HR & LEADERSHIP
WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Part time Working Fathers and the 'Fatherhood Forfeit'

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Introduction

- **My role at Plymouth University**

- Mother is always the primary contact regardless of working hours of parents

- "what the XXXX is your Mrs doing so much you have to keep sloping off to get the girls?"

- "you need to man up and tell Jas to get her arse home"

Family Life has changed.....

▶ Decline of the social norm of male breadwinner and a full time female homemaker, rise of female breadwinner

▶ Stay at home dad rates are the highest since records began

▶ Changing role of fathers- rise of 'involved fathers'

▶ (Census data , 2010, Gornick and Meyers, 2003, Mason,2009 Probert, 2005,OECD, 2011, ONS,2013)

So then, how come …..

➤ 11% of fathers work part time - compared to 42% mothers (ONS,2015)
The main responsibility for children is still considered to be held by women regardless of working hours

What is the happening with the dads?

▶ Views are formed- in and outside of the workplace on the basis of whether actions violate expectations of what behaviours are required

▶ Studies in the USA with students have found fathers who are actively involved in caregiving, contradicting stereotypical gender norms, suffer negative consequences in the workplace
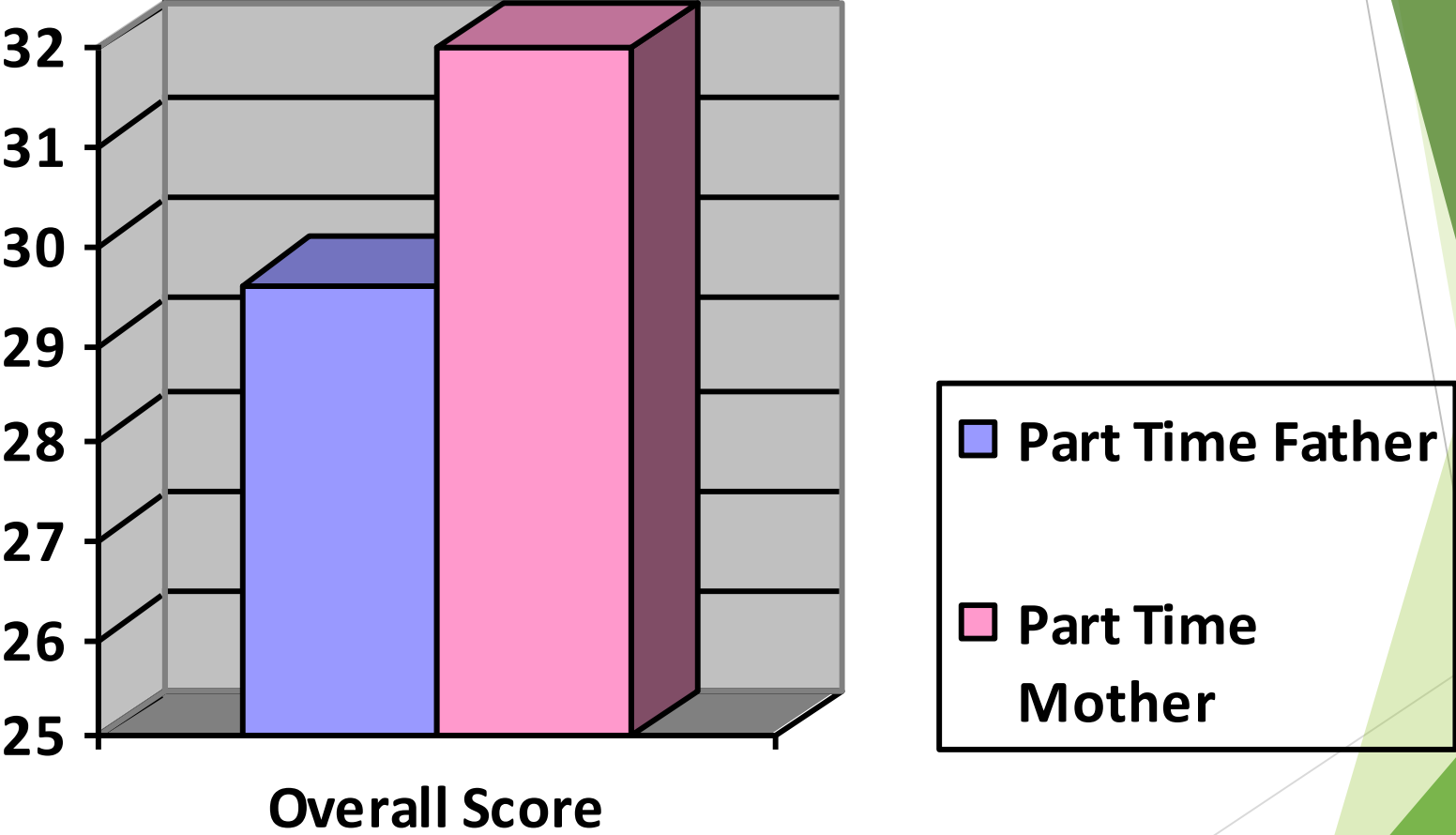
(Berdahl and Moon,2013, Correll et al, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002 Fuegen et al, 2004, Heilman and Okimoto, 2008) .

My Research

▶ What happens in the workplace when parental gender norms are challenged?

▶ For fathers who work or want to work part time will a fatherhood forfeit emerge?
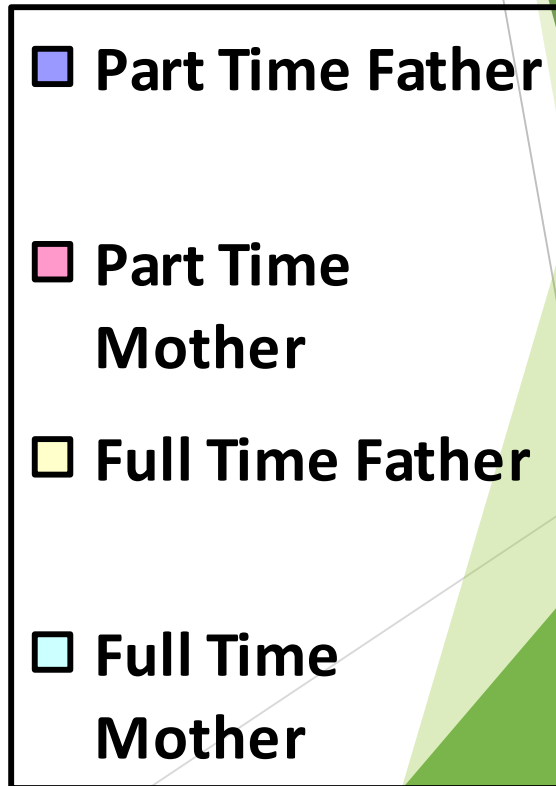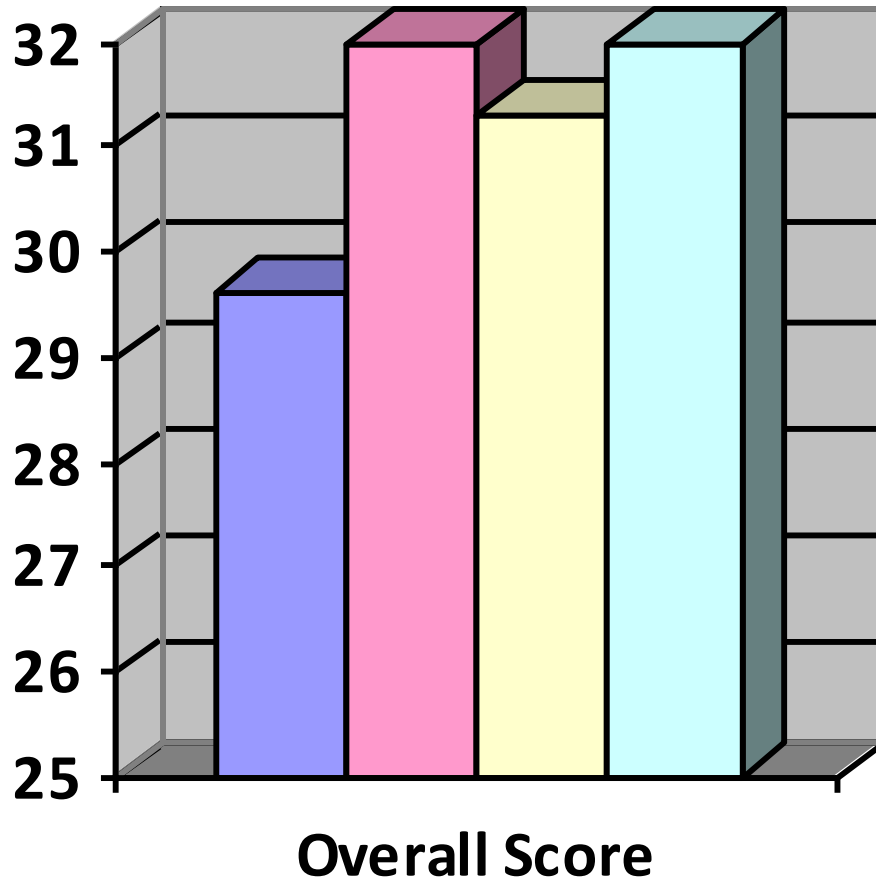
▶ In the UK

▶ Manager and Parents as participants

What did I do?

▶ Online Survey (82 managers)- scoring fictitious applicants -equal apart from parental status   (mother/father/ full time/part time)- based on 'perceived competence', 'workplace commitment', 'hireability', 'promotability'

▶ Focus Group- 5 focus groups, (charity, manufacturing, healthcare and defence)- same task as above but in a group

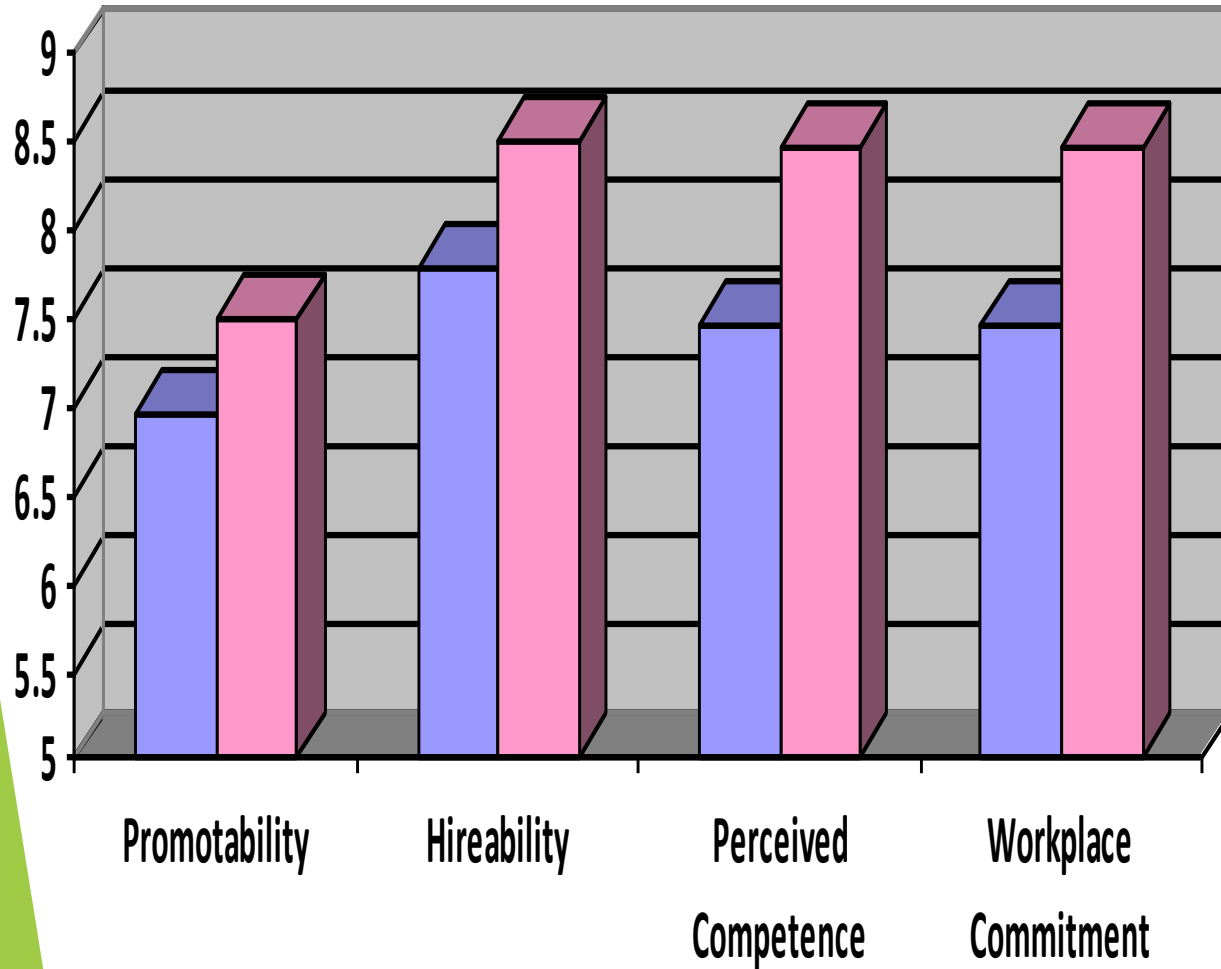▶ Semi- Structured Interviews-31 Participants- fathers, mothers and managers

Survey Results – Part time Role

Survey Results – Compared

Survey Results – Part time Role in Detail

Interviews – Key Themes

▶Think Child Think Mum

▶Fathers get less Support

▶Social Mistreatment

Fatherhood Forfeits- Think-Child- Think Mum

▶ **Where is Mum?**

"I was often asked 'Where's Jacob's mother?' things like that. And although they weren't barbed in any way, I could tell that they were kind of meant to be… they were just supposedly innocent questions, but I think that there was a bit more of a point to them." (Part time Working Dad)

▶ **Deviance**

"Generally the response is one of surprise, I feel like I am encroaching on someone else's territory, on passport forms the mothers comes first … this is just another one of the things.. when I say I am the main one at home for the kids people will quickly move over the subject, it is such an unusual thing for people to understand….I see the mums bring kids to school.. it is natural …I suppose I feel a fraud at times.. I have felt it quite profoundly" (SAH Dad)

Fatherhood Forfeits-
Fathers Get Less Support than Mothers

▶ **Caregiving Fathers have less**

"a father would be looked at differently than a Mum …. it is easier perhaps for people to think of the mum taking time off than the Dad and they would be more supportive" (Manager)

▶ **Support for caregiving Fathers is Subject to Negotiation (+ contingent on circumstances)**

"(fathers are) almost waiting to be given permission…..I get the feeling that (for mothers) it's not a negotiation; it's just "we've got to go"(fathers) don't expect to be let off as easily… I think the men I work with seem to make more of a story about it." (Manager)

Fatherhood Forfeit-
Social Mistreatment

► *Viewed with suspicion-*

"They (part time working fathers) are viewed with a great deal more suspicion than women working part time... I think this would affect recruitment as I expect at least one person on the panel would view it as suspicious and not normal" (Manager)

► *Mockery-*

"There would be a lot of piss taking.. 'you are a bit of a wuss', 'she rules the roost , 'wears the trousers' that sort of thing, especially if it was due to childcare, there would be a lot of 'you are not a real man', 'what is wrong with your wife'.. it would be gentle but it would definitely occur"

Fatherhood Forfeit- Social Mistreatment

▶ *Caregiving Fathers are Idle*

"There are few of them (Part Time/Stay at home dads) at my kids school, I know it works for some families ... but every time I see them I just think, go to work- lazy bastard- it wouldn't work for my house." (Full time Working Mum)

" someone did say once "the thing is, you are just a bum you just look after your kids and you do nothing else...I always think they don't think I am a capable of doing a days work" (SAH Dad)

▶ *Negative Judgement*

"there there little boy you are a dad who looks after your kids, you are not a proper person, not an upstanding citizen"

Fatherhood Forfeit- Social Mistreatment

▶ *Friendship/Exclusion -*

"He didn't really mix with very many other fathers…….there was a big group of fathers that made really good friends with each other and he's not one of them… he could have been but they've never invited him.." (Full Time working mum about her SAH Partner)

"I felt excluded ….its really difficult to pinpoint how much is my fault, I did withdraw a little, I felt self conscious …. I see women forming groups but I don't get invited.., I have been very isolated by it … I have never felt legitimate to be part of it" (SAH Dad)

Key Findings

➢ The existence of a 'Fatherhood Forfeit' for fathers who are applying for a part time position- part time fathers consistently scoring lower

➢ The existence of a 'Fatherhood Forfeit' in the workplace and more widely - fathers given less support, face social mistreatment, considered to be secondary parents

What can we do?

▶ Consider where these stereotypes come from and how to mitigate them

▶ Consider the language we use- often the comments are not intended to cause offence

▶ Role Modelling

▶ Consider the way in which our organisations respond to parents in the workplace- policy change?

KEEP CALM AND DON'T CRY LIKE A GIRL

Cry Baby Bunting
Daddy's gone a-hunting
Gone to fetch a
rabbit skin
To wrap the
Baby Bunting in
Cry Baby Bunting

Strong like Daddy

Any questions?

- Keep in Contact –always great to hear your views

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- Twitter- @plymunihr

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