Call Me Daddy: How Professional/Managerial Men Craft and Enact Their Fatherhood Identities

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Historically, the thrust of work-family research has focused on women's challenges with managing their career versus family identities. However, men are now struggling to make sense of what it means to be a father, and meet the conflicting demands of being breadwinners and nurturing fathers. In this study, we investigate how men envision and enact their fatherhood identities through interviews with five first-time expectant fathers and five new fathers who work in professional/managerial careers. We uncover a variety of fatherhood role ideologies, fatherhood identities, and several organizational factors that help or hinder men's ability to successfully combine career and family.

INTRODUCTION

As North American women become progressively invested in their education and careers (Davidson & Burke, 2011), both motherhood and fatherhood roles and identities are shifting (Hofner, Schadler, & Richter, 2011). In fact, while fewer than half of all women with children under the age of 18 were in the paid U.S. workforce in the mid-1970s, more than 70% are employed outside the home today (Galinsky, Aumann, Bond, 2011). In examining the ramifications of this new social context, research has primarily focused on women's struggles to pursue their career goals while meeting the demands of motherhood. This stems, at least in part, from the perspective that engaging in a work role takes time and energy away from the roles of wife and mother (Bielby & Bielby, 1989). However, as women continue to outpace men in the pursuit of graduate degrees and professional careers (Davidson & Burke, 2011), and men become more involved in caring for children and the home (Hofner et al., 2011; Humberd, Ladge & Harrington, 2015), men have also begun to experience competing work and family identities (Allen & Finkelstein, 2014; Winslow, 2005). As the male breadwinner/female homemaker model of family life continues to wane, "good provider" is no longer synonymous with "good father" (Cooper, 2000; Humberd, Ladge, & Harrington, 2015). Contemporary images of fatherhood challenge men to be "superdads," capable of providing both financial stability and nurturing care (Orecklin, Steptoe & Sturmon Dale, 2004). In fact, developing a fatherhood identity is one of three main difficulties men face in becoming fathers (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). Increasing our understanding of how men view themselves before and after the birth of their first child is important because fatherhood identities have significant implications for men's participation in childcare activities (Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). This in turn impacts the level of support that is available to women as they engage in career and family.

In the present study, we examine the shifting meaning of "father" in the North American context, and focus on how professional/managerial men craft and enact their fatherhood identities in this new environment. For a man, becoming a father is an identity-laden transition (Goldberg, 2014) that begins with his partner's pregnancy and continues through labor, delivery and the early stages of living with a new baby for the first time (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). To that end, we investigate how men conduct identity work, defined as, "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), as both expectant and new fathers. Through this research, we seek to build theory about how men develop, revise and enact their fatherhood identities, and to uncover those factors that help, as well as those that hinder, a man's ability to become the kind of father he hopes to be.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Several bodies of literature have laid the foundation for investigating men's identity work through the transition to fatherhood and the relational and structural constraints they face in combining career and family. We begin with a review of research that examines the changing nature and meaning of fatherhood in North America. Next, we discuss the work-family literature that investigates men's experiences as fathers in the workplace. We then review prior research that has focused on men's experience of the transition to fatherhood, and draw on the possible selves and identity work literatures to provide a theoretical framework for the present study.

The Changing Nature and Meaning of "Fatherhood"

In the present social context, the meaning of the role of "father" is shifting. In particular, the movement away from the male breadwinner/female homemaker model of family life in North America has altered the criteria used to evaluate a man's role in the family and in the workplace. On the home front, traditional definitions of fatherhood have centered around the role of "breadwinner" and "disciplinarian" (Eraranta & Moisander, 2011; Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). Whereas being a good provider once equated to being a good father, men are now facing conflicting societal messages about what it means to be both a successful professional and a "good father." According to Humberd and colleagues (2015), fathers have adapted to this cultural shift in one of three ways: maintaining a traditional breadwinner role, developing partially nurturing roles in child caregiving, or becoming what Cooper (2000) refers to as a "superdad," someone who provides both financial security and nurturing care.

Cooper's (2000) typology of masculinities distinguishes between three distinct approaches to fatherhood: traditionals, transitionals, and superdads. She describes traditionals as men who take on primary financial responsibility for their children, tend to limit their nurturing role to play and discipline, and often have stay-at-home spouses. In these kinds of arrangements, the mother assumes the primary responsibility for nurturing, childcare and basic housework, resulting in a marital ideology that fosters traditional female and male roles in the family (Gaunt & Scott, 2014). "Superdads," on the other hand, strive to be successful on both the work and home fronts. These fathers often experience extreme levels of self-sacrifice, primarily in terms of decreased physical activity and social interaction (Cooper, 2000). Their egalitarian views foster a drive to meet the demands at home as well as at work; however, striving to be successful in both their professional and private worlds can leave fathers feeling burnt out and overwhelmed (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009). Scholars have found that men who adopt superdad identities often have partners/spouses who also work outside the home and share in the breadwinner role for the family (Cooper, 2000; Humberd et al., 2015). Finally, Cooper (2000) discovered that men who enact the "transitional" identity tend to be nurturing fathers part of the time, but easily slip into a more traditional role focused on providing financially for their families. Although they desire to be actively involved in raising their children, transitionals feel a strong sense of responsibility for being the breadwinner and often revert to enacting a traditional ideology that conflicts with their egalitarian beliefs (Cooper, 2000). These men generally struggle to find a balance between work and home.

Combining Career and Family: Competing Identities

In 1985, Greenhaus and Beutell brought the concept of work-family conflict to the forefront of scholarly attention. In fact, the perspective that work and family roles are inherently conflicting dominated the work-family literature for nearly two decades (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). While scholars have argued that both men and women who pursue careers and have families are likely to experience work-family conflict (Ladge, Humberd, Baskerville Watkins & Harrington, 2015), researchers have primarily focused on women. Scholars who do study men's experience of combining career and family have found that many of today's fathers are taking a more active role in care of the children and the home. However, those fathers who do actively nurture their children are at risk of being seen as a "superhero" in the eyes of their female peers while simultaneously feeling overtly feminized and separate from their male peers (Eraranta & Moisander, 2011; Hofner, Schadler, & Richter, 2011). These men report feeling lonely, isolated and confused by the conflicting feedback they receive from their peers, presumably due to the fact that masculinity and fatherhood continue to be linked to the breadwinner role (Burnett, Gatrell, Cooper, & Sparrow, 2013). In fact, fathers who take extended paternity leaves often experience social isolation and pressure to return to work by the males in their lives, including fathers, siblings, friends and coworkers (Burnett et al., 2013). This external pressure to adhere to a traditional sense of masculinity results in an internal conflict in which new fathers struggle to maintain a "masculine" pre-father identity, such as worker or husband, while attempting to incorporate a new fatherhood identity (Habib & Lancaster, 2010).

Not surprisingly, the perpetuation of gendered expectations often leaves fathers feeling stressed, isolated and/or silenced in the workplace (Burnett et al., 2013; Humberd et al., 2015). For one, men lack social support in their organizations because fatherhood is rarely discussed among male co-workers. This lack of male support has its consequences. For example, Eraranta and Moisander (2011) highlight how conflicts between work and family responsibilities often lead to deep internal struggles when one identity (i.e., father) is neglected in order to fulfill another identity (i.e., worker). Even if a man wishes to express his fatherhood identity at work, he may feel "silenced" in order to maintain his established work identity and avoid compromising his position in the organization (Burnett et al., 2013; Humberd et al., 2015). Superdads tend to mitigate the conflict caused by competing identities by fulfilling the roles of father and worker to the full extent, while in turn neglecting themselves (Cooper, 2000). These men describe giving up former elements of their pre-fatherhood lives such as sleep, physical activity/exercise, friendships, social situations, hobbies and, to some extent, the relationship with their spouse or partner. These men often express the desire to have a support network at their disposal, yet few actually find these connections (Humberd et al., 2015). According to Humberd and her colleagues, this may be attributed to new fathers spending increased time at home in the post-natal period, isolated from the outside world and their peers. This might also be due to men's reluctance to share their fatherhood experiences with each other at work given the risk of being stigmatized if they are perceived as being involved fathers (Ladge et al., 2015).

Although some organizations are making an effort to support working fathers through the provision of flexible schedules and paternity leave, working fathers experience less support than working mothers. Men are now putting many more hours into child care and household chores than in years past, yet they do not feel supported by their organizations in meeting their work and family needs (Hill, 2005). In fact, Aumann, Galinsky and Matos (2011) claim we are witnessing a "new male mystique" in which men feel "the pressure to do it all in order to have it all" (p. 1). That is, today's working fathers find themselves in a context in which women are actively participating in the breadwinner role and expect equal participation from their male partners on the home front. Indeed, men are facing increasing work and family demands yet social and organizational support systems are lacking. Given that working fathers are in need of additional support from their employing organizations, and working mothers need increasing support from their partners/spouses in order to successfully combine career and family, understanding how men craft and enact their fatherhood identities has become increasingly important.

The Transition to Fatherhood

While knowledge is limited regarding the impact that shifting meanings and expectations of fatherhood are having on how men construct their father identities (Ladge et al., 2015), an important foundation for such research has been laid by scholars who study the transition to fatherhood. For example, Genesoni and Tallandini (2009) identified 32 studies conducted between 1989 and 2008 that provide insights into men's psychological experiences during the transition to fatherhood. Through this in-depth literature review, Genesoni and Tallandini discovered that researchers have conceptualized the transition to fatherhood as encompassing three phases: pregnancy, labor/delivery, and the post-natal period. Based on their review, these scholars conclude that men experience a wife's/partner's pregnancy as particularly demanding because it invokes an identity shift from the role of "partner" to the role of "parent." During this phase, men begin to envision themselves as "playmate," "coach," "provider," and "caregiver." However, given the lack of physical interaction with the child during pregnancy, it is not until the labor and delivery phase that the biological transition to fatherhood occurs (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009).

During the post-natal period, the transition to fatherhood comes full circle. Prior to this phase, men have the option to delay the identity transformation process (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009); however, after the birth of the baby, men face putting their envisioned fatherhood identities into practice. Genesoni and Tallandini (2009) discovered that how a man imagines fatherhood both prior to and during pregnancy impacts how he enacts the fatherhood role; for example, men who construct conflict-free visions of themselves as fathers are more likely to engage more directly with their newborns. Scholars have also discovered that fathers tend to make adjustments to their routines and social behaviors during the post-natal period. For example, new fathers spend increased time with other fathers and less time with single or childless friends (Cooper, 2000). This process of accommodating the role of father in their day-to-day lives can be stressful; in fact, many men fear that they will lose social status in the workplace during the post-natal period due to physical and/or mental absence (Baafi, McVeigh, & Williamson, 2001).

How well men adjust to their fatherhood role is strongly influenced by the resources available to them, such as paternity leave and work schedule flexibility; however, men often feel silenced and unable to express and/or act upon the desire to take paternity leave to be at home with new children (Cooper, 2000). In fact, men have reported feeling increased pressure from relatives, co-workers, friends and the media to continue to assume the breadwinner role, even if that is not how they see themselves. The perceived necessity to return to work creates an internal conflict for fathers who wish to play a more involved role at home. In fact, Miller (2010) found that all of the men in her UK-based study became actively involved in caring for their newborns during their paternity leaves; however, this hands-on fathering waned when they returned to work. These new fathers began to feel more and more distanced from their babies' daily routines and evolving needs, leading to a more traditional family ideology in which father plays the primary breadwinner role while mother plays the primary caregiver role. In another study, Ladge and her colleagues (2015) found that many men hold both progressive and traditional views of fatherhood. However, the disconnect between espoused values (i.e., involved fathering) and enacted values (i.e., traditional fathering), left most of the fathers in their study with an ambiguous sense of their fatherhood identities.

As evidenced by these studies, becoming a father has become a much more complex experience than it once was. By illuminating the challenges men face in confronting traditional views of fatherhood, scholars have made important contributions to the extant literature. However, much remains to be learned about the process men engage in to actually form, practice and revise their fatherhood identities. In other words, how do men imagine themselves as fathers-to-be, where do these images come from, and how do men claim and enact them? In the following section we draw on the possible selves and identity work literature to provide a theoretical framework for studying how men craft and enact their fatherhood identities.

Possible Selves and Identity Work: Crafting a Fatherhood Identity

During the transition to fatherhood, men begin to envision themselves as future fathers (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009. These images reflect possible selves that represent aspirational future identities (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and drive behaviors that help men attain their hoped for, imagined selves as new dads (Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). This often involves crafting fatherhood identities that are distinctly different from the examples that were set by their own fathers (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Hofner et al., 2011). Crafting possible selves during the transition to fatherhood, men begin the process of adding "father" to their identity role set, which often includes "spouse," "worker," and "friend" (Rane & McBride, 2000; Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). This process is not without its challenges. In fact, many men experience a sense of internal conflict due to the competing responsibilities of these roles and identities; this is especially true if a man identifies "worker" as a large component of his self-identity, in which providing for his family through paid work is a primary focus (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Further, a new father may experience frustration, anxiety and dissatisfaction with himself if there is a mismatch between his envisioned possible self and how he sees himself as a new father (Habib & Lancaster, 2006).

Previous studies also reveal that mothers play an important role in their partners' paternal identity development (McBride, Brown, Bost, Shin, Vaughn & Korth, 2005). Mothers who actively encourage their spouses/partners to participate in caring for their babies facilitate the development of a bond between father and baby (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; McBride et al., 2005). Such actions increase the likelihood that new fathers will develop a desire to be actively involved in the nurture and care of their children; conversely, mothers who engage in "gatekeeping," or preventing fathers from participating in childcare activities, hinder a man's desire and ability to take on an active caregiver role (Gaunt & Scott, 2014; Hofner et al., 2011). Even when a man envisions himself as a caregiver, gatekeeping behaviors have the potential to prevent him from becoming the kind of nurturing father he hopes to be (Hofner et al., 2011).

Given the complexity of the context within which men are crafting and enacting their fatherhood identities, it is reasonable to assume that men will be actively engaged in identity work throughout the transition to fatherhood. In fact, scholars contend that individuals are most likely to engage in identity work during times of crisis or significant transition (McAdams, 1999; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) argue that individuals engage in narrative identity work, or "social efforts to craft self-narratives that meet a person's identity aims" (p. 137), to legitimate major role transitions to both themselves and others. That is, individuals craft and recount stories about themselves to explain and justify how a new role fits within their lives and careers, and aligns with who they are and hope to be. Accordingly, studying men's narrative identity work through the transition to fatherhood has the potential to illuminate men's hopes and desires for their combined career and family lives, as well as the obstacles they face in realizing those aspirations.

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

As demonstrated by the preceding literature review, the transition to fatherhood is a complex experience that warrants further investigation. In particular, there is a need to increase scholarly understanding of the impact this transition has on a man's identity in the current social context in which the gendered distinction between parental roles is blurring as men's and women's career paths continue to converge. We are lacking studies that investigate the nature and meaning of professional/managerial men's identity work as they become fathers and develop an approach to combining career and family. Longitudinal studies are needed to explore the process of identity work over time, from the pre-natal to post-natal periods, as well as to investigate the relationship between how men envision engaging in childcare and housework as expectant fathers, and how they actually engage in these activities as new fathers. Research is also needed to further explore how men perceive the resources that are available to them as expectant and new fathers both inside and outside of the workplace. Understanding the factors that facilitate and constrain the process of becoming the kind of father a man hopes to be is important to developing appropriate organizational support systems and flexibility policies for fathers. Accordingly,

the present exploratory study is designed to lay the foundation for longitudinal research by addressing the following research questions:

> *What ideologies do professional/managerial men envision and enact in their anticipated and actual approaches to combining career and family?*
> *What kinds of fatherhood identities do professional/managerial men envision as expectant fathers, and enact as new fathers?*
> *What factors facilitate and constrain professional/managerial men's ability to become the kinds of fathers they hope to be?*

METHODOLOGY

In the present study, we take a qualitative, narrative approach to eliciting and examining men's identity work. Qualitative methods are well-suited to uncovering identity work (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006), and interviews are an appropriate means to prompt explicit telling of narratives (Boje, 1991; Pentland, 1999). We used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) in recruiting participants because we were interested in understanding how men who are invested in their education and careers engage in identity work to craft and enact a fatherhood identity. We sought to include men who could be presumed to have an established professional identity, so we only included professional/managerial men who had a minimum of a bachelor's degree and three to five years of full-time work experience. A total of ten men participated in this study: five first-time expectant fathers and five new fathers. All of these men were married, except one who was engaged to the mother of his child. We recruited this sample by placing fliers in hospitals and OB-GYN offices and an ad in an employee newsletter, announcing the project at a seminar for expectant fathers, and asking interviewees and colleagues to forward our recruitment flyer on to expectant and new dads who met our sample criteria and might be interested in participating.

Data Gathering

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that lasted between 60 and 75 minutes. For the interviews with expectant fathers, the questions addressed three main areas: a) the informant's career history and current work/home situation, including his partner's/wife's work situation, b) the experience of discovering that his partner was pregnant and how he envisions himself as a soon-to-be father, and c) how the informant imagines combining career and family. The interviews with the new fathers also began with a brief career history and current circumstances, including his partner's/wife's work situation. Questions then focused on: a) the experience of becoming a father, beginning with the birth of the baby and continuing to the present moment, b) the experience of returning to work after the birth the child (e.g., supervisor/co-worker reactions, organizational supports and/or constraints, etc.), and c) how the informant and his partner/wife are combining career and family, including managing childcare and housework responsibilities.

Data Analysis

All interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by a third party transcription service. Using thematic narrative analysis (Reissman, 2008), the first author analyzed the five transcripts pertaining to the expectant fathers, and the second author analyzed the five transcripts pertaining to the new fathers to uncover preliminary themes. The first author made note of the expectant fathers' explanations of their current participation in domestic activities, as well as their anticipated roles in housework and childcare after the birth of the baby. The second author analyzed how the new dads described their roles in caring for their babies and homes, and how fatherhood had impacted their prioritization of career and family. In parallel, we created an analytic memo for each case that included demographic information, a career timeline, emerging themes and example quotes. Once this process was complete, the authors met to discuss preliminary themes within and across the two groups of informants.

This resulted in the creation of an initial set of focal themes, including working definitions and illustrative quotes. Next, both authors re-read all ten transcripts to try to label and understand the narrative identity each man revealed through his personal story. We met several times during this process to discuss our findings and come to agreement on key themes. In the following section we present the results of our analysis. The name of each informant has been changed to protect the identity of our participants.

FINDINGS

Table 1 reports the three distinct fatherhood role ideologies we uncovered: traditional, egalitarian, and altruistic. The traditional ideology emerged from stories of placing a strong emphasis on work and career and referring to the fatherhood role in terms of being a "provider" or "breadwinner." The egalitarian ideology was revealed in stories of sharing equally in childcare and/or housework responsibilities with their wives/partners, and placing an even focus on career and family. Finally, the altruistic ideology came through in stories of making significant levels of self-sacrifice, including giving up or decreasing considerably the time allocated toward a hobby, particularly a sport or exercise regime, before and/or after the birth of a first child.

TABLE 1
FATHERHOOD ROLE IDEOLOGIES

Ideology	Definition	Example Quotes
Traditional	Father focuses on providing financially for his family; domestic responsibilities are primarily the mother's domain	*They all know that I am the main breadwinner, so to speak…that's what brings in the dough more. And not to downplay (wife's) job, it's definitely a good supplement…(Cooking? Cleaning?). Probably about 70/30. (Wife) does 70%, I do 30%.*–Ed (Expectant father) *And financially, we didn't need to have her working full time, so I let her work part time and take care of all that other…because I don't shop. I can't remember the last time I was in a grocery store. She takes care of all the cooking, cleaning, shopping, stuff like that.* -Brandon (New father)
Egalitarian	Equal participation in childcare and housework with partner.	*I work a compressed work week of Monday through Wednesday, and Friday, of 6:00 AM to 5:00 PM. I am off, out of the office, on Thursdays. That's when I take care of [daughter]. My wife actually works Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. She's off Tuesdays.* -Randy (New father) *I do a lot of the cooking during the week. I do grocery shopping, I do trash, cat litter, vacuum. She does all the laundry. We have different zones of the house that we do.* –Chris (New father)
Altruistic	Self-sacrifice to create time and space for home and childcare responsibilities	*We have an agreement where she would do the laundry, and I would do the dishes…even when that job division was set up, I still had to go and do laundry and help her with laundry…when she was learning she's pregnant, that whole thing shifted, and I did the majority of all the work.* –Mel (Expectant father) *I have some friends from when I lived here, undergrad, but (going out) just far less often. You know, you've got to get to bed early so you can wake up early. And…you can't be taking care of your baby while you're hungover.* -Jerry (New father)

In contrast to previous studies, we discovered that men cannot be neatly categorized according to one ideology versus another. In fact, many of our informants made reference to multiple ideologies in their narratives. For example, James, a vice president and new father who is married to a full-time professional, admits to holding to a traditional philosophy regarding his family role: *I am, I hate to say, traditional…I'm one of these guys that feels like you should provide for your family.* However, he enacts an egalitarian ideology in parenting his daughter:

> *Every single morning, I get up and take care of the kid. I get up every morning, no matter what day it is, and get her changed, and get her fed, and all that good stuff. And then the nights I am home before she goes to bed, I help out with doing the bath or taking her for a walk, whatever needs to be done.*

In another case, Randy, a new dad, describes an egalitarian approach in which he and his wife both work compressed, four-day weeks in order to each have one day at home with their daughter. However, he also reveals an altruistic ideology in the personal sacrifices he has made to accommodate the needs of his family: *Usually, I'm a very active person. My entire life has changed...I put on the Daddy 15...my usual routine that I'd had over the years before [daughter] was born, pretty much, it doesn't exist anymore.*

The discovery that our informants are enacting multiple role ideologies as they transition to fatherhood indicates that what it means to be a father is much more complex than it once was. Our findings suggest that the process of developing a fatherhood identity is too multifaceted to be captured by a typology. Further, our informants told stories that exposed a wide range of narrative fatherhood identities. As shown in Table 2, our interviews with the expectant fathers revealed five distinct narrative identities that we label: The Extraneous Father, The Superhero, The Devoted Dad, The Playmate, and The Authority Figure. As shown in Table 3, we also uncovered distinct narrative identities among the five new dads that we label: The Gadget Dad, The Reluctant Grown-Up, The Homesteading Father, Father of the Year, and The Wussified Guy. We describe each narrative identity in detail below.

TABLE 2
NARRATIVE FATHERHOOD IDENTITIES: THE EXPECTANT FATHERS

Narrative Identity	Definition	Illustrative Quotes
The Extraneous Father	A father who feels out of place and somewhere in distance	*Once they come, then I'll be extraneous. I'll do whatever I need to do, but they'll be helping out a lot during the day. And then I go back to work, and I'll be back at work pretty much. Once they arrive for sure I will not be needed as much there. I'll get in the way.* -Mitch
The Superhero Father	A father who is a hero and protector	*My idea of family would be like, "You need me to lay down on the railroad tracks and have the railroad go over me in order for my daughter to do whatever she's got to do?" That's what I would do.* -Mel
The Devoted Dad	A father committed to spending time with his child	*I've got some friends that really value their time with work…and their social life is very important...it's like you can use their names as a joke and everyone would get it for not spending time (with their kids)… I want to be the running joke like, "Geez, this guy spends too much time with his daughter." That's the joke I want to be in.* -Mike
The Playmate	A father who is his child's friend; someone with whom his child plays	*I want to be able to not only be the one to provide discipline or anything like that, but also have fun with them, play with them, be down on the floor, and be active with them. I definitely want to be an active dad, and be able to play with them, and get them outside, and sports or whatever*. –Walter
The Authority Figure	A father who "knows best" and makes the rules.	*I do want to be very good friends with him, but it's not like we're going to be besties, because I'm still dad. I'm going to be his leader. I'll be guiding him. There's still going to be that level of, like, he answers to me. You don't have that with your typical friendship, right? You don't have that with your best friend. You don't answer to your best friend*. –Ed

TABLE 3
NARRATIVE FATHERHOOD IDENTITIES: THE NEW FATHERS

Narrative Identity	Definition	Illustrative Quotes
The Gadget Dad	A father who parents through technology.	*I have an engineering background, and so often times I look for a technical solution for things. And there are lots and lots of baby gadgets out there. So anyway, the approach is solving with technology. I call it finding the right solution to the problem.* -Brandon
The Reluctant Grown-up	A father who mourns his pre-parenthood self	*My wife lets me go out once or twice every month to the city to go out… but it's just far less often, you know, you've got to get to bed early so when you can wake up early. And you can't…you know, taking care of your baby while you're hung-over.* -Jerry
The Homesteading Father	A father who wishes to create the wholesome-ness of the past.	*Seems like I put hundreds of hours into that house. It's got a beautiful yard, fruit trees, orchard, gardens, I kept bees. And I tried out all this different stuff.* -Randy
Father of the Year	A father who aspires to be the best Dad	*This isn't just like you're father of the year right out of the gate, right? There's a lot of day-to-day work involved and it's not all-- and I don't know if I thought it was going to be easy, but I definitely thought it would be easier than what I found it to be.* -Chris
The Wussified Guy	A father who lets go of his male ego and accepts his softer, nurturing side	*I feel like (fatherhood) sort of wussifies the guy a little bit...Your mentality as a 20-something year old dude is always like, put your arms out and puff your chest out, and whatever. And then even when you're engaged and you're married, you still sort of have that… not single guy mentality... but, just sort of like head lion type. And I feel like as a father it sort of goes away. Like you just don't care... you're not trying to prove a point -- you're just sort of happy with what you have, going home and that's it.* -James

Narrative Identities: The Expectant Fathers

Our interviews with the five expectant fathers revealed two narrative identities that speak to the nature of fatherhood established in times past, and three that are idealized and progressive. We begin with a discussion of the more traditional father identities and then explain the idealized identities.

The Extraneous Father

The identity of the extraneous father emerged from the narrative recounted by Mitch, a researcher in the pharmaceuticals industry whose wife is also a full-time scientist. Mitch makes it very clear that his career is a central element of his identity: *My job is, I would say, is my life. It is who I am.* The centrality of Mitch's career identity was also reflected in his plan to be "on call" at work during a one-week paternity leave. Further, Mitch envisions himself as a father who exists in the background:

> *I hopefully will be (a father) that...takes good care of the kid, and the kid will become smart and successful, and be a good person…hopefully I'll be around enough that I won't work too much*

that they'll know who I am. Hopefully I'll fulfill what I need to do so...the baby's okay, and I don't accidentally leave a kid in a mall or something.

However, Mitch also envisions having a connection with his daughter in the future, when he can relate to her on more adult level: *It would be nice once they become able to speak, and when she becomes able to have a conversation…having somebody intelligent…have that person that you can talk with.* Mitch's intense focus on his career and vision of being somewhat distanced from his child are reminiscent of a more traditional fatherhood role. He appears to be clinging to his professional identity and putting the crafting of his fatherhood identity on hold.

The Authority Figure

The second traditional fatherhood identity to emerge from our findings is what we label, The Authority Figure. This identity was uncovered in the narrative identity crafted by Ed, an accountant whose wife had been employed full-time until she recently lost her job. In describing himself as a future father, Ed paints a picture of someone who provides guidance and exerts influence; however, Ed also describes a desire for connection: *I want to have a close relationship with him, but I'm still going to be in authority*. He characterizes his role in the family in a similar fashion: *You're the head of the family. You've got to be the provider. You have to be, not like the caretaker but like, the guide.*

Interestingly, Ed's conceptualization of an authority figure reveals a deeper meaning in the influence he will have at home versus at work:

…but more than just leading and guiding. You have to put your heart and soul into it, too. So, it's not just like I'm going out on an audit, and I'm leading and showing the staff how to do stuff. It's not just like, "You do this, this, this, and this, and you should ask for this, and this." No. It's everything.

This sense of commitment to his family is further demonstrated in how Ed envisions the relationship he will one day build with his son: *Once he actually gets old enough, we can do things together, and actually appreciate things together. I feel like I'll be able to…build a relationship with him.* Although Ed seems to incorporate more traditional elements into the crafting of his fatherhood identity, he clearly wants to be more than an authority figure to his son.

The Superhero

The fatherhood identity we label, The Superhero, speaks to an idealized image of a father willing to do whatever it takes to ensure his child's happiness. This narrative identity was uncovered in the story told by Mel, an educational technology specialist who is married to a professional woman who works full-time. Mel poignantly describes his willingness to lay down his life for his daughter:

You need me to lay down on the railroad tracks and have the railroad go over me in order for my daughter to do whatever she's got to do? That's what I would do. I will come, I will help, and do whatever. I will give you every dime I have to make sure that your house is nice.

Beyond being willing to sacrifice himself for his child's happiness, Mel's superhero identity is revealed in his desire to be a role model for his daughter to help ensure that she ends up in a healthy adult relationship: *I want to be a role model to show her that when she does find someone, that she sees someone that is going to take care of her and be respectful the way that dad and mom are.* In crafting a heroic fatherhood identity, Mel sees himself playing a vital role in ensuring his daughter's future success and happiness.

The Devoted Dad

The fatherhood identity we label, The Devoted Dad, reveals an envisioned sense of self as a father intensely dedicated to his family. This identity was discovered through Mike, a full-time account manager who wants to be known as, *the guy who spends too much time with his daughter*. He also describes being attentive to his wife's needs:

> *(Wife's) been great here for reading What to Expect When You're Expecting, but like I'm reading a 40-week app that gives you three paragraphs a week. To me, that's perfect. Here's what she's expecting. As a dad, here's what you should be doing for her...like, "Her feet are going to be sore, maybe you should offer to rub her feet every day."*

In painting a picture of himself as a father, it is clear he hopes to provide unconditional love and support for his daughter:

> So *I hope I can just let her be herself...I don't want to say, "Oh, you've got to do this."...to be someone you can go to and not be scared to say anything to. I know as a kid, you get scared to tell your parents something. You're ashamed of something. I really don't want that to be the case.*

In the process of crafting his Devoted Dad identity, Mike began to enact this identity in his relationship with his wife, practicing his caretaker role and committing himself to being there for his family.

The Playmate

The narrative identity we label The Playmate was discovered through Walter, a university athletics coach who is married to a full-time professional. Walter crafts an envisioned fatherhood identity as a dad who is actively engaged in playing with his children, and describes a keen desire to be involved in his son's life: *I just want to be very involved. Be present, and definitely involved with my child's life. Just spend a lot of time with him.* Walter also plans to play an equal role in caring for his new baby: *The goal is 50/50… I will probably take on more of the responsibilities around the house…in terms of waking up at night with the baby, (wife) made it pretty clear that it will be done 50/50!* When describing how he and his wife intend to meet career and family demands, Walter envisions making adjustments to his work schedule in order to have more time with his son:

> *I can see myself doing more things from home, especially in the off-season, you know, where I used to or even still come in… I could be more flexible with that, and do more stuff from home. Because, you know, spend time with the kid more.*

As Walter crafts his fatherhood identity, he envisions making changes to his work and home life that will allow him to be the kinds of playful and involved dad he hopes to be.

Narrative Identities: The New Fathers

Our interviews with the five new dads reveal a variety of ways in which new fathers actively craft and enact their fatherhood identities. These include expressing a pre-parenthood identity in the fatherhood identity, letting go of a pre-parenthood identity, and experimenting with different ways of being a father.

The Gadget Dad

The fatherhood identity we label, the Gadget Dad, was discovered in the narrative told by Brandon, a new father who is an engineer and technology guru. Working in a demanding career in which he puts in 50 to 60 hours per week, Brandon expresses his techno-savvy self by putting his love of gadgets to use in his approach to fathering:

I have an engineering background, and so oftentimes I look for a technical solution for things. And there are lots and lots of baby gadgets out there. So anyway, the approach is solving with technology. I call it finding the right solution to the problem.

For example, Brandon describes finding a new way to put his baby to sleep for the night using a baby swing and a "wombie", a progressive garment that simulates being in the womb. Brandon also uses technology to stay engaged in the activities he enjoyed before becoming a father. In order to continue training for triathlons, he purchased a jogging stroller and attachable bicycle cart to involve his son in the process:

I'm setting up a call with a trainer to plan it, because you've got to plan this stuff like seven, eight months ahead of time. So I have, obviously, the jogging strollers. I have a thing I bought - once again doing the research - the trailer for the bike. He's not big enough for it, but I went ahead and got it…I did sit him in it. And he's got this awesome helmet that's got flames!

By expressing his love of technology and his engineering background in his parenting, Brandon is integrating his professional and personal selves in developing a fatherhood identity.

The Reluctant Grown-Up

The identity we label The Reluctant Grown-Up, emerged from the story told by Jerry, a full-time educator whose wife has a similar career. This identity revealed a sense of nostalgia for his pre-fatherhood self who had fewer responsibilities and a more active social life. In recounting his experience of becoming a father, Jerry described taking on additional household duties that were once shared evenly between him and his wife:

I've taken more household duties because my wife, I would say, she's breastfeeding so she is spending more time with [baby]…and so I cook a lot more often. We used to sort of 50-50. I'd say that I cook about 75% of our meals. Yeah, stuff that I used to do sort of 50% of the time I'm doing most of the time now.

In addition to feeling an increase in his home responsibilities, Jerry sees himself as a breadwinner who must provide for his family at home as well as through financial means: *I think being a father you have a lot more sense of responsibility…You have to be a breadwinner, right?* The increase in responsibility has left Jerry with a nostalgic view of his pre-fatherhood days when he and his wife had an active social life:

It used to be that we would have people over weekly. To have dinner, to hang out, to play board games - there used to be board game night once a week. A group of friends that would come over every week. So that's the stuff that we've given up. We're sort of sleeping by the time that stuff would have been happening.

While Jerry grudgingly accepts the loss of pre-fatherhood fun and freedom, he also believes he has gained a new perspective on life, one in which he sees the importance of prioritizing his family: *You gain perspective for sure. The job's not the most important thing.*

The Homesteading Father

The narrative fatherhood identity we label the homesteading father reveals how a man envisions fatherhood and family life as a return to a wholesome lifestyle of days gone by. In telling his story,

Randy, a technology coordinator, describes abandoning his urban lifestyle, buying a house, and creating a simpler life in a rural area:

> *Seems like I put hundreds of hours into that house. It's got a beautiful yard, fruit trees, orchard, gardens, I kept bees. And I tried out all this different stuff. And then I think you eventually find out what you like to do, and which things you just like the idea of. And I think some of those things I just liked the idea.*

While this approach initially provided Randy with a sense of enjoyment and self-exploration, he soon felt conflicted by the desire to return to an urban setting to raise his child:

> *I want to focus more on the things that I have to learn from my career. I still have a lot to learn with my department, and I would love to spend more time with my daughter. If we were in one of those school districts, I could potentially even walk her to school. I would love to have one car, instead of two. It's like a complete 180, and it's scary to me at the same time that I could change that quickly.*

In developing his fatherhood identity, Randy let go of his former life and self and explored an approach that was much more satisfying as a vision than in reality. His revised vision of fatherhood now includes providing better educational opportunities for his child and being able to walk to shops and restaurants with his family. Having experimented with being a homesteading father, Randy is ready to try out being a city dad.

Father of the Year

The narrative identity we label, Father of the Year, represents a man who desires to be a great dad and is not afraid to reveal this aspiration at work. This narrative identity was revealed by Chris, a director-level manager in the healthcare industry. Having worked as a nanny in high school, Chris always envisioned himself as a natural father: *I always loved kids and really liked being a nanny. I was excited to be a dad*. However, becoming a father was not what he expected, and he did not immediately bond with his new baby:

> *…a baby is not the same thing as a kid, so I was definitely detached. Not that I didn't love him or anything like that, but definitely didn't feel-- like, it was very real looking at my wife and her immediate visceral bond. I did not have that. I sort of looked at it as like this is this thing that pees, and poops, and cries, and demands lots of things of me and doesn't really give a lot back.*

The lack of immediate connection and demanding, thankless work was upsetting to Chris, who imagined that his transition to fatherhood would be seamless. In fact, he expresses a desire to see himself as, "Father of the Year," but experienced unexpected challenges as a new dad. He also felt judged by his colleagues for taking a two-week paternity leave, and sought out other fathers who held high-level positions in his organization for advice:

> *I went into five meetings with those in higher roles who seemed to be successful at work, where they had three or more pictures of their family at their desk. I set up meetings with them to get their perspective.*

Through interviewing these senior managers, Chris discovered that his experience was far from unique. By sharing his feelings and concerns with other fathers, Chris found peace of mind in the belief that things would improve and he might one day be the kind of father he hopes to be.

The Wussified Guy

The narrative identity we label, the Wussified Guy, describes a father who has let go of his macho identity, and in turn has accepted his softer, more nurturing side. As shown in Table 2, James, vice president of a family-owned and operated retail store, described himself as having a more macho persona prior to the birth of his daughter, and revealed that he believes fatherhood "wussifies" the man. James describes being very focused on body building in college: *I spent a lot of time in the weight room there. And I'm not a big guy…I came into (college town) 5'10" 130. I left at 5'10" 195.* After becoming a father, James discovered a shift in his personality and sensed a reduction in his male ego: *That male ego, I guess, is gone a little bit.*

James further illustrates this change in explaining how he switched to a less macho, more practical vehicle that he could use with his daughter:

> *The racing, but not even the racing, just having a sports car type thing. I like doing that type of stuff. And that took a backseat, or has taken a backseat to (daughter) as well. I actually sold a really nice two-door sports car I had because, obviously, she couldn't ride in it. I got myself a nice four-door sporty little car instead that has a car seat in there.*

Although he has clearly let go of his more macho, younger self, James describes feeling content in his new persona as a father. He really enjoys the time he spends with his wife and daughter and has a newfound appreciation for the simpler things in life.

DISCUSSION & DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

By taking a narrative approach to understanding men's identity work during the transition to fatherhood, the present study provides results that have theoretical and practical implications that may be further explored in future research. Our interviews with expectant and new fathers revealed some important insights into the identity work men engage in during the pre-natal and post-natal phases of the transition to fatherhood. In addition, our results suggest that improved organizational support systems are needed if today's professional/managerial men are to become both the engaged, nurturing fathers and the successful careerists they hope to be.

Theoretical Implications

The first important theoretical implication of our study is the discovery that the process of developing a fatherhood identity is much more complex than existing typologies convey. While we uncovered three distinct role ideologies that resonate with the extant research (e.g., Cooper, 2000; Ladge et al., 2015), we also discovered that that majority of our sample enacted more than one ideology. This finding indicates that men are drawing on a variety of master narratives regarding what it means to be a professional/manager and a father in the current evolving social context. Second, by collecting and analyzing expectant and new fathers' personal narratives, we discovered that men engage in a variety of forms of identity work, including: deferring the construction of a fatherhood identity, forming idealized future fatherhood identities, expressing their pre-fatherhood selves in their fatherhood identities, shedding their pre-fatherhood identities, and experimenting with possible fatherhood identities. These discoveries indicate the need to move beyond the current tendency to categorize men's approaches to fathering/combining career and family and to probe more deeply into the fatherhood identity construction process. For example, the *Extraneous Father, Authority Figure* and *Father of the Year* identities reveal that some men imagine and/or experience a feeling of distance from their newborns (Ladge et al., 2015), yet envision a vivid sense of themselves as fathers in a more distant future. Previous studies have indicated that some fathers do not establish a connection with their children until labor/delivery or even well into the post-natal phase (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). Both the *Extraneous Father* and *Authority Figure* are envisioned identities that hint at the traditional meaning of "father" as someone who exists in the background, providing financial support and guidance for his family. However, in both cases the

expectant fathers indicated a desire to have a close relationship with their children in the future. This suggests that they will likely engage in additional identity work as they craft more nurturing fatherhood identities. The *Father of the Year* narrative identity also sheds light on how a man bridges the gap between his envisioned and enacted fatherhood identities, and the difficulties men face in finding the social support systems needed to do so (Eraranta & Moisander, 2011).

The Superhero, Devoted Dad and *The Playmate* identities reveal how new fathers craft idealized visions of themselves as fathers. Scholars have demonstrated that individuals hold idealized future work selves that they are motivated to achieve (Strauss, Griffin & Parker 2012); however, our findings suggest that men also create possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) as future fathers. These images represent better, almost virtuous, versions of their current selves. *The Gadget Dad* identity suggests that some men craft their fatherhood identities by expressing an almost romanticized pre-fatherhood identity, such as techno-savvy engineer, in how they engage with and care for their children. The envisioned *Playmate* identity also speaks to the expression of a pre-fatherhood identity; that is, the expectant father who crafted this identity is a former athlete and head coach who describes playing with and doing sports with his children.

Whereas *The Gadget Dad* and *The Playmate* suggest that men form their fatherhood identities by drawing on aspects of their past and/or present sense of self, the *Reluctant Grown-up* and *The Wussified Guy* speak to the identity loss (Ebaugh, 1988) that is associated with giving up of one's freedom and transitioning from childless man to father. For some men, the crafting of a fatherhood identity involves shedding one's adolescent/young adult sense of self. And finally, *The Homesteading Father* identity reveals how some men fantasize about fatherhood and experiment with an approach that seems ideal, only to find that there is a mismatch between their imagined and actual selves. The discovery of this narrative identity suggests that some men craft and enact provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999) as new fathers and experiment with different ways of being until they find an identity that "fits."

Altogether, the results of our study uncover important identity processes that have been masked by categorizing men's fathering behaviors and identities into neat categories and typologies. By treating each participant's story as our unit of analysis, we uncovered ten distinct narrative fatherhood identities that speak to the complexity of crafting and enacting a fatherhood identity. Our findings lay the foundation for future, longitudinal research that follows professional/managerial men on their journey from first-time expectant father to new dad.

Practical Implications

Although our findings are based on a small sample, there are clear indications that organizations have an opportunity to vastly improve the support they provide to their employees who become fathers. Our participants' stories provide important insights that can help organizations understand the challenges new fathers face, as well as the resources and support systems men need to successfully combine career and family. First and foremost, organizations that offer parental leave policies should ensure that both maternity and paternity leave options are available to employees. Historically, organizations have focused on developing practices and policies targeted at the needs of expectant and new mothers, to the exclusion of expectant and new fathers. Even when organizations do have official paternity leave policies on the books, men fear the backlash they will encounter if they choose to take a parental leave. In order for these circumstances to change, organizations need to recognize that the transition to parenthood is a significant career and life turning point for both women and men. This will hopefully translate into training managers on how to better support their male employees as they prepare to become parents.

Further, our research suggests that both fathers and mothers need flexible work options if they are to fulfill their career aspirations while crafting the family lives they envision and desire. Not only do organizations need to provide more flexibility for men, but they must work to mitigate the stigma that often accompanies taking advantage of so-called "family-friendly" policies. By creating an open dialogue in the workplace, organizations and their members would have an opportunity to transcend the phenomenon of the "silent" father in which men feel the need to separate their home and work identities in order to be perceived as successful in the latter (Burnett et al., 2013; Humberd et al., 2015). We believe

that our research helps to facilitate a more prevalent and open dialog about the multiple roles (e.g., "spouse," "father," "professional") men hold and help them to not only craft, but to enact, their hoped-for fatherhood identities.

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