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"YOU TRY TO BE SUPERMAN AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE": GAY ADOPTIVE FATHERS' CHALLENGES AND TENSIONS IN BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

A body of literature has emerged that focuses on work-family balance among heterosexual fathers. Little attention has been paid to how gay fathers balance work and family, despite the reality that they too are likely affected by similar masculine norms. The current qualitative study of 70 gay adoptive fathers (35 couples) begins to fill this gap in the literature. Analyzing interview data through the lens of Voydanoff's (2005) work-family fit and balance model, we examine the ways in which gay men's experiences of work-family balance are both constrained and enhanced by particular demands and resources. Highlighting the role of gender and sexual orientation, we analyze the challenges these men face and the strategies they use to cope with work-family tensions.

Keywords: employment, gay, parenthood, qualitative, work-family balance

Dominant masculine norms emphasize the "breadwinner" role as central to heterosexual men's sense of worth (Pleck, 2010; Riggs, 1997). These norms, in turn, shape the types of experiences and challenges that men encounter as they seek to balance their professional roles with their family roles (e.g., spouse and parent). Notably, most of the literature on how men balance and negotiate work and family is based on heterosexual fathers (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). We know little about how gay men negotiate work and family, particularly during the transition to parenthood, or about how perceived masculine norms may affect gay fathers' experiences balancing work and family.

When heterosexual couples become parents, the female partner often takes on the majority of child care and housework (Edwards, 2007), whereas the male partner tends

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to become the primary wage-earner, and, in turn, takes on a secondary role with regard to child caregiving (Wall & Arnold, 2007). Recently, however, men have become more involved as parents than fathers were in previous generations (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010), and acceptance of fathers as equal or even primary parents has increased over time (Doucet, 2009). Men with more egalitarian ideologies are particularly likely to be invested in both their professional role and their caretaking role, and, in turn, frequently struggle to balance these often conflicting responsibilities (Cooper, 2000; Henwood & Procter, 2003). Because these egalitarian men tend to be more involved in child care and family life (Henwood & Procter, 2003), they are likely to feel more work-family tension than fathers in previous generations (Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin, 2009).

Notably, gay men may have more egalitarian gender role ideologies than heterosexual men (Goldberg, 2010). For example, research suggests that gay men tend to desire and enact a more equal division of labor compared to heterosexual couples (Goldberg, 2010; Kurdek, 1993, 2005; Perlesz et al., 2010). Indeed, gay men approach parenting outside of the dominant heterosexual nuclear family; in this context, there are no firm expectations regarding which partner does what. Yet, as men they are also exposed to dominant scripts that associate wage-earning with masculinity (Pleck, 2010). These conflicting ideologies and norms may create tension and conflict for gay men as they become parents. To date, there has been limited exploration into the ways in which gay fathers' experiences of work-family tension are similar to or different from heterosexual men's—that is, how their status as *gay men* shapes their experiences and challenges related to work and family. The current study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by examining the work-family challenges and tensions experienced by a particular group of gay men: partnered gay men who recently adopted a child.

In the following sections, we begin with a review of the literature on challenges and tensions in work-family balance among heterosexual parents. In particular, we focus on the research that examines gender ideologies, workplace policies, and the strategies that heterosexual fathers use to balance work and family. We then present the limited research that addresses the experiences of balancing work and family among gay and lesbian parents.

CHALLENGES AND TENSIONS IN BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY: HETEROSEXUAL PARENTS

Egalitarian heterosexual fathers increasingly challenge the stereotypical role of father as uninvolved breadwinner (Doucet, 2009; Henwood & Procter, 2003; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000). Due to in part to gender ideologies and workplace policies, however, heterosexual working parents experience challenges related to work and family balance, particularly men and women who value an egalitarian division of labor (Haddock, Zimmerman, Ziemba, & Lyness, 2006; Singley & Hynes, 2005; Wierda-Boer, Gerris, & Vermulst, 2008).

Gender Ideologies

Although married heterosexual fathers might be more involved as parents than fathers were in previous generations (Doucet, 2009), mothers are still generally viewed

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by society as the primary parents, and men's role as fathers is regarded as secondary in importance (Wall & Arnold, 2007). These societal assumptions impact fathers' practices with regard to child caretaking, hours spent working, and parental leave. Fathers typically spend less time at home with their families than mothers, and they tend to work longer hours, especially those who value the traditional model of parenting with the man as breadwinner (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000; Wierda-Boer et al., 2008). Even among heterosexual couples who claim to value equality within the home, women still end up doing the majority of child care and housework (Kluwer, Heesink, & van de Vliert, 2002; Rogers & Amato, 2000). In some cases, middle-class women who enjoyed demanding careers prior to having children quit their jobs completely when they become parents, because they find that it is too difficult to balance the pressures of work and family (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). In contrast, employed fathers are typically not pressured to choose between work and family, because they tend to have a higher salary and also benefit from the "construction of gendered ideologies that privilege men's work" (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004, p. 80). That is, men are not expected to give up their careers in order to serve their family's needs.

Nevertheless, although they might not feel societal pressure to spend time with their families to the extent that women do, many men do desire more time at home—particularly those in more recent generations (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000; Merla, 2008). Research suggests that among egalitarian men (i.e., men who wish to share child care as much as possible), fatherhood is associated with a decrease in paid work hours: Kaufman and Uhlenberg (2000) found that among "traditional" heterosexual fathers, fatherhood was associated with an increase of nearly 11 hours of paid work per week, whereas among "egalitarian" heterosexual fathers, fatherhood was associated with a decrease of nine hours of work per week. Therefore, egalitarian heterosexual fathers are increasingly challenging the stereotypical role of father as uninvolved breadwinner by decreasing their work hours to spend time with their children.

Workplace Policies

In addition to society's gendered expectations for fathers, workplace policies also create challenges for men attempting to balance work and family. In most states in the US, fathers are not guaranteed paid parental leave, and if they want time off to care for their children, they often need to take unpaid or vacation time (Fass, 2009; Kaufman, Lyonette, & Crompton, 2010). Some fathers in the US may rely on the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 to take time off from work once they have a child (Heymann, Earle, Simmons, Breslow, & Kuehnhoff, 2004). However, not all employees are guaranteed time off through FMLA (e.g., the policy does not apply to businesses with fewer than 50 employees or to employees who have been at their job for fewer than 12 months). Further, FMLA provides only unpaid leave, which may not be financially viable for some fathers (Fass, 2009), particularly since men tend to earn higher incomes than women (Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, & Matheson, 2003).

Gendered workplace practices can also make it difficult for men to spend more time at home with their families. Some research suggests that women have greater flexibility over their work schedules than employed men (Haddock et al., 2006). In turn, with some exceptions (e.g., depending on occupation type; Blair-Loy, 2009), flexible work

scheduling tends to be associated with greater satisfaction with work-family balance among both men and women (Haddock et al., 2006; Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001). Thus, while men might not be expected to take on a primary caretaking role, when they want to provide such a role, they encounter barriers—both on a societal level (e.g., feeling compelled to live up to the traditionally valued role as breadwinner) and on a practical level (e.g., few opportunities for paid parental leave; less flexibility in work schedules).

Strategies for Balancing Work and Family

Given the challenges that parents face in balancing work and family—and the unique challenges that employed fathers may face—research has focused on strategies associated with enhancing the balance of work and family. Research suggests that men who prioritize family may feel better able to balance work and child care (Merla, 2008; Wierda-Boer et al., 2008), such that for these men, tensions surrounding the balance of work and family roles are minimized. There is also evidence that work-family tensions are lessened in men who are able to structure their own work schedules (Haddock et al., 2006; Hill et al., 2001). Other factors that have been found to facilitate greater work-family balance include shorter work commutes (Haddock et al., 2006) and increased autonomy at work (Tuten & August, 2006). Men who benefit from supportive colleagues and supervisors and family-friendly work environments also describe more success, and less stress, balancing work and family (Haddock et al., 2006). Finally, research suggests that support outside of the workplace can alleviate work-family stress. Being able to rely on a network of extended family members, and having access to quality paid child care (e.g., nannies or day care centers) can alleviate some of the work-family stressors that employed parents endure (Anderson, 1998; Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2011).

It should be noted, however, that much of the research on work-family strategies is based on samples of middle-class, highly educated, dual-earner heterosexual couples (e.g., Haddock et al., 2006; Hill et al., 2001). Being able to seek out more flexible and supportive workplaces is not realistic for parents across income levels and career types. Indeed, parents who do not have such resources must seek other ways to balance work and family (e.g., by relying on child care centers or working opposite shifts; Deutsch, 1999; Santhiveeran, 2010).

EXPERIENCES BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY: GAY AND LESBIAN PARENTS

Gay men who encounter work-family challenges may draw on many of the same tension-reducing strategies reported by heterosexuals (e.g., relying on flexible work schedules or seeking support from workplaces; Haddock et al., 2006; Hill et al., 2001). In one of the only studies thus far to examine work-family challenges among gay fathers, Bergman, Rubio, Green, and Padrón (2010) retrospectively examined 40 gay fathers' transition to parenthood via surrogacy. Many of the men described cutting back on their work hours and working fewer paid hours as a means of balancing work and family; in some cases, men became stay-at-home fathers. Furthermore, some of the fathers—

including those who continued to work—said that career goals became secondary to family goals. These men had reconstructed their perspectives of work once they became fathers, asserting that they felt a stronger desire to spend time with their children than to advance their careers. In this way, in contrast to traditional heterosexual fathers, these men prioritized the role of parent over breadwinner.

Of note is that gay fathers' experiences are impacted by socioeconomic status. Gay men earn higher income, on average, than lesbians, although they do earn less, on average, than heterosexual men (Badgett, 2001; Badgett, Gates, & Maisel, 2008; Carpenter, 2008; Carrington, 1999). Same-sex couples are also more likely than heterosexual couples to have both partners working and to benefit from two salaries (Badgett, 2008). Because gay couples often have higher incomes, they may in turn have access to economic and educational resources that grant them the luxury of stable jobs and quality child care (Goldberg, 2012; Rabun & Oswald, 2009); however, same-sex couples have less access to partners' health benefits and other forms of compensation (Badgett, 2008). Given gay fathers' unique status as male parents in a same-sex relationship, and the lack of existing research on work-family balance among gay men, it is important to study gay fathers' experiences balancing work and family in greater depth.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

We approached the current study of gay fathers' experiences balancing work and family using an integrated theoretical framework. We analyzed the data primarily through the lens of Voydanoff's (2005) work-family fit and balance model, which is a person-environment fit theory that links work demands and resources with family demands and resources. Person-environment fit theory holds that it is the incongruence between a person and the environment that creates stress, and not the person or environment alone (Voydanoff, 2005). Thus, fit occurs on two levels: when the person sufficiently meets the needs and expectations of the environment, and when the environment sufficiently meets the needs of the person. Whereas fit contributes to mental and physical health and well-being, misfit can result in stress.

Voydanoff's (2005) work-family fit and balance model is an extension of person-environment fit theory, which posits that there is variation from high levels of balance to high levels of imbalance between work and family demands and resources. The overall work-family fit and balance model compares the demands of work and family to the resources from work and family. If a person's demands (from both domains) are met by the resources available, the person experiences balance. This perspective facilitated our exploration of the ways in which men's experiences of work-family balance are both constrained and enhanced by particular demands and resources. In this way, we were able to analyze to what extent these men endorsed work-family fit and balance.

We also drew upon gender role theory. With regard to work-family balance in particular, gender theorists posit that the stereotypical domain of women (the home) and that of men (paid work) are not necessarily dichotomous; that is, gender roles, family structures, and social categories change over time and are complex in nature (Deutsch, 2007; Ferree, 1990). Gender interacts with other social categories, such as sexual orientation and social class, thus impacting people in both unique and intersecting ways (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2004).

Research suggests that gay and bisexual men, who have come of age in a heteronormative and at times homophobic society, are particularly vulnerable to gender role strain: That is, their gender role identity might not match standards of traditional masculinity, which can be experienced as stressful (Levant, 2011). For example, gay men might have been bullied as children for engaging in gender atypical activities (Sanchez, Greenberg, Liu, & Vilain, 2009), and those who attach importance to traditional masculine norms "may experience stress, shame, or guilt because being truly 'masculine' is unattainable due to their same-sex romantic attractions" (Sanchez et al., 2009, p. 82). With regard to work-family balance, gay men who value traditional masculine norms might feel gender role conflict in balancing their desire for occupational success with their desire to have a family (Levant, 2011).

Thus, drawing from Voydanoff's (2005) work-family fit and balance model and gender theory (Levant, 2011), we sought to examine the work-family experiences and challenges encountered by 35 gay couples who had recently become adoptive fathers, to address the following research questions:

1. How do gay fathers prioritize family and work once they become parents?
2. What types of challenges do gay men experience in balancing work and family? For example, to what extent do they describe work responsibilities as impinging on family, and family responsibilities as impinging on work?
3. What strategies do gay fathers use to balance work and family? For example, how do they work to either increase resources or decrease demands?
4. For men who experience few challenges and tensions, what factors contribute to their ability to successfully balance work and family?

METHOD

The current study utilized data from an ongoing longitudinal study of the transition to adoptive parenthood. Data from interviews with 70 men (in 35 gay male couples) were analyzed. At the time that they were interviewed, all couples had recently become adoptive parents. That is, all couples were placed with a child through private domestic, public domestic, or private international adoption, 3-4 months prior to their interviews.

Participants

The men in the sample were, on average, in fairly long-term relationships: They had been in their current relationships for a mean of 9.0 years ($SD = 3.7$), and they were 38.8 years old, on average ($SD = 4.4$). Couples resided in various regions of the United States: West (49%), South (23%), Northeast (20%), and Midwest (9%). The sample was largely White and well-educated (see Table 1). The men's annual median salary was $70,000 (range = 0-$450,000), and their annual median family income was $122,750 (range = $53,000-$550,000). The men in the sample held primarily high-status positions (e.g., management, education, health care, computer programming). Ninety-one percent of men ($n = 64$) continued to work post-adoption (see Table 1), and 88% of the 64 working men ($n = 56$) had taken some form of parental leave, with an average of 5.2 weeks off ($SD = 5.2$).

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Participants (*n* = 70)
Race	
Caucasian	60 (86%)
Latino	6 (9%)
African American	2 (3%)
Asian	2 (3%)
Education Level	
College degree	28 (40%)
Master's degree	19 (27%)
MD/PhD/JD	11 (16%)
High school	7 (10%)
Associate's degree/completed some college	5 (7%)
*Work Status**	
Full-time	58 (83%), 51 (73%)
Part-time	12 (17%), 13 (19%)
Stay-at-home	0, 6 (9%)

**Note:* Status prior to adoption precedes the comma, work status after adoption follows the comma.

Twenty-four couples (69%) completed private domestic adoptions; nine couples (26%) completed public domestic adoptions (i.e., through the child welfare system); and two couples (6%) completed private international adoptions. Couples' adopted children were, on average, 16 months old (*SD* = 35.7; range = 0-12 years) at the time of the adoptive placement. Eighteen of the adopted children (51%) were described as non-White (i.e., biracial, Latino, African American, or Asian), and 17 children (49%) were described as White. Twenty-one couples (60%) adopted a boy, and 14 couples (40%) adopted a girl.

Recruitment and Procedures

The current study is part of a larger, ongoing project on the transition to adoptive parenthood among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples. This study was initiated in part to address the research gap on adoptive same-sex and heterosexual parents, and in an attempt to understand couples' experiences that are unique to this transition period of parenthood. Thus, inclusion criteria were: (a) couples must be adopting their first child; and (b) both partners must be becoming parents for the first time. Census data were used to identify states with a high percentage of same-sex couples (Gates & Ost, 2004), and efforts were made to contact adoption agencies in those states. Particular effort was made to contact agencies whose materials were explicitly inclusive of a variety of family forms. Agencies were asked to provide study information to clients who had not yet adopted. Over 30 agencies provided information to clients, usually via a brochure

that invited them to participate in a study of the transition to adoptive parenthood. Clients contacted the researcher for details about participation. Because same-sex couples may not be "out" to their adoption agencies, we also made efforts to recruit participants via several national LGBT organizations.

Participation entailed completion of a questionnaire packet and participation in a telephone interview, both of which were completed 3-4 months after couples were placed with their child. Participants completed individual semi-structured interviews over the telephone, separately from their partners. Generally, interviews (which covered a range of topics, including but not limited to those of interest in the present study) lasted 1-1.5 hours.

Participants were interviewed by the principal investigator and trained graduate student research assistants. Interviews were transcribed, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect confidentiality. The data from this study are derived from the following open-ended questions:

1. What has it been like for you, trying to balance work with parenthood and also your relationship with your partner? *(Probe: What strategies have you used?)*
2. Do you feel you have sacrificed job opportunities for family? Sacrificed aspects of family life for work? Explain.
3. How supportive have your supervisors/coworkers been since you became a parent?
4. How satisfied are you with your job, currently?

Data Analysis

The current study was analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves carefully examining participants' narratives in an effort to identify recurrent themes and patterns in their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). We analyzed data from both members of each couple, paying special attention to the words participants used to describe their experiences and challenges balancing work and family. The third author initiated the coding process using comparative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to establish analytic distinctions by comparing data across participants to identify similarities and differences. She began by conducting line-by-line coding, attending closely to participants' interpretations and constructions. At the start of the coding process, focus was given to identifying similarities and differences in the ways that the men negotiated their parenting desires and experiences amid broader cultural discourses about work, gender, masculinity, and parenthood. This interest framed the selective analysis and coding of the data. The third author read and applied initial codes to the transcripts of the first five couples (10 men) and then wrote extensive memos about the transcripts. Careful analysis of these memos led her to identify a number of initial themes. After reading the transcripts of the next five couples and writing memos about the emergent themes, the third author compared her data to those of the first 10 men. This led to further refinement and specification of themes. Then, using the emerging scheme, all transcripts were re-read multiple times, and effort was made to categorize all participants' narratives in the existing coding scheme. This process led to further refinement of emerging categories. For example, some codes were collapsed with other codes, some were

modified, and others were dropped. After developing an extensive list of specific codes, focused coding was applied to the data, such that the most substantiated coding categories were created to sort the data. This led her to further integrate some codes and to discover new connections among the data. Four rounds of focused coding allowed for refinement of all of the descriptive categories.

Once this coding process was complete, the first author read selected segments of participant transcripts (i.e., one-quarter of the total transcripts) and evaluated the scheme against the data. The first and third authors' intercoder reliability was .80, well above Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggested initial reliability of .70. Based on the discrepancies that emerged, the first and third authors reviewed the coding scheme once more. They produced a further refined analysis of the codes and sub-codes, and this revised coding scheme was reapplied to all of the data. The findings are organized around this final scheme.

RESULTS

We first examine the shift in priorities that many men described experiencing upon transitioning to parenthood. We then explore the work-family challenges and tensions that they described, followed by the strategies that they reported using to alleviate such tensions. Lastly, we discuss the narratives of those men who reported few challenges in balancing work and family, with attention to their explanations of how and why they had not experienced many tensions.

The Prioritization of Work and Family

Nearly half of the men in our sample (*n* = 29) experienced a shift in priorities upon becoming parents. For most of these men, becoming a parent had led them to prioritize family over paid work, while a smaller number described an increase in their prioritization of paid work.

Prioritization of family over work. Twenty-two men (17 full-time workers, four part-time workers, and one stay-at-home father) described a diminished investment in and identification with their work role and identity since becoming parents. As they described it, becoming a parent had "added clarity about the things that are important." They found that they were more focused on their families than on work. For example, Patrick, a 41 year-old White professor, mused about the shift in both his and his partner Carter's prioritization of work (both men were employed full-time): "Both Carter and I used to go in early and stay late at work. Now it's like, whatever. Our work attitudes have really changed. We are still doing the work. We're not slacking or going to be fired or anything like that. You suddenly realize that there is more to life than spending every day focusing on work." For men like Patrick, parenting had clarified their sense of what was most important to them.

In some cases, the desire to shift attention away from work and toward family surprised the men, in that they had expected to feel more "torn" between work and family. About becoming a parent, Lars, a 36 year-old White human resources assistant who had reduced his hours to part-time while his partner Joshua continued to work full-time, said:

It has surprised me in that ... I thought my main priorities would stay where they were. I would just have to make all these, all these big sacrifices. And suddenly they're not really sacrifices as much as I thought they would be. I mean suddenly I'm making these choices to move things around, but it's what I'm *wanting* to do.

In this way, 15 of the 22 men who reduced their investment in work (12 full-time workers, two part-time workers, and one stay-at-home father) described little to no tension associated with their decision to do so. They did not perceive themselves as "sacrificing" work for family, but as easily choosing family over work, given that their "priorities [had] shifted more toward being a parent."

In contrast, seven of the 22 men (five full-time workers and two part-time workers) articulated tensions surrounding their changed priorities. They voiced feelings of guilt or concern about how their reduced work focus might be perceived by their workplace or how it might impact them in the long-term. Such feelings appeared to reflect their previously strong identification with the work role. Dean, a 30 year-old Asian American man who was a full-time director of a non-profit organization, noted his concern that he was no longer living up to his identity as an overachieving worker:

I was definitely the person that would work weekends. Work, you know, do things to get the job done. But now I'm like, I really can't. I travel less. I used to travel a lot for work and now I'm kind of going, "No, I don't really want to do that, no I'm not really willing to go there." So there is some, in the back of my head, some worry of like really, how effective will I be?

Dean expressed some tension in resolving the kind of worker that he used to be (overachiever) with his increased prioritization of family. He seemed firm that he was not willing to exert as much effort as before, but was struggling to adjust to his stepped-down performance, and his new (perhaps more realistic) expectations of what he could accomplish.

Prioritization of work over family. Seven men (six full-time workers and one part-time worker) described an increased commitment to work upon becoming parents. Four of these full-time workers increased their number of paid work hours, which appeared to reflect their heightened sense of responsibility for meeting the financial needs of their families. For three others (two full-time workers and one part-time physician), parenthood was experienced as having increased their sense of commitment to their jobs. Work had taken on a new significance in their lives, because they were aware that they needed the income to provide for their children. It is notable that each of these three men was employed in a high-status, high-paying occupation (e.g., physician, engineer) and was the primary financial earner in the family. Their high earning power, coupled with their employment in high-status careers, may have facilitated identification as the breadwinner and thus their commitment to paid work. Michael, a 33 year-old White full-time employed psychiatrist, remarked:

You know, it's very interesting. For most of the time Damian's been here, Carlos has been off and I've been at work. Carlos has been pretty much his primary care-

taker. And so I haven't really had as much of a drive in that perspective, but it's more of a drive to, you know, make sure that financially we're more in a sound place, so we have money for his education and some other things down the road.

Challenges in Balancing Work and Family

Regardless of whether they were employed full-time or part-time, and regardless of their partner's work status (full-time, part-time, or stay-at-home), over one-third of the 64 men who continued to work after becoming parents ($n = 24$) described tensions and challenges in balancing work and family. Most of these men felt that work demands were causing them stress because they felt they could not delegate enough resources to family life. A small minority of men felt pulled in the opposite direction, in that they felt too much of their time and energy was being directed to family life and, despite their efforts to maintain high productivity, they felt that their work responsibilities were being neglected.

Work responsibilities are impinging on family. Twenty-one men (18 full-time workers and 3 part-time workers) expressed feeling that their work hours and/or job responsibilities were impinging on their family time. Whereas these men's jobs had generally seemed manageable before having children, the time-intensive demands of parenthood—as well as their strong desire to spend time with their children—created new conflicts (and an imbalance) which they struggled to manage.

Excessive work hours and job responsibilities. Twenty men (17 full-time workers and 3 part-time workers) felt that they were working too many hours and/or managing too many responsibilities at work to effectively balance work and family. Simply put, they perceived excessive demands on their time and not enough flexibility in their lives to manage all of the responsibilities involved in parenting, working, and managing a household. As some men highlighted, working a high number of hours, coupled with low job satisfaction, was particularly unpleasant. Nathan, a 38 year-old White full-time assistant director of a museum, revealed:

> I don't have tremendous job satisfaction, so leaving her in the morning to come to a job I don't particularly care for is ... hard. And you know, I had to do this whole negotiation where I was like "I can't work 70 hours a week anymore, I can't work 60 hours a week, I can't even work 50, I need to work the 40!" That's the trick of it, and in some ways it's a luxury problem for me because we are making enough money, we do have health insurance at home. I'm not a single parent without an au pair, earning $20,000 a year. I'm not, that's not my situation. So in some ways it's a luxury problem, but you still need to attend to it, because you don't want to get into a situation where you resent Leah. You know what I mean?

Nathan labeled his problem of time management a "luxury problem," insomuch as he recognized that he possessed more resources than most other parents. Yet, as he noted, having a high-status job did not diminish the reality of work hours interfering with family life, nor did it preclude the possibility of him experiencing stress.

Specific job-related challenges. Nine men (seven full-time workers and two part-time workers) pointed to specific aspects of their job that made balancing work and family particularly difficult. For example, three full-time workers mentioned after-hours work responsibilities as a particular downside of their job. Although such responsibilities had seemed reasonable pre-parenthood, they were now viewed as onerous.

Four men (two full-time workers and two part-time workers) named work-related travel as an increasingly taxing aspect of their job, insomuch as it seemed like "wasted" time away from their children. Commuting to work, as well as regular business trips, was experienced as more stressful now than pre-parenthood. Ray, a 37 year-old White pharmaceutical representative with a long commute, noted that since becoming a father, travel had become more emotionally challenging: "I just feel like that time [away] is precious time." Further reflecting his dissatisfaction with his travel schedule, Ray later noted his plan to "stay with my company and just move into a different position that has a little bit less travel and a little bit better hours."

Family responsibilities are impinging on work. Five men (three full-time workers and two part-time workers)—two of whom also felt that work was impinging on family responsibilities—voiced stress related to their perception that their family responsibilities were impinging on their work time. They felt overwhelmed with child care responsibilities and other household tasks and voiced a preference to be doing less at home in order to more effectively manage the demands of their jobs. For example, two men had worked at home prior to becoming a parent but now found it difficult to do so, as it was harder to focus on work when their child was only a few rooms away. Lars, 36, who worked full-time in human resources, used to work at home, but now, "… [work] doesn't really get done very much. Just because of the nature of being around, taking care of him [has] been all-consuming." For this handful of men, work was a central part of their identity long before they had children, and being forced to cut back was experienced as stressful.

Strategies for Balancing Work and Family

Men sought to manage or improve work-family balance by implementing a variety of strategies. Men employed two specific types of adaptive strategies: increasing family resources (e.g., using non-parental child care) and decreasing work demands (e.g., cutting paid work hours) as a means of increasing work-family fit and balance. Notably, in many cases, men's use of these adaptive strategies successfully prevented feelings of work-family imbalance.

Increasing family resources. The majority of men employed strategies aimed at minimizing the degree to which they felt their work responsibilities were encroaching upon their family life. Namely, over three-quarters of the sample ($n = 27$ couples) reported benefiting from outside help such as child caregivers. In turn, these resources afforded them more flexibility to meet the demands of their jobs and, because they had help in accomplishing family tasks, they were able to maintain a sense of balance between work and family.

Most of the men in our sample had enough financial resources to delegate child care duties to someone else. While four couples relied primarily on family members to provide child care, nine couples placed their child at least part-time in a day care center and six had their children enrolled in preschool or school. Many of the couples who chose day care centers reported feeling pleased that they had secured flexible, convenient, reputable center-based care that they liked, which in turn alleviated stress related to balancing work and family.

Notably, eight couples employed nannies to care for their children while they worked; an important resource that allowed them greater flexibility overall. These men reported that their decision to secure a nanny had served to preclude excessive work-family tension. Some men alluded to a sense of guilt that they were able to afford the luxury of a full-time nanny. Dustin, a 39 year-old White full-time psychologist, contrasted his experience as a parent with the more limited resources his parents had when he was growing up: "We definitely didn't have a nanny or anything like that. And I think just the notion of how people use nannies here is very different than any kind of babysitter I had when my mom was working."

While most of them acknowledged the financial expense of having a nanny, some men expressed that it was actually the less expensive option. Michael, the full-time psychiatrist, noted: "It's not the arrangement I think that I would really like. I think we would both like it if Carlos could quit his job, but we're not really financially able to do that at the moment." For some men, although their ideal scenario might have been to have a stay-at-home parent, it seems that the only way to satisfy their financial demands was to increase their family resources so that they could bring home two full-time salaries. Men who hired nannies in an attempt to balance their family resources with their work demands expressed a variety of feelings about whether hiring someone to take care of their child converged with their vision of an ideal family life. Nevertheless, they appreciated having the means to afford a full-time caretaker of their children, allowing both partners to continue working full-time.

Decreasing work demands. In addition to increasing family resources, over half of the men in our sample ($n = 39$ individuals) responded to misfit between work demands and family resources by decreasing their work demands. These men were able to modify their careers such that they were able to switch to less demanding schedules or jobs, get by doing the bare minimum, or become more efficient, thus lessening the time spent away from their children.

Changes in schedules or jobs. Twenty-five men (nine full-time workers, ten part-time workers, and six stay-at-home fathers) stated that they had made, or were considering making, changes in their schedules or jobs to better accommodate their family demands and responsibilities. Ten men had recently transitioned from working full-time to part-time, a transition which was difficult for some of them. Henry, a 45 year-old biracial physical therapist, noted: "I quit my full-time job and now I just do my private practice, two days a week. I mean, I keep it very small—two days a week, ten clients, five clients each day. That was quite a change for me, leaving a job. It was hard—it was definitely a major change." Although this change in his professional role made Henry's life easier on a practical level, cutting back on his work was psycholog-

ically slightly more difficult than he had anticipated. Other men did not experience any difficulties in transitioning to a lighter work schedule.

Six full-time workers imposed changes in their schedules that allowed them to keep their jobs while enjoying more flexibility. For example, one man hired an assistant, while others worked from home one day a week or worked longer days so that they could have one day at home. Patrick, the full-time professor, explained: "With my schedule, knowing that we are going to adopt, I did some front loading and I teach 13 hours on Mondays and I'm pretty much home by 1:00 the rest of week. So I get everything done earlier on in the week and I don't work on Fridays." For Patrick, working longer days at the beginning of the week was worth the trade-off so that he could spend a full day each week with his daughter.

Ten men (three full-time workers, one part-time worker, and six stay-at-home fathers) had left their jobs soon before becoming parents, or they were in the process of considering more family-friendly positions. For those who continued to work, they desired different positions that involved more flexibility, less travel, fewer hours, the option to work at home, and/or fewer responsibilities. Todd, a 46 year-old African American full-time marketing manager, recently changed jobs: "It's just a very different environment, it's very child friendly.... We have lots of clients and we are not afraid to say, my child comes first. And it's just a whole paradise for me." The trade-off, however, was that these new jobs were sometimes less prestigious than the men's old positions.

Doing the bare minimum. Thirteen men (12 full-time workers and one part-time worker) described doing the bare minimum at work. These men conceded that they had lowered their expectations and put less pressure on themselves about what they could and would accomplish in a day's work. In turn, they were apt to "let things slide," "leave work with stuff undone," and "take more time to respond to e-mails and phone calls." Most men did not feel that doing the bare minimum ultimately hurt their work performance or success. Rather, they noted that they had probably been working more than necessary before they had children, and they felt good about their decision to cut back at work. Trey, a 32 year-old White full-time dermatologist, mused, "I just let things slide.... Whereas before, I would either stay a little bit later or work on the weekends. I just don't really do that anymore unless it really needs to be done. And so, it just sort of means that things maybe take a little bit longer.... It makes me realize that a lot of the time I was staying late before was probably a little unnecessary." For Troy and others, then, having a child had prompted them to re-evaluate the amount of time and energy they put into their work.

More efficient at work. Eight full-time workers had made an explicit effort to be more efficient at work so as to free up their time at home for child care and family time. In an effort to ensure that they did not bring work home with them, they sought to manage their time better at work. In several cases, better time use meant "working faster" and "multitasking." For other men, better time use was defined as curtailing "social time" at work. Nolan, a 36 year-old White full-time teacher, remarked, "I don't hang out in my classroom as much as I used to and talk to the teachers after school. I come home. I have something much more important to do with my time." Although these men had previously valued the social aspect of their jobs, they now sacrificed their time with colleagues in order to spend more time at home.

Few Challenges/Tensions in Balancing Work and Family

Over half of the men whom we interviewed ($n = 40$) described few challenges in balancing work and family during early parenthood. They highlighted specific aspects of their jobs and workplace climate in describing why they perceived so little work-family conflict.

Family-friendly workplace/supervisor. In explaining why they had experienced minimal stress in balancing work and family, 18 men (15 full-time workers, two part-time workers, and one stay-at-home father who was about to return to work) emphasized the support and flexibility that they had received from their bosses and workplaces. These men reported that their bosses had supported their decision to telecommute, at least part-time; had allowed them to flex their hours or change their schedules; and had encouraged them to bring their child to work in the event of a child care crisis. Such accommodations were appreciated in that they served as tangible representations of their bosses' support for their new role as parents; they also facilitated men's efforts to more efficiently and effectively balance the demands of work and family. Jim, a 36 year-old White full-time chef, was grateful that his boss was "able to give me the earlier hours so that I could accommodate getting home by the time he gets home from school."

In several cases, men's bosses had communicated a message that "family comes first"—a gesture that men appreciated as they struggled to maintain productivity at work while also dealing with new demands at home. For example, when asked about how thing were going with respect to balancing work and family, Jim's partner Timothy, a 41 year-old White full-time sales manager at a small car dealership, remarked that his boss told him: "'You try to be superman and you don't have to be. You go do what you have to do and if you have to get up and walk out do it. If something is going on at home, work at home for a day.'"

These men were heartened by their supervisors' support, and in turn highlighted their commitment to remain at their current jobs, feeling that they were at "really good job[s] for being a parent." For example, Timothy went on to say, "Somebody could come along and say, 'We are going to offer you double the pay, why don't you come over here?' and I wouldn't leave. Not that I don't want to make more money, but I make enough money doing what I'm doing and they're just incredible.... I just can't say how fortunate I am to work for somebody [who understands]."

Job flexibility. Job flexibility emerged as a major factor that appeared to minimize work-family stress. Specifically, 15 men (13 full-time workers and two part-time workers) named the temporally flexible nature of their job as a key reason why they had experienced so little work-family conflict. Many of them reported that their flexible schedule allowed them to drop off and pick up their child from day care, attend occasional pediatrician appointments during the day, and so on. Being able to flex their schedule allowed men to spend more time with their child, and to make up missed work hours in the evening, when their child was in bed. These men were aware that life would be more challenging if they were required to work a standard work schedule. Will, a 37 year-old White full-time marketing manager, explained: "The balance has been good

because I have that flexibility.... If I was stuck in a 9-5 or 8-5 job, in a rigid schedule, it would be difficult. Just because her child care [is] only open until 5:30 and you can't get there before 8." These men had the freedom to accomplish work tasks whenever was most convenient for them, thus enabling them to more effectively manage their work schedules and minimize work-family stress.

Discussion

This is the first study to provide an in-depth exploration of gay adoptive fathers' experiences balancing work and family in the early stages of parenthood. Most of the men in our sample were satisfied with the distribution of family responsibilities and paid employment, suggesting little evidence of gender role strain with regard to work-family balance (Levant, 2011; Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2002). These men challenged dominant masculine norms, portraying themselves as involved parents who valued hands-on parenting and an egalitarian ethic. Some men did struggle to balance their roles as both breadwinner and parent, and they articulated a great deal of work-family tension in part due to the value they placed on their role as caretakers (Schieman et al., 2009).

As gay adoptive fathers in particular, it is possible that because they had to go to extreme lengths to become parents (Goldberg, 2010), their decision to pursue parenthood translated into a decision to take an active role in parenting, which in turn might have influenced their work/family priorities. While most of the men did not report changes in their work/family priorities—suggesting had already valued both work and family before the transition to parenthood—some men reduced their focus on their careers, as their priorities shifted more toward their role as parents, a finding that coincides with recent research on contemporary egalitarian heterosexual fathers (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Some men found that although the nature of their jobs had not changed much since becoming parents, the value they placed on their jobs had changed: These men felt that they held more of a "big picture view" of what was important in life.

A smaller number of men explicitly endorsed ideologies consistent with dominant masculine norms (Pleck, 2010), prioritizing work over family once they became parents. These men perceived breadwinning as an important contribution to fatherhood—one that is often underappreciated by contemporary scholars (see Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001). Indeed, the good provider model (Bernard, 1981; Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001) posits that men demonstrate their commitment to the family by being responsible employees and bringing home money. Thus, it is not that these men were necessarily less committed to their children than those men who reduced their prioritization of work, but, rather, they were simply enacting their commitment to their children in an alternative, perhaps somewhat more stereotypically gendered, manner.

The men in our study thus very much valued parenthood, and interestingly, only approximately one-third of the men reported challenges in balancing work and family. These numbers are lower than recent national estimates, which suggest that nearly half of working fathers experience work-family conflict and that 75% of parents working in professional occupations feel they do not have enough time to spend with their children (Matos & Galinsky, 2011). This discrepancy suggests that balancing work and family might be experienced as less stressful for gay adoptive fathers, possibly because

they are enacting alternative gender roles and have felt less pressure to live up to masculine ideals (Pleck, 2010). In turn, these men might balance work and family with greater ease than many heterosexual fathers.

Nevertheless, some men felt that their jobs were making it difficult to balance both work and family. Nearly one-third of the men described work-family interference; that is, they felt that their work responsibilities were interfering with their time with family (Voydanoff, 2005). Work-related travel, after-hours commitments, unsupportive supervisors, and scheduling issues were all described as specific aspects of work that made balancing work and family difficult. Some of the men's narratives echoed those of heterosexual employed men in prior research, who described feeling that their employers and colleagues did not take seriously the needs of fathers in the same way that they consider the needs of mothers (Kaufman et al., 2010; Singley & Hynes, 2005).

On the other hand, only a few men described family-work interference: that is, the experience of family responsibilities as interfering with work productivity (Voydanoff, 2005). These men were concerned that they were not able to devote as much time to their jobs as they used to. Echoing research findings on heterosexual fathers (Schieman et al., 2009), they showed evidence of a struggle with dominant masculine norms (Pleck, 2010) as they grappled with feelings that they might not be living up to their pre-parenthood standards of work productivity. Furthermore, it is possible that as men, they had on some level been operating under the dominant societal notion that they would never have to prioritize family over work (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004), despite the fact that they were partnered with other men.

Men used a variety of strategies to alleviate work-family and family-work tensions. Consistent with Voydanoff's (2005) theoretical conceptualization of work-family balance, men evaluated the fit between their work demands and their family resources, and between their family demands and their work resources. They responded to misfit among these by actively constructing and modifying their roles, resources, and relationships.

Specifically, many men sought to increase resources by hiring outside child care. Some expressed that they did not want to leave their high status occupations, which would have required them to give up the middle- and upper middle-class lifestyles that they were accustomed to prior to becoming fathers (one father aptly labeled this a "luxury problem"). Indeed, the majority of couples remained at their current jobs and obtained outside care for their children, most typically via day care centers and preschools. This allowed them to maintain the salary they were earning prior to adopting. Furthermore, men who viewed themselves as breadwinners were not able to rely on a female primary caretaker in the same way that conventional heterosexual fathers often do (Edwards, 2007), and thus some men sought outside help so that they could maintain their positions as breadwinners. Indeed, nearly one-quarter of the couples were able to hire nannies to care for their children at home while both partners worked. Living on two men's salaries, these couples were able to afford quality paid child care, which allowed them to allot the primary child care role to someone else and to thus maintain both men's breadwinner status. However, some of these men felt conflicted about relying on outside child care, echoing the narratives of heterosexual women who often feel compelled to place family above work upon becoming a parent (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004).

It is also possible that these men felt a need to counter societal representations of gay men as unfit parents (due to both their gender and sexual orientation; Hicks, 2006).

In addition to increasing family resources, men sought to alleviate work-family tensions by reducing their work demands. The men who continued to work after becoming parents often spent less time at work by doing the bare minimum or simply becoming more efficient at work. In contrast to the typical increase in work hours among heterosexual fathers (Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006), the reduction in effort and time that these men describe appears contradictory to dominant conceptualizations of how men's contribution to paid work changes during the transition to parenthood (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000).

The findings of our study build off prior work examining the re-prioritization of family over work among egalitarian, non-traditional heterosexual fathers (Henwood & Procter, 2003; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000; Merla, 2008) as well as Bergman et al.'s (2010) study of gay men who became fathers via surrogacy. On one hand, the fathers in our study may simply be egalitarian fathers (akin to egalitarian heterosexual fathers) who experience the desire to be more involved parents than fathers have in the past (Henwood & Procter, 2003), and therefore are forced to confront more work-family conflict than non-egalitarian fathers (Cooper, 2000; Schieman et al., 2009). But, for the fathers in our sample, their positioning as *gay* men—and thus violators of conventional standards of masculinity by virtue of their sexuality (Hicks, 2006)—may facilitate a greater willingness to violate gender norms in choosing to prioritize family over work. Future research should focus on clarifying the uniqueness of *gay* fathers' work-family conflict as compared to *egalitarian* fathers' work-family conflict in general. In addition, some research on lesbian mothers suggests that lesbian adoptive parents are more egalitarian than lesbians who create biological families (Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002); future research should compare gay adoptive fathers with gay fathers who pursue surrogacy. That is, as adoptive fathers in particular, the men in our sample began parenthood on an equal plane and thus might be more egalitarian than gay fathers who pursue surrogacy, where one father is biologically related to the child and the other is not (which might, presumably, predispose them to somewhat differentiated work-family roles).

Our findings speak to the need for employers and companies to offer greater flexibility and support to employees (Haddock et al., 2006). Indeed, in prior research on heterosexual workers with family responsibilities, supervisor support has been found to reduce stress and role conflict and may even improve family functioning (Clark, 2001; Haddock et al., 2006). The men in our study often relied heavily on job flexibility and support from employers and were able to maintain successful work-family balance when they received such support. Notably, most of the men in our study were in high status occupations, which allowed them to pay for the resources necessary to maintain healthy work-family balance. Men employed in lower status occupations have historically struggled more than their higher class counterparts to balance their jobs with their families (Fass, 2009).

Furthermore, it is important for workplaces to be both LGB-friendly (Huffman, King, & Goldberg, 2012) as well as respectful of men as parents, particularly as men in general are becoming more involved as fathers (Doucet, 2009) and gay men specifically are increasingly choosing to become parents (Goldberg, 2010). For gay fathers who

are trying to balance work and family responsibilities, having job flexibility and understanding bosses can both ease their stress and increase their job satisfaction. In turn, evidence suggests that satisfied employees are motivated to work hard at their jobs (Haddock et al., 2006), and that employers who offer workplace flexibility will benefit from having satisfied and engaged employees (Matos & Galinsky, 2011). Thus, facilitating a workplace culture that is both LGB-friendly and family-friendly can be advantageous to employers as well as employees.

Limitations

The current study was limited in its sample of primarily White, highly educated, and financially stable men. For some men, tensions in prioritizing family over work may reflect the general tendency of the overall sample to be engaged in relatively high-status occupations which emphasize advancement and competition (Schieman et al., 2009). Their experiences might differ from those of men who are employed in lower-status occupations and/or who work in non-competitive work environments (Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2010). Likewise, most of the strategies that men described to reduce perceived work-family conflict are strategies not available to low-income workers. For example, job flexibility has been shown to positively impact employees in terms of reducing their stress level associated with work-family balance (Haddock et al., 2006; Hill et al., 2001). However, as scholars have noted, job flexibility is unfortunately typically available only to workers in professional occupations (Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Drescher-Burke, 2005).

Thus, gay men's largely middle-class status had implications for their experiences of work-family balance and imbalance, and it is important to contextualize these men's struggles in the context of their generally high levels of education and income. For example, workplace flexibility is more characteristic of white collar occupations than blue collar occupations (Cooper, 2000; Fass, 2009), and our sample consisted primarily of men in the former category. More research should examine the challenges of working-class gay fathers (e.g., the role of homophobia in male-dominated working-class occupations, and how job status impacts work-family conflict). The majority of men in our sample did not describe experiencing homophobia in the workplace, which may also reflect their high-status jobs.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study of gay adoptive couples examined the ways in which men prioritized work and family, the types of challenges and tensions that they faced as parents and professionals, and the strategies that they used to increase congruence between their work roles and family roles (Voydanoff, 2005). Their class status impacted their experiences, in that many couples were able to draw upon resources such as nannies and quality day care that are not available to many working-class parents. We found that these gay fathers' experiences often overlapped with prior research on egalitarian, non-traditional heterosexual fathers (Henwood & Procter, 2003; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000; Merla, 2008), in that they experienced similar tensions in balancing their desire to be involved fathers with their desire to maintain their professional identities. In ad-

dition, the men who felt obligated to prioritize family over work expressed similar beliefs and experiences to heterosexual working mothers from prior research (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004). Importantly, we also found that their experiences reflected their unique status as gay adoptive fathers, in that as two men, they tended to be highly motivated parents (Tyebjee, 2003) with egalitarian gender role ideologies (Riggle, Whitman, Olson, Rostosky, & Strong, 2008). Despite growing up in a heternormative and gendered society, the majority did not voice evidence of gender role strain (Levant, 2011) and in fact were able to successfully balance work with family. The narratives of the men in our study thus deviate from—and perhaps represent a form of resistance to—dominant masculinity ideologies that emphasize breadwinning and career success as central to masculinity in general and "good" fathering specifically (Cooper, 2000; Merla, 2008).

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