

Gay Men Who Become Fathers via Surrogacy: The Transition to Parenthood

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The current investigation explores how gay fathers who become parents through gestational surrogacy experience the transition to parenthood. Structured interviews were conducted with one of the partners in 40 couples that had conceived children via surrogacy. The interviews consisted of closed- and open-ended questions examining changes in fathers' careers; lifestyles; couple relationships; relations with family of origin; friendships; self-esteem; and self-care. Thematic and quantitative analyses of the data were employed. The most striking psychological findings were that fathers reported greater closeness with their families of origin and heightened self-esteem as a result of becoming parents and raising children.

KEYWORDS *Gay fathers, surrogacy, transition to parenthood*

INTRODUCTION

The notion of what it means to be a couple or a family has evolved dramatically over time (Coontz, 2006; Stacey, 1996; Weston, 1997). In recent years, these changes are due in part to greater possibilities for forming families via alternative reproductive technologies and adoption opportunities (Ehrensaft, 2005; Evan B. Donaldson Institute, 2006). Among gay men and lesbians, we have also seen a rapid increase in the number of committed couples

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that have obtained legalized status through registered domestic partnerships, civil unions, or marriage (Green, 2009). These committed same-sex couples and parents have challenged the long-held assumption that being gay is antithetical to family life.

Furthermore, we have seen a dramatic rise in the number of gay men and lesbians who have become parents after coming out rather than in the context of a previous heterosexual marriage that ended in divorce. The latter phenomenon has been variously termed the “gay-by boom” (Dunne, 2000), “lesbigay-by boom” (Bergstrom, 2006) and “gay baby boom” (Johnson & O’Connor, 2002). In support of this growing trend, the U.S. Census 2000 reported that 22% of gay male couples and 33% of lesbian couples were living with their children under 18 years of age (Simmons & O’Connell, 2003).

Despite the increasing social visibility of gay and lesbian families, there remains a dearth of studies that deal with the phenomenological experiences of gay fathers and their children. Especially with earlier research, custody concerns made gay fathers reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation (Peterson, Butts, & Deville, 2000). Most research focused on the experiences of lesbian-headed families, and some findings were generalized to gay fathers. In a narrower scope, the transition to parenthood has been a neglected area in investigations among gay and lesbian parents. As much as research in this realm has been advancing for lesbian families, no empirical research to date has focused on the transition to parenthood among gay fathers. Moreover, we found no prior empirical investigations of any kind focused on gay fathers who are raising children conceived via surrogacy. Savin-Williams and Esterberg (2000) suggested that studies of gay fathers need to look at how the transition to parenthood is both similar and different between gay and heterosexual parents and how gay relationships change and evolve with the addition of children.

Thus, as a first step to learn more about gay fathers who became parents via surrogacy, the current study explored how these fathers experience the transition to parenthood. In the following sections, we review the available literature on gay fathers’ parenting experiences, their transition to parenthood, and their use of assisted reproductive technologies. We include in this review some relevant findings from studies of lesbian and heterosexual parents because there is such a paucity of prior studies on gay fathers.

Gay Men As Fathers

The desire to become parents among gay men is similar to that of heterosexual men. Gay men have reported the desire for nurturing and raising children, for the constancy of children in their lives, for wanting some means of immortality and generativity by having children, for achieving a sense of family

that children help provide, and for achieving a higher social status perceived to be accorded to parents (Bigner, 1999; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989a, 1992).

The first wave of studies with gay fathers focused on divorced men who had children in the context of heterosexual relationships and later established a gay identity (Barrett & Robinson, 2000; Bozett, 1989). These investigations, for the most part, explored the difficulties experienced by gay fathers in integrating their gay and father identities, and they offered evidence that contradicted negative stereotypes about gay men as fathers (Benson, Silverstein, & Auerbach, 2005). A major limitation of these early studies was the difficulty in making generalizations about gay men's parental competence because the fathers often were not the primary caregivers for their children, and most did not even have physical custody of their children (Armesto, 2002).

A second wave of studies shifted the focus to the so-called new gay fathers who have become parents in the context of pre-existing gay identities and relationships (Beers, 1996; Lewin, 2006; Mallon, 2004; Stacey, 2006). These studies looked into the experiences of gay men who chose to be parents versus those who did not (Sbordone, 1993) and the challenges faced by gay men who pursue parenthood through adoption, foster care, co-parenting, and surrogacy avenues (Quartironi, 1995; Stacey, 2006).

An underlying theme in early and recent studies is the difficulty experienced by gay fathers in reconciling their seemingly contradictory identities as members of the gay community and as fathers (Harris & Turner, 1986; Bozett, 1981a,b, 1989). On one hand, gay fathers experience rejection from the heterosexual parenting community because of prevalent stereotypes that children of gay men will be harassed and rejected by their peers, that children of gay fathers will develop homosexual identities themselves, that children of gay men will have an immoral upbringing, and that gay men are sexually promiscuous individuals who would most likely molest their own children (Mallon, 2004; Silverstein & Quartironi, 1996). On the other hand, gay fathers' parenting identity is occasionally not accepted within the gay community because of its incompatibility with a singles-oriented gay culture and because of a gay family model that is distinct from heterosexual notions of family and does not involve children (Armesto, 2002; Bigner, 1999; Demo & Allen, 1996; Dunne, 1987).

Although one might expect that there would be fewer problems with integrating gay and parent identities among the new gay fathers, current studies have documented the continued prevalence of these difficulties. Recent studies have described a so-called *Heterosexist Gender Role Strain* among gay men (Schacher, 2002; Schacher, Auerbach, & Silverstein, 2005). This is a particular type of gender role strain in gay fathers who experience their gay and father identities as mutually exclusive, and who are constantly questioned by a society that believes in the primacy of women in child-rearing roles. Similarly, in a study of the development of procreative consciousness

among gay men (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007), most participants viewed the coming-out process as linked with a belief that they will never become parents. Furthermore, Armesto (2002) posited that gay fathers must negotiate a multimorality status by being gay men in the heterosexual parenting community and being fathers in the gay community.

Studies also have reported the strengths and uniqueness of gay fatherhood. In research by Bigner and Jacobsen (1989a,b) on divorced gay fathers and their children, the fathers demonstrated higher levels of warmth and responsiveness to their children's needs compared to their heterosexual counterparts. They also were more consistent and firm in setting limits on their children's behavior (i.e., more authoritative parenting style) and used more reasoning strategies when responding to the needs of their children (Bigner, 1996, 1999; Tasker, 2005). Furthermore, gay fathers tended to place greater importance than heterosexual fathers on nurturing behaviors and less emphasis on traditional paternal expectations of being an economic provider (Peterson et al., 2000; Scallen, 1981; Turner, Scadden, & Harris, 1990).

Most gay fathers also evaluated themselves positively in terms of the parenting role and had higher self-esteem than those who were not fathers (Frommer, 1996; Harris & Turner, 1986; Sbordone, 1993). A consistent pattern evident among gay fathers was a deconstruction of the gendered nature of parenting, which has been referred to as *degendered parenting* (Mitchell, 1995; Quartironi, 1995; Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2002). As such, the children of gay fathers are raised in families that are less gender stereotyped, less hierarchical, and more egalitarian. Bigner (1999) posited that gay fathers model more androgynous gender role traits for their children compared to heterosexual fathers. Furthermore, gay couples also have reported more equitable division of responsibilities for household maintenance and child care and more satisfaction with their parenting roles than heterosexual couples (McPherson, 1993).

In addition, a plethora of studies has explored developmental outcomes of children raised by gay and lesbian parents. The research literature from the United States (e.g., Patterson, 2005), Great Britain (e.g., Tasker & Golombok, 1997), and Europe (e.g., Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007) consistently shows that children and adolescents raised by gay and lesbian parents function as well as those raised by heterosexual parents in terms of mental health outcomes and peer relations. The interested reader is directed to comprehensive reviews of these outcomes by Anderssen, Amlie, and Ytterøy (2002); Biblarz and Stacey (2010); Golombok (2007); Patterson (2005); and Tasker (2005).

Transition to Parenthood

The literature on the transition to parenthood has mostly focused on heterosexual parents and has addressed changes along dimensions ranging from

division of labor to marital satisfaction (see Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008; Cowan & Cowan, 1992). A few studies have explored the transition to parenthood for gay and lesbian parents with a majority of these focusing on lesbian mothers because of their greater prevalence (Erera, 2002). The leading research to date on children conceived by lesbian parents via alternative reproductive technologies is the 25-year National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study (NLLFS), which is the first longitudinal study of lesbian women who became parents through donor insemination. The research has yielded four publications (see Gartrell et al., 1996, 1999, 2000; Gartrell, Rodas, Deck, Peyser, & Banks, 2006) wherein the mothers were interviewed before the children were born (T1); and when the target children were 2 years old (T2), 5 years old (T3), and 10 years old (T4) respectively. We briefly present some important findings from this study across the four data-gathering time segments. We also reinforce these results with relevant findings from other studies with gay and lesbian parents.

In terms of work and domestic responsibilities, at T1, the lesbian couples have established flexible work schedules in anticipation of child care requisites. After having children, most mothers reduced their work hours and had changes in their career opportunities. However, at T4 most of the mothers were more able to satisfactorily manage their parenting and career responsibilities. Most mothers sought legal protections for their children including establishment of wills, powers of attorney for their children's medical care, and co-parent adoption by the lesbian mother who had no genetic link to the child. Compared to traditional heterosexual families, the lesbian mothers noted the advantage of having two actively involved parents raising their children. This advantage continued until the children were 10 years old. Child-rearing responsibilities, domestic chores, and income earning consistently remained equitably shared between the partners who stayed together. The partners took turns in taking full- or part-time jobs to accommodate child care tasks. This evidence of degendered parenting is consistent with findings in other studies that compared gay fathers or lesbian mothers with heterosexual parents (Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; McPherson, 1993; Quartironi, 1995). In another study, the gay parents noted that this egalitarian division of parental responsibilities was derived by mutual agreement as opposed to following prescribed gender roles (Schacher et al., 2005). In addition, the study of gay fathers by McPherson (2003) indicated that they were more satisfied with their division of child care tasks than their heterosexual counterparts.

Before having children, at T1, most lesbian couples were worried about a decline in time and energy for their partners once their children are born. After having children, as the mothers' lives became more child-focused, most reported that child rearing was stressful to their relationships with their partners, and they had less time and energy for their relationships. This was coupled by reports of sexual infrequency and relationship conflict. At

T3, almost a third of the original participants had separated (a divorce rate comparable to heterosexual marriages), with 15% of the divorces occurring between T2 and T3. In the McPherson (2003) study, gay fathers reported greater satisfaction with their couple relationships compared to heterosexual fathers. A study that explored the predictors of relationship quality among lesbian couples (Goldberg & Sayer, 2006) concluded that love is related to performing relationship maintenance behaviors and feeling satisfied over the division of child care responsibilities, while conflict in relationships is strongly related to expected support from one's partner's family.

Regarding their relationships with their families of origin, at T1 most expectant mothers reported strong social support from their parents and families. Having a child enhanced the lesbian mothers' relationships with their parents and increased their contact with them. Most grandparents were delighted with their grandchildren. It is noteworthy that the grandparents' openness about their daughter's lesbian family steadily rose across time. Similarly, a study by Goldberg (2006) also reported this increase in familial support from both partners' families of origin for lesbian-headed families across the transition to parenthood. Consistent with these results, the parents and families of gay fathers were often more supportive and approving than had been initially expected (Mallon, 2004; Schacher et al., 2005). In contrast, Oswald (2002) noted that compared to most heterosexual couples, same-sex parents receive less support from their families of origin. Therefore, while the support that gay parents receive from their families of origin appears to increase across time, gay parents may nevertheless receive less such support than do heterosexual parents.

After having children, most lesbian mothers had declined in socializing with their friends, and some had lost friendships with lesbian friends who were not parents. Almost half of the participants noted that most of their current friends were also parents from both lesbian/gay and heterosexual families. At T4, their social network included more straight parents, compared to T1 to T3, because of their children's choices of peers. Most parents also were involved in lesbian support groups and social activities. Changes in social network associated with being parents were also evident among the gay fathers in Mallon's (2004) study. The gay fathers reported that their friendships ceased to be exclusively gay and became more inclusive of heterosexual parents.

In terms of psychological well-being, identity, and stigmatization, prospective mothers were concerned about raising their children in a lesbian household and a homophobic world. At T1, most of the mothers were openly lesbian and were planning to be open about their lesbian identity to their children. The participants had been progressively coming out at work (e.g., from 55% at T1 to 93% at T2). In an effort to reduce homophobia in their communities, the mothers had been increasingly active (e.g., 54% at T2 and 75% at T3) in political and educational initiatives to increase awareness

and acceptance of diversity in human relationships. With regard to the overall impact of having a child, most of the mothers at T2 expressed that having children was the most enjoyable and best thing that ever happened to them. At T4, the mothers noted that participating in their children's growth and development was the most gratifying aspect of parenting. In a study that presented a social and demographic profile of gay and heterosexual couples (Henehan, Rothblum, Solomon, & Balsam, 2007), the authors conjectured that same-sex couples may be more open about their gay or lesbian identities after having children as an attempt to reduce homophobia in their environment. In one of the few studies done with gay fathers, the participants in Sbordone's (1993) research reported higher self-esteem and fewer negative attitudes about homosexuality compared to gay men who were not parents. Similarly, gay fathers also spoke of a sense of personal fulfillment and pride in having children and a new sense of commonality with heterosexual parents (Schacher et al., 2005).

Use of Surrogacy by Gay Men

Surrogacy is an assisted reproductive technology (ART) technique in which an individual or a couple, the prospective parent(s), contracts with a woman to carry a child for the parent(s) (Ciccarelli, 1997; Ragone, 1996). There are two types of surrogacy arrangements: genetic (traditional) surrogacy and gestational surrogacy (American Society for Reproductive Medicine [ASRM], 1990; Nakash & Herdman, 2007). As applied to gay couples, genetic surrogacy takes place when the surrogate is impregnated with the sperm of one of the male partners through insemination. With this arrangement, the impregnated woman is both genetically related to and the carrier of the child.

On the other hand, gestational surrogacy (also called IVF surrogacy) occurs when another woman's (i.e., an egg donor's) ovum is fertilized by one of the male partners' sperm in the laboratory using in vitro fertilization (IVF), and the resulting embryo is transferred to the surrogate's womb. In this scenario, the surrogate who carries the growing fetus to term is not genetically related to the child, and one of the male partners is the sperm contributor. Surrogacy is well-regulated in the United States, and rigorous procedures such as psychological testing and interviews, genetic histories, and careful matching of donors and surrogates are utilized in the selection of egg donors, surrogates, and intended parents (Ragone, 1994).

Research has looked into the demographic and psychological aspects of surrogacy arrangements primarily with heterosexual couples. Intended parents often have high socioeconomic status, which is to be expected considering the high medical, legal, insurance, and other costs of commercial surrogacy (Ragone, 1996). The primary reason for many couples to seek surrogacy

arrangements is the desire to have genetic relatedness to their children (Kleinpeter, 2002; Ragone, 1996; Schwartz, 1990). As for the surrogates, altruism and a sense of value, and not financial factors, were reported as prime motivations (Blyth, 1994; Edelman, 1994). In terms of children's developmental outcomes, current research studies have found few, if any, differences between children conceived through ART and those conceived through ordinary means in terms of the child's cognitive, behavioral, socio-emotional, and psychological functioning (for reviews, see Ciccarelli & Beckman, 2005; Edelman, 2004; and van Balen, 1998). When differences were noted, they were in the direction of better results for families who used ART, such as superior quality of parenting, greater warmth and emotional involvement of parents especially during the earlier years, greater satisfaction with the parenting role among fathers, greater enjoyment of parenthood, and lower stress associated with parenting (Golombok, Murray, Brinsden, & Abdalla, 1999; Golombok, Murray, Jadva, MacCallum, & Lycett, 2004; Golombok, MacCallum, Murray, Lycett, & Jadva, 2006; van Balen, 1996). Even in the absence of a genetic link between a child and one of the parents, Golombok (2000) argued that the quality of parenting is not compromised. In fact, she concluded that, "What matters most for children's psychological well-being is not family type—it is the quality of family life" (p. 104).

A few studies investigated the experiences of lesbian couples who formed families through ART, primarily through donor insemination (e.g., Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997; Kranz & Daniluk, 2006). Noteworthy from these investigations was the finding that lesbian mothers were more equally involved with raising their child compared to greater inequality between heterosexual mothers and fathers. A more recent clinical paper (Mitchell & Green, 2007) explored the psychosocial challenges faced by gay and lesbian parents and their children who were conceived through reproductive technologies, which include the psychological (as opposed to merely biological) conception of a baby; establishing parental legitimacy; gaining validation and support from families of origin and the greater community; and answering questions about the family's structure with their children and other individuals. To date, similar to a review by Greenfeld (2007), the present authors have not found a single empirical study that looked at gay fathers who utilized ART to create families.

The Current Study

This investigation sought to achieve two main goals. First, we aimed to provide a demographic profile of gay men who attained parenthood with the help of a commercial surrogacy agency. Second, we explored changes in the lives of gay men who became fathers through surrogacy arrangements, across various areas:

1. work and career goals and relationships;
2. lifestyle, including financial status, domestic issues, and travel;
3. relationships with partners, families of origin, and friends;
4. self-esteem; and
5. self-care.

As this was foremost a study that delved into the subjective experiences of gay fathers in their transition to parenthood and, therefore, was exploratory, we made no specific directional hypotheses.

METHOD

Participants

Data were obtained through in-person or telephone interviews from 40 fathers who were in a committed gay relationship. Only one member of a couple was interviewed. Four single fathers were also interviewed but the results of their interviews were not included in this article because their number was insufficient to make generalizable conclusions. The participants were clients of a leading surrogacy agency headquartered in California that specializes in working with gay male parents nationally and internationally. These men became fathers through the agency's surrogacy program. The ages of the 40 respondents were between 27 and 52 years ($M = 40.8$; $SD = 5.53$) at the time of interview. In terms of race and/or ethnic breakdown, 32 (80%) of the fathers were white, three (7.5%) were Asian, three (7.5%) were Latino, and two (5%) were Middle Eastern.

Most participants were financially stable. The mean annual household income for 37 respondents who answered the question was \$270,000 ($SD = 201,320$; range = \$100,000 to \$1,200,000). This is greatly above the national average household income and undoubtedly reflects the fact that commercial surrogacy involves significant costs for the egg donor's participation, surrogate's participation, IVF physician services, health insurance to cover all procedures and the pregnancy, legal services for agreements among all parties, services of an egg donor agency, and services of a surrogacy agency.

As for place of residence, 16 (40%) fathers lived in California; 10 (25%) in New York; 5 (12.5%) in Texas; 2 (5%) in Illinois; 2 (5%) in Massachusetts; and 1 each (2.5% each) from Georgia, Arkansas, New Jersey, and Tennessee. One (2.5%) respondent was from Australia. Twenty-three (57.5%) fathers had only one child; nine (22.5%) had two children, and six (15%) had three children. All of the children were conceived with the help of a commercial surrogacy agency. Eleven families (27.5%) had twins, while three (7.5%) had triplets. Children's ages ranged from two months to eight years ($M = 1.85$; $SD = 1.81$). Thus most fathers in this sample were relatively new parents (within two years of their child's birth).

Procedures and Measure

Participants were invited to take part in a study that would further the understanding of gay families. They agreed to participate by signing an informed consent form. The interviews were conducted in person or by phone in approximately one hour. Interviewing began in 2003 and was completed in 2006.

The interview involved closed- and open-ended questions along a variety of domains that sampled gay fathers' experiences in their transition to parenthood. The interview schedule was developed and the study was designed entirely by the first author, and the other researchers/authors on the project analyzed these archival data after receiving IRB approval for that purpose. The interview contained the following domains and representative questions (a more detailed account of specific items is found in the tables):

1. *Demographic information.* This section involved questions pertaining to the respondents' age, race and/or ethnicity, city and state of residence, and ages of children.
2. *Work and career changes.* This section involved questions about changes in the fathers' work life, being "out" at work, relationships with peers and superiors at work, and career goals.
3. *Lifestyle issues.* This section included questions relevant to the participants' financial status, domestic issues, and travel experiences. In terms of financial status, the fathers were asked about annual household income, changes in financial situation, estate planning, and donations made to nonprofit organizations. As for domestic issues, they were asked about housing changes and plans, child care assistance, and their children's schooling. Questions about travel experiences included both business and leisure travels in terms of frequency, type, and expenses.
4. *Couple, family, and friendship experiences.* This section asked about the fathers' extent of romance and intimacy in their committed relationships, time spent with partner, relationships with their own as well as their partners' families of origin, changes in their social life and network, and socialization activities.
5. *Self-esteem and self-care.* This final section included questions about the fathers' assessment of their global self-esteem and personal worth after having children; evaluation of the balance among home, work, and social life; degree of spirituality and involvement in an organized place of worship; and appraisal of their physical well-being and ability to allot personal time for various activities.

Data Analyses

We used quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the interview data. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, ranges, frequencies,

and percentages were calculated for the closed-ended questions. Paired-samples *t*-tests were conducted across some of the transition to parenthood domains to make appropriate comparisons before and after the participants had children. To render the results robust against Type I error, the Bonferroni method was used to adjust the level for concluding that results were significant. Qualitative data analysis (coding for themes in the responses) was used on open-ended questions to shed further light on the statistical results.

RESULTS

Work and Career Changes

Most of the fathers experienced occupational changes since they had children (see Table 1). The changes involved taking a leave of absence for the first few weeks or months after delivery; becoming a full-time dad for either the respondent or their partner; shifting from a full-time to a part-time job; changing work hours (e.g., four-day work week, starting early in the morning, and leaving before 5:00 p.m.); and switching jobs to have fewer work hours and travel assignments.

In terms of interactions and relationships with peers at work, the fathers who evaluated their interactions as “better” described that having children increased communication with co-workers, especially with those who also have children. One father said, “Having children has opened an avenue for conversation. My co-workers are more interested in me and my family.” Another father mentioned, “There has been an acknowledgement of us as a family. My work environment has become more intimate.” As for interactions

TABLE 1 Descriptive Statistics for Gay Fathers’ Work and Career Changes Since Having Children

Categorical Variables	<i>n</i>	Yes	No	N/A
Went through occupational changes (for either partner)	40	26 (65%)	14 (35%)	
Increased level of being “out” at work	40	9 (23%)	24 (60%)	67 (17%)
Changed work life in terms of travel, hours, and career path	40	28 (70%)	5 (13%)	7 (17%)
Had sacrifices, losses, and missed opportunities in work life	38	20 (53%)	18 (47%)	
Made changes in career goals	36	21 (53%)	15 (37%)	
Continuous Variables	<i>n</i>	M	SD	
Relationship with peers at work ^a	40	3.61	.69	
Relationship with superiors at work ^a	40	3.00	.93	

Note: *n* represents the number of fathers who responded to the item. Frequencies, followed by percentages (in parentheses), are given for categorical variables.

^a1 = *much worse*; 3 = *same*; 5 = *much better*.

and relationships with superiors at work, though most of the fathers evaluated their interactions with their supervisors as “the same,” some who said it was “better” also described an increase in the quality of communication because of shared similarity with their bosses who were parents too.

Most fathers experienced changes in their work life since their child’s birth. These changes involved fewer hours at work and more time at home, less business travels, getting less sleep, and working late at night when their children have gone to bed. More than half of the respondents felt that they had experienced sacrifices, losses, and missed opportunities in their work life since they became a parent. These included decreased work productivity and creativity and lessened involvement in social events with co-workers. Some fathers described that being a parent has trade-offs and compromises. As one father put it, “I don’t see it [having sacrifices and missed opportunities after becoming a parent] that way. It’s what we planned; every time you change, you gain something, and you miss out on something.”

Pertinent to career goals, more than half of the fathers revealed that their goals had changed since they became parents. Some of the fathers felt that their career goals were secondary to their parenting goals. As one father voiced in the interview, “Career is less important. I’m more interested in retiring early and spending more time with my children and grandchildren.” Another father said, “Balancing work life with parenting life is more important than career objectives.” Some fathers described that their career goals needed to be postponed until their children were old enough to go to school. Even then, these fathers felt that their careers should not compromise their responsibilities as parents. To this point, one father asserted, “I think when my kids are in school full-time, I’ll go back to work, maybe part-time or home-based.”

Lifestyle Issues

The transition to parenthood also involved changes in the fathers’ financial status, domestic issues, and travel experiences (see Table 2). More than half of the participants experienced changes in their financial situation since they became parents. Annual household income significantly decreased after the participants had children. The mean decrease in income was \$75,000.00 (range = \$20,000.00 to \$200,000.00). The changes were primarily due to an increase in expenses, a partner quitting his job to become a full-time father, or a partner earning less because of cutting down work hours.

Most of the fathers also had completed some form of estate planning before and after the birth of their children. These included wills, trust funds, savings accounts, college funds, educational plans, and changes in wills to include children, powers of attorney for health care, and living trusts. Among the gay couples who resided in California, the majority of them were registered as domestic partners.

TABLE 2 Descriptive Statistics and Before Versus After Children Comparisons of Gay Fathers' Lifestyle Issues

Categorical Variables	Before having children			After having children		N/A
	<i>n</i>			Yes	No	
Had changes in financial status	40			26 (65%)	14 (35%)	
Completed estate planning	40			34 (85%)	6 (15%)	
Registered as domestic partners (for California residents)	16			13 (81%)	3 (19%)	
Purchased new car	40			26 (65%)	12 (30%)	2 (5%)
Had domestic or baby care assistance after birth	40			24 (60%)	16 (40%)	
Has domestic or baby care assistance currently	38			26 (68%)	12 (32%)	
Made changes in housing	40			25 (63%)	15 (37%)	
Planned for changes in housing	33			11 (33%)	22 (67%)	
Changed travel expectations, locations, and length of time	39			35 (90%)	4 (10%)	
Continuous Variables	<i>n</i>	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>
Hours per week of child care assistance after birth	21			57.40	48.64	
Weekly amount paid (in hundreds of dollars)	20			8.46	11.41	
Hours per week of child care assistance currently	24			42.27	30.04	
Weekly amount paid (in hundreds of dollars)	26			5.37	5.57	
Annual private school tuition (in thousands of dollars)	14			8.76	7.71	
Annual income (in thousands of dollars)	27	282.78	157.00	260.07	142.65	-1.90
Annual donation to nonprofits (in thousands of dollars)	32	17.03	42.84	15.90	42.50	.99
Frequency of business travel (number of times a year)	26	21.19	40.66	3.31	6.02	2.52*
Frequency of leisure travel (number of times a year)	38	5.75	6.14	2.51	4.07	4.14**
Annual leisure travel expenses (in thousands of dollars)	17	10.68	6.27	5.61	4.24	3.61**
Takes care of home life in terms of:						
Organization ^a	39			1.79	0.73	
Cleanliness ^a	39			2.03	0.71	
Household Chores ^a	38			2.00	0.57	
Meal Planning or Preparation ^a	40			2.38	0.74	
Interior Decorating ^a	35			2.09	0.61	

Note: *n* represents the number of fathers who responded to the item. Frequencies, followed by percentages (in parentheses), are given for categorical variables.

^a1 = worse; 2 = same; 3 = better.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The fathers also tended to give annual donations to nonprofit organizations. It is noteworthy that on average, the amount of donations did not change after the men had children. Their annual donations ranged anywhere between \$200 and \$200,000. These fathers had supported nonprofit organizations and were active in various causes, such as the following:

1. GLBT rights and issues (e.g., Family Equality Coalition, LA Gay and Lesbian Center, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders [GLAD], National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Human Rights Campaign [HRC], Gay Men's Health Crisis [GMHC], Empire State Pride Agenda);
2. health and medical care (e.g., American Cancer Society, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, The AIDS Project, AIDS Services Foundation, Designers against AIDS, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative [IAVI], Breast Cancer.org, Disabled American Veterans [DAV], Challenged Athletes Foundation);
3. social and political issues (e.g., American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], Equip for Equality, Human Rights First);
4. humanitarian aid (e.g., Amnesty International, Angel Food Ministries, Food Bank, United Way);
5. animal protection (e.g., animal shelter, Humane Society of the United States, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals); and
6. the arts (e.g., Music Guild, Classical Action, Small Theatre companies, Women's Project).

Changes were also made with regard to domestic issues. In terms of housing, more than half of the participants moved to a bigger home with additional bedrooms for the children and a larger yard. Some remodeled their current home to make it more child-friendly. Relevant to home life, there were no changes in the fathers' organization, cleanliness, household chores, and interior decoration since they had children. However, they evaluated themselves as "better" at meal planning and preparation after becoming parents.

Immediately after the birth of their children, more than half of the fathers sought child care assistance. Most of them hired babysitters or nannies. Some hired night nurses, au pairs, and housekeepers. On the other hand, for some couples, one partner stayed home as a full-time father. For others, one partner's mother stayed with them for some time to provide child care assistance. At the time of interview, most fathers continued to hire babysitters to provide child care assistance, but the hours per week and amount paid decreased compared to immediately after arrival of the children. In terms of plans for their children's schooling, 67% of the fathers planned to enroll or had enrolled their children in a private school. The other 33% were considering or had considered a public school. Fourteen fathers indicated that their children were currently enrolled in a private school such as a Montessori program, a co-op nursery, a religious day school, or a Jewish

preschool. On average, they paid about \$8,764 in tuition annually ($SD = 7,712$; range = \$1,000 to \$22,000).

Frequency of business as well as leisure travel decreased significantly for the participants since they had children. Before having children, some of the fathers had frequent weekend getaways, trips to foreign countries, domestic trips on major holidays, road trips, and long camping trips. Most fathers acknowledged that their traveling expectations and experiences changed since becoming a parent. After having children, travels more often involved visits to families of origin, and domestic family-oriented trips. Some were able to travel to foreign countries with their children. One father stated, "We do more family trips now with extended family, not just by ourselves." Traveling with children involved complications for some of the fathers, such as having to take the nanny with them, getting more rooms, and spending more. As one father put it, "It is difficult to take children anywhere. Logistics are more complicated: car seats, cribs, etc. They [the children] don't do well without routine."

Couple, Family, and Friendship Experiences

In becoming parents, changes were also evident in participants' relationships with their partners, families of origin, and friends (see Table 3). It is noteworthy that all of the fathers stayed with their partners after their children were born (i.e., no breakups had occurred by the time of this study). On average, the couples had been together for 12 years ($SD = 6.70$; range = 3.5 to 28). Compared to the time before they had children, the fathers acknowledged a decrease in romance and personal intimacy in their relationship with their partners. However, on the Likert scale, both mean scores for romance and intimacy (i.e., before and after having children) were still within the range of "romantic." Moreover, the number of waking hours spent alone by the couples decreased significantly to less than half of the time they had spent alone as a couple before becoming parents.

Relationships with families of origin improved after the participants became fathers. On average, the respondents reported that their relationships with members of their families of origin (including parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins) had become "somewhat closer." Fathers who assessed their relationships with their families of origin to be "much closer" described their parents as very supportive and excited to be grandparents. The frequency of contact and visits increased following the birth of children. Some fathers expressed that they had increased recognition of their family unit after having children. One father said, "Our baby is a very interesting acknowledgement of us as a family." Another father asserted, "My family is more interested in what we're doing. It's just such a pleasure to watch my family react to the baby. My parents have rejuvenated." Another father said,

TABLE 3 Descriptive Statistics and Before Versus After Children Comparisons of Gay Fathers' Couple, Family, and Friendship Experiences

Categorical Variables	<i>n</i>	Before having children		After having children		<i>t</i>
				Yes	No	
Stayed with partner since becoming a parent	40			40 (100%)		
Relationship with family is as expected	38			27 (71%)	11 (29%)	
Relationship with partner's family is as expected	40			32 (80%)	8 (20%)	
Lost friendships	36			20 (56%)	16 (44%)	
Made changes in social life and friendships	38			36 (95%)	2 (5%)	
Felt sadness due to changes in social life	38			15 (40%)	23 (60%)	
Continuous Variables	<i>n</i>	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>
Romance and personal intimacy in relationship ^a	40	3.33	1.05	2.78	1.21	3.85**
Time spent alone with partner (in waking hours per week)	33	44.80	21.82	20.70	20.86	7.15**
Relationship with one's family ^b	40			4.15	1.00	
Relationship with partner's family ^b	39			4.05	0.89	
People socialized with (out of 10 most socialized with):						
Gay without children	37	4.58	2.67	2.42	2.24	4.42***
Heterosexual without children	36	2.34	2.34	1.36	1.94	3.54***
Gay with children	35	0.87	1.23	1.78	1.97	-2.07*
Heterosexual with children	36	1.87	1.61	3.72	2.59	-4.86***
Number of people socialized with now who are different from before becoming parents	35			4.03	3.13	
Emotional impact of social life changes ^c	23			2.30	1.18	

Note: *n* represents the number of fathers who responded to the item. Frequencies, followed by percentages (in parentheses), are given for categorical variables.

^a1 = *not very romantic*; 3 = *romantic*; 5 = *extremely romantic*; ^b1 = *much less close*; 3 = *stayed the same*; 5 = *much closer*; ^c1 = *not very significant*; 4 = *very significant*.

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

"Every holiday, we are together. Now everyone wants to be around the kids." Similarly, the respondents' relationships with their siblings had also become closer, especially with siblings who had children as well. According to one father, "We talk a lot more. We have more in common. My twin sister has kids too." Another said, "My brother and I both have kids. We were close already but there are more family visits now."

In contrast, only two fathers described their relationship with their families to be "less close" after having children. It was apparent that their families had difficulty integrating the fathers' identities of being gay and being a parent. As one father put it, "They freaked out. My parents were mildly okay

with me being gay but they thought we were wrong to have a baby.” Similarly, another father stated, “They didn’t want us to have a baby, and they reacted badly. We still talk, but there is a difference. They were upset enough when I came out.”

These same results were also evident in the respondents’ relationships with their partners’ families of origin. Most fathers attested to a “much closer” relationship with their partners’ families. Similar to the respondents’ families, there was also an increased level of recognition by their partners’ families. As one father said, “My partner’s mother toasted our child as the newest member of their family after my partner’s adoption of our child.” Another father said, “They relate to us as the parents of their grandchildren.” Two fathers compared their families of origin with that of their partners’. One father stated, “My partner’s parents are much better grandparents. The twins are their first grandchildren so they are good and excited grandparents.”

Overall, several fathers attested to an improved relationship with their own, as well as their partners’ families of origin. As one father described it, “Both families consider our child a common interest they did not have before.”

In terms of the fathers’ expectations of their relationships with their families of origin, most had expected the relationship to improve after having children. They expected their parents to be excited about being grandparents. One father described it as, “My parents moved to be near us. I am an only son so being grandparents was a great thing for them.” On the other hand, a few fathers were disappointed that their relationships with their families of origin did not improve after having children. One father stated, “We expected more involvement. They don’t spend as much time with our children as we hoped.” Two fathers acknowledged that one reason for this lack of involvement was their parents’ age. As one father puts it, “My folks are not young, and they can’t drive much to see us. . . it exhausts them to have kids for a long time.”

For some fathers, they expected the relationship to remain the same because their families had been supportive of the gay couple’s relationship even before they had children. Three fathers described their relationship with their families to be better than what they had expected it to be. Similar results were evident in the fathers’ expectations about their relationships with their partners’ families of origin. Most expected the relationship with their partners’ families of origin to improve, and indeed it got better following the birth of their children.

Pertinent to social relationships, a majority of the fathers experienced changes in their social life and friendships. These changes included decreased frequency of social involvement, late-night and weekday engagements, and impromptu meetings with friends. For most fathers, socialization had become limited to their neighbors and friends who were parents too. Statistical comparisons were made regarding the parent status and sexual

orientation of the people that the fathers socialized with most, before and after they had children. As presented in Table 3, before having children, participants socialized more with both gay and heterosexual individuals who had no children. However, after having children, the gay fathers tended to socialize more with heterosexual parents. At the same time, the fathers had also slightly increased their level of socialization with other gay parents. On average, the fathers had about four people that they socialized with the most, and these people were different from those with whom they socialized prior to becoming parents. In general, after having children, the fathers socialized most with heterosexual parents because they were the most frequently encountered in their children's environment. One father described it this way: "Most neighbors are straight with children. These are who we socialize with. We have more in common with them."

More than half of the respondents indicated that they have lost friendships since they became parents. Most of them lost gay friends who are single because of lack of time to socialize with these single friends and differences in values and activities regarding children. One father described it this way: "Gay friends who saw us as a gay couple could not accept us as a family with children." Another said, "After having a baby, we didn't have much in common with our single gay friends. Your values change when you become a parent." On the other hand, some fathers pointed out that they had not lost friendships. Instead, they still kept in touch with their friends but not as frequently as before. The relationships tended to be more distant, especially with single gay friends. As one father noted, "Certain friendships receded and there was a tacit understanding that we just can't go away for the weekend sort of thing."

Some fathers felt sad due to changes in their social network following the birth of their children. They indicated that they regretted not being able to spend more time with their friends and join them in social events and parties. Most fathers did not feel sad as much as they missed their friends. On the other hand, some fathers more easily accepted the changes in their social network. When one father was asked about feeling sad based on these changes, he replied, "Not at all. We've got such great new friends now."

The frequency and quality of social activities that the fathers engaged in also changed significantly after they became parents (see Table 4). Statistical analysis was not carried out because of an insufficient number of respondents to make accurate and meaningful comparisons. However, a visual inspection of the frequencies indicated a general decrease in the number of times that the fathers engaged in different socialization activities since they had children. On the other hand, socialization shifted to activities that included both parents and children, such as dining in or out as friends, children's play dates, parent-child classes, school activities, religious activities, and others.

TABLE 4 Descriptive Statistics for Gay Fathers' Social Activities Before and After Having Children

Activity	Before having children			After having children					
				With adults only			With adults and children		
	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD
Going out to eat	38	8.01	5.70	28	2.54	2.27	32	4.08	3.48
Dining in or out as friends	38	3.64	3.25	25	2.66	2.21	35	4.39	2.98
Movies	37	3.91	2.99	20	1.46	.85	7	.84	.63
Parties	32	1.80	1.48	17	1.04	.90	9	1.45	1.12
Bars	13	1.55	2.04	2	.77	.62			
Art/theater activities	32	2.67	2.08	22	1.12	.83	12	1.11	.99
Sports/recreation (e.g., gym)	26	10.83	7.77	18	8.42	4.66	8	5.75	3.28
Watching sports activities	7	1.64	1.18	4	1.63	.75	4	2.00	1.41
Weekend getaways	30	1.07	.70	11	.80	.93	12	.94	.70
Children's birthday parties							19	2.26	2.37
Children play dates							16	9.50	9.05
Parent-children classes							10	7.20	3.68
Gay parent support groups/activities							14	1.17	.99
School activities							10	3.38	2.50
Religious activities							8	2.92	3.36
Amusement parks, zoos, etc.							20	1.91	1.17
Park dates with child's friends							14	4.30	3.54

Note: *n* represents the number of fathers who responded to the item. Means are expressed in number of times per month.

Self-Esteem and Self-Care

The gay fathers also assessed themselves along dimensions that relate to self-esteem and self-care (see Table 5). In terms of comparing their global self-esteem or personal value before and after having children, almost all of the fathers "valued themselves more" now that they were parents. Most fathers felt proud and positive about being parents. Along these lines of increased self-esteem are the following quotes from some of the fathers:

1. "Everything I do now seems so meaningful. I now know and feel what parents say about life being enriched on every level."
2. "There's been a validation as a member of the community that is encouraging that wasn't there before."
3. "I derive a lot of pleasure in taking care of my child. I think I have done pretty well."
4. "I like myself better as a father than I ever did before."
5. "I have additional confidence, self-esteem, and pride in being a parent."
6. "I'm proud of the fact that I am a good parent and that my friends and acquaintances think I am."

TABLE 5 Descriptive Statistics and Before Versus After Children Comparisons of Gay Fathers' Self-Esteem and Self-Care

Categorical Variables	<i>n</i>	Before having children		After having children		<i>t</i>
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Overall assessment of work, home and social life:						
Makes me feel good about myself	40			38 (95%)	2 (5%)	
Is worth any sacrifices or losses	39			37 (95%)	2 (5%)	
Is what I want	40			21 (53%)	19 (47%)	
Is what my partner wants for me	37			27 (73%)	10 (27%)	
Works well for our family	36			35 (97%)	1 (3%)	
Involved in religious worship	40	10 (25%)	30 (75%)	15 (38%)	25 (63%)	
Increased importance of religious worship	30			14 (47%)	16 (53%)	
Continuous Variables						
Self-esteem or personal value now compared to before having children ^a	39			2.85	0.37	
Takes care of physical well-being in terms of:						
Exercise ^b	40			1.48	0.75	
Diet ^b	40			1.88	0.76	
Sleep ^b	40			1.23	0.48	
Personal Grooming ^b	39			1.72	0.56	
Allots personal time for:						
Hobbies ^c	40			1.05	0.32	
Daily routines (e.g., reading the newspaper) ^c	40			1.43	0.64	
Personal growth activities (e.g., classes) ^c	39			1.36	0.58	
Pleasurable activities (e.g., movies, shopping alone) ^c	37			1.14	0.42	
Degree of spirituality ^d	39	2.41	.99	2.41	1.02	.00

Note: *n* represents the number of fathers who responded to the item. Frequencies, followed by percentages (in parentheses), are given for categorical variables.

^a1 = less valuable; 2 = same; 3 = more valuable; ^b1 = worse; 2 = same; 3 = better; ^c1 = less; 2 = same; 3 = better; ^d1 = not spiritual at all; 4 = very spiritual.

When asked to evaluate the balance between home life, work life, and outside activities, most fathers indicated that this balance made them feel good about themselves; was worth any sacrifices and losses; worked well for their family; and was what their partner wanted for them. About half of the respondents appraised this balance to be consistent with what they wanted for themselves.

Pertinent to physical well-being, the fathers evaluated themselves as being "worse" in terms of taking care of themselves through exercise and adequate sleep, compared to before they had children. On the other hand, there were no changes in the way the fathers took care of themselves in

terms of diet and personal hygiene. Relevant to personal time, compared to before becoming a parent, the fathers felt that they dedicated less time to their hobbies, daily routines, personal growth activities, leisure activities, and involvement in personal causes.

As to spiritual well-being, the fathers assessed themselves as “not very spiritual,” and indicated no difference in their level of spirituality before and after becoming parents. However, involvement in an organized place of worship slightly increased by 13% (from an initial 25%) after the participants became fathers. Almost half of the respondents attested to an increased importance of involvement in an organized place of worship since they had children. For some of these fathers, they noted the importance of raising their children in a religious setting with people who shared their values and interests.

DISCUSSION

This is the first investigation to examine the experiences of gay men who became parents with the assistance of reproductive technologies. In the following discussion, we present some of the most salient findings in this study and their relevance to previous research on transition to parenthood for both same-sex and heterosexual couples.

First, it is necessary to compare the demographic profile of the gay fathers in this study to those from similar studies. The sample was predominantly white, which is typical in many studies of the new gay fathers (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; Mallon, 2004; Schacher et al., 2005; Sbordone, 1993). However, compared to participants from those studies, this sample of gay fathers was extremely well off financially. Considering the high financial costs of surrogacy arrangements (Ragone, 1996), it was expected for the sample to have a high socioeconomic status. Most gay men pursue adoption or relative care (i.e., kinship) arrangements to become parents, whereas a smaller segment of them pursue surrogacy. However, a common thread among all of these new types of gay fathers is their necessarily deliberative approach to parenthood, which requires a great deal of thought, planning, and decision making. Among the population of gay fathers who become parents after coming out, one aspect that is unique to those who do so via surrogacy is the genetic link of one of the fathers to their children, and the generally higher incomes required to have children via surrogacy.

Data from this study support the idea that gay fathers have both unique and similar experiences in their transition to parenthood when compared to same-sex and heterosexual parents in other studies. Many changes are similar for all types of parents, especially in work and career, involving ways to accommodate child care responsibilities and prioritize the parenting role. Many fathers in this sample resorted to switching to less demanding jobs,

lessening work hours, and even becoming a full-time father. These changes resulted in a general decrease in household income. However, despite these changes, the fathers felt that their parenting role took precedence over their careers.

One of the traditional ideals of men due to gender role socialization is to be an economic provider, expressed in terms of work achievement, high earnings, and career development. It is noteworthy that many of these gay fathers negotiated their career prospects downward and focused on their parenting responsibilities as being primary, at least for the time being while their children were so young. The same observation was evident in other studies with gay fathers (Mallon, 2004) and lesbian mothers (Gartrell et al., 1999, 2000; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007). This is in sharp contrast to heterosexual fathers, who often augment their work hours and career commitments after having children (Cowan & Cowan, 1988, 1992; Sanchez & Thompson, 1997). On the more pragmatic side, the gay fathers in this study dealt with issues similar to most parents regardless of sexual orientation, including economic changes, employment of child care assistance, housing changes, domestic activities, and changes in travel priorities.

Pertinent to their couple relationships, the gay fathers expressed a general decline in time and intimacy with their partners, primarily as a result of an increase in time devoted to parenting responsibilities. It must be emphasized that although time spent together as a couple significantly decreased, the partners continued to evaluate their relationships as romantic, although not as romantic as before having children. A decline in time and energy spent with each other by couples who became parents is a widespread occurrence in both same-sex (Gartrell et al., 1999, 2000; Goldberg & Sayer, 2006; Quartironi, 1995) and heterosexual couples (Cowan & Cowan, 1988, 1992). As for intimate and romantic connections between partners, it is yet to be explored how these translate to satisfaction with the couple relationship. One study suggested that compared to heterosexual fathers, gay parents are more satisfied with their couple relationships (McPherson, 1993).

Most of the gay men received overwhelming support and acceptance from their families of origin when they became parents. Grandparents were described as being quite enthusiastic about the new families, and their excitement translated into increased frequency of visits, child care assistance, and family gatherings. This finding has been replicated in similar studies, showing an increase in family support for same-sex couples in their transition to parenthood (Gartrell, 1999, 2000; Goldberg, 2006; Mallon, 2004; Schacher et al., 2005). However, when compared to heterosexual couples, Oswald (2002) concluded that same-sex parents perceived lesser support from their families of origin. In contrast, another study (Henehan et al., 2007) found out that gay fathers were not significantly different from heterosexual fathers in terms of contact with families of origin, although lesbian mothers had

less frequency of contact with their parents compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

Some studies done with lesbian women who became parents through donor insemination suggested that genetics play a significant role in relationships with families of origin. For parental couples, there was greater perceived investment from the families of origin of the mothers who had a genetic connection to the child compared to the families of origin of the mothers who did not have a genetic connection (Gartrell, 1999, 2000; Julien, de Brumath, & Fortin, 2006; Patterson, Hurt, & Mason, 1998). This issue is yet to be addressed among gay men who became parents through surrogacy, where only one parent is genetically linked to the child. As a matter of speculation, the importance of genetics may not be as central with men as compared to women. In our society, legitimacy of parenthood is most of the time ascribed to the birth mother. This is partially supported by the literature on discriminative grandparental investment, which concluded that maternal grandparents cared for their grandchildren significantly more than paternal grandparents because parenthood is more certain for birth mothers compared to fathers (see DeKay, 1995; Euler, Hoier, & Rohde, 2001). As such, we may hypothesize that differences in grandparental support between gay fathers via surrogacy who have a genetic link to the child versus the fathers who do not have such a link may be less marked when compared to lesbian-headed families. Future research should address this issue directly. However, the data from the current study clearly indicate that, upon having children, gay men become more involved with and report improved relations with their own families of origin as well as their partners' families of origin.

For the present sample of gay fathers, we found major changes in their friendships. Socialization activities of all kinds generally declined, with an increase in activities that involved both parents and their children such as play dates, parent-child classes, gay parent support group activities, religious activities, and school activities. With the transition to parenthood, the gay fathers gravitated to building friendships with other parents, most especially heterosexual parents, who were more numerous and therefore readily available in their environment. Most of the gay parents lost friendships with their non-parent gay friends. This adds support to similar studies with gay fathers (Mallon, 2004) and lesbian mothers (Gartrell et al., 1999, 2000). The loss of relationships with gay friends who are not parents may be explained by the difficulty integrating gay and parent identities documented in several studies (Bozett, 1989; Schacher et al., 2005). Many older gay men (in their forties, as was true of this sample) still view being gay and being a parent as incompatible, which is a reflection of how society delineates these two roles. However, perhaps equally or more important is the fact that most of the activities that adult couples ordinarily would enjoy doing with friends (such as going to dinner after 7:00 p.m., going to the movies, athletic activities, rigorous travel, and so on) are virtually impossible for parents of very young

children. Thus, becoming parents involves a shift in priorities to those that are most salient to the parenting role, and this necessarily decreases shared activities between gay parents and non-parents.

A key result in this study is the very strong increase in self-esteem among the gay fathers. They felt extremely positive and proud about being parents. This reinforces similar findings with gay fathers in other studies (Quartironi, 1995; Sbordone, 1993; Schacher et al., 2005). The narratives of the gay fathers in this study underscore how being a parent contributed to greater meaning in their lives through both intrinsic and extrinsic avenues. They derived pleasure and pride in taking care of their children, while they also received increasing validation from their families and their communities.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A limitation of this study is the homogeneity of the sample, which consisted of a small segment of financially successful gay fathers who pursued parenthood through surrogacy arrangements with the help of one national/international agency. As shown in the demographic profile, the conclusions from this study may not be easily generalizable to gay fathers who come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and different racial or ethnic groups; or who pursue other avenues of parenthood such as adoption and relative care arrangements. Also, the results from this small sample size of 40 gay fathers should be viewed with some caution. Replication is warranted to determine the consistency of these results with other groups of gay fathers who also pursue assisted reproductive technologies. It would also be useful to conduct comparative studies with a matched sample of heterosexual fathers and mothers who became parents via surrogacy.

Another limitation of this study is the inclusion of gay fathers who are at different stages of parenthood. The children's ages ranged from two months to eight years. As evidenced from the investigations of Gartrell and her colleagues (1999, 2000, 2006), there are progressions and major changes in the transition to parenthood across the children's life span. It is necessary to conduct a longitudinal study to be able to explore these dynamic changes over time. At different points in the children's lives, researchers could address questions such as the following:

1. How does the balance between parenthood and career change?
2. How are child care responsibilities and work negotiated by the gay fathers?
3. What changes occur in the quality of the couples' relationships?
4. How do gay fathers explain their family structure to their children and to the community?
5. How does gay fathers' gender role socialization influence their transition to parenthood?

In reference to other studies done with same-sex couples, this study was not able to aptly capture major strengths of same-sex parents in terms of degendered parenting and greater visibility as a gay person. Several studies have highlighted degendered parenting as a hallmark characteristic of same-sex parents that sets them apart from heterosexual parents (Chan et al., 1998; Gartrell et al., 1999, 2000; McPherson, 1993; Patterson, 1995; Quartironi, 1995; Schacher et al., 2005; Silverstein et al., 2002). As much as this study was able to show how the gay fathers were actively negotiating their work and career commitments with their parenting responsibilities, it is important for future investigations to look at how these couples equitably divide child care and work responsibilities. It is also important to look at how these gay fathers deal with their growing visibility as gay fathers in navigating their communities. Perhaps most important from a psychological and public policy perspective, future studies of gay fathers via surrogacy should examine the developmental outcomes of the children longitudinally (Tasker & Patterson, 2007; Crowl, Ahn, & Baker, 2008).

Also missing from this research were the unique psychological issues that surround surrogacy arrangements (see Ciccarelli & Beckman, 2005; Edelmann, 2004; Mitchell & Green, 2007), which potentially influence the transition to parenthood. For example, future investigations should look at whether or how the genetic connection between one of the fathers and the child affects the family dynamics, division of domestic and paid labor, and relationships with families of origin members. Another important aspect to examine is the degree of contact between the surrogate and/or the egg donor and the gay parent family after the child is born.

CONCLUSION

The gay fathers in this study are in many ways very similar to parents from different family structures in their transition to parenthood. They share the collective experiences of many parents in balancing work and child care responsibilities, making family-oriented sacrifices and decisions, seeking support from families of origin and friends, and feeling pride in the parent role. However, this group of gay fathers is unique in their efforts to rework traditional ideologies of being a father; expand their relationships to include children; model a same-sex-headed family that involves genetic connection to their children; challenge cultural stereotypes about the necessity of a mother for healthy child outcomes; and raise their families challenged by homophobia and often inadequate legal protections.

The most striking findings from this research are the fathers' enhanced closeness with their families of origin and heightened self-esteem as a result of having and raising children. Being the first of its kind, we hope this study

will have heuristic value, stimulating further research on gay fathers and the developmental outcomes of their children conceived via surrogacy.

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