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Professionals Becoming Parents: Socialization, Adaptation, and Identity Transformation

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The focus of our research was to learn about the process of new identity construction and socialization into parenthood among career-oriented professionals voluntarily working less than full time for family reasons. Enhanced understanding of this process of identity transformation will potentially help employers respond to the changing demographics in the workforce—through offering different ways of working and design and delivery of more effective and more widely utilized work-life initiatives. Illumination of the process of professionals becoming parents will also benefit individuals and increase their capacity to continue to invest in their professional growth and development, while creating space for investing in children and family life. This study examined in depth the meaning behind reduced-load work arrangements among professionals, in order to explore changes in identity as these professionals-turned-parents adapted to their new life circumstances. Although professionals often invest years in training, preparing for a career, and developing a professional identity, little work has been done on how professionals adapt and are socialized to take on other significant life roles such as parent. The intent is to link state of the art theory and research from several disciplines (including sociology, social psychology, development psychology, management, and family studies) to enhance understanding of what happens when a professional becomes a parent.

The overall aim of this research was to gain insight into: (a) similarities and differences in the ways individuals describe their career and family orientations before and after arranging to work on a reduced-load basis, (b) the process of socialization into parenthood, (c) the process of adaptation of previous work and family routines to new realities, and (d) emergent identity changes and factors accounting for differences in the impact of parenthood on this group of professionals. The premise of this chapter is that we need to learn more about the transition to parenthood *in a career context* in order to increase understanding of individual development and identity transformation over time, as well as to provide employers with a more complete picture of the needs of employees for different ways of working and support structures as they try to make choices aligned with their changing work and personal contexts. Greater understanding of this process could lead to new theoretical insights as well as to practical ideas to help professionals cope with this major life transition.

Identity and Identity Change

We use the term *identity* to refer to the meanings attached to a person by self and others (Gecas, 1982). We assume that identities are socially constructed and negotiated in social interaction and that an individual's sense of self or identity is based both on personal traits as well as social roles and group memberships. Our investigation here seeks to examine carefully whether and how identity changes occur when career-oriented professionals become parents and also choose reduced-load work. The term *identity* has been used to refer to different phenomena in the fields of social psychology, sociology, and developmental psychology, for example self-esteem, personal identity, social identity. Here the focus is *not* on self-esteem, which involves an evaluation of self rather than self-concept; nor are we concerned with social identity, which has to do with the aspects of identity derived from group memberships or identification. Instead, we focus on self-concept or personal identity. Gecas (1982) points out that there are two different traditions in the study of conceptions of self in sociology. One approaches the study of identity through the roles people play, and identities are viewed as internalized roles (Desrochers, Andreassi, & Thompson, 2003). Identity theorists in this tradition (e.g., Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Burke, 2000) view roles as connecting persons to the social context. The structure of self-concept is considered a hierarchical organization of an individual's role-identities, and the more one is involved or enmeshed in relationships related to a particular role, the greater is one's commitment to that aspect of identity. This research stream within sociology has been called the structural interactionist perspective, or the Iowa school. Career theorist D. T. Hall (1976, 2002) has followed in this tradition in suggesting that people have different subidentities, or individual components of identity, based on different social roles a person occupies, for example father, church elder, soccer coach, manager, and so on. Many work-

family scholars have also pursued this research tradition in proposing positive effects of multiple roles (Barnett, 1998; Marks & MacDermid, 1996).

The other research tradition on identity in sociology, commonly known as the Chicago school, is referred to as the processual interactionist approach. This school of thought has emphasized more of the ongoing process of negotiation of identity in a social context and the importance of individual social construction of reality. Gecas (1982, p. 11) suggests that indeed researchers in this tradition "view action and interaction as indeterminate, because of the unpredictable 'I' and the problem involved in aligning actions." This approach seems more compatible with learning from the sample of professionals being studied here, who can be viewed as actively negotiating identity and constructing their own reality through reduced-load work. But to understand identity transformation we need to focus not only on how these individuals act on their environments—their social situation both at work and at home—but also on how they are affected by these interactions. In short, identity is conceived as both cause and consequence in social interaction. *Identity transformation* is used here to mean a significant change in the way the individual views him- or herself in a social context, a shift in self-concept that goes beyond simply adding a role or subidentity.

Identity change or growth has been of great interest to adult development or life-span scholars, and one recurring theme in much of this literature has been the assertion that there are predictable, age-related transitions that shape identity over time (Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1978). A contrasting developmental view is that of Robert Kegan (1982), who does not ascribe to the importance of age but sees individual growth and identity development as driven by how individuals cope with new situations that contain increasingly greater complexity. Kegan (1982) proposes a series of levels of identity, as individuals shift from being highly dependent and self-focused to being more autonomous and perhaps later to being capable of interdependence. He emphasizes the importance of individuals' interactions with others in a variety of environments, in determining the evolving self. Both of these developmental perspectives have more in common with the processual interactionist than with the structural interactionist perspective on identity. That is, the focus is more outward on how the individual continuously negotiates identity in a changing social context; whereas the structural interactionist takes a more inward, or intrapersonal perspective on different roles played and different subidentities and their interrelationships.

An abundant literature in management exists showing that changes in identity accompany career transitions, whether they occur in early career stages, as in job entry and socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), or later periods, as in transfers or promotions (Hill, 1992; Nicholson, 1984). At the same time theorists have suggested that there are continuities across individuals' careers resulting from somewhat stable configurations of motives, values, and interests as well as abilities. Schein (1978, 1996) calls these "career anchors." In family

studies there is also a stream of theory and research focused on changes in identity that accompany the transition to parenthood (e.g., Antonucci & Mikus, 1988; Dion, 1989; Salmela-Aro, Nurmi, Saisto, & Halmesmaki, 2000; Strauss & Goldberg, 1999; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Both family and management scholars acknowledge the importance of identity and identity construction (e.g., Bielby & Bielby, 1989; Ibarra, 1999). But there has been little attention paid by scholars in either organizational studies or family studies to the *career* transition of parenthood, to the socialization into the new role of parent in the context of a professional career. The management literature has given little attention to the significance of parenthood in the overall development of a career. And the family literature has not integrated career continuity and discontinuity issues in its consideration of the transition to parenthood and associated adult development challenges that unfold over time.

Socialization

In a review chapter on adult socialization Dion (1985) defines *socialization* as "the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society" (p. 3). She notes that the three main domains of adult socialization dealt with in the literature are work, marriage, and parenthood, but there has been more focus on socialization into work and occupational roles than into family roles. Socialization in the management literature has tended to be viewed as a process through which individuals learn the beliefs, values, orientations, behaviors, skills necessary to fulfill their new roles and function effectively within an organization (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Hall, 2002; Van Maanen, 1976). Socialization can also refer to a process professionals go through when they experience major career transitions and need to acquire new skills and adapt to social norms and rules that govern conduct in the new context. Gecas (1982) notes that a major stream of research from the processual interactionist approach to the study of identity has focused on socialization. Ibarra (1999) recently linked socialization and identity in interpreting findings from a study of financial analysts promoted to management positions. She suggests these finance professionals developed "provisional selves" that allowed them to bridge the gap between their current capacities and self-concept and the representations they had about attitudes and behavior expected in their new roles.

Socialization into parenthood has not been investigated in the same way as socialization into occupational or work roles. The literature on becoming a parent tends to be framed as a transition, which suggests personal and/or marital adjustment; whereas socialization automatically conjures up the social context and situates parenthood in a broader social structure. The term *socialization* raises questions about *how* the transition plays out and what the influences are

over time. The focus on transition reflects the clinical concern in the family literature about healthy adjustment to parenthood (Demo & Cox, 2000). Just as the socialization literature (e.g., Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) has maintained that identity changes accompany *work* role changes, family sociologists have asserted that the transition to parenthood has the potential to change the way parents think and feel about themselves and their environment (Daly, 1996; Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). Strauss and Goldberg (1999) suggest that this happens as a result of increased differentiation and reorganization of existing aspects of self, leading to a more coherent self across different roles. However, the framing of entry into parenthood as a transition, rather than a process of socialization, has perhaps limited the research focus and therefore the learning to be gained. In this time of the dual-earner family as the modal family structure and dramatically increased labor participation of mothers with young children, a socialization perspective on entry into parenthood could draw needed attention to emerging changes in how individuals learn the necessary skills to perform their new roles and subsequent implications for society, community, and organizations.

Process of Adaptation

Research on work and family in recent years has generated some interesting theorizing about how individuals and families are dealing with the high level of work and family demands (Barnett, 1998; Daly, 2002; Hall, 2002; Hall & Hall, 1979; Hertz, 1997; Hochschild, 1997; Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr, 1999; Moen & Wethington, 1992; Moen & Yu, 2000; Perlow, 1998; Sekaran & Hall, 1989). Moen and Wethington (1992, p. 234) coined the term *family adaptive strategies* to refer to "the actions families devise for coping with, if not overcoming, the challenges of living, and for achieving their goals in the face of structural barriers." Out of this framework a life course approach was developed to examine how couples make choices over time around engagement in work and family. In a subsequent study Moen and Yu (2000) plotted couple work-hour strategies at different life stages (e.g., one or both members of couple working under 39 hours per week, one or both over 45 hours, and both 39–45 hours). Using the same data set Becker and Moen (1999) found three "scaling back" work-family strategies, all of which involved the couple decreasing total work commitments. Kossek, Noe, and DeMarr (1999) proposed the term *work-family role synthesis* as a way of thinking about the strategies an individual uses to manage the enactment of work and caregiving roles. They identified two critical components to work-family role synthesis, boundary management and role embracement of multiple roles. Barnett (1998) has suggested that the concept of *fit* is critical to our enhanced understanding of effective management of work and personal life. She defines *fit* as "a dynamic process of adjustment between work conditions and the characteristics of workers and their strategies to meet their own needs"

(1998, p. 144). Hertz (1997) focuses on different approaches to child care as the centerpiece of organizing family life among dual-career couples.

Emotional Response

Emotion has not been a popular topic of study in organizational behavior until relatively recently, and its role in work motivation has been little explored (Seo, Barrett, & Bartunek, 2002). In fact, mainstream theories of work motivation place more emphasis on needs, external stimuli, and cognition (e.g., perceptions, goals). Emotion has not been considered a very important factor. Yet Seo et al. (in press) note that there is an extensive body of research that provides convincing evidence that human emotion influences human thought and behavior in all domains, whether at work or in other settings. In their paper they present preliminary evidence of how core affect has direct and indirect effects on work motivation. Furthermore, Rothbard (2001) recently proposed a model of engagement in work and family roles in which positive and negative affect help explain the dynamics of depletion and enrichment between roles. Certainly emotion would seem to be critical to our understanding professionals' socialization into parenthood and subsequent efforts to adapt work and family routines to the new demands of the situation, because fathers and mothers typically have affective responses to becoming parents (Oberman & Josselson, 1996; Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). In fact, individuals' variable emotional responses to parenthood could be a major force driving the process of identity transformation

Reduced-Load Work

Although there has been a proliferation of theoretical frameworks and typologies on approaches to effective engagement and enactment in the areas of career and family, there has been a tendency to focus on different types of strategies rather than the actual *process* of adaptation, and there has been little attention given to adaptation connected specifically to *new* parenthood. Yet a recent study of reduced-load work arrangements among professionals and managers (Lee, MacDermid, & Buck, 2002) indicated that the timing of requests for working less was strongly associated with the birth of a child. Working on a reduced-load basis, or part time, in a professional or managerial job, represents a relatively new alternative work arrangement that has been getting increasing attention in recent years (Barnett & Gareis, 2000; Corwin, Lawrence, & Frost, 2001; Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, & Saute, 1998; Lee, MacDermid, & Buck, 2000; Meiksins & Whalley, 2002). Lee, Engler, and Wright (2002) document increased percentages of doctors, lawyers, and accountants working less than full-time, and Corwin et al. (2001) estimates that 10% of corporate professionals work part time. Barnett and Gareis (2002) note that a number of studies show professional dissatisfaction with long work hours, and many scholars connect this

trend with the increased number of dual-career and single-parent families and the struggle to balance the competing demands of work and family obligations (Spalter-Roth et al., 1997). Furthermore, there is evidence that working longer hours is clearly associated with *wanting* to work less in dual-career couples in which husband and wife are both working at least 35 hours (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001). It is also clear that more organizations are offering reduced-load work to professionals in an effort to retain talented employees (Barnett & Gareis, 2002).

Despite the growth in reduced-load work arrangements, little attention has been paid to the meanings behind this phenomenon and the implications for organizations that want to be responsive or even proactive in providing alternative ways of working for a changing workforce. What we explore here is the underlying function of reduced-load work in the context of professionals' lives and careers, as well as in the context of the organization. We view reduced-load work as a manifestation of the adaptation process professionals go through as they are socialized into a new role and experience identity transformation from career-oriented professional to professional *and* parent.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this chapter came from a subsample of a larger study of managers and professionals voluntarily working less than full time (.50–.90 of a full-time equivalent position) for family and/or lifestyle reasons and incurring commensurate reductions in compensation. Using a case study approach (Yin, 1994), we sought multiple perspectives on each work arrangement by interviewing not only the target managers and professionals but also four additional stakeholders per case. These included the worker's senior manager, a peer-level coworker, the spouse or partner (where applicable), and a human resource representative of the employing firm. The total sample consisted of 87 cases of reduced-load work in professional and managerial jobs in 45 different firms.[1] Because of equipment failure or lost audiotapes in four cases, the final sample was 83 cases from 43 firms. The study described here focused on 78 individuals in 75 cases (three were job share arrangements), where the target individual working reduced load was a parent with at least one child living at home. Seventy-four were women and four were men. Three were separated or divorced; one was a single parent; and 74 were married. The average age of the youngest child was 4.7. Participants were in a variety of kinds of professional and managerial positions (e.g., engineer, accountant, bank branch manager) in a variety of different kinds of companies (e.g., manufacturing, financial services, natural resources, telecommunications) in the United States and Canada. They had been working on a reduced-load basis an average of 4.2 years, and the average work load was 72% of full time, with the most typical reductions being three or four days, 60% or

80%. Participants were working an average of 32 hours a week at the time of the study, which represented an average of 17 hours less than they had been working when full time. Prorated to a full-time equivalent, salaries ranged from $31,111 to $175,000 U.S., with the mean salary $79,441 (at time of data collection 1996–1998).

The target respondents were all interviewed for one to two hours about the logistics of the reduced-load arrangement, how it came about, and how it was working out from a personal and family, as well as organizational perspective. Appendix A herein shows the entire interview protocol. The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim. A grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used in data analysis, with a focus on material specifically related to identity issues and socialization into parenthood. Keeping in mind themes in the work and family and socialization literatures, the authors read and reread transcripts and produced a reflective memo for each case, giving special attention to participant comments and responses related to the following topics or issues:

1. Career orientation:
   - *Prior* to becoming a parent.
   - Currently (while on reduced-load work).
   - Projecting into the future.
2. Family orientation.
3. Other aspects of identity or other roles.
4. Socialization into parenthood (learning about and entry into new role).
5. Adaptation.

In addition, the first author reviewed previously produced analytic memos that contained summary information on each case based on all stakeholder interviews. This was done to probe reasons given for pursuing reduced-load work and to review the process of negotiation with the employer as well as the overall story of previous and ongoing adjustments made over time in the actual enactment of the work arrangement.

The first author then reviewed the materials mentioned earlier, using the method of constant comparison advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and produced the following building blocks for a tentative theoretical framework: a set of profiles that captured similarities and differences in respondents' descriptions of themselves before parenthood and at present; a catalog of the kinds of socialization into parenthood experiences that surfaced; and characterization of different dynamics that seemed to be operating in the adaptation process of making adjustments in work or home routines to accommodate new realities. Gradually, through multiple iterations of comparing and contrasting the experiences of respondents and integrating existing relevant theory, a tentative the-

oretical framework was developed to explain some of the dynamics in identity transformation and to guide future research on this issue.

OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Out of this qualitative examination of how professionals enter into parenthood has emerged a tentative theoretical framework for understanding the socialization process, as well as the process of adaptation which together shape a new sense of self (see Fig. 14.1). Most professionals in their early career stages are consumed with developing the appropriate skills and knowledge, as well as acquiring the necessary repertoire of behaviors and conforming to organizational and/ or professional norms and regulations; and establishing and proving themselves by performing well and garnering recognition for staking out territory and promoting further career advancement. They are very committed to their careers and feel closely identified with their professions. We propose here that although most professionals share a great deal in common before they have children, there is variation in self-conceptions, which are represented in the model as five kinds of *Identity Before Parenthood*: Career Defined, Career Defined with Family Acquisition Plans, Career and Family: A Joint Venture, Alternating Career and Family, and Career Pursued in a Context. These are meant to capture some of the differences among professionals, before becoming parents, in the centrality of career and family to the self-concept and the goals and expectations about parenthood at a later point in time.

It is proposed here that once a professional becomes a parent, preparenthood identity is transformed through a complex and dynamic process of socialization into parenthood and concurrent adaptation of work and family routines. Meanwhile, the individual's emotional responses to becoming a parent, to the process of socialization, and to making changes or adjustments in work patterns play an important role in the evolution of identity. *Socialization* into parenthood consists of a process of learning about and entering into a new role. Of course, it begins in childhood through our own experiences with our own parents, and it continues through different stages of parents' lives when their children are different ages. But socialization into parenthood is especially intense around the time of first becoming a parent. It happens unconsciously and unintentionally through what individuals observe and experience. It happens as mothers and fathers have to begin to perform the new role in the particular circumstances of pregnancy and birth and early care of an infant, and in interaction with other important players. It unfolds as a function of the individual professional's work context, in terms of the kinds of parental leave policies and other work-life practices in place in the firm, as well as a result of the kinds of social norms and values that circumscribe the range of acceptable behaviors for employees who are parents. So-
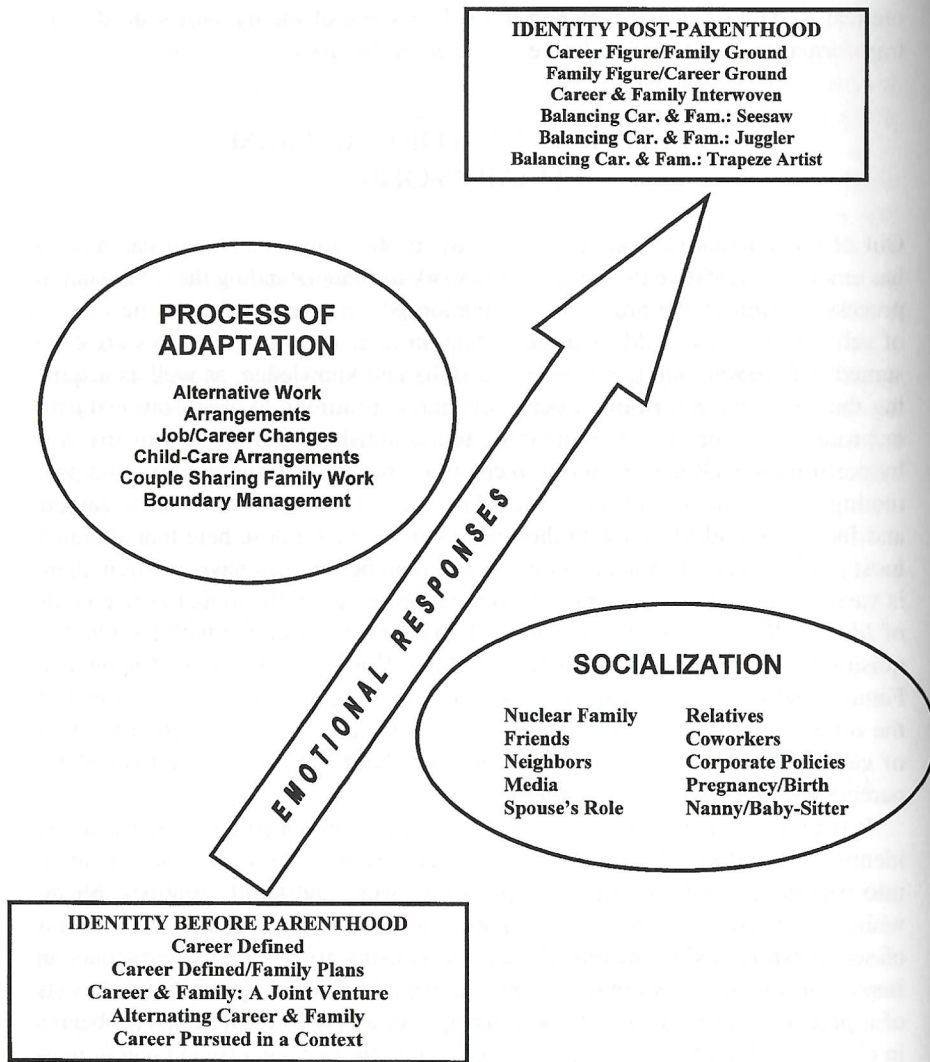
cialization continues—through the interaction of parents and child as well as family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and so on, and through concomitant emotional responses—the individual begins a *Process of Adaptation* to the new parental role. Through experience and trial and error, the individual makes accommodations at work for the sake of family and accommodations in the family for the sake of work, in order to establish a new regime for satisfactory linking of parent and professional interfacing with the realities of negotiating career and family in daily life. Often some structural changes are initiated in work patterns, in order to lessen work time and burden. New arrangements around the family work also emerge.

Of course, as the socialization into parenthood continues and these professionals experiment with changes and adjustments in the work and family routines, they also have *Emotional Responses*, both positive and negative—to the new regimes, to being a parent, to trying to continue the fast-paced demanding career with a toddler or two at home, and so on. Those responses may also lead to further adaptations. And, of course, the kinds of changes and adjustments possible in the workplace are constrained by the type of position, work unit, and employer of the individual professional as well as his or her spouse.

So gradually what emerges then from this process of Identity Transformation is professionals whose sense of identity or self has changed from previously, to incorporate the new role of parent. The new kinds of Identity Postparenthood are proposed to include the following: Career Figure/Family Ground, Family Figure/Career Ground, Career and Family Interwoven, Balancing Career and Family: Seesaw, Balancing Career and Family: Juggler, Balancing Career and Family: Trapeze Artist. These new selves represent more than just adding of an additional role, because the overall essence of the individual is fundamentally altered as he or she continues to negotiate identity but in a new context and social structure that includes the workplace, family, and community. In this formulation of identity transformation the individual is not a static entity, and the interrelationships and dynamics among various roles the individual plays are viewed as meaningless outside of the context of the social situations where life is enacted. Identity is conceived of as more than the sum of its parts (e.g., roles), and the labels given to the new identities here are meant to allow comparing and contrasting how the individual is linked to the social context. These new identities can be thought of as representing provisional selves, and they express differences in the orienting force, or dominant orientation, or organizing principle in peoples' lives, as well as differences in the nature and stability of interlinking mechanisms joining professional and parent.

The emergent provisional self that comes out of the socialization into parenthood and the adaptation process of creating new work and family regimes is essentially highly variable. Individuals enter into parenthood with different self-images, expectations, experiences, emotions. And the socialization process is idiosyncratic. Furthermore, the adaptation process is strongly influenced by cou-

IDENTITY POST-PARENTHOOD
Career Figure/Family Ground
Family Figure/Career Ground
Career & Family Interwoven
Balancing Car. & Fam.: Seesaw
Balancing Car. & Fam.: Juggler
Balancing Car. & Fam.: Trapeze Artist

PROCESS OF ADAPTATION
Alternative Work Arrangements
Job/Career Changes
Child-Care Arrangements
Couple Sharing Family Work
Boundary Management

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

SOCIALIZATION
Nuclear Family   Relatives
Friends   Coworkers
Neighbors   Corporate Policies
Media   Pregnancy/Birth
Spouse's Role   Nanny/Baby-Sitter

IDENTITY BEFORE PARENTHOOD
Career Defined
Career Defined/Family Plans
Career & Family: A Joint Venture
Alternating Career & Family
Career Pursued in a Context

FIG. 14.1.   Identity transformation.

cialization is also going on when a person inquires or networks with colleagues about the possibilities for flexible or customized work arrangements within certain departments, or jobs, and so on.

So, individuals bring to the experience of having a child: their pre-existing identity as a professional, embedded in a complex network of relationships at work and at home (e.g., spouse and spouse's occupation, employer) and perhaps in the community; and a process of learning about parenthood. Then, as so-

ple and relationship factors, as well as organizational factors that determine degrees of freedom the individual participant has to custom design a career work arrangement and a family work arrangement compatible with individual needs and desires.

FINDINGS

First, we examine similarities and differences in how the reduced-load professionals in our sample described themselves, conveyed their sense of self *before* having children. Second, we describe recurrent themes in respondents' accounts of their socialization into parenthood, that is, how they learned about and entered this new role. Third, we describe five of the most common kinds of changes or adjustments in work and family patterns that were enacted in the adaptation process. Fourth, we provide examples of the dynamic role of emotional responses in the overall process of identity transformation. Finally, we describe our sample's self-conceptions *after* becoming parents and propose a typology of different kinds of linking of parental and professional identity based on observed resolutions of the professional's journey involving incorporating parenthood into his or her sense of self.

Identity Before Parenthood

What we were looking for here was how these professionals thought about themselves *before* actually having a child. How did they talk about who they were and what they cared about, their dreams, and so on? What did their careers mean to them? Did they want a family and what were their expectations about how their careers might be affected if they did? Of course, given that all of the interviews occurred on average three to four years after the birth of the first child, this meant that respondents were looking back and reconstructing their sense of self, their identity from an earlier period. So the self-descriptions presented here are retrospective and likely tainted by their actual experiences with parenthood.

In examining the self-descriptions of the 78 individuals in the sample *before* parenthood, we found one striking similarity across all but a handful of the cases. They were all highly identified with their careers, and they had met with significant success and recognition and were proud of their career achievements. They also reported that the idea of abandoning their careers if they had children was never something they had considered. There were also some important differences in the ways these individuals represented who they were before parenthood, what role career played in their lives in general, what they wanted and expected in their careers and lives. For example, some had a more active and diverse set of activities and commitments in their lives apart from work. Some

reported being more certain than others about wanting to have children, and they had a wide range of expectations about how having a family might affect their careers and how they would react or adapt to being a parent *and* a professional.

Career Defined.   Those we labeled as career defined described themselves as very career-oriented, with ambitions to rise to the top and with little or no interest in having children. They presented an image of themselves as having been very successful and having been on an upwardly mobile career trajectory before having had children. They had not really planned to have a family or had given no real thought to whether they wanted children. They did not recall thinking ahead or anticipating any difficulties that might arise if they became parents. Ten of the 78 participants (12.8%) fit into this identity pattern.

Career Defined with Family Acquisition Plans.   The second group identified was quite similar to the Career-Defined group in that these individuals were very ambitious and had been very successful so far in their careers. They were striving for the same high level jobs in their firms, and they did not anticipate any changes or difficulties in continuing their strong commitment to their careers after having children. The distinction between the two groups is that those in this second group said that they had always wanted to have a family and had assumed they would be able to "add on" family to their very career oriented lives, kind of like a planned business acquisition, with no significant problems. They had presumed that with lots of help from surrogate caregivers (e.g., nannies, day care, relatives) and hired help, the extra load would not be that great and they would be able to maintain their long work hours and involvement in key roles in their organizations unfazed. Thirty-two of 78 participants (41%) fit this pattern of preparental identity.

Career and Family: A Joint Venture.   The third kind of self-description that surfaced came from a group of individuals with the same strong career orientation before children, the same ambition and success, recognition outlined in the previous patterns. Like those in the Career Defined with Family Acquisition Plans, they had always imagined that they would have a family as well as a career. However, these individuals said that they had known in advance that having children would change their lives, that it would involve a major expansion of responsibilities and perhaps some changes in their careers. In spite of this, they said they had looked forward to becoming a parent and considered it very important to their overall identity. They also expected to be able to move ahead and continue in their careers, just not quite in the same way or at the same pace. They described their expectations of "life after children" with images suggesting a kind of joint venture between career and family, assigning equal importance to the two in their lives. Twelve of 78, or 15.4%, fell into this pattern.

Alternating Career and Family. This group was very committed to their work and saw themselves as giving their all to their careers as long as they did not have a family. Once they had children, they assumed they would put family first and continue their careers only as long as they could successfully orchestrate them around family as the priority. These individuals had high career goals before having children but were prepared to put them on hold for some period of time and concentrate more on family once they became parents. They assumed they would have to make compromises in their careers for the sake of family; and they were completely comfortable with such an eventuality, as it fit with their identity and sense of self, which was grounded in a clear commitment to family as the most important thing in life. Nine of 78, or 11.5%, fit this pattern.

Career Pursued in a Context. The final kind of preparental self-conception presented was labeled to convey that these individuals claimed to have always pursued their careers in a context in which family or other life interests played a central role. Even before having children, they had never conceived of their careers as a key defining aspect of identity but rather as a pursuit in service of other goals in life. These individuals never made career the centerpiece in their lives, even before becoming parents, and they often had compelling interests or activities outside of their careers before having a family. They pursued their careers in the context of a life rather than as "the main show." They tended to talk more about the importance of sustained personal growth and development, making a contribution, or being able to pursue other interests in addition to their careers. Nevertheless, before becoming parents these individuals had achieved significant career success as professionals and felt proud of their accomplishments. Fifteen of 78, or 19.2%, of the sample fit this pattern of preparental identity.

Socialization into Parenthood

So the next question is: What brought these individuals from their sense of self before becoming a parent to their new identity afterward? Of course, we know already that they began with different self-conceptions and expectations of career and family even before becoming parents. In addition, they described different kinds of experiences, events, and associations in relation to their transition to parenthood. These different avenues of socialization included: (a) childhood and crossgenerational interaction, (b) peer and sibling same cohort models, (c) purposeful information seeking, and (d) self-learning during role entry.

Childhood and Crossgenerational Contact. The concept of socialization as both learning as well as initiation into a new role means that it is a diffuse and extensive process that surely starts with an individual's experiences

in childhood with their own parents, not to mention the ongoing relationships they have with parents into adulthood. Many participants talked explicitly about the model of parenting they had observed and experienced in their own nuclear family and the impact that it had had on them. Participants talked about their own (and/or their spouses') positive experiences with their own mothers or fathers—for example, being home when they came back from school, baking homemade cookies, being there to talk to them and give help with homework, or teaching them how to do things. But they also described mistakes they felt their parents had made and how they were attempting to avoid those pitfalls. Participants also frequently talked about ongoing, current dialogue (sometimes contentious) with their parents about how they were choosing to "parent." Of course, given the mean age of the sample, most were born around 1960, before the dramatic increase in number of mothers with young children in the labor force. So most of the study participants, though not all, had mothers who had not worked outside the home when their children were young.

Peer and Sibling Models. A second related kind of socialization experience was watching siblings, cousins, friends, and colleagues become parents and observing how they incorporated the new role, coped with the added demands, and so forth. Some participants gave accounts of what they had figured out they wanted to avoid; whereas others were inspired to try solutions they had observed among friends or relatives. In these kinds of socialization experiences, participants talked about just absorbing what was around them, for better or worse; they were not intentionally seeking out exposure to different models of parenting or learning about what parenting entails.

Purposeful Information Seeking. A third kind of socialization experience described was more intentional and involved seeking out specific information from coworkers or neighbors, friends of friends, and the like with young children to get their thoughts on what parenthood would involve and what kind of career adjustments were possible, helpful, and not too disruptive. This included talking to others who had tried various alternative work arrangements and gathering information from their employer and/or other employers about existing work-family policies and practices that might be useful to them once they became parents *and* professionals.

Self-Learning During Role Entry. A fourth kind of socialization experience that surfaced in participants' descriptions of the process of becoming parents had to do with the actual physical realities of pregnancy and birth, as well as the subsequent early weeks and months of intense learning about caring for an infant and getting to know a child. Prenatal experiences were mentioned, including fertility issues, multiple miscarriages, difficult pregnancies, twins, adoption. Participants who faced unexpected roadblocks or exceptional chal-

lenges in conceiving said that having had to face the possibility of *not* being able to be parents had made them more committed to being present and involved parents. They had been through a process of realizing how important parenthood was to them and they embraced the new role eagerly.

Many participants described specific aspects of the birth itself or the early weeks and months after the birth as important in their realization of how different their lives were going to be after parenthood. Some found these early experiences difficult and challenging and were eager to return to work after parental leave. Such sentiments often were associated with such things as a difficult birth, postpartum hormonal abnormalities, babies with feeding problems, incessant sleep deprivation, or depression about loss of autonomy. Others had more positive experiences; some even pinpointed events in this period as life-time high points or extraordinary, sublime, life-changing moments. They talked about such things as "falling in love" with their babies, about their own gradual development of a sense of mastery in the new role, or the joint couple experience of making room for a new member of the family.

Another important input that participants mentioned during this time right after the birth of a child was involvement of extended family, especially parents and siblings, who came to visit or help out in the early weeks or months. Participants talked about being more comfortable leaving their babies with relatives than with a paid caretaker whenever possible. Finally, there was often commentary about the degree of involvement of the father in the care of the baby in the early weeks and months. This represented learning about what parenting was going to be like in this particular family, whether more of a joint, shared enterprise, or one parent taking the main responsibility.

Participants also talked about learning from their own early experiences as parents, as well as from books and interaction with other parents with babies—in their neighborhoods, churches, play groups, and so on. For example, they mentioned learning from other mothers about things to do with a baby who will not stop crying; gradually getting to know their own baby and its peculiarities compared to other babies; figuring out when to take the baby to the doctor and when it is not worth it; learning ways to keep their baby physically close but still get things done (through the use of different carriers, etc.); or learning about things they could and could not control about sleep patterns, and so on.

Of course, socialization into parenthood can be viewed as ongoing and continuous in the sense that even after someone has made the transition to the new role of parent, the learning goes on as children grow and change and present new challenges at different stages of development. Some participants in fact talked about significant marker events, when their children were older, which led to major changes in the way they understood their roles as parent and ultimately the way they behaved in the family context. Ambert (2000) talks about the parent-child relationship being an integrated process of socialization in which children affect the parenting they get from their parents. Her perspective differs

from traditional theories on childrearing which concentrate on the parents' independent actions (or their actions alone) as shaping children's behavior and personality. Instead, she says that children themselves affect the way their parents raise them and also affect their parents' lives more than we would have previously thought. A story from one participant provides a good illustration of this point.

> I had a very interesting experience a couple of week ago, where my younger son was very upset on the way to school. And I'm sure there were other things going on at school, but anyway, he was not wanting to go into school. . . . So I sat down, I spent some time with him, and I said, "You're going to have to go in. I'll go in with you." So we walked in together and—and "You know, I really don't want to do this"—and he is not sick. And there is not much I was going to be able to do, because I really had to—work.
>
> So I said, "Gee, I'd really like to spend some time with you. How about let's not do it at lunchtime because that is not going to work for me. But I'll be at school at 2:30. You don't have to go to extended day today. And we'll spend the afternoon together." So I came in to work, I—I left work, I picked him up at 2:30, and he was so happy. . . . He just needed time with me, alone. He didn't ask me to buy him anything, which he often does. But what he wanted was just to spend time with me. We went home, we changed our clothes, we went and had ice cream. And we then came home and we played a little bit of one-on-one basketball and kicked some soccer balls. Just whatever he wanted to do.

Socialization into parenthood necessarily includes the ongoing interaction between parent and child and the parents' assimilation of the reality that their behavior and interaction with their child has, or can have, a powerful impact on the child's thriving or failure to thrive. It means figuring out how and when to act and not act to help children grow and develop, make friends and gradually become independent and spread their wings.

Adaptation Process

The third aspect of this inquiry was to look at different ways participants made adjustments or changes in their work patterns, both in the family and in their careers, as a result of becoming parents. In examining actual changes, of course, all those in the sample were working less than full time as one way to enable combining career and family successfully. There were also other aspects to their alternative work arrangements. Many participants experimented with working one or more days from home offices (completely equipped by the company) as part of their reduced-load work arrangement. And a few had no office other than the one at home and went into the workplace only sporadically for meetings. One manager even supervised from her home office a product development team of 15 who worked in four different locations across three different states.

The shifts in physical location of work were viewed partially as efforts at boundary management, as efforts to customize the boundaries between career and family in a way that worked best for all stakeholders in the situation. Another way participants made adjustments in their work arrangements was to match their own work schedules to the organization's peak demand seasons over a year. So, for example, a comptroller might work three days a week during most of the year but full-time for two weeks around each quarter end. Or an accountant might work full-time in tax season but three days a week the rest of the year.

A second kind of adaptation found was changing jobs or departments or even employers in order to find or create the desired work load and still be able to do interesting, challenging work. We also heard from many of the participants that they had adjusted in some way their career plans, goals, or expectations—short term and/or long term. However, a few insisted that even though they were working reduced load, they did not think it would affect their career advancement. And in fact a third of the sample had been promoted once or twice while working on a reduced-load basis. Among those who had altered their career plans or expectations, there was great variation in the degree of change in their thinking.

A third kind of adjustment or adaptation observed was in child care arrangements. Of course, all working parents must create a system for child care once the parental or maternal leave is over. And often the choices made differ for the first child and then with subsequent children. Our sample varied a great deal in their preferences here. For example, some insisted on extended family involvement, whereas others used on-site employer-sponsored or other institutional day care. Others hired nannies and dealt with a great deal of turnover, or alternatively found individuals who stayed five or ten years. In addition, once a professional changed his or her work arrangement, whether in terms of number of days of work, physical location of work, or a combination of the two, usually there was a need for change in child-care arrangements. For example, a software engineer cutting back to a three-day work week in the office wanted to then find a three-day-a-week nanny, because she would be at home alone with the baby on her two days off. On the other hand, a project manager working 80% of full time worked every day at her fully equipped home office, but she put in fewer hours per week overall. She wanted a five-day-a-week nanny so that she could spend significant time with her two year old more spontaneously throughout the days and the week, depending on her schedule as well as her son's schedule. But in most cases, child-care arrangements went through a number of changes over time, in response to number and ages of children, changes in work patterns of the professional and/or spouse, and changes with the hired help or services.

A fourth kind of adjustment in career/family routines found in the sample was shifts in the division of labor in the family. These professionals working less in the workplace often took on more of the family work at home, although

a few insisted on keeping their increased time off strictly for themselves or for play time with children rather than for chores. However, an unexpected finding was that often the spouses got more involved in the family as a result of the reduced-load work arrangement. For example, if a reduced-load mother or father still maintained contact with the office on days off and was open to being called in on an emergency basis for meetings or client-related issues, the other member of the couple often undertook to be backup. This required the spouse to negotiate or create more flexibility in his or her own work schedule and arrangement.

So there were many different kinds of adjustments and changes made in work and family patterns as part of these professionals' process of adaptation to parenthood. And two clearly powerful constraints operating on this adaptation process were the organization context and the spouse or partner's career and employment situation. Employers offering less flexibility in terms of work load, work hours, work places, and the like restricted the range of accommodations available to the parent wanting to work less, both directly and indirectly, through the rigidity in the spouse or partner's work situation. The spouse or partner's actual occupation and interest in being involved significantly in the family work also has an impact on the kinds of adjustments possible. For example, if a father is a professional cellist in a symphony orchestra, a certain amount of travel per year is totally non-negotiable, as is being able to pick up a sick child from school if there is a rehearsal or performance in progress. However, if the cellist has periods of weeks off totally and refuses to share drop-off and pick-up of children, the shortfall is in his attitude not the constraints of the occupation.

The other common theme we found in the process of making changes and adjustments to accommodate career and family was a great deal of fluidity and transience in solutions found. In most cases this seemed to be a positive thing, for it allowed a kind of ongoing mutual accommodation process to go on. Something might work well for a few months, but then need to be modified because of family or work circumstances changing. As long as there was some flexibility on both the family and work sides, it was possible to engage in ongoing fine-tuning and recalibration or alignment. However, in some cases, individuals were looking for more permanence or stability, a more fixed arrangement because of lack of flexibility in one domain.

Emotional Responses

The transformation process for professionals from preparenthood to postparenthood identity involves an iterative and idiosyncratic process of socialization into the new role of parent. Meanwhile these professionals are also learning by trial and error what kinds of changes or adjustments in work and family patterns allow for the way of life they want. To a great extent the socialization experiences are proposed to have a big effect on the adaptation process, albeit within the constraints of the workplace policies and culture and the career and work-

place constraints of the spouse or partner. But there is a final important dynamic operating in the transformation of identity, and that is the individual's emotional reactions to the transition of becoming a parent in addition to a professional. These emotional responses then drive the spiraling effects of socialization on accommodation and change, and then the effects of those changes in work patterns on subsequent socialization and so on. Gradually over time a new postparenthood identity emerges out of the individual's experiences with socializing influences, adaptation of work and family routines and concomitant emotional responses. Of course, we are not positing that emotional responses determine ultimate postparenthood identity patterns. However, they are considered critical to the identity transformation process, as they represent both cause and effect in relation to ongoing socialization into the new role of parenthood and attempts to accommodate new family commitments.

There was a wide range of emotions, both positive and negative, expressed and recounted in these interviews with professionals working on a reduced-load basis. In fact, in the process of stories being told and key events being recalled, it was not unusual for tears to be shed, or for anger and resentment to be close to the surface. On the other hand, enthusiasm, ebullience, and contentment were also in evidence. It should be noted that in the total overall sample of cases, 93% of the individuals working reduced load were very happy with their arrangements, and 66% of the cases were assessed as being highly successful from the point of view of the individual, the organization and the family. The most common emotions observed or described in the interviews can be divided into two categories, those related to family (e.g., being a parent, socialization into parenthood, division of labor in the family) and those related to career (e.g., job, reduced-load arrangement, career advancement).

Family

- Falling in love with baby or new role
- Exhilaration about expansion of self or self-discovery and exploration of new friends and activities apart from work
- Feelings of loss of self
- Feelings of failure or frustration in new role
- Anger or resentment about lack of support and family work load

Career

- Personal fulfillment about continued achievement, making a meaningful contribution, and future opportunity
- Thrilled and grateful to be able to have both a career and a family
- Comfortable with career trade-offs
- Anxious or ambivalent about career trade-offs

- Feelings of failure or frustration about work performance
- Anger or resentment about lack of support in the workplace

One observed emotional response that did not fall into either the family or career category:

- Feeling torn and fatigued by need for incessant strategic approach to making everything work

So these professionals experienced many of these emotional reactions, and sometimes they seemed paradoxical. For example, one might think that falling in love with one's baby could not be accompanied by a feeling of loss of self from becoming a mother. Yet the two sometimes did go hand-in-hand. Partly because of the mix of emotional responses, these professionals sometimes took action as a result of their reactions and sometimes they did not. And sometimes the action taken led to other emotional responses that were problematic. Or there were constraints in the situation, at work or at home, that made further change and adjustment of work or family regimes difficult. But the emotional responses to the new role, as well as to the processes of socialization and adaptation were integral to the gradual evolution of the new postparenthood identity. In the next section some examples of how the dynamics of emotional responses might link pre- and postparenthood identity patterns will be offered.

Identity as Professional and Parent

Participant self-conceptions after becoming parents suggested an array of different kinds of coupling of professional with parental identity. What we observed was variety in not only the nature of the interlinking of these different aspects of identity, but in the dominance or overall influence of one over the other, as well as the degree of fluidity in the interrelationship.

Career Figure/Family Ground. There were some whose sense of self did not seem to change much after they became parents. Their predominant sense of self came from their professional identification and pursuit of their careers even with the addition of their new role as parent. For example, in the case of some Career-Defined individuals, becoming a parent represented a minor acquisition of a new role requiring a minor reconfiguration. Career remained the priority, and the rest of life was organized around professional goals and constraints. While family and family roles were perceived as an important part of life, the career remained front and center. Only 5 of 78 (5%) individuals fit into this pattern, which is not surprising given the nature of the sample and the fact that all had chosen to work less than full time.

Nevertheless, given that 10 of 78 described themselves as Career Defined *before* having children, and another 32 described themselves as Career Defined with Family Plans, which they did not expect to disrupt their careers in any way, the small number who fit this category of *post* parenthood identity is a testimonial to the power of identity transformation. Four of the five were in the preparental Career-Defined identity pattern, which is also not surprising. These individuals maintained a high level of commitment to their careers and were not prepared to alter the position of career in their overall life context. There was a sense of permanence and clarity about the source, the center of their life structure. Four of the five individuals in this postparenthood identity pattern were also either planning to terminate their reduced load arrangements in the near future or had just recently done so, either because they were not able to actually work less though they were being paid less, or because they had been offered a promotion that required them to be working full time.

The most predominant emotional reactions in this group were exhilaration with continued career achievement and opportunity, loss of self, and anger or resentment about lack of support. Because these professionals continued to invest heavily in their careers after becoming parents, they continued to do well in their careers and feel good about that. However, some of the professionals in this group clearly avoided spending time and home and yet expressed a sense of loss about their restricted ability to work as obsessively as before. Also, several of them expressed a great deal of resentment about their employers' unwillingness to actually allow them to carry a lower work load.

Research on the transition to motherhood has found that one of the key dimensions along which women differ when becoming parents is loss versus expansion of self (Oberman & Josselson, 1996). This issue has different significance for women and men who become parents in the context of a dynamic career and a professional identity independent of family. But we would still expect this issue to be front and center in terms of determining how these individuals seek to join, affix, or integrate their new role as parent to the preexisting professional identity. For example, the parent who experiences parenthood as involving a loss of self may be eager to reengage in the prior work context to reclaim and reaffirm the previous main source of identity. But as a result, that professional may short-circuit the socialization into parenthood and the potential for true embracement of the parental role and ultimately identity transformation. On the other hand, someone who experiences an expansion of self may feel inclined or compelled to completely drop out of his or her career, because his or her employer offers no options that allow for cutting back on work to make room for an expanded life as a professional and parent.

Family Figure/Career Ground. In this postparenthood identity pattern these professionals also were very clear about their priorities, but family was clearly front and center. Their careers remained an important, even essential part

of the picture, but they were orchestrated around family to a great extent. Twenty-two of 78 (28%) fit this pattern. Twelve of them were in the preparental identity pattern of Career Pursued in a Context. So they had known before having children that career would never be the "end-all and be-all" of their existence. Becoming a parent simply consolidated a prior commitment to a rich life beyond career and provided a new source of self-fulfillment. An additional four in this identity pattern had also been clear before having children that their careers would take a back seat to family once they became parents. They were in the Alternating Career and Family preparental identity pattern. However, four came to this postparenthood identity from Career Defined, and they told quite interesting stories about epiphany experiences that led them to a dramatic shift toward putting family, not career, first. The predominant emotional responses to parenthood among those in the Family Figure/Career Ground were quite positive. They experienced a sense of expansion of self, or blossoming and self-discovery, and they felt very comfortable about the career tradeoffs they were making.

Career and Family Interwoven. A third type of postparenthood identity found involved more of a merger or fusion of the two aspects of identity, professional and parent. Reduced-load professionals in this pattern used images or metaphors that suggested integration, synthesis or interweaving of career and family, as well as other important aspects of life. Their identity transformation was like a work of art in progress, an improvised dance, with shifting movement and rhythm through time and space. They talked about their involvement in different roles expanding and enriching their overall lives, rather than in terms of multiple roles competing for time in a finite universe. Their enactment of each role was enhanced by their experiences in other roles.

> Before it used to feel like I worked five days a week and I had a two-day weekend. Now it feels like I have a life. Even though I am in here every single day, I just can't believe the emotional difference it makes. I have an integrated life that all works. And I work here, I work there, I play here, I play there, and it is just a patchwork quilt that all fits together and makes sense.

There were 31, or 40%, of the sample in this pattern, and they started out for the most part with preparental identities of Career Defined with Family Plans or Career and Family: A Joint Venture. The predominant emotional responses were positive. These individuals experienced expansion of self and felt that their different roles were mutually enriching. They were very happy to be able to pursue both a career and a family, and they were comfortable with the career tradeoffs they were making. That is not to say that they did not experience disappointments and frustrations or resentment about lack of support. But they

seemed to absorb these negative experiences into the overall fabric of their lives, which they were pretty happy with.

Balancing Career and Family: Seesaw, Juggler, and Trapeze Artist.   The final kinds of postparenthood identity that were observed among these professionals were labeled Balancing Career and Family: Seesaw; Balancing Career and Family: Juggler; and Balancing Career and Family: Trapeze Artist. In all three there was a focus on juggling, balancing, or otherwise orchestrating a way for the most important aspects of identity, the professional and the parent, two discrete even opposing aspects of identity, to coexist side-by-side. There was an ongoing sense of stress and strain around finding the balance, making the right connections, and there was an underlying assumption that unless one finds or creates the right balance, career and family will interfere with each other. These balancing act identity patterns also seemed quite fragile and tenuous, vulnerable to shifting circumstances in multiple life domains. In two of these kinds of interlinking of professional and parental roles (Seesaw and Juggler) the onus was clearly on the individual to find, create, craft, and sustain the balance, the symmetry among roles. In the third, Trapeze Artist, the balancing act involved a partner who was active in enabling the total process of orchestrating career and family. The challenge in all three balancing act identities was on how to establish a system for interlinking in which both the professional and parental aspects of identity had opportunities for expression and development, without their being at odds with one another.

The first kind of Balancing Career and Family identity was labeled Seesaw and was found among those who described career and family as all they had time for. They alternated between savoring the highs in one domain and then the other, but finding the point of equilibrium hard to arrive at and impossible to maintain. These individuals (10 out of 78, or 12.8%) seemed to be forever seeking a balanced alternation between favoring one role over the other depending upon the circumstances and how the wind was blowing. It was hard work, this balancing act, yet it did not seem to bother them, and in fact they liked the shifts, the movement, the occasional arrival at a place of temporary equilibrium, suspended in space. But the predominant emotional response among those in this pattern was feeling torn and fatigued by the continuous effort needed to monitor the ups and downs. They also tended to have experienced substantial frustration or strong feelings of dissatisfaction with their reduced-load work arrangements, and felt undersupported or valued at work. Yet it was not clear that changes could be accomplished, and so they were sticking with the status quo.

A second kind of balance-oriented new identity we labeled Juggler, because these individuals described themselves as needing to keep more than just two balls in the air. They had other significant involvements beyond career and family—like community volunteer work or playing in a competitive tennis league.

As with the Seesaw, the onus was on the individual to keep everything going, and the right height and pace for keeping the balls all coordinated was not easy to figure out. They often spoke in terms of figuring out how to be comfortable with trade-offs and to find the right equilibrium among different aspects of their lives. They also tended to express resentment about their doing the lion's share of the family work at home. There were four individuals (5% of the sample) in this balancing act group.

The final kind of new identity that involved a quest for balance or equilibrium we called Trapeze Artist, because there was less certainty, reliability, stability in the platform for interlinking of roles, partially because of the importance of the partner's role. These individuals had the most fragile and complex, carefully choreographed systems, which seemed to allow occasional amazing feats of coordination and peak achievements. Yet the risk of disaster and failure was high. Each day seemed to require a new highly orchestrated performance, moving like clockwork and executing perfectly timed coordination of bars and bodies. These individuals had lofty goals in both their careers and their family lives, and the kind of interlinking that should be possible; but there were many variables to figure out and control. Six of 78 (7.7%) fit this pattern.

DISCUSSION

This model is not intended to generate predictions about more successful or less successful identity transformation when professionals become parents. Nor is it laid out for the purpose of developing specific hypotheses about linkages between various elements in the model. Rather it represents an attempt to describe and elaborate on the process professionals go through when they become parents. Close examination of how individuals talk about this process and labeling and differentiating of their experiences with this process has provided some insights into the phenomenon of reduced load and other alternative work arrangements. For enactment of new work structures can be viewed as simply an expression of individuals' changing identities and their attempts to make adjustments to align their actual work regimes with internal shifts in provisional selves. Further development and refinement of this framework is needed, and more focused and timely questioning of professionals as they go through the transition of becoming a parent will allow greater elaboration of both the dynamics of the adaptation process and the contours of the new professional/parent identity.

The theoretical model of identity transformation developed from this data set makes explicit a different way of thinking about identity. Instead of thinking about professionals as adding a role when they become parents, the proposition here is that one's entire sense of self changes. Instead of focusing on whether multiple roles are enriching or depleting, the question becomes more how is an

individual professional's overall identity affected when he or she becomes a parent. The career and organizational implications of this view of individual identity are profound, because the perspective challenges the predominant assumption of the separation of work roles and family roles and the organization's mandate being to help employees maintain boundaries or balance the two. If this view of professionals' identity changes over time is closer to actual reality, employers should be acknowledging, affirming and even adapting work structures more aggressively to suit a workforce with different motivation, priorities, and proclivities. A recent frontpage *Wall Street Journal* article (Chaker, 2003) indeed suggests some companies are already overhauling leave policies to "lure Moms back to work."

The contrasting types of postparenthood identity found among these professionals working on a reduced-load basis also suggest that this sort of alternative work arrangement is not a one-size-fits-all kind of phenomenon. The adjustment in work pattern is only a small piece of the overall puzzle, and it also works out better for some than others. It clearly allows some greater flexibility to orchestrate their lives in ways that are more satisfying and meaningful. But for others reduced-load work is just one of the many balls they have to continuously juggle or keep in some hypothetical balance. Reduced load work is not an automatic fix, a perfect solution. The model puts reduced-load work in a broader context, as just one element along with socialization and other work and family pattern adjustments, which lead to a new sense of self.

This model of evolving identity indirectly suggests that individual professionals cannot be assumed to stay the same, to be consistent over time—in their needs, desires, expectations, dreams. They change and evolve over time as their identities shift. Organizations that pay attention to their employees' changing circumstances and personal identities may be more likely to garner greater loyalty and commitment. However, the implication is then that organizations must be adaptable as well. Many of the reduced load work arrangements in the study were described as continuously evolving, being fine-tuned and renegotiated.

The powerful effects of socialization as seen in this model of identity transformation make it clear that organizations play an important role in identity transformation, not only through the kinds of alternative work arrangements or types of parental leaves offered, but also through the culture—the norms and values, coworker experiences, boss responses, and so on. From an individual's point of view, becoming more aware of different socializing influences could lead to individual professionals more actively and self-consciously seeking out specific kinds of influences when they feel the need to generate options, or even to alter their emotional responses to particular aspects of parenthood or dual-career family life. For example, if a professional is trying to decide whether and how to go back to work after maternity leave and speaks with colleagues who are not parents in the office, she will most likely be encouraged to return full time as soon as possible. But if she talks with another parent in her toddler's

play group, then she might be more likely to raise the possibility of asking for a reduced-load arrangement or some kind of extended leave.

Two insights that have emerged from this study that need further exploration are related to the growth and development of the individual and to the increased capacity for integration or synthesis and resolution of emotional ups and downs, as a result of becoming a parent. Organizational career advancement systems should take into consideration the additional competencies and differentiated identity that parents bring to their positions. And more work should be done to explore how and why some people are able to interweave different elements in their lives, while others struggle with balancing, which involves a totally different kind of linking mechanism.

AUTHOR NOTE

NOTE

1. For more background on this study, see Lee, MacDermid, and Buck (2000) or Lee, MacDermid, Williams, and O'Sullivan (2002).

APPENDIX

Target Manager/Professional Interview Schedule

I. Career

Tell me about your reduced load work arrangement. (When it started, how and why it came about, how is it working out?)

Job Design

- Nature and scope of tasks
- What makes the load lower
- Work schedule (hours, days, evening, travel)

- Seasonal factors
- Special challenges of reduced load (being a manager with direct reports)
- Tools used to monitor, appraise, develop, support, and communicate with direct reports

Organizational Issues

- Pay and benefits
- Performance evaluation (yardsticks used)
- Career path

Negotiations

- Who is involved—at work/home?
- Formal/informal (policies in place or not)
- Options if request had been denied
- Concessions made

Success

- How successful and why?
- How satisfied and why?
- Strategies
- At working less and doing what you want with the extra time
- At performing job well
- At maintaining necessary support to continue—work and family
- Meaning of career success

Positives and Negatives

- Factors that make reduced-load work arrangement more difficult
- Factors that make reduced-load work arrangement easier

II. Family/Personal Life

Tell me about your family/personal life and how it has been affected by your reduced-load work arrangement.

Self

- Work load in family
- Health and overall psychological well-being
  (a) Before and after reduced load
  (b) What is necessary to maintain it

- Meaning of:
  (a) Good wife/husband
  (b) Good mother/father
  (c) Healthy family life
  (d) Good marriage
  (e) Healthy children
- Unique personal qualities?

Partner

- Premarriage expectations of work and family arrangements
- Partner's occupation and work schedule
- Current satisfaction with partner relationship
- Partner's work load in family

Children/Others

- Ages and gender
- Child/eldercare arrangements
- Current well-being of children/others

Whole Family

- What is it like when all is well, not so well?
- What makes family life good/not so good?
- Peak experience

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