraged. Sports and other activities shut down. Many dad groups, a source of support and entertainment for many lead-dad

families, were on hiatus for a time. Another support that disappeared was child caretaking breaks from grandparents. Some families reported not seeing grandparents during the first several months of the pandemic, when they had previously provided regular child caretaking assistance during the week.

Similar to some of the men in normative households who are doing more child caretaking during the pandemic while working from home without it impacting their working hours (Ruppanner et al. 2021; Kitchener 2020), some working mothers in lead-dad households are also taking on more child caretaking while working the same number of hours. Many mothers in lead-dad households reported more child caretaking during the pandemic (N=9). Most of the moms who reported doing more care work started working at home during the pandemic, making them more accessible to help with child caretaking (N=7). None of these moms cut their work hours as we have seen happen with mothers in normative households during the pandemic. A couple of the mothers shifted a portion of their hours to allow them to either give dad a break or spend more time with their children, working after the children's bedtime.

All of these lead-dad households did experience a blurring between home and work similar to normative households, with some moms incorporating child caretaking into their workday. This ranged from breastfeeding while doing a Zoom presentation, to covering naptime while dad ran household errands to avoid exposing the kids to COVID-19. While moms reported doing more child caretaking than in the past, they were not doing more relative to dad overall.

Other moms were treated as though they were not at home, even when telecommuting from the bedroom or home office. They put in their work hours, uninterrupted for the most part, and joined the family after their workday was complete. Mothers and the demands of their jobs seem to set the tone for which alternative a family will adopt – incorporating mom into family life a little more since she's at home, or waiting until the end of the workday to enjoy a little extra time with mom since there's no commute from the bedroom.

While household labor increased due to having the whole family home all the time, this area is where families tended to make cuts. Four mothers reported spending less time on household chores than they did before the pandemic, while two mothers and two fathers reported spending more time performing domestic duties. Some families made do with the bare minimum in terms of household chores, prioritizing the increased child caretaking time required by the pandemic. In one household which canceled their housekeeping service at the start of the pandemic, dad reported doing only slightly more household chores than in the past – the rest of it just didn't get done. In that household, both mom and dad focused on spending more time on care work rather than household chores. For most households in this study, the allocation of household chores didn't change. When households were overwhelmed by child caretaking and/or work demands, families did the minimum amount of household chores required – but who did it relative to pre-pandemic times did not change.

CONCLUSION

In the face of an exogenous shock like COVID-19, I find that atypical arrangements do remain atypical. There was one household out of 15 where the father indicated that he did less child caretaking after the start of the pandemic than previously – but he still carried the bulk of the child caretaking load in the household. The mother in this family is seeking to telecommute the majority of the time permanently, as it has had such a positive impact on her quality of life.

The families in my study have not changed from a lead-dad household arrangement due to the pandemic; they have simply added mom in to more of their day-to-day lives, when possible. Dad is still acknowledged as responsible for the bulk of the child caretaking, and household chores are what gets cut because of the time pressures all families are experiencing due to the pandemic.

While other research has found that women in heterosexual couples all over the world are performing the extra child caretaking and household labor required due to the pandemic (Mooi-Reci and Risman 2021), that is not the case in lead-dad households. I find that most breadwinner moms are incorporating some care work into their workday, and dads are taking care of the majority of increased child caretaking demands. Household chores are a low priority in lead-dad households, with most families not changing their allocation of domestic labor from what it was pre-pandemic.

In terms of long-term impacts, the pandemic has likely changed the way we work. Whether this is good for women depends on how much their husbands choose to contribute. In lead-dad households, dads continue to support their breadwinner wives' success in the workplace by taking the lead at home.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research suggests other avenues for further study. Future work should include a larger and more racially and economically diverse sample to better capture the various impacts of COVID-19 on different racial and economic groups. This sample includes individuals who have access to the resources and technology required to perform work and schooling at home. Future research should consider how households without access to such resources handled the transition to schooling online, if they had access to work online, and how these resources (or lack of) impacted gendered attitudes and behavior regarding child caretaking and household labor in these households. Following households over a longer-term period would provide insight into whether changes that happened during COVID-19 lasted beyond the pandemic, or if they were a temporary response to an exogeneous shock and lead-dad households reverted to past roles or developed an alternative division of labor as life returns to a new "normal."

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to discover how men and women construct their gender identities when normative gender roles are swapped in heterosexual households. Building on research that has established that one of the primary factors contributing to gender inequality is the inequitable division of household labor and child caretaking between partners, I examined what happens when women are the breadwinner and men are the lead parent. How are gender atypical households different than and similar to gender-normative households? Does the balance of household labor and child caretaking shift to men? What causes lead-dad couples to contravene gender identity norms, and how do they make sense of their roles? How has the pandemic impacted these households differently than traditional households? Ultimately, my purpose within this study was to discover, describe, and understand how women and men construct their gender identities in atypical families.

To answer my research question, I conducted 40 individual interviews with heterosexual couples residing in the same home who had children in the household 5 and under where fathers were identified as the lead parent. I interviewed both members of the couple whenever possible, for several reasons: to ensure each partner had equal time, to reveal discrepancies between partners' understanding of household arrangements, and to encourage honesty in responses. Interviewing couples with these characteristics was important for several reasons. Children five and under require the most parental care and time, thus highlighting the parental labor distribution most clearly. In order to compare how much of the domestic workload each partner was performing, both needed to reside in the same home. I also limited my interview candidates to those couples who both agreed that dad was the lead parent, as I was not interested in households with an equal or unclear division of labor. I limited my sample to heterosexual couples to allow a comparison between fathers and mothers in households where normative gender assumptions were disrupted in some way.

In this final chapter, I synthesize and analyze the data discussed in the previous 4 chapters and apply the theory of "re-doing gender" in a new context – to heterosexual couples in atypical families. Before proceeding, however, I will briefly summarize the analysis of the chapters, identifying their major findings before contextualizing them in the larger frame.

Do Dads do it Differently?

Chapter 3 asks how a lead-father arrangement is dissimilar or similar to what we know about lead-mother arrangements. When a household has adopted a lead-dad arrangement, we don't assume they will emulate normative gender roles in other ways. All lead-dad households viewed dad as the primary parent—at least while mom was at work. However, I found that lead-dad households are bimodal; some dads do-it-all, and some don't (daytime-dads and divide-and-conquer dads). Do-it-all dads cover almost all

household chores and split child caretaking when mom is home from work. Among the dads that don't do it all, there are two main approaches to how this is implemented. Daytime dads do the majority of household chores, and turn the kids over to mom when she gets home from work. Divide-and-conquer dads split everything when mom is home from work: household chores and child caretaking are split, divided, alternated, and/or performed jointly.

Despite the atypical breadwinner/carer arrangement, some households seem to be "doing gender" in traditional ways in certain aspects of their lives. Domestic expectations vary depending on if you're a lead dad or a lead mom, and may follow traditional gender norms. Some tasks appear to be particularly resistant to non-normative gender allocation, such as cognitive labor and yardwork. Moms in both types of lead-dad households still takes on a substantial portion – if not all – of the cognitive labor required to operate a household. Other work has found that child caretaking duties and household chores are performed by the same partner more often in heterosexual couples than is seen in same-sex couples (Goldberg et al. 2012). For example, Goldberg et al. found that the household manager (the partner doing most of the cognitive labor) was usually the primary child caretaker in heterosexual couples, but this association did not appear among same-sex couples in their study. I found that breadwinning moms were doing most of the cognitive labor in lead-dad families, including acting as the household manager, while their partners handled most of the day-to-day caretaking. Additionally, lead dads continue to perform "dad" work, like yard work, rather than exchanging those duties with the breadwinner mom. In normative households, breadwinning fathers also take care of the yardwork. Also, many lead dads have side jobs in addition to their work at home, in some cases even when they don't need the additional income. Finally, moms still have a "second shift" in daytime-dad and divide-and-conquer dad households – only in do-it-all dad households does mom get a break when she gets home from work. We see that despite the atypical breadwinner/carer roles, other duties remain traditionally gendered in some of the families in my sample.

The households that are rewriting gender roles to the greatest extent are the do-it-all dad households. In these households, dad takes care of almost all household chores in addition to caring for the kids in order to free mom up for quality time with the kids when she is at home. Do-it-all dads don't check out once mom arrives home; instead, they participate jointly with her in the evening routine, and then they cover the overnight shift. However, even among these do-it-all dads who take care of nearly everything in the domestic sphere, many still rely on mom to carry part of the cognitive load at home.

This study establishes that there is no single approach to how lead-dad households divide child caretaking and household labor. The household arrangement that likely frees mom up the most to dedicate time to her job is the do-it-all dad type. While dad may be the lead parent in the other types of households, mom still retains substantial responsibility for the domestic sphere – children and/or chores.

Choice or Circumstances?

Chapter 4 examines what causes couples to choose a lead-father household arrangement. All three household types (do-it-all, daytime, and divide-and-conquer) varied in which motivating factors were important in their decision to adopt a lead-dad household, and what combination of factors mattered the most to them. Many couples in my sample reaffirmed the motivating factors previously identified in the literature (economic, career considerations, and preference for an at-home parent). However, some new factors emerged in this study.

First, most couples do mention economic or financial considerations – but it is not the main deciding factor. I find that couples consider multiple factors, and if they can make the financial piece work, that eliminates the final barrier. Rather than being a motivating factor, it is a practical matter which must be considered once a couple has decided they want to adopt a lead-dad household arrangement. Interestingly, a significant number (24%) of households didn't mention finances as a deciding factor at all, one of which had the lowest income in the sample (<$40,000). For some couples other considerations override the financial piece, and this is not limited to households that are upper-middle class.

Second, while almost all of the households in my sample preferred an at-home parent (95%), most of the moms (65%) were not interested in doing that work themselves. Some of these mothers loved their jobs, while others realized they were not suited to being an at-home or lead parent. Regardless of the reason, these mothers were very clear – and for some, vehement – about not wanting to be the lead parent themselves. While husbands and wives both expressed a strong desire to have an at-home parent, men were surprisingly open to taking on that role themselves. In many cases the husband offered to become a lead-dad or suggested this option to their wives. This is an interesting pairing of what could be perceived as traditional values (wanting a parent at home) with non-traditional implementation (dad becoming the lead-parent). Does this indicate that people with traditional beliefs are willing to adopt a broader variety of household arrangements to support those ideals, or does it suggest that traditionalism is becoming less rigid and more open-minded?

Finally, little previous research has examined the detriments of paid childcare (health, safety, attention) and the advantages of having a lead parent at home (quality of life, values, and time) as motivating considerations. However, these reasons came up frequently among this group of respondents as key deciding factors which, in varying combinations, contributed to their decision to adopt a lead-dad household arrangement. These findings raise the question of how these motivating factors – and in what combinations – are the same and different for households that have a lead-mom arrangement.

Making Sense of Non-Traditional Roles

Chapter 5 considers how lead-dad household couples explain why they've adopted these non-normative roles. The way that couples explain why they've adopted these non-normative gender roles vary. For some couples, they are actively undoing gender. For others, they are simply doing gender in traditional ways within a new framework. I found that the ways that lead-dad household couples explain why they've adopted these non-normative roles include aspects of both doing and undoing gender.

Overall, couples frequently made sense of their atypical roles in the household by framing it as suiting their personalities. Personality appears to provide an acceptable rationale for violating traditional gender norms. The households where dads and/or moms expressed supportive spouse sentiments when explaining why they have adopted these non-normative roles are embracing their atypical gender roles. Couples who view their contributions at home as essentially equal are "doing gender." Other research on breadwinner fathers with stay-at-home mothers finds that the mothers in these households usually take care of all child caretaking and household chores to support dad's work (Kaufman 2013).

The two ideological approaches couples use to explain why they've adopted these non-normative gender roles are split in terms of doing or undoing gender. The new traditionalism orientation emphasizes the lead-dad arrangement's similarity to the traditional lead-mom family model. These couples are doing gender. However, the households with a progressive orientation often are undoing gender – in some cases, intentionally and with relish. They see disrupting gender norms and breaking stereotypes as part of their job as lead parent. For some couples, they have always had a non-traditional relationship in terms of the work and domestic orientations of each partner. Many of these households don't conform to the SNAF model in a variety of ways, and this is simply one more aspect of how they are different.

Most of the dads in my sample talked about how they got to the point of embracing their "dad" identity. For many, this was a process that occurred over time, often with some difficulty. Even when dad had voluntarily chosen this role, he still struggled with shifting his identity from his job to his "vocation as a parent" (Parri, Leon). These dads are undoing gender as they adopt a new "dad" identity. Alternatively, this study identified a new developing discourse where men are identifying as "more than just a dad." These couples focus on dad's side work, even when it doesn't bring in money or isn't his major focus of time or attention – taking care of the kids is. They discuss how what he does is different from lead moms, or how he doesn't fit the stereotypes of what a lead dad looks like. These respondents are clear in their desire to differentiate dad from ideas about lead moms and their associated gender role and responsibilities.

For breadwinning moms, the gender identity shift is not as great. Among women with children under 18 in the United States today, 71% are part of the workforce (Zessoules et al. 2018). Moving into the role of primary family breadwinner is the bigger change for these women. Some breadwinning mothers continue to view themselves as in

charge at home, despite their absence while working – they are the planners/organizers, while their partner performs the day-to-day implementation. Other mothers in this project are undoing gender, focusing on their work and allowing dad to take charge of the home front. Again, some moms are doing gender, while others are busy undoing gender.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Atypical Families

Chapter 6 explores if COVID-19 has impacted household roles in families with lead fathers. In the face of major economic and socially disruptive events, gender equality has the potential to increase or decrease. Comparing how lead-dad households have handled the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to normative households is revealing. Research has found that fathers in traditional lead-mom households protect themselves from care work (Dunatchik et al. 2021). During the pandemic an unequal division of labor has been reinforced, with moms carrying the majority of increased child caretaking and virtual schooling required by stay-at-home orders (Mooi-Reci and Risman 2021).

The findings here also show a change in the level of involvement of mom in day-to-day child caretaking in lead-dad households. However, moms were not taking on the majority of increased child caretaking required during the pandemic in lead-dad households; rather, I found that most breadwinner moms were incorporating some child caretaking work into their workdays if they were able to (i.e., working from home). This ranged from covering naptime so dad could run some household errands without exposing the kids to COVID, to breastfeeding during Zoom presentations. There were also some mothers that were entirely absent from the family during their workdays. These mothers either telecommuted from the back bedroom and emerged once their workday was over, or physically were gone as they had jobs that could not be performed remotely (i.e., doctors).

Dads were covering the majority of increased child caretaking time and responsibilities in these lead-dad households. While mom and dad were both doing more child caretaking than in the past, mom was not doing more relative to dad overall. None of the families in my sample changed their family arrangement from a lead-dad household due to the pandemic.

Household chores became a low priority in lead-dad households, with most families not changing their division of who was responsible for what housework from pre-pandemic times. Some households did cancel their housekeeping services for a time during the pandemic, and in these cases it was generally expected that dad would pick up the additional housework. When dads were maxed out, only essential household chores got done. Housework was the area that got neglected when couples were stretched thin due to the pandemic.

Overall, I found that most of the increased child caretaking work in lead-dad households during the pandemic was performed by dad, unlike in traditional lead-mom households. The additional domestic labor that was required due to the family being home all the time and/or canceling housekeeping services was done minimally or not at all. In most households, neither mom nor dad did domestic chores consistently.

The mothers in lead-dad households who were able to work remotely and be more involved in the day-to-day lives of their children on their own terms experienced less work/family conflict. However, some moms felt the crunch at work and at home, similar to traditional lead-mom households. But instead of reducing their work hours or quitting their jobs, these overwhelmed moms decreased their housework contributions and/or cut out time to themselves.

These findings raise questions about how families will deal with other disruptions in the future. Many breadwinning mothers are seeking more work/family balance in their lives, even if they don't want to be the lead parent. Future disruptions impacting the family could include an increase in remote work options. Could this help working mothers achieve more work/family balance? Or will it be the new mommy track, taken up by working mothers but not working fathers?

Doing, Undoing, or Redoing?

Thinking about how lead-dad households are similar and different than traditional lead-mom households raises the question of whether these couples are doing – or undoing – gender. Are they actively challenging gender norms and changing conventional gender roles? Are circumstances forcing couples to make this practical exception to their otherwise traditional gender roles? Or are these households enacting a new way of doing gender? I conclude that lead-dad household arrangements are doing all of the above – some of them are doing gender, some are undoing gender, and some may be mapping their own course and re-doing gender.

Do-it-all dad households provide breadwinner moms with the most infrastructure to succeed at work among the three categories of lead-dad households. These dads consider running the household to be part of their job; not only do they take care of the kids, but they also do the majority of household chores. This is a deliberate choice, intended to free mom up to enjoy the kids when she's home. These do-it-all dads tend to partner with their spouse to complete the child caretaking routines together after her workday ends. Do-it-all dad households are full-service; these dads take on a similar level of domestic responsibility as mothers do in normative households. We could consider these couples as "undoing gender," since normative gender roles and responsibilities have essentially been swapped. This is aligned with Pinho and Gaunt's (2021) finding that "role-reversed" couples are actually undoing gender because they are using family role (breadwinner, caregiver) rather than gender norms to assign family work.

Daytime-dad households occupy the middle ground, with dad watching the kids while mom is at work, dad also completing the majority of household chores, and mom taking over with the kids when she is home. In these households dad does a lot, but the kids and some chores are handed over to mom when she arrives home. This allows moms to spend time with their kids, but also prevents her from getting a break – the second shift endures. Are these households doing gender or are they undoing gender? Perhaps they are doing both: as Risman (2009) observes, "It is perhaps often the case that at the same moment people are undoing some aspects of gender and doing others."

Some might consider the divide-and-conquer dad households the most gender-traditional of the typologies. While dad watches the kids when mom is at work, mom and dad split the chores and child caretaking whenever mom is not working. In this type of household arrangement, moms take on a substantial portion of domestic responsibility in addition to being the family breadwinner. This could be an effort at "gender deviance neutralization" from one or both partners (Bittman et al. 2003). This can happen when mom either holds traditional beliefs, or performs domestic labor to enact her femininity and compensate for being the (masculine) breadwinner (Goldberg 2013). This can also occur if dad has traditional beliefs, or if he limits the amount of housework he is willing to perform while mom is at work to "assert his masculinity" (Goldberg 2013:86). These divide-and-conquer households could also be viewed as "doing gender" because being the breadwinner and out of the house for a substantial part of each workday does not free mom from gendered expectations about how involved she should be at home. This aligns with Chesley's work which finds that intensive mothering expectations and male breadwinning ideals can result in lead-dad households that are actually "doing gender," having a (somewhat) traditional division of labor despite men's increased child caretaking (2011). Certainly, the overall workload is unlikely to be distributed evenly in these households when one party – mom – never get a break.

Lead-dad households clearly represent a range of gender norms and expectations. Even lead-dad households that see themselves or endeavor to portray more traditional values overall have difficulty evading disclosure entirely of their atypical arrangement. However, I did find that some couples avoided bringing up their atypical arrangement in certain settings such as religious-based gatherings, seemingly to avoid calling attention to their non-normative roles. One couple, who attended (and hosted) multiple church-sponsored events every week, said most people at church aren't aware that the husband is the lead parent. The wife stated, "When I'm in that community, we don't talk about it that much" (Cox, Fay).

Interestingly, even with this atypical arrangement in common, we see that there is a wide divergence in how couples view and perform their gender roles. There is no unified set of identities enacted by atypical couples. These findings support a change of perspective aligned with Goldberg (2013), who argues that "… (dividing up tasks as 'feminine' and 'masculine' on the basis of who has historically performed such tasks) merely serves to reify and perpetuate gendered meanings associated with housework, as well as binary conceptualizations of gender and heteronormativity more broadly" (2013:95; Kelly and Hauck 2015). Kelly and Hauck argue that queer couples' division of labor can be seen as "an opportunity…to redo gender together" (2015:460). They define re-doing gender as "challenging normative gender roles and creating alternatives for how gender shapes social life" (Kelly and Hauck 2015:460). Perhaps lead-dad households aren't solely doing or undoing gender, but instead offer a similar opportunity to "redo gender together." These households are violating normative gender roles and are in an ideal position to create alternative visions for the future. With the Covid-19 pandemic incurring permanent changes in how – and where – some people work, and clouding the

boundaries between personal and professional lives, lead-dad households have the opportunity to provide a model of a new way to organize our personal and professional lives, and a chance to see what re-doing gender could look like for heterosexual couples.

This study examines how gender identity is developed in lieu of the conventional markers, such as men and women performing normative breadwinner and caretaker roles, used by people personally and recognized by society in general. Kelly and Hauck (2015) propose that it would be useful to consider heterosexual couples division of domestic responsibilities "with a 'queer' eye" (p. 461). The present study endeavors to do that with a unique subset of heterosexual families – those with lead-parent dads. This project attempts to identify under what conditions lead-dad families employ practices which disrupt the gender order beyond simply having a female breadwinner with a lead parent who is male.

LIMITATIONS

There are some possible limitations to this project that future research should address. First, there may be bias in those who elected to participate in this project. While I employed snowball-sampling and attempted to interview couples from a variety of backgrounds, unfortunately families with fathers acting as lead parents (and who agreed to participate in this study) do not reflect a diverse cross-section of race and class intersections. These are areas of particular interest relating to the gender division of household labor, but I had difficulty recruiting many participants of color and working-class families. The sample is characterized by an overrepresentation of White, middle and upper-class, well-educated people, resulting in the representation of a limited perspective and experience of lead-dad households. This is a significant area of interest for future research to explore in order to better understand the experiences of lead-dad households at various social locations. Having a majority White sample does not allow for an analysis of differences between lead-dad households due to race and class differences.

Second, another possible limitation is that the sample does not include same-sex partners. For this project I was particularly interested in the comparison between cisgender mothers and cisgender fathers in households where traditional gender assumptions were disrupted. This particular model of non-traditional households (lead dad) allowed insights into how they are navigating family formation scripts as lead-dad couples challenge many heteronormative gender identity assumptions.

Third, a potential limitation of the study is that it analyzes self-reported information, which may produce results different from what participants actually do in situations. As Carrington (1999) noted in his ethnographic study of same-sex couples' division of housework, participants often asserted that the division was more equal than what he observed. He argued that some of the participants appeared to be engaging in gender identity work by either minimizing or exaggerating one partner's housework contributions (depending on if they were gay or lesbian couples), narratively "doing gender." Other research has found that participants sometimes overestimate their own

domestic contributions and underestimate their partners (Pinho and Gaunt 2021; Lee and Waite 2005).

Fourth, another possible limitation pertains to my personal characteristics. As a female, male participants might have felt less comfortable sharing accurate aspects of their domestic situation with me versus a fellow male, particularly if the situation is clearly unequal. Additionally, female participants may have endeavored to portray a more egalitarian division of labor than exists due to a perceived agenda. Additionally, as a White person, certain participants may have been more forthcoming with someone from a similar ethnic or racial background. However, phone interviews may have helped mitigate this factor.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study have several implications for future research. Future research should include couples from a range of races and ethnicities and a variety of class intersections to get a fuller picture of how lead-dad households vary for diverse groups in different settings. For example, less educated couples from a lower socioeconomic background likely are more restricted in their options, such as not being able to afford child caretaking support or to hire house cleaning help. Also, are families of color more or less able to push back against normative ideas about masculinity and femininity?

Additionally, future research should incorporate ethnographic observations or time use diaries to gain a more accurate representation of the time and distribution of domestic chores and child caretaking duties compared to what is reported. Also, future research should endeavor to include a research partnership which includes both male and female researchers of various races and/or ethnicities to allow for increased perceived relatability by respondents.

Finally, a few of the participants in this sample had repartnered and were in a second marriage. One participant specifically mentioned that a cause of her divorce was her ex-husband's unwillingness to be an equal partner at home. Two male participants had children from previous relationships whom they had not been the lead parent for. While this is not an area that I examined within the scope of this project, other research considers the impact of re-partnering and the potential partner market on the household division of labor (Ophir 2021; Stauder and Rohlke 2022). Future research should consider the impact of divorce and repartnering on the development of a lead-dad household arrangement.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Household Childcare Arrangements

- Can you tell me about your family?
    - Family make-up (number, age, gender of kids)
    - Job title/occupation (for both partners, if applicable)

PRE-COVID

- Walk me through a typical WEEKDAY (pre-COVID), focusing particularly on child caretaking.

    - *Probe on: Physical labor*
        - Dressing
        - Cooking / feeding / meal preparation
        - Grocery shopping (Who makes list? Does meal planning?)
        - Pick up and drop off duties (to preschool, day care)
        - Sports, lessons (music, language, etc.), practices
        - Homework (if applicable)
        - Bathing
        - Bedtime (teeth brushing, stories, etc.)
        - Overnight coverage (if kid(s) wake up)
        - House cleaning
        - Laundry
        - Yard work

    - *Probe on: Cognitive labor*
        - Sets schedules (social, sleep, etc.)
        - Purchases clothes and toys, books, etc. (and who notices they're needed)
        - Purchases gifts (for kids, family, friends)
        - Makes social arrangements and attends events (playdates, parties, etc.)
        - Planning & attending sports, music, language lessons
        - Doctor/dentist appointments – scheduling and attending
        - Daycare (or other childcare help) arrangements
        - Coordinates paid help (housekeeper, gardener, etc.)
        - Paying bills / finances
        - Plans and makes arrangements for vacations

- How else do you spend a typical WEEKDAY? (working for pay, leisure activities, other?)

- What does a typical SATURDAY look like at your house?
- Can you describe how you and your partner divide care work?
    - Which aspects/duties do you like and why?
    - Which aspects/duties do you hate and why?

- Do you get help from others (paid or unpaid) with household chores (housekeeper, gardener, etc.) and/or child care (campus club, babysitter, relatives, etc.).

- Would you call yourself or your spouse more of the "household manager" (who keeps things running/plans/organizes household)?

DURING COVID: CHANGES

- Since COVID-19, how are you and your partner dividing up duties differently? How have things changed?
    - *Probe on:*
        - Paid work (schedule, amount, (childcare) breaks, commute, etc.)
        - Housework (doing more/less, different things)
        - Child caretaking (more/less, schedule, spouse's involvement level)

- How has your typical schedule changed since COVID on weekdays? On Saturdays?

- What has the impact of COVID-19 been on your workload overall? (at home and/or at work). [Where has it shifted?]

- How do you feel about these changes?

- What do you think the long-term impacts of these changes might be?

Conceptions of Gender/Family

- What would be the ideal child caretaking arrangement from your perspective?

- How do you feel about (being/having your partner be) the lead parent?
    - How happy are you with your current arrangement?
    - How happy do you think your spouse is?

- Why have you and your partner organized child caretaking duties in the way that you have in your family?
    - How did you come to have these roles?
    - What was lead parent's previous job/line of work?

- Have you ever had different child caretaking role responsibilities?
    - If yes, when? Why did they change?
    - What is the difference between the 2 experiences?

- How do you see your current arrangement changing in the future?

- What did you think your family's parenting arrangement would be before you had kids?
    - How is this similar/different from current arrangement?

- What was your upbringing in terms of how your parents organized child caretaking?
    - How do you think this influenced your own family decisions?

Gender Identity and Comparison Referents

- What does being a "good" mother and "good" father look like to you?
    - What do you think other people think is "good" mothering/fathering?
        - How do you think you compare to this?
        - What about your spouse?

- Who do you compare you and your spouse to in terms of household arrangements and how things are divided?

- When thinking about other families and their child caretaking DOL, who do you look up to and why?
    - Who do you not want to be like and why?

- What do you have in common with other mothers/fathers?
    - What do you think makes you different than other mothers/fathers?

- Outside of parenting, what other things are important to you?
    - How do these things fit or conflict with your parenting roles?
    - In what ways do you experience work/family conflict?

- When you are with your friends, what do you talk about?

- Does parenting come up? Can you give an example?

Community Reception

- What is your level of involvement with your extended family?

- What community groups are you involved with (i.e., church, sports, political, etc.)?

- How do you like to spend your free time?
- How do you think your child caretaking role may influence your interactions with other people?
  - Does it affect your friendships and other personal relationships?

- When talking with others, how do you describe your role in the household?
  - How do you define your role?

- What do other people in your life think about your family's parenting division of labor?
  - Can you provide an example(s) of what makes you think this?

- Do you receive feedback or responses from people that indicate you are different from "typical" mothers/fathers?
  - If yes, can you provide an example?

- Do you think there's any difference in how people perceive you based on your race or ethnicity?
  - If yes, in what way(s)?

Disclosure

- Do you think that it is easy for others to identify your family's child caretaking arrangements?
  - Why or why not?

- Are there things that make it difficult to disclose your household's child caretaking division of labor with your family and community (i.e., ethnic, racial, religious, other)?
  - If yes, what are they and why?

- Is there anything I haven't asked about that you'd like to add?

Demographic Questions

- Birth year

- Education level
- Job title (if applicable)
- Hours currently worked weekly (for pay)
- Household Income
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion / religious affiliation
    - Frequency of church/religious involvement (x/weekly)
- Where you currently live (City/State)?
- Class origin when growing up (parents' general class – income, education, occupation)?