

Equalizer. Mobile App.

Change the Sheets, Change the World

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High Level Abstraction

An app that helps new fathers understand and achieve equally shared parenting.

Background

a. DISCOVERY PHASE: Literature and resources related to the issue

- [6 facts about American fathers](#)

“In 2015, fathers reported spending, on average, **seven** hours a week on child care – almost triple the time they provided back in 1965. And fathers put in about **nine** hours a week on household chores in 2015, up from four hours in 1965. By comparison, mothers spent an average of about **15** hours a week on child care and **18** hours a week on housework in 2015.

- [Gender Equity: It's Not Just a Women's Issue](#). “To understand the issues surrounding gender equity we first have to understand the dynamics of power within political and financial circles that favor men. While the share of women in Congress in 2017 reached an all-time high, women still hold only 104 seats—just 19% of the total population of congress, while men hold 81%. Furthermore, 94% of the CEOs at Fortune 500 companies are male and perhaps more striking, there are fewer women of any name running large companies than there are men named ‘John’ running companies.

Men are visible in the world of politics and business but the majority are absent in the fight to tear down long-held social norms that perpetuate the continuing cycle of gender inequity. Most of the deeply embedded social norms, traditions, and attitudes, upheld by men, are done so unwittingly. Many men don't see or understand the issues surrounding gender equity and why would they? Men are born and grow to adulthood inside of a global culture that places a higher value on aggression, power, and strength, than it does on showing vulnerability and cultivating awareness.

Experts like Michael Kimmel and others have discussed what's been described as the “Man Box”—a term researchers use to paint a picture of the dominant forms of American masculinity. Rigid sets of expectations, behaviors and perceptions of what it means to be ‘manly’ exist within this metaphorical box, and serve to marginalize men who don't fit the stereotype of what we perceive as being “real men.”

- [Why Women Still Can't Have It All](#) - “Going forward, women would do well to frame work-family balance in terms of the broader social and economic issues that affect both women and men. After all, we have a new generation of young men who have been raised by full-time working

mothers. Let us presume, as I do with my sons, that they will understand “supporting their families” to mean more than earning money.”

- [Most Americans Still Think Women Should Do The Bulk Of The Housework](#)

- “Most research on housework suggests that couples divide housework along different axes; for example, lower-earning partners do more housework than higher-earning partners,” said lead author Natasha Quadlin, a doctoral student at Indiana University. **“Instead, our findings suggest that [gender] is by far the biggest determinant of Americans’ attitudes toward housework.”**
- Quadlin’s survey disentangles the possible factors that might be driving this inequity, and shows clearly that **a woman generally does most chores simply because she is a woman**, she explained.
- **This never-ending workday may have harmful effects on a woman’s health**; a recent study found that women who work more than 60 hours a week are at a [higher risk of several chronic diseases](#), while this wasn’t true in men who worked the same amount of time outside the home.
And in addition to the health effects of this “second shift” of work women perform, **other research shows that women are more likely than men to initiate divorce. This could be because they suffer more from deeply unequal [divisions of household chores and childcare](#), even when both partners work.**
- Despite the popular notion that same sex couples distribute chores more evenly (see Sheryl Sandberg’s advice for women to marry other women), **Quadlin’s study shows that when couples have the same gender, they still fall prey to the same norms, using gendered behavior as a proxy for gender itself.**

- “Equally shared parenting is a term used by Francine Deutsch, as social psychologist at Mount Holyoke College.

Equally shared parenting is the purposeful practice of two parents sharing equally in the four domains of childraising, breadwinning, housework, and time for self”. “Equally shared parenting aims to create an equal partnership between parents and an individually balanced life.”
Vachon, Amy; Vachon, Marc. Equally Shared Parenting. Rewriting the Rules for a New Generation of Parents.” Perigee, 2011.

- “The World Economic Forum estimates that, at the current rate of progress, it will take 217 years to realize gender parity. Despite the fact that women are quickly becoming the most educated cohort, their participation in the U.S. workforce has been on the decline since 2014, and it’s expected to continue dropping until 2026. By 2020, we’ll be unable to fill five million jobs in the United States and 40 million jobs worldwide.” Bohnert, 2018.

“Gender equity is really a massive economic opportunity. We can add \$2 trillion to the U.S. GDP and \$12 trillion globally if we actually close the gender gap.” K. Roy, 2018

- Evetts, Julia. "Women and Career: Themes and Issues In Advanced Industrial Societies", Routledge, NYC, 2014.

- McLeod, S. A. (2016). Bandura - social learning theory. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html
 - Behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning.
 - Individuals that are observed are called models. In society, children are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents within the family, characters on children's TV, friends within their peer group and teachers at school. These models provide examples of behavior to observe and imitate, e.g., masculine and feminine, pro and anti-social, etc.

- Cause Lab's Case Study: [Dad Time/Just Beginning program](#). "The main theme from our research was that for fathers who are juggling parenthood, fatherhood program activities, and holding down a job or looking for work, **it can be difficult to squeeze one more thing into their day.**
 Our approach in getting dads to more in-person sessions needed to be simple, straightforward, and timely, so we developed an experience that walks the dad through planning how to get to their next session in a minute and a half or less. Automated photo and audio reminders were also designed to be sent at specific intervals to help boost motivation to get to the next session. In-person sessions were extended through the app to help the dads practice what they had learned earlier in the week. These extensions were automatically displayed in the app at the most appropriate time for each user. **Having the app surface relevant content at just the right time was a key value of the app for the dads."**

b. PREMISE

- i. Fathers might agree that "supporting their families" means more than earning money, but it often doesn't come through in practice. There's a gap between agreeing with an abstract idea and actually doing something. When you've been conditioned your whole life under a different set of expectations, it can be difficult to shift your thinking to produce a different type of action.
- ii. Fathers feel they are too busy with work-related worries to significantly participate in childcare and chores.
- iii. Mothers who work the same amount as the father end up pulling "double shifts" because they are expected to fulfill household/childcare duties as well.
- iv. This often leads to negative health effects and higher rates of marriage dissatisfaction / divorce initiated by women.

c. GOALS

- i. Give new fathers concrete steps and tools to challenge their social conditioning and create an equal partnership in “the four domains of childraising, breadwinning, housework, and time for self” (Vachon, 2011).
- ii. Facilitate critical thinking about and attitude change towards gender equality, parenting, invisible work, and their consequences.
- iii. Lead to an equal distribution of work inside and outside the home.

d. USE CASE

- i. Dads would be guided to download and start using the app as part of a workshop, talk or bootcamp for new dads. Before using the app, dads receive an in-person session about the challenges and inequalities moms face, and why it's important to change the pattern.
 - Potential partners:
 - [Third Path Institute](#)
 - [Denver Health Program for New Dads](#)
 - [LOS PADRES/LAS MADRES Program \(Colorado\)](#)
 - [Nurse Partnership Program](#) (Colorado)
 - [National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse](#) (NRFC)
 - [Bezos Foundation](#) (Vroom)
 - [Child Care Aware](#)
 - [Mi Casa Family Programs](#) (Colorado)
 - Wellness programs at companies
 - Child care centers, especially those that accept infants.
- ii. After their baby is born, the mom repeatedly expresses disappointment about the dad's lack of support. The dad wants to do better but doesn't know how. He hears about the app from a friend and wants to give it a try.

● Product

a. DESIGN: Integrate Learning Strategies

- i. Model cognition, emotion, and behavior at critical decision points—including trial and error, missteps and new efforts, comparative consequences of two opposing decisions—in handling or solving the problem as unfolds.

- ii. Goal-oriented, by introducing a situation to individuals who are striving to satisfy the goal.
- iii. Have personal meaning and relevance for men's own situations, goals, and lives.
- iv. Generative, provocative, prompting users to think about what might happen next and how the problem might be solved.

b. DESIGN: User Interface

- i. Tinder-like swiping for selecting a task
- ii. Fast, efficient, to-the-point navigation
- iii. Simple, neutral theme (black & white, primary colors)

c. NARRATIVE

The name Equalizer responds to the meaning of the word “equalization” “the process of adjusting the balance between frequency components within an electronic signal.”

User downloads Equalizer app and personalizes the app by providing his name (or nickname), his child’s and partner’s names (or nickname) and provides information that will allow a more personalized experience. Then, he can decide to choose what area to focus on or to go straight to take a task from his partner’s hands by swiping left or right. Equalizer praises user’s effort and jabs with humor when they are opting out too many tasks. Playing with the idea of men not being completely aware of who makes things happen around the house, we have called that ethereal figure: The elf. Who in reality is the woman doing most of the work at home.

At the end of the streak, the user can see cool graphs and data visualizations showing the positive impact the little actions in his life make toward achieving gender equality,

d. FEATURES

- i. Onboarding
 - Nickname
 - Mom’s nickname
 - Do you live with her?
 - Do you work from home?
 - Does she work from home?
 - Child’s nickname
 - Child’s DOB
 - Do you have help?
 - Nanny

- Family member
 - Friend
 - What time would you like receive your prompt each day?
- ii. Choose a **Focus Area** for the week. Each day the app prompts you (at the time you specified) to choose an **Action** from that Focus Area. Or -- Each day, choose from a random pool of action items that has one from each focus area. User can pick/change the method during onboarding or in Settings.
- [Focus Areas & Actions](#) (data model)
 - Snooze function: “Remind me in x minutes”
 - Swipe left to “reject” an action item and “send” it to the mother (metaphorically). Swipe up to “accept” the action item. Tap “I’ve done it” when you’re done, and it will add to your “streak”
- iii. Critical Thinking
- At the end of the week, answer a quick question (via text message?) about how did you feel, what changes did you see in your partner/family. Commit to be the “owner” of that task for a period of time or permanently.
- iv. Reinforcement
- Users may see feel-good statistics/graphs in their dashboard with prompts such as: Now you’re part of the 1% of men who clean the toilet, you are the change!