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# fathering

## The Interweave of Fathers' Daily Work Experiences and Fathering Behaviors

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### Abstract (Document Summary)

Fathering may be best understood as a process through which men demonstrate care and support for their children on a day-to-day basis over time. This contention represents a shift from viewing fathers as primarily breadwinners and disciplinarians (Bernard, 1981; Furstenberg, 1988) to recognizing fathers as active and nurturing participants in routines and activities that constitute daily family life, such as providing their children with emotional support (Almeida, Wethington, & McDonald, 2001; Bronstein, 1988; Lamb, 1987). Furthermore, this emerging perspective of the "new fatherhood" no longer views fathers' work and family roles as occupying separate spheres, but rather these roles are seen as integrating in a complex weave (Almeida & McDonald, 1998; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Kanter, 1977; Lopata & Pleck, 1983; Moen, 1982; Pitrkowski, 1979). An example of this is the synergy that Barnett (1998) suggests may exist between fathers' work and family roles such that work may enhance the family role for men by allowing them to fulfill their obligations and provide for their families. On the other hand, work may also interfere with fathering to the extent that work stressors disrupt fathering activities. One way to examine this work-family interweave is to study the day-to-day connections between fathers' work and family experiences. In this article we apply an ecological perspective to explore how daily work experiences are differentially associated with fathering experiences at home.

Emotional transmission has been defined as "occurring when events or emotions in one family member's immediate daily experience show a consistent predictive relationship to subsequent emotions or behaviors in another family member" (Larson & Almeida, 1999, p. 2). The process of emotional transmission has been extended to examine the conveyance of events and experiences from one setting to another such as work to home ([Almeida, D.M.], Wethington, & Chandler, 1999; Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; [Repetti, R.L.], 1994). The term "transmission" implies a certain correspondence in the types of experiences that spill over from one setting to another. For instance, tense interactions with coworkers may carry over to tense interactions with children (Bolger, et al., 1989). Yet many work experiences do not correspond directly to home experiences but may manifest in differing but predictive parenting behaviors. Repetti's (1989) study of air traffic controllers showed how varying types of job stressors differentially affect the father-child relationship. For example, fathers' work overload resulted in behavioral and emotional withdrawal from children upon arriving home, and interpersonal conflicts with

coworkers were related to harsher tones with children at home. While it is reasonable to assume that there is a temporal ordering for most work/family experiences that flows from work to home, this is clearly not always the case. However, an appropriate first step to getting at this temporal process is to show that events co-occur between fathers and their children within a 24-hour period. The present paper highlights the differentiation in work-family spillover by exploring how daily work experiences, such as work cutbacks and work overloads, are associated with different types of fathering behaviors in the home.

**Full Text** (7534 words)

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One way to examine the relationship between work roles and family roles for fathers is to study the day-to-day connections of their work and family experiences. The present study applied an ecological perspective to explore how daily work experiences are differentially associated with fathering experiences at home. Data for these analyses were from the National Study of Daily Experiences, which asked fathers to report about engagement with their children on workdays, including quantity of time spent with children and whether or not fathers provided their children with emotional support or were involved in a stressful event with their children on those same diary days. Fathers also reported on the number of hours spent in paid employment each day and whether or not they experienced a cutback in their work productivity or were overloaded with demands and deadlines at work. Results from a series of Hierarchical Linear Models (HLM) showed that fathers were more likely to report providing emotional support to their children on days they also reported overloads at work and, on days fathers reported cutting back on work, they were also more likely to report providing their children with emotional support or report being involved in a stressful event with their children. The nature of the job for fathers was also examined to identify factors that may moderate the relationship between work and home experiences. The association between work hours and time spent with children was shown to be moderated by the degree of decision latitude fathers experienced in the work setting.

**Keywords:** fatherhood, work/family, daily diary, productivity

Fathering may be best understood as a process through which men demonstrate care and support for their children on a day-to-day basis over time. This contention represents a shift from viewing fathers as primarily breadwinners and disciplinarians (Bernard, 1981; Furstenberg, 1988) to recognizing fathers as active and nurturing participants in routines and activities that constitute daily family life, such as providing their children with emotional support (Alineida, Wethington, & McDonald, 2001; Bronstein, 1988; Lamb, 1987). Furthermore, this emerging perspective of the "new fatherhood" no longer views fathers' work and family roles as occupying separate spheres, but rather these roles are seen as integrating in a complex weave (Almeida & McDonald, 1998; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Kanter, 1977; Lopata & Pleck, 1983; Moen, 1982; Pitrkowski, 1979). An example of this is the synergy that Barnett (1998) suggests may exist between fathers' work and family roles such that work may enhance the family role for men by allowing them to fulfill their obligations and provide for their families. On the other hand, work may also interfere with fathering to the extent that work stressors disrupt fathering activities. One way to examine this work-family interweave is to study the day-to-day connections between fathers' work and family experiences. In this article we apply an ecological perspective to explore how daily work experiences are differentially associated with fathering experiences at home.

The ecological perspective provides a lens through which the complex weave of work and family can be examined. Furthermore, the ecological perspective places special emphasis on the multiple factors associated with fathers' work role. The interplay of settings within the mesosystem is an important element of the ecological perspective. The present study examines this interplay by looking at the linkage between two specific microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) pertinent to fathering: work and home. The difficulty with utilizing the theoretical formulations provided by the ecological perspective, and in particular those related to the mesosystem, is translating those propositions into an empirically testable design. However, the spillover or transmission of emotions from one setting to another provides a useful conceptual lens for examining and measuring these work-family linkages (Larson & Almeida, 1999).

Emotional transmission has been defined as "occurring when events or emotions in one family member's immediate daily experience show a consistent predictive relationship to subsequent emotions or behaviors in another family member" (Larson & Almeida, 1999, p. 2). The process of emotional transmission has been extended to examine the conveyance of events and experiences from one setting to another such as work to home (Almeida, Wethington, & Chandler, 1999; Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Repetti, 1994). The term "transmission" implies a certain correspondence in the types of experiences that spill over from one setting to another. For instance, tense interactions with coworkers may carry over to tense interactions with children (Bolger, et al., 1989). Yet many work experiences do not correspond directly to home experiences but may manifest in differing but predictive parenting behaviors. Repetti's (1989) study of air traffic controllers showed how varying types of job stressors differentially affect the father-child relationship. For example, fathers' work overload resulted in behavioral and emotional withdrawal from children upon arriving home, and interpersonal conflicts with coworkers were related to harsher tones with children at home. While it is reasonable to assume that there is a temporal ordering for most work/family experiences that flows from work to home, this is clearly not always the case. However, an appropriate first step to getting at this temporal process is to show that events co-occur between fathers and their children within a 24-hour period. The present paper highlights the differentiation in work-family spillover by exploring how daily work experiences, such as work cutbacks and work overloads, are associated with different types of fathering behaviors in the

home.

Stressful work experiences are often laden with emotions. Larson and Pleck (1997) have demonstrated that male emotions, particularly in a male culture, are centered on outcomes, competition, and situations. Moreover, men's focus on instrumental goals may be waylaid by situations in the workplace, thus causing men to be preoccupied with problem-solving work issues after arriving home. For instance, fathers who are highly involved in their work may be less sensitive to the needs of their children and may be less available emotionally (Heath, 1976). Williams and Alliger (1994) examined work characteristics involving high task demands, mood, and work-family conflict and found that high task demand at work and low occupational control were positively related to psychological distress. In addition, these researchers found that negative mood states were persistent across settings (e.g., work to home). Gottman and Levenson (1986) found that men's emotional arousal subsides more slowly than women's. Therefore, men may have a greater propensity for emotions to spill over from one setting to another. However, Larson and his colleagues (Larson, Verma, & Dworkin, 2001) did not find evidence for emotional spillover in a sample of middle-class men in northern India.

According to Larson and Almeida (1999), there appears to be a pathway of emotional transmission with fathers acting most often as senders of emotions and other family members acting as receivers of fathers' emotions: primarily negative emotions. However, these authors caution that while the emotional effects of events are important, the behaviors and experiences resulting from these emotions are also critical in understanding family functioning (Larson & Almeida, 1999). Perhaps varying types of work-related experiences are differentially associated with fathering behaviors by others in the home.

Work hours (time in paid employment), work overloads (e.g., deadlines, too much to do), and work cutbacks (e.g., lost productivity) are three such experiences occurring in the work setting that may be related to different father-child interactions such as fathers' provision of emotional support, the amount of father-child engagement, or fathers' involvement in child-related stressors. For instance, the amount of time fathers spend with their children is associated with the quality of that interaction (Almeida & Galambos, 1991; Almeida et al., 2001). Furthermore, the more time men spend involved in paid work, the less time they have to be directly engaged with their children (Almeida & McDonald, in press). In addition, being overloaded with work could result in energy depletion, which might explain why men withdraw from social interaction in the household (Piotrkoski, 1979). In the same vein, having to cut back on work may be associated with emotional reactions as well. Larson and Pleck (1997) argue that when men are unable to complete their instrumental goals, they frequently experience feelings of disappointment, frustration, or anger.

In order to understand the daily linkages associated with fathering, it is also necessary to examine the more global contexts of fathers' work environments such as working conditions (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000), which are relatively constant over long periods of time. Although previous diary research has helped to establish how varying work experiences may be related to fathers' interactions with their children (Almeida & McDonald, 1998; Repetti, 1989, 1994, 1997), the next logical step is to identify factors that moderate such relationships. Some fathers are more likely to carry the effects of work home with them than are other fathers. This may be due to stable aspects of the work environment. For example, fathers who work in environments with inflexible and routine job characteristics may experience greater role incongruity in terms of the quantity and quality of father-child engagement. For instance, Crouter and McHale (1993) studied occupational conditions, or more specifically the flexibility of work schedules, which were found to have a moderating effect on the amount of time fathers spent with their families. However, in a more recent study, Crouter and her colleagues (Crouter, Bumpus, Maguire, & McHale, 1999) found that higher work pressures were associated with higher prestige occupations. Perhaps the types of pressures fathers experience are qualitatively different in high status versus low status positions.

Furthermore, Staines and Pleck (1983) found employee schedule control moderated the relationship between the amount of time a respondent spent in childcare and working an afternoon or night shift. The more control the employee had and the more time he or she was able to spend in childcare, and the more time fathers spend with their children, the more likely they are to engage in supportive interactions (Almeida et al., 2001). Barnett (1998) argues that the real culprit affecting role strain in terms of work schedules is not the number of hours but rather the nature of the work, including control over work hours. The present study extends previous research by examining how day-to-day work conditions, including work hours, are connected to fathering experiences in the home and how those relationships are moderated by stable work characteristics involving the degree of decision latitude within the work setting.

Much of the empirical support for the link between work and family roles has relied on cross-sectional studies (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Brandt & Evanke, 2002; Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & Crawford, 1989; Ishii-Kuntz, 1993; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000; Marsiglio, 1993; Radin, 1982; Roxburgh, 1999; Russell, 1983). This type of research is expanded by examining activities and experiences at work and home settings on a daily basis (Almeida & McDonald, 1998; Almeida, Wethington, & McDonald, 2001; Repetti, 1989, 1997). Whereas most other studies have only considered between-father differences in the type of work conditions and fathers' level of involvement in their families, the present study examines how daily variation in work experiences within fathers is associated with their daily interactions with their children.

There are several benefits to examining fathers in this manner that cannot be easily achieved through use of standard designs. First, fathers report about work and family experiences much nearer to the time that they occur, resolving some of the issues associated with retrospective recall. Second, work and family experiences that might appear static in traditional cross-sectional designs are captured in their more dynamic form. This design permits an examination of how work experiences are associated with changes in father-child interactions from one day to the next. Third, by employing an

intra-individual approach, the researcher is better able to rule out third-variable explanations for the linkage between work and family experiences.

Although prior research has advanced our understanding of the interweave between fathers' work and family roles, there exist important limitations in these studies that could be addressed in the present study. First, early studies of work and family linkages examined global characteristics, such as job satisfaction and marital satisfaction, without exploring those broader constructs in concrete ways that help us to understand the relationship between work and home settings. The present study uses diary data to examine more closely the day-to-day experiences occurring in both settings, which, we contend, constitute just a few of the intricately woven threads connecting work to home. Second, previous diary studies of work stress and family interactions typically have relied on self-administered checklists of daily stressors that assess only the occurrence of a stressor. The present study uses a semistructured telephone interview instrument that measures quantitative (e.g., frequency) and qualitative (e.g., context) aspects of daily stressors. The present study also examines job characteristics such as work cutbacks and overloads on a daily basis as potentially important experiences that may help explain the relationship between fathers' work and home experiences. Third, previous diary studies have failed to consider how stable characteristics of the workplace may moderate these associations between work and home experiences. The present study corrects this problem by utilizing the data collected in the larger MIDUS survey (Brim, Ryff, & Kessler, 2004) to study how decision latitude may moderate the relationship between work experiences and fathering behaviors. Fourth, previous diary studies have relied on small samples from limited geographic areas. The present study addresses this limitation by analyzing data from a larger sample of fathers ( $n = 290$ ) taken from a subsample of a national sample of U.S. adults.

To better understand the interweave of fathers' work and home experiences, we examine both dynamic (e.g., work experiences that tend to change on a daily basis) and stable (e.g., work situations that tend to be more constant, such as working conditions) characteristics of fathers' work environments and their effects on parenting behaviors to address the following research questions:

- To what extent are daily work-productivity experiences (e.g., work hours, work overloads, work cutbacks) associated with fathers' daily experiences in the home (e.g., time spent engaged with children, involvement in child-related stressors, providing emotional support to children)?
- How does the stable work characteristic of fathers' decision latitude within the workplace moderate the day-to-day linkages of work-productivity experiences and fathering behaviors?

## METHOD

### SAMPLE AND DESIGN

Respondents for the present study were from the National Study of Daily Experiences (NSDE), one of the in-depth studies that are part of the National Survey of Midlife in the United States Survey (MIDUS) carried out under the auspices of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Successful Midlife (O. Gilbert Brim, Director). Respondents ranged in age from 25 to 74 years with an oversample of people between the ages of 40 and 59 years. The MIDUS survey was designed by an interdisciplinary team to study patterns and correlates of adult development in the United States with special emphasis on physical health, psychological well being, and social responsibility. The MIDUS was fielded in January 1996 and consisted of three subsamples: (a) a representative subsample of 3,032 respondents who were obtained through random-digit dialing (RDD) of telephone numbers; (b) a national sample of 987 twin pairs; and (c) a subsample of 1,800 siblings of the RDD respondents.

Participants first completed a telephone interview lasting approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Subsequently, the respondents were mailed a written survey along with a gift pen and a check for \$20. The response rate for the telephone interview was 70% and for completion of the written questionnaires was 87%. The overall response rate therefore was 61% ( $.70 \times .87$ ).

Respondents for the NSDE sample were randomly selected from the 3,032 RDD respondents who participated in the MIDUS. The NSDE attempted to recruit 1,242 respondents from the MIDUS RDD pool and was able to recruit 83% of those contacted ( $n = 1031$ ). The NSDE also attempted to recruit 516 respondents from the MIDUS twin pool and was able to recruit 88% ( $n = 452$ ). Respondents who agreed to participate in the NSDE study received a check for \$20 and a letter explaining the purpose and procedure of the study.

For the purposes of this investigation, only employed fathers with children under age 21 in the household were used. This resulted in a sample of 290 fathers (Table 1 presents a comparison of demographic data for the samples). The MIDUS and NSDE samples had very similar distributions for age, marital status, and parenting status. The NSDE subsample had slightly more females as well as better-educated and fewer minority respondents than the MIDUS sample. As might be expected, the father sample selected for the present study contains a somewhat higher proportion of young adults as compared to the MIDUS and NSDE samples. In addition, 96% of fathers were married, and the other four percent were cohabiting. The level of education was somewhat higher in the present sample, with two-thirds having at least one year of education beyond high school. Almost three-quarters of the subsample were part of a dual-earner couple.

In addition, fathers were on average 40 years old and had approximately two children in the household with an average age of 13 years. The average family income was \$38,000. Nearly two-thirds of spouses were involved in gainful employment.

Over the course of eight consecutive evenings, NSDE respondents completed short telephone interviews about their daily experiences. Data collection spanned an entire year (March 1996 to March 1997) and consisted of 40 separate "flights" of interviews with each flight representing the eight-day sequence of interviews from approximately 38 respondents. The initiation of interview flights was staggered across the day of the week to control for the possible confounding between day of study and day of week. Respondents completed an average of seven of the eight interviews, resulting in a total of 10,374 daily interviews. For the present analysis, 290 fathers with children in the household under 21 years of age are used, resulting in 2030 interview days. For the purposes of the present study, only days that fathers reported being engaged in paid work were used, resulting in approximately 1,450 study days.

## MEASURES

Data for the NSDE telephone interview were collected over the course of eight consecutive evenings. These interviews included questions about daily experiences in the past 24 hours concerning time use, productivity and cutbacks, and daily work/family stressors. The time frame for all of the measures was the previous 24 hours or since the previous telephone call. The advantage of using a daily measurement is that it reduces problems associated with retrospective recall by having fathers report on experiences much closer to the time they occurred. Larson and Richards (1994) found that the transmission of emotions between fathers and their children occurred most often in the evening upon the father's arrival home from work. However, such a sequencing of events is not always the case, as many parents can relate to hurried mornings trying to get children off to school. Therefore, a limitation to this method is that we are unable to distinguish precisely when and in what order events occurred with the previous 24-hour period.

Fathers' home experiences were assessed via measures of child-related stressors, hours with children, and emotional support provided to children. These measures of fathering represent both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the father-child relationship (Almeida et al., 2001).

**Child-related stressors.** Child-related stressors were assessed through the semistructured Daily Inventory of Stressful Events described above (DISE, Alineida, Wethington, & Kessler, 2002). The inventory consists of a series of stem questions asking whether certain types of events had occurred in the past 24 hours along with a set of guidelines for probing affirmative responses.

The aim of the interviewing technique was to acquire a short narrative of each event that included descriptive information (e.g., tensions with children over household chores, family demands involving children) as well as what was at stake for the respondent. All of the interviews were tape-recorded then transcribed and coded for several characteristics. Expert raters initially coded each stressor into one of seven broad classifications (i.e., interpersonal tensions, work/education, home, finances, health/accident, network, miscellaneous) and then further categorized into 54 specific classifications depending on the content of the stressor (e.g., interpersonal tensions involving respect, work overloads, work breakdowns, work mistakes, family demands). The focus of involvement was also assessed to determine if the event involved only the respondent, only a person other than the respondent, or jointly the respondent and another person. For events involving only others or both the respondent and another person, the respondent was asked the relationship of the other person involved (e.g., spouse, coworker, child).

For Child-Related Stressors, only those stressful events involving the respondent and his children, jointly, were analyzed. Child-Related Stressors was created by dummy coding study days into two categories. For each study day respondents were given a score of "1" if they reported a stressful event involving the respondent's children and himself on that day and a "0" if they did not.

**Daily hours with children.** "Daily hours with children" refers to the quantity of father-child engagement, measured by asking respondents on each interview day how much time in hours and minutes they spent that day "taking care of or doing things with their children such as playing with them, helping them with homework, driving them around, or doing something else with them." This item was adapted from the Quality of Employment Survey (Quinn & Staines, 1979). Minutes were subsequently converted to decimals to represent a proportion of an hour.

**Providing emotional support.** Provision of emotional support was assessed by asking fathers how much time in minutes and hours they spent in the past 24 hours "giving emotional support to anyone, like listening to their problems, giving advice, or comforting them" Respondents were further asked to whom they gave support.

Daily Emotional Support was created by dummy coding study days into whether fathers reported giving emotional support to their children or not. For each study day respondents received a score of "1" if they reported providing emotional support to their children on that day and a "0" if they did not. While our primary concern for the present study is the occurrence of this particular fathering behavior, we are aware of its limitations. This approach does not allow us to examine the type, intensity, or duration of the emotional support provided.

Fathers' daily work experiences were assessed using measures of paid work hours, work cutbacks, and work overloads.

**Paid work hours.** Paid work hours were measured by asking respondents how much time in hours and minutes they spent each day on activities related to business or paid work. Minutes were subsequently converted to decimals to represent a proportion of an hour.

**Cutbacks in paid work.** Cutbacks at work were assessed via two questions: (a) the quantity of work performed, and (b) the quality of work performed. The quantity of work performed was measured by asking fathers if they had to cut back on their normal activities today because of any problems with physical health or their emotions. The quality of work performed measure asked fathers to report whether or not they had to cut back on the quality of their work today, in regard to how carefully they worked, due to emotional or physical problems. Work Cutbacks was created by dummy coding study days into two categories. For each day respondents were given a score of "1" if they reported any type of cutback in either quantity or quality and a score of "0" if they did not.

**Daily work overloads.** The variable representing overloads was created by dummy coding days into two categories. For each study day respondents received a "1" if the stressor they reported was categorized as a work-related overload, deadline, demand, or breakdown and a "0" if they did not report such incidents.

The baseline MIDUS survey included self-administered questionnaires and a one-time telephone interview. The survey consisted of structured scales developed to tap aspects of the work and home environments including work schedules and supportive work environments.

**Decision latitude.** The amount of discretion and control an employee possesses as part of his or her position was measured using a five-item scale adapted from the Whitehall studies: Decision Latitude (Gryzwacz & Marks, 2000; Whitehall, 1989). Respondents were asked on a questionnaire to indicate how often each of the job characteristics accurately described them on their job. For instance, respondents were asked, "How often do you have a choice in deciding what tasks you do at work?" The response set included a five-point scale with 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Most of the Time, and 5 = All of the Time (Cronbach's Alpha = .88).

## RESULTS

To generate descriptive statistics and correlations among variables, data were aggregated across all study days. The first four columns of Table 2 present a description of the variables for daily home and work experiences and stable work characteristics. On average, fathers spent approximately two hours and 13 minutes with their children on days they worked, within the range reported by other researchers regarding father engagement (Pleck, 1997; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hoffeth, 2001). The standard deviation and range indicated some variation among fathers, as a portion of the fathers spent a fairly substantial amount of time with their children during the workweek while others spent very little time with their children. The means for Emotional Support and Child-Related Stressors are represented as a percentage of workdays. On average, fathers provided Emotional Support to their children on 9% of workdays, which translates to approximately one episode of Emotional Support every 10n working days. Fathers were also involved in a Child-Related Stressor on 6% of the workdays, or one stressor every 15 workdays. Work Hours represents the amount of time fathers spent in paid employment in hours and minutes on a daily basis. The means for Work Cutbacks and Overloads are represented as a percentage of workdays. Cutting back on the quantity or quality of work or having too many demands made on them were not frequent experiences for most of these fathers. On average, Cutbacks and Overloads at work occurred every 10 working days.

The final row represents the stable characteristic of the work environment we chose to measure. On average, these fathers rated the degree of decision latitude they have over their work situations as relatively high, although the standard deviation indicates that there is some variability in that assessment.

The remaining six columns show the intercorrelations of the variables. Fathers who spent more time with their children also provided more frequent emotional support to their children, spent less time involved in paid work, and had more cutbacks at work. Furthermore, fathers who provided more emotional support also had more frequent reports of Work Cutbacks and Work Overloads and experienced more child-related stressors as well. There was a moderate association between overloads and cutbacks at work.

The main data analysis method will be Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Mason, Wong, & Entwistle, 1984), a method that allows simultaneous estimation of both (a) a separate within-person model of regression slopes and intercepts for each respondent and (b) a between-person model in which the within-person slopes and intercepts are treated as dependent variables regressed on person-level predictor variables.

Table 3 presents results from the within-father hierarchical linear modeling analyses involving fathers' daily work and home experiences, the stable work characteristics, and their interactions. Results for the Time With Children variable are shown in the first two columns and are represented in raw coefficients. The Child-Related Stressors and Providing Emotional Support variables are represented in odds ratios and are shown in the last four columns. In these analyses, an odds ratio represents an association between a predictor variable and an outcome variable and can be interpreted as the predicted likelihood of

having one event occur given the occurrence of another event.

In Step I of the HLM analyses, the three main effects for daily work experiences were entered first. As with the between-father correlational analyses, the time fathers spent at work was related to the amount of time fathers were able to commit to activities with their children. The HLM analyses revealed that on days fathers worked additional hours, for each additional hour worked, they spent approximately 10 minutes less engaged in activities with their children than on days they did not work additional hours ( $-.17 \times 60$ ). However, on days fathers reported working additional hours, they were neither more nor less likely to have reported providing Emotional Support to their children or being involved in a Child-Related Stressor within the past 24 hours. In terms of Work Cutbacks, on days fathers reported experiencing a cutback at work they were nearly twice as likely to also report involvement in a Child-Related Stressor and more than twice as likely to report having provided their children with Emotional Support within the past 24-hour period than on days they reported not having those work experiences. Also, on days fathers reported experiencing Work Overloads, they were 72% more likely to have also reported providing Emotional Support to their children than on days they did not report experiencing an overload in their work.

The Decision Latitude stable work characteristic did not prove to be a significant predictor of fathers' daily home experiences. However, one interaction term was significant. The final section of the table shows the results of Step III of the HLM analyses. The negative relationship between fathers' Work Hours and Time With Children was moderated by the degree of Decision Latitude possessed by the father. To understand the nature of the interaction, we plotted the interaction terms using one Standard Deviation above and one below the mean of Time With Children and Work Hours variables contained in the interaction. Figure 1 illustrates the nature of the interaction. On days fathers with higher levels of Decision Latitude reported working fewer hours, they also reported spending more time engaged in activities with their children as compared to similar days experienced by fathers with lower levels of Decision Latitude.

## DISCUSSION

The results presented in this article contribute to our understanding of fathering as an intricate weave of threads connecting men's daily work and family lives (Almeida, Wethington, & McDonald, 2001; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982; Kanter, 1977; Lopata & Pleck, 1983; Moen, 1982; Pitrkowski, 1979). Consistent with previous studies (Almeida, Wethington, & Chandler, 1999; Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Repetti, 1989, Williams & Alliger, 1994), these findings suggest a correspondence between experiences at work and experiences in the home. However, because previous studies typically used much smaller sample sizes, were conducted in particular regions of the country, or focused on specialized professions, it was difficult to generalize beyond those particular populations. It could be, for instance, that highly specialized professions, such as the air-traffic controllers studied by Repetti (1989), react to work events differently than do men in other professions. The present study enables us to look at a broader spectrum of fathers from across the United States.

Examining the complex weave of fathers' work and home experiences helps us to better understand how men enact their fathering role. Findings from this study lend support to the contention that work and home settings are interrelated for men: that is, work hours, loss in productivity at work, and having too many demands at work are each differentially associated with certain fathering behaviors at home. Working more hours for these fathers translates to less time spent with their children; however, it does not necessarily mean fewer stressful or emotionally supportive experiences with their children. When we look at fathers' day-to-day experiences, we find that on days fathers report cutting back on their work productivity, they are nearly twice as likely to report being involved in some form of stressful occurrence involving their children, yet there is no indication that they have spent more time with their children within the same 24-hour period. Furthermore, on days that fathers report experiencing overloads at work, they appear to be neither more nor less likely to also report child-related stressors on those days. Therefore, enactment of the fathering role for these men involves more than just the quantity of time spent with their children.

One interpretation of these findings may be contrary to Repetti's findings (1989) in her study of air traffic controllers. Fathers in the present study apparently did not withdraw behaviorally or emotionally from their children on days they reported experiencing work overloads, as might have been predicted based on Repetti's findings. On days fathers reported overloads at work, they were 72% more likely to report providing emotional support to their children within that same period. Furthermore, these fathers were more than twice as likely to report being emotionally supportive of their children during those same diary-days they reported cutting back at work. These findings are somewhat puzzling in light of previous research. For instance, if, as Piotrkowski (1979) suggests, overloads tend to deplete one's energy, and, as Larson and Pleck (1997) have suggested, not accomplishing instrumental goals may result in disappointment, frustration, and anger for men, we might expect fathers to withdraw from engagement with their children on those "lousy" days at work. However, one perspective might suggest that just the opposite is occurring with the fathers in this study. There are a couple of plausible explanations. One interpretation is that the responsibilities of parenting encroach upon and intermingle with work responsibilities for fathers, such that the provision of emotional support or the involvement in a stressful event in the home setting are not entirely separate experiences from work overloads and cutbacks. Rather, these experiences may be linked in complex ways, suggesting a synergistic relationship between work roles and home roles, proposed by Barnett (1998). Another plausible explanation is that fathers have an expectation of engaging positively with their families as a counterbalance to the stressors experienced at work.

Another possibility is that the provision of emotional support may have triggered cutbacks at work or contributed in some

manner to a sense of overload on the part of these fathers. Unfortunately, these data do not permit us to explore the sequencing of events within each diary-day.

Finally, the finding that fathers' decision latitude at work moderates the relationship between work hours and time with children lends credence to Barnett's argument that it is the nature of the job, more so than actual work hours, that contributes to the strain of fulfilling both worker and parenting roles. Our findings indicate that fathers with greater discretion and control over their work environment tend to spend more time with their children on days they work fewer hours, as compared to those with less decision latitude.

Generalizations from these findings should be made in light of the limitations of these data. First, time with children was operationalized as taking care of and doing things with their children, which is a somewhat narrower view than that proposed by other researchers (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985; Pleck & Stueve, 2001), who suggest incorporating availability and responsibility for child care needs. Second, we are unable to determine a sequence of events within each day due to the nature of the daily reports we collected. Had we utilized an experience sampling method (Larson & Richards, 1994), we would have been better able to detect if overloads and cutbacks preceded children stressors and emotional support, or vice versa, or perhaps were simultaneous occurrences. Last, our method of data collection did not ask fathers to target one particular child when reporting these interactions. While our study presents a wide-angle view of fathers' parenting behaviors with all their minor children, it does not permit us to explore such factors as child age, gender, or personality. While the first step in understanding the interweave of fathers' daily work and family experiences is to examine the co-occurrence of events within the preceding 24-hour period, the next step in this area of research will be to explore in greater detail mechanisms that underlie fathers' work and home experiences, so that we might better understand the complex weave of men's fathering experiences.

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## Table 1

### Demographic Comparisons

#### Demographic Breakdown MIDUS % Fathers %

variable

Age Young adults, 25-39 33.2 48.2

Midlife adults, 40-59 46.0 48.2

Older adults, 60-74 20.8 3.6

Gender Males 48.5 100.0

Females 51.5 0.0

Education 12 years or less 39.2 33.3

13 years or more 60.8 66.7

Marital status Married 64.1 95.8

All others 35.9 4.2

Children in household Yes 39.0 100.0

No 61.0 0.0

Race Caucasian 84.1 88.9

African American 10.8 8.6

All other races 5.1 2.5

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Range, and Intercorrelations for Daily Home Experiences, Daily Work Experiences, and the Stable Work Characteristic Moderator

M	SD	Min	Max	1	2
3	4	5	6		
1. Time with Children	2.21	1.94	0	10.0	
2. Emotional Support	.09	.18	0	.23(**)	
3. Child-Related Stressors	.06	.12	0	0.6	.03 .19(**)
4. Work Hours	8.81	2.49	0.75	14.3	-.15(**) -.10 -.02
5. Work Cutbacks	.09	.20	0	.19(**)	.20(**) .08 -.14(*)
6. Work Overloads	.10	.15	0	-.01	.20(**) .09 .09 .14(*)
7. Decision Latitude	3.78	.81	1	5	.03 .08 .07 .02 -.04 .03

Note. N = 290.

(\*) $p < .05$ .

(\*\*) $p < .01$ .

Table 3

Within-Father Hierarchical Linear Model Analysis for Daily Work Experiences, Stable Work Characteristics, and Their Interactions Predicting Fathers' Daily Home Experiences

Home Experiences

Time Child-Related Providing

With Children Stressors Emotional Support

$\beta$  (SE) OR (LCI, UCI) OR (LCI, UCI)

Work Experience

Variables

Step I.

Work Hours -.17(\*\*) (.02) .95 (.90, 1.01) .97 (.92, 1.02)

Work Cutbacks -.05 (.19) 1.91(\*) (1.04, 3.51) 2.25(\*\*) (1.33, 3.82)

Work Overloads .20 (.15) 1.55 (.89, 2.72) 1.72(\*) (1.05, 2.80)

Step II

Decision Latitude .14 (.13) .95 (.72, 1.25) 1.15 (.90, 1.48)

Step III.

DL X Work Hours -.09(\*\*) (.02) 1.03 (.96, 1.11) .99 (.92, 1.06)

DL X Cutbacks .04 (.25) .54 (.23, 1.29) 1.61 (.74, 3.50)

DL X Overloads -.06 (.21) 1.00 (.43, 2.32) 1.25 (.58, 2.67)

Note. N = 1503 workdays; DL = Decision Latitude.

(\*) $p < .05$ .

(\*\*) $p < .01$ .

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Table (Demographic Comparisons)

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