WHEN EXPECTATIONS BECOME REALITY: WORK-FAMILY IMAGE

MANAGEMENT AND IDENTITY ADAPTATION

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ABSTRACT

Working parents often contend with how to effectively portray themselves as both devoted professionals and good parents. In this article, we introduce the construct *work-family image* as a cross-domain, collective image representing how competent an individual is perceived to be as a parent and a professional by key constituents in both work and life domains. We present a theoretical framework to explicate a process in which work-family image management drives work-family identity adaptation. Specifically, we suggest that work-family image management occurs when work-family norms, derived from societal, organizational and familial expectations, create image discrepancies that drive impression management behavior. These behaviors, in turn, can create image-identity asymmetries and lead to work-family identity adaptation. We contribute to existing research by highlighting the dynamic interplay between image management and identity adaptation and explain the process by which work-family norms can influence working parents' identities.

Working parents often struggle to meet organizational expectations while also living up to societal and family norms related to ideal parenting (Buzzanell et al., 2005; Humberd, Ladge, & Harrington, 2015; Williams, 2000). The ideal worker is willing to work long hours, be ever available, and do whatever is asked while expectations for parents have become increasing child-centric and intense (Garey, 1999; Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2006). Often, people are judged based on their competence in both of these domains simultaneously, rather than subject to unrelated evaluations of their work or family image (Coltrane, Miller, DeHaan, & Stewart, 2013; Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004). In light of these challenges, working parents may be concerned about their *work-family image* defined here as a cross-domain, collective image representing how competent an individual is perceived to be as a parent and a professional by key constituents in both work (i.e., clients, bosses, superiors, subordinates, and colleagues) and life domains (i.e., family members, friends and other members of one's social network).

Work-family norms or societal, organizational, and familial expectations related to what constitutes a favorable work-family image are often difficult to meet. Existing research points to some of the problems. For example, working mothers are expected to be warm and nurturing— often the primary caregivers—while also meeting or exceeding work standards (Cuddy et al., 2004; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Working fathers juggle a range of expected images from primary breadwinner, to co-parent, to role model, to involved dad (Humberd et al., 2015). In this paper, we suggest that work-family norms can create impossible standards regarding the "appropriate" work-family image and engender feelings that how one is perceived as a working parent is not the perception one desires—called a *work-family image discrepancy*. We synthesize existing theoretical perspectives regarding the construction of professional images (Roberts,

2005) and research exploring the discrepancies between how individuals perceive themselves and how they think others perceive them at work (Meister, Jehn, & Thatcher, 2014; Meister, Sinclair & Jehn, 2017; Reid, 2015) to explicate a process in which work-family image management drives work-family identity adaptation. Specifically, we suggest that work-family image management occurs when work-family norms create image discrepancies that drive impression management behavior. These behaviors, in turn, can create image-identity asymmetries and lead to adapted work-family identities—a process we refer to as work-family identity adaptation.

Our theorizing illuminates how work-family image management triggers work-family identity change and makes the following theoretical contributions. First, we introduce the work-family image construct. Whereas previous researchers have focused solely on professional images (Reid, 2015; Roberts, 2005; Williams, 2000), we focus on the dualistic work-family image, acknowledging that for working parents, judgments and expectations are often not one-dimensional but rather represent assessments of competence in these multiple, intrinsically linked domains. We argue that an investigation of work-family images is timely and important as recent decades have seen a simultaneous increase in dual-earning parents and in intensive child-centered parenting creating additional burdens on both mothers and fathers (Hays, 1996; Shirani, Henwood, & Coltart, 2012). Scholarship and practice often point to these expectations, yet little research has addressed the ways in which working parents react to them both at work and in life domains.

Second, we expand upon assumptions regarding what influences work-family image discrepancies and individuals' reactions to them. We propose that work-family norms, derived from societal, organizational and familial expectations, create work-family image discrepancies

and result in specific work-family impression management behaviors. Prior work has focused on strategies used to manage professional image discrepancies. These strategies—called social identity impression management (SIM) behaviors (Roberts, 2005)—focus on reducing the salience of one's devalued identity (social recategorization) or highlighting the value of one's differences (positive distinctiveness) in order to meet the expectations regarding the desired professional image. Because work-family images involve two interconnected images that are often naturally perceived to contradict each other, competence in one can come at a direct cost to the other. In this paper, we focus our attention on exploring how an individual manages these dual images.

Third, we incorporate and build upon the work of Meister and colleagues (2014, 2017) by further specifying the association between image and identity and building on their construal of internal identity asymmetry. We suggest that image-identity asymmetries—when one's work-family image does not match one's internal identity—may not always be contextually derived or a result of an accidental misperception of individuals' identities, but rather could be a result of trying to fit in different contexts. Our theorizing suggests the image-identity asymmetries are created because working parents engage in impression management strategies aimed at embodying a desired image. As such, we integrate SIM theory with Meister and colleagues work to suggest that impression management may precede identity change.

Fourth, we develop a conceptual model revealing a more comprehensive view of the relationship between cross-domain images and identities. Research has explored the intersection of identity and image at the macro level (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000); but at the micro level, research connecting identity (who one is at the core) and image (others' perceptions of one's competence) has largely assumed that individuals project images as

strategic enactments of their internal identity (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006; Roberts, 2005). This research investigates antecedents and consequences of individual decisions to reveal or conceal internal identities in order to achieve social acceptance (Clair, Beatty & Maclean, 2005; Jones & King, 2014; Jones et al., 2016; King, Mohr, Peddie, Jones, & Kendra, 2014; Ragins, 2008; Reid, 2015). Broadening this view, we argue these dynamics may also work in the reverse direction. That is, individuals may try out images to gain social approval without full consideration of their internal identity (Ibarra, 1999). Interaction partners provide feedback that supports or discourages future expressions of these images (Swann, 1987). Images that are rewarded and sustained may become entrenched and result in internal identity adaptation. Building on the perspective that identities are malleable or adaptable in certain contexts (e.g., Collinson, 2003; Ibarra, 1999; Kondo, 1990), we explore how image management can influence identity adaptation of working parents in both their work and life domains.

Fifth, we present three adapted work-family identities: restructured work-family identity, confused work-family identity, and integrated work-family identity that result from work-family image management, answering calls for research seeking to better understand why some working parents may opt out of their work or family roles and why some may thrive in both (Cabrera, 2007; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Percheski, 2008). Prior literature has treated work and family identities either on a continuum where family identity is on one end while career identity is on another (e.g. Lobel & St. Clair, 1992) or as distinct constructs (e.g. family identity salience, Amatea, Cross, Clark & Bobby, 1986; Bagger, Li & Gutek, 2008; career salience, Greenhaus, 1971; 1973). Our theorizing considers how the combined work-family identity evolves. We align our model with previous work-family scholarship and discuss the enriching and depleting nature of the duality related to work and family identities (Rothbard, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006;

Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007). Lastly, we describe two moderators that relate to the decision to engage in impression management behaviors and provide information as to how and why working parents may develop different work-family identities.

Taken together, our theorizing linking work-family image management and identity adaptation stimulates new questions and insights for scholars and practitioners to advance our understanding of how working parents navigate work-family norms both inside and outside the workplace. We begin with an overview of the literature on image and identity, shedding light on how these two constructs differ as well as how they are similar. Then, we present a theoretical model in which we argue that work-family norms drive work-family image discrepancies. Further, we stipulate that image discrepancies between desired work-family images and perceived work-family images lead individuals to engage in work-family impression management strategies that may result in work-family identity adaptation. We conclude with a discussion of theoretical and practical insights and provide direction for future work-family research.

THE IMAGE AND IDENTITY DISTINCTION

Image and Image Discrepancies

An image, in general, is "an externally oriented public persona" based on reflected appraisals regarding how an individual thinks others perceive him or her (Roberts, 2005: 687). We use this definition not to refer to a self-image, or how one perceives oneself (Ibarra, 1999; Mead, 1934; Tice & Wallace, 2003), nor to others' actual perceptions (Roberts, 2005); rather, we refer to impressions representing various social roles that individuals convey (Ibarra, 1999). Images develop through social norms and an understanding of how others expect one to behave in a given context. As enacted personas, images convey the qualities that individuals want others

to ascribe to them. Some of these qualities may be well-defined aspects of their identities or who they are at their core; others may be quite incongruent with their self-concepts (Ibarra, 1999). Ibarra (1999) suggests that "failure to convey appropriate images that are consistent with one's social role not only diminishes one's effectiveness in that role but may also cause the individual to lose the right to enact the role" (cf. Ibarra, 1999: 764; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Because one's image has important implications for social approval, power, and career success (Baumeister, 1982; Ibarra, 1999; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 2001; Schlenker & Wowra, 2003), individuals may be motivated to convey images that are consistent with contextual expectations. Understanding the social and psychological processes by which people construct or modify their professional images and how these processes relate to identity, thus, becomes important.

A professional image is others' perceptions of one's competence and character at work (Roberts, 2005). There are two types of professional images: desired and perceived (Roberts, 2005). Desired professional images reflect how people would like others to view them at work and develop based on organizational standards and norms. A desired image captures personal characteristics that individuals think are highly regarded at work and are based on organizational and societal expectations as well as gender norms. These include knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, and values that individuals want others to think they possess. A perceived image relates to how an individual thinks others perceive him or her in a certain context. Of course, others do not always perceive people as they desire to be perceived. As individuals consider their desired and their perceived images, they may find an image discrepancy (Roberts, 2005). Image discrepancies exist when individuals perceive that their professional images do not align with the ones they desire (Roberts, 2005). When one's image does not align with the desired image, one

does not have the approval of key constituents, which may diminish their effectiveness. In such cases, individuals are motivated to initiate *impression management strategies* wherein they try to shape the perceptions others have of them (Roberts, 2005; Rosenfeld et al., 2001).

Identity and Internal Identity Asymmetry

Identity has been commonly defined as a "self-referential description that provides contextually appropriate answers to the question 'who am I?'" (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008: 327). Individual identities are invoked based on common identification of ascribed characteristics with a social role or group (Tajfel, 1978). Individuals can ascribe to multiple identities based on the roles they assume. Identities represents a collection of attributes or stereotypical traits, cognitive beliefs, values or ideological positions, motives, and experiences used to ascribe to a particular role or set of roles (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Ibarra, 1999; Schein, 1978; Tajfel, 1981). Identities represent the core of who we are, but they are also malleable. Research suggests that individuals negotiate their identities through social interactions and relationships with others (Mead, 1934; Swann, 1987; White, 1992).

Scholars acknowledge interrelationships between identity and image and note, "image often acts as a destabilizing force on identity, frequently requiring members to revisit and reconstruct their organizational sense of self" (Gioia et al, 2000: 67). Thus, just as discrepancies can exist between desired and perceived images, there are also times when one's perceived image can conflict with one's internal identity (Meister et al., 2014). *Internal identity asymmetry* refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they are misidentified in the work context (Meister et al., 2014). In contrast to image discrepancies, which occur when individuals do not think they are perceived in the ideal or desired way, identity asymmetry occurs when beliefs

about how others see them (their perceived image; Roberts, 2005) are misaligned with how they see themselves (their identity; Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010).

A MODEL OF WORK-FAMILY IMAGE MANAGEMENT AND IDENTITY ADAPTATION

We present a theoretical model (Figure 1) revealing how work-family image management leads to work-family identity adaptation. Specifically, we suggest that work-family image discrepancies, resulting from work-family norms, lead working parents to engage in impression management strategies to meet expectations associated with their desired work-family image. By engaging in work-family image management, working parents may trigger work-family identity adaptation as they transcend these negative image discrepancies. Our model sheds light on an important phenomenon experienced by working parents who are simultaneously trying to live up to societally driven ideal-worker and ideal-parent norms.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Work-Family Image

Research and common sense suggest a frequent intersection between work and family (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Little, Major, Hinojosa & Nelson, 2015; Rothbard, 2001). As mentioned above, we introduce the construct *work-family image* as a cross-domain, collective image representing how competent an individual is perceived to be as a parent and a professional by key constituents in work and non-work settings. Work-family images develop from assessments of competence in each domain. Thus, they are based on perceived knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, dedication, and values within each domain. Inherent tensions and competing ideologies create a perceptual dichotomy related to judgments of competence at work

and in one's family life (Johnston & Swanson, 2007). Consequently, people often assess individuals' holistic work-family images, rather than unrelated evaluations of their work or family image. Alternatively stated, image perceptions regarding high competence in work often mingle with the perception that one's family time is limited and that strong dedication to one's family inherently interferes with workplace performance (e.g., Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007). Thus, work-family images are constructed from orthogonal but intrinsically related work and family images. Although working parents are concurrently evaluated as to their competence in each role, they can embody images that their competence in one domain is greater, that they are incompetent in both or that they are competent in both their work and family roles.

Work-Family Norms and Work-Family Image Discrepancies

For many working parents, feeling that others perceive them to be competent in both their work and family domains may be difficult because they may feel as though they can never satisfy all the criteria or sufficiently meet expectations related to their work-family image. These high standards may be due to work-family norms derived from societal, organizational and familial expectations. Societal expectations refer to the general standard of behavior expected from members of society but can vary based on one's social roles (i.e., cultural and religious affiliation; Johnstone, 2015; Minkov, Blagoev, & Hosftede, 2013). Gender norms are often embedded in societal expectations and refer to the "appropriate" role of men and women in society (Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; McHale & Huston, 1984). Organizational expectations involve standards of performance and behavior within the organization as a whole and can vary based on industry or professional norms and occupational type. Finally, familial expectations are derived from attitudes and behaviors based on family formation and gender role beliefs within the family system (Kaufman, 2000). Because societal, organizational, and familial norms may

differ in what each considers a desirable work-family image, working parents may struggle to meet impossible expectations both inside and outside of the workplace. For example, societal expectations placed on parents often consider good parenting as time intensive and child-centric (Hays, 1996; Sperling, 2013), while some organizational expectations require that the ideal worker should dedicate his or her life to working with no other significant life responsibilities (Williams, 2000).

Expectations of working parents may differ based on the work-family norms ascribed to them. For example, different work-family norms are often ascribed to women as compared to men. Organizational performance expectations and related rewards are tied to work productivity, and yet, the contemporary 'good mother' is also expected to be there for her children, subvert her own needs for her family, and prioritize family over work (Kvande, Brandth, & Halrynjo, 2017; Orenstein, 2000; Riggs, 1997). Fathers' moral obligations to family and caregiving may be, in general, less intense than mother's (Brandth & Kvande, 2017); however, cultural expectations that men be involved in childcare is increasing and the 'earning is caring' mentality is not always the definition of a good working father (O'Brien, Brandth & Kvande, 2007). Traditional conceptualizations of "good" working dads were those who simply showed up to school events (Hochschild, 1989) while more contemporary notions of "good" working dads are those who are equally involved in regular childcare activities (Aumann, Galinsky, & Matos, 2011; Humberd et al., 2015). Thus, men can be faced with traditional norms that stipulate less involvement with their family and more time in the office (Cooper, 2000; Coltrane, 1997; Feintzeig & Eshelman, 2016; Levine & Pittinsky, 1997; Townsend, 2002) or more nontraditional ideals such as fathers who coach soccer, pick up the kids from school and do the grocery shopping (Burnett, Gatrell, Cooper, & Sparrow, 2011; Humberd et al., 2015; Miller, 2011). Men may also contend with

what has become a popular media depiction of fathers as lazy, chauvinistic, and irresponsible (aka, Homer Simpson; Nathanson & Young, 2006). Although, these images may not represent fatherhood ideals, they speak to the variety of expectations that working fathers may face.

In addition to gender differences, work-family norms may vary for working parents based on religious affiliation or, even, parenting stage. Some religions have clear expectations regarding gender roles, which influence the "appropriate" work-family image (Morgan, 1987). Expectations regarding a mother's responsibilities to parenting may be more intense during the first few months after birth—a time when women are uniquely qualified to meet the needs of the baby (Etaugh & Folger, 1998). As children grow and their needs become less parent-specific, parenting expectations of fathers may increase (Craig & Sawrikar, 2009). Work-family norms may be associated with parenting stage in ways unrelated to gender as well. For example, organizational norms may convey greater support for new parents immediately post-birth, while parents of older children may receive less support at work despite having high childcare demands (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lee, 1994).

Thus, working parents may differ in their vulnerability to social and institutional dissonance and norms (Halpert & Burg, 1997; Heisler & Ellis, 2008; Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010; Williams, Berdahl, & Vandello, 2016). For some individuals, successfully projecting a desired work-family image may seem like an impossible task. As with other types of images, individuals can experience *work-family image discrepancies* when they believe that, others' perceptions of them do not live up to their desired image. Desired work-family images serve as a goal—a desire to live up to others' expectations (Baumeister, 1989)—but individuals are not always able to live up to these expectations, or may not perceive that they are doing so. Perceived work–family images, then, represent how an individual thinks he or she is viewed as a

working parent in various contexts (Roberts, 2005). Like desired work–family images, perceived work–family images are complex. They include opposing characteristics of the two images they represent (competence towards parenting and competence towards work).

As working parents consider the work-family norms ascribed to them and evaluate the desired and perceived work–family images, they may find that a negative image discrepancy exists. We suggest that the greater the expectations inherent in the work-family norms to which one ascribes, the more impossible the standards, the greater the disparity between the desired and perceived image and thus, the more severe the image discrepancy. These types of discrepancies result either because they believe that others' perceptions of their work competence is not meeting expectations (i.e., a work deficit) or because they believe that others' perceptions of their parenting competence is not meeting expectations (i.e., a family deficit). Formally,

> *Proposition 1: The greater the expectations inherent in the work-family norms to which one ascribes, the more severe the work-family image discrepancy experienced.*

Work-Family Image Discrepancy and Impression Management

Research suggests that individuals are keenly interested in how others perceive and evaluate them (e.g., Leary & Kowalski, 1990). As such, people are motivated to assume the image that has the highest potential value because doing so helps to maximize rewards, enhances self-esteem, and facilitates the development of desired identities (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980). For most people, success and happiness in and outside organizational life involves the ability to develop positive relationships (DuBrin, 1990; Hewlin, 2003; Jackall, 1988). People are often motivated to live up to others' expectations (McDonald, Fielding & Lewis, 2013) and may engage in impression management or the process by which individuals project images that promote the attainment of their desired goals (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Impression management involves assuming the characteristics of a desired image and actively

engaging in tactics that demonstrate role embracement (Collett, 2005: 330; c.f. Goffman 1959;

McKillop, Berzonsky, & Schlenker 1992). Impression management differs from other internal

self-preservation processes because identity work is an "inward cognitive process of identity

creation and maintenance" (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006: 1032) while impression

management is externally focused.

For the working parent, conforming to role expectations or just leaving the impression of

conformity can be particularly difficult. Working parents' time is finite and work and family

domains are often considered to be in opposition to one another, making it a working parent's

responsibility to exhibit the "appropriate" levels of competence in each domain. As such, work-

family impression management is more complicated than other forms of social identity

impression management. Below, we explain the specific impression management strategies used

by working parents when trying to manage their dualistic work-family image.

Social Recategorization

In line with theory focused on image construction (Roberts, 2005), we label the first

work-family impression management strategy *social recategorization.* Social recategorization

involves self-presentation behaviors used to change social categories and manipulate the extent

to which one is aligned with expectations associated with a particular social identity group

(Tajfel, 1978). We expand upon Roberts (2005) conceptualization of social recategorization by

considering the duality of work-family image discrepancies. Based on the aforementioned

perceptual dichotomy inherent in work-family images, when assessing an image discrepancy,

working parents may feel they need to strengthen others' perceptions of their competence in a

particular domain. Consequently, if the work-family image discrepancy involves a family deficit,

working parents will engage in *family-focused social recategorization* whereas if the work-family discrepancy involves a work deficit, work parents will engage in *work-focused social recategorization* to reduce the image discrepancy.

Family-focused social recategorization involves invoking behaviors that highlight one's competence as a parent while downplaying one's work image. As mentioned above, working parents engage in this strategy because they feel their work-family image reflects a deficiency in parenting. For example, working mothers may experience a work-family image discrepancy that includes a family deficit because they are often perceived by others as lacking warmth (Cuddy et al., 2004) and may be labeled reluctant mothers (Gerson, 1985) and nonconformist mothers (Hattery, 2001). Studies suggest that mothers are expected to be more flexible in their jobs (as compared to fathers) when children need care (Hobson & Fahlen, 2009; Miller, 2012) and experience more intense emotional reactions when their mothering competency is called into question (Kvande et al., 2017). Women often feel compelled to meet cultural ideals of parenting even when these ideals may not reflect children's needs or a moral obligation; rather, they are often driven by perceptions of how they are supposed to behave (Johnston & Swanson, 2007; Smeby, 2017). As a result, working mothers may overemphasize their mother image while avoiding mention of their work competence. Heisler and Ellis (2008), suggest that women construct "mommy faces" when they feel as though they do not live up to parenting standards and expectations. When a mother works more hours outside the home than she believes a "good mom" should work, she might begin to emphasize to others the ways in which she reaches these standards in other areas of motherhood such as providing quality childcare and shouldering more parenting responsibilities over her spouse (Buzzanell et al., 2005).

Within the context of one's workplace, women may sacrifice work for the sake of their work-family image. Massachusetts Gubernatorial Candidate Shannon O'Brien recalled having to leave early from a campaign event for a photo opportunity with her daughter on Halloween so that potential voters would perceive her as a good mother (Cherkis, 2017). Outside the workplace, working mothers may engage in family-focused social recategorization because they feel judged by stay-at-home moms and family members (Masters, 2013). For example, Smeby (2017) found that many working moms feel intense pressure to leave work and pick up their child(ren) 'early' from preschool to project an image of a good mother who has her priorities in order (Smeby, 2017). Similarly, female executives state that they avoid mentioning their careers outside of work in order to meet work-family image expectations (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014).

Recent research suggests that working fathers are increasingly feeling pressures associated with their roles as fathers and employees (Coltrane, 1997; Dowd, 2003; Humberd et al., 2015; Rehel, 2014). Men who experience work-family discrepancies that includes a family deficit will engage in family-focused social recategorization so that others will perceive them as more kind, compassionate, and mature. Men report that highlighting their role as a father shows colleagues and others in the work context that they have a lighter side, particularly when they feel that their work-family image is too work-focused (Humberd et al., 2015). They also may be more likely to receive a "fatherhood premium" with regard to earnings (Glauber, 2008; Hodges & Budig, 2010; Killewald, 2013; Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006) because having children signals they have a family to support. Both mothers and fathers report that talking about being a parent at work serves to build social connections and bonds with colleagues who are also parents (Humberd et al., 2015; Ladge & Greenberg, 2015). As a result, they may intentionally highlight

their contributions to their children and families at work. Similarly, outside of work, family-focused social recategorization can serve also to increase perceptions of kindness and compassion for working dads (Richards, 2014).

Work-focused social recategorization involves invoking behaviors that highlight one's work competence while downplaying one's family role. For example, research suggests that working mothers often believe others at work see them as less committed, less ambitious (Fels, 2004), or as a burden (Gueutal & Taylor, 1991). When experiencing a work-family image discrepancy with a work deficit, working mothers may display an image focused on work competence and may downplay their parental role at work. While focusing on work and productivity, they may avoid displaying pictures of their children or discussing their families in the office to embody the image of a competent worker. Research has found that women engage in these strategies when they believe that talking about their families at work might harm their image, making them appear less professional (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). Similarly, men "fake" working long hours by not calling attention to time spent with their children during work hours and passing themselves off as workaholics (Reid, 2015). By downplaying either their work or family image, working parents hope to emphasize their competence in the other domain.

We contend that the more severe the work-family image discrepancy, the more likely working parents will be to engage in a social recategorization strategy that emphasizes one domain and de-emphasizes the other. Formally,

> *Proposition 2: The severity of a work-family image discrepancy is positively related to the use of social recategorization strategies. Specifically, when a work-family image discrepancy involves the perception of a lack of competence in one's work (i.e., work deficit), individuals will engage in work-focused social recategorization (P2a). When a*

work-family image discrepancy involves the perception of a lack of competence in one's

family life (i.e., family deficit), individuals will engage in family-focused social

recategorization (P2b).

Positive Distinctiveness

Positive distinctiveness is the second strategy used to reduce image discrepancies

(Roberts, 2005). Like social recategorization, positive distinctiveness strategies involve

behaviors that highlight competence in the domain (i.e., work or family) of the work-family

image that is not in line with the desired work-family image. However, positive distinctiveness

does not involve behaviors that downplay the other domain. In the context of work-family

impression management, for example, working mothers, knowing that others do not consider

them serious employees, may project images that highlight their work competence; however,

engaging in positive distinctiveness, they would also continue to highlight the importance of

their families. Outside the workplace, parents would again emphasize their competence in both

domains. As such, the work-family impression management strategy positive distinctiveness may

be used for either type of deficit (work or family) and involves challenging the perceptual

dichotomy that these two domains conflict with one another.

While engaging in positive distinctiveness, working mothers and fathers may play up

family roles and work responsibilities to colleagues to show how much they value work and

family. For example, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on a CEO who marked both work and

family time on an organizational calendar that everyone in the company could view (Feintzeig &

Eshelman, 2016). Positive distinctiveness may involve "reframing the contradiction by socially

constructing a reality whereby the two competing needs are no longer perceived as contradictory

(e.g., work from home, take child to work, reconstruct meaning of work or motherhood)"

(Baxter, 1990; cf. Johnston & Swanson, 2007: 450). Employees may report being better

managers because of their experiences parenting (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002), or may report greater efficiency and time management skills because of being working parents (Hill, 2015). Conversely, some working mothers express that they are better mothers as a result of having a job they enjoy stating, "it's the best of both worlds" (Buzzanell et al., 2005: 273). By emphasizing both work and family, those who engage in positive distinctiveness hope to create a more positive work-family image. Like social recategorization, these behaviors are a result of a perceived work-family image discrepancy. Taken together, this leads us to the following proposition:

> *Proposition 3: The severity of a work-family image discrepancy is positively related to the use of positive distinctiveness strategies regardless of whether there is a work deficit (P3a) or a family deficit (P3b).*

Factors that Influence the Choice of the Impression Management Strategy

In the preceding pages, we have described how expectations inherent in work-family norms, derived from societal, organizational and familial expectations, influence image discrepancies and lead to work-family impression management behavior. We suggest that image discrepancies will positively influence both types of impression management. Next, we identify two factors, which may affect the choice of impression management behaviors, making either social recategorization or positive distinctiveness more likely. While there are likely to be several work-related and personal factors that may increase or decrease the use of impression management in general, we relegate these to the discussion and, here, focus specifically on factors that influence the choice of strategy—namely, vicarious learning through role models and preferences regarding boundary management.

Vicarious Learning through Role Models

Research suggests that people's behavior is often a reflection of behavioral cues found in their immediate environments (Ibarra, 1999; Louis, 1980; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). How to react to work-family norms may be clearer when working parents have distinct role models inside and outside their organization—those with whom they interact regularly. Thus, we suggest that working parents' choice of work-family impression management strategy will reflect the influence of vicarious learning from role models (i.e., other parents). Vicarious learning involves the observations individuals' make of others, which allow them to learn about what is possible for themselves (Bandura, 1986). Role models are likely to include other working parents in the organization or in similar professional roles in other organizations (e.g., Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Through the observation of role models, individuals gain an understanding of possible coping mechanisms (Gibson, 2004) and may seek to emulate positive attributes (Collins, 1996; Gibson, 2004).

Role models who exhibit behaviors linked to positive distinctiveness are likely to encourage these types of behaviors in others. Successful individuals within or outside one's workplace who highlight undervalued aspects of their own identities provide examples of how to navigate work and family roles in a more authentic way. Conversely, vicarious learning from role models engaging in social recategorization may drive behaviors, actions, and attitudes that defy one's own desires or, at a minimum, encourage the downplaying of aspects of one's identity. For example, if a supervisor never discusses his or her family at work, employees are likely to follow suit. Thus, the approach one takes in managing work-family impressions may depend on vicarious learning through role models. Vicarious learning from role models exhibiting positive distinctiveness is likely to strengthen the relationship between work-family image discrepancy and positive distinctiveness, whereas vicarious learning from role models

exhibiting social recategorization is likely to strengthen the relationship between work-family image discrepancy and social recategorization. Formally,

> *Proposition 4: Vicarious learning from role models who exhibit positive distinctiveness is likely to strengthen the relationship between work-family image discrepancy and positive distinctiveness, whereas vicarious learning from role models who exhibit social recategorization is likely to strengthen the relationship between work-family image discrepancy and social recategorization.*

Boundary Management Preference

Extant research suggests that individuals have personal preferences for managing the separation of their work and personal life, which are assessed on a single segmentation-integration continuum (Kreiner, 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1995; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). Individuals with a strong desire for segmentation keep work and personal lives separate. They prefer to disconnect the two domains wherever possible, for example, keeping separate calendars and key chains and not engaging in work while attending to home-related matters or vice versa (Nippert-Eng, 1995). Individuals may desire segmentation of work and family roles in a conscious attempt to avoid negative spillover as well as to focus on the role that is most salient to them (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Hall & Richter, 1988; Rothbard 2001; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003).

Individuals with a strong desire for integration, on the other hand, are more inclined to combine these domains. Those with stronger preferences toward integration may be more likely to talk about their family while at work and take work home with them (Nippert-Eng, 1995). They desire permeability between domains because it helps them manage the tensions associated with holding multiple, competing roles (Meyerson & Scully, 1995) and navigate competing

norms and expectations associated with each domain (Hewlin, 2003). As such, we suggest that individuals experiencing a work-family image discrepancy who have a strong desire for integration will be more likely to engage in positive distinctiveness and less likely to engage in social recategorization. Although these individuals are still subject to external pressures to conform to the "appropriate" work-family image in any given context, their natural inclination to combine work and family will make the choice of positive distinctiveness more likely. Thus, we propose:

> *Proposition 5: Boundary management preference is likely to influence the relationship between work-family image discrepancy and choice of impression management tactics, such that individuals with a strong desire for integration will be more likely to engage in positive distinctiveness and less likely to engage in social recategorization.*

WORK-FAMILY IMAGE MANAGEMENT LEADS TO WORK-FAMILY IDENTITY ADAPTATION

Above, we presented a process of work-family image management explaining how work-family image discrepancies lead individuals to engage in work-family impression management strategies. Building from extant research suggesting that an individuals' understanding of how others perceive them can influence their identity (e.g., Humberd et al., 2015; Ibarra, 1999; Reid, 2015; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), we explore the implications that image management has for one's work-family identity next.

Social Recategorization and Work-Family Image-Identity Asymmetry

Working parents may experience an image-identity asymmetry when others inside and outside of work see them in a way that is incongruent with who they are (Meister, et.al, 2014). In other words, they will experience *work-family image-identity asymmetry* when their work-family

image is incongruent with their work-family identity. Social recategorization strategies, motivated by image discrepancies, involve self-presentation behaviors used to influence and improve social standing (Roberts, 2005; Tajfel, 1978). Individuals who engage in these strategies communicate competence in one domain (i.e., work or family) while downplaying the other. Roberts (2005) argues that when individuals use social recategorization and suppress aspects of their identity to build credibility, they are more likely to experience identity conflict (Roberts, 2005). Thus, as individuals create false images of themselves, they can create an internal identity asymmetry (Meister, et al., 2014). These types of self-presentation behaviors have consequences for one's internal identity because they create cognitive dissonance related to a disparity between one's identity and one's image (e.g., Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, & Skelton, 1981; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986). Successful social recategorization—as an ideal worker, for example—may result in a difference between a working parent's work-family image inside and outside of work and his or her internal identity.

The greater the difference between one's image and one's identity, the more severe the work-family image-identity asymmetry. The severity may be related to how important each identity is to an individual. Individuals with strong preferences toward a particular identity may have more severe image-identity asymmetries when they behave without authenticity, resulting in a mismatch between image and identity. Formally,

> *Proposition 6: Work-focused social recategorization (6a) and family-focused social recategorization (6b) will positively relate to the severity of a work-family image-identity asymmetry.*

Responses to Work-Family Image-Identity Asymmetry

Image-identity asymmetries are likely to be uncomfortable. Previous research has found that when individuals experience incongruence with respect to their identities, they experience negative affect, increased anxiety, and stress, as well as decreased well-being (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003; Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010; Burke, 2004). Self-verification theory suggests that the negative consequences of dissonance drive individuals to desire congruence or symmetry between their internal views and how they believe others see them (Swann, 1990). Individuals consider their desire for symmetry along with the importance of preserving the current image perceptions. These considerations will drive resolution and maintenance outcomes (Meister et al., 2014; Meister, Sinclair, & Jehn, 2017).

To *resolve* their work-family image-identity asymmetry, we expect that working parents will adjust their internal identities to align with the images they are projecting (Meister et al., 2014). Research suggests that self-presentations that are repeatedly reinforced become internalized over time (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). Positive reinforcement including approval, friendship, assistance, power and other rewards ensue from meeting these expectations (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Individuals are motivated to have others see them in a positive light and thus, once received, working parents will desire to maintain these rewards and therefore, may internalize the image they are portraying (e.g., Baumeister, 1982; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987; Schlenker, 1980). For example, a working mother may grow accustomed to the positive feedback she receives as an ideal worker, forsaking family for work, such that she may disassociate from other mothers at work and fail to mention she is a parent when introducing herself to others. A working father whose male colleagues chastise him for taking paternity leave when his child is born may come back earlier (Rudman & Mescher, 2013) and continue to work longer hours to uphold his masculinity and prove his competence at work. In these examples,

what started as image management became an entrenched and natural way to behave—in other words, the work-family image-identity asymmetry is resolved.

Working parents may also try to *maintain* the work-family image-identity asymmetry. If changing the underlying identity is untenable, but individuals feel pressure to engage in work-family image management and/or are rewarded for it, they may choose to keep up the ruse. Maintaining a work-family image-identity asymmetry requires constant impression management to conform to the environment while still upholding one's internal identity. For example, an individual attempting to satisfy an organization's ideal worker image may continue to downplay their family involvement, but, internally, preserve their family identity, focusing considerably more attention on their family outside of work. Some may come to believe they have successfully tricked others into believing they are dedicated, capable employees, even though they may not see themselves in this way (Clance & Imes, 1978; Hewlin, 2009). Maintaining a work-family image-identity asymmetry requires strict compartmentalization (Baumeister, Shapiro, & Tice, 1985) or that work and family spheres remain strictly separate to avoid situations that would require differing types of behavior. We propose the following:

> *Proposition 7: The experience of a work-family image-identity asymmetry will positively relate to resolving a work-family image-identity asymmetry or maintaining the* work-family image-identity asymmetry.

Adapted Work-Family Identities

Thus far, we have focused on how work-family image discrepancies and impression management create work-family image-identity asymmetries as well as the strategies individuals use to manage these asymmetries. Consistent with research studying bi-racial and bi-cultural individuals (e.g., Berry, 1997; Berry, Segall, & Kagitcibasi, 1997; Dona & Berry, 1994;

Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), we suggest that resolving or maintaining one's work-family image-identity asymmetry can lead to three types of adapted work-family identities.[1]

Resolving a Work-Family Image-Identity Asymmetry Leads to a Restructured Work or Family Identity

First, we suggest that the high expectations inherent in work-family norms can lead individuals to alter their identities by driving working parents to engage in impression management tactics that may require downplaying aspects of one identity by forcing prioritization of another, resulting in the restructuring of their identities. Research on bi-racial individuals suggest that others' perceptions of their race influences their identification with each race and, often, singular identities can develop (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Likewise, bi-cultural research has found that individuals often take on a singular identity that represents only one of the cultures they represent (Berry, 1997). The choice of which identity to assume relates to behavioral expectations in one's immediate environment (Berry, 1997).

We suggest that a restructured work-family identity is one that results in a more singularly focused identity state wherein the work or family identity is less valued. Expectations from work environments that encourage employees to downplay their family commitments, for example, may foster restructuring of the family identity. In the book *Family Man*, Coltrane describes an interaction with an attorney and a friend with whom he runs into at the grocery store, "I'll bet you can't imagine me as the domestic type, but things have changed since we had Megan. Now all I want to do is stay home and take care of her, and everyone at the office is questioning my commitment to the firm" (1997: 3). As this passage illustrates, Coltrane found that as men engage more in their children's lives, they became more sensitive, understanding and parent-centric—restructuring their work-family identity.

Another prime example may be a working mother who, due to a work-family image discrepancy involving coworkers' or others' perceptions that she is not a competent employee, engages in work-focused social recategorization, publicly emphasizing her competence at work. As she successfully recategorizes and her organization rewards her for such efforts, she may find a mismatch between her internal work-family identity and her work-family image. If she chooses to resolve this asymmetry, she will adopt a more work-focused and less family-focused work-family identity. She may become less engaged at home, more willing to miss important family events and, as a result, reduce family engagement. Research suggests that organizational pressures and expectations influence individuals' devotion to work and may drive them to sacrifice family for work (Blair-Loy, 2003; Mazzetti, Schaufeli, & Guglielmi, 2016). Alternatively, women may find that overcoming gender stereotypes and discrimination associated with being a working mother is impossible either in their workplace or in their personal life. Indeed, it is more socially acceptable for women to disengage at work when they feel their identity is threatened and it may be easier to withdraw from work rather than challenge or influence others' perceptions (Meister et al., 2017). Each scenario suggests that the greater the work-family image-identity asymmetry, the greater the degree to which one restructures their work-family identity.

Thus, a restructured work-family identity may result in a more singularly focused identity state wherein one's work or family identity is more valued. As such, we propose the following:

Proposition 8: Resolving a work-family image-identity asymmetry will result in a restructured work-family identity, such that the more severe the work-family image-identity asymmetry, the more singularly focused the (work or family) identity becomes.

Maintaining Asymmetry Leads to a Confused Work-Family Identity

We suggest that maintaining work-family image-identity asymmetry—wherein one projects an inauthentic image—will lead to a confused work-family identity, inhibiting a coherent sense of self. A confused work-family identity is a state in which individuals experience ambiguity about who they are due to internal contradictions of the self (Zikic & Richardson, 2016). Alvesson describes this as "fighting through a jungle of contradictions and messiness in the pursuit of self" (2010: 208). Bi-racial research suggests that individuals who self-identify as bi-racial but whom others consider black, experience identity confusion. Despite internally understanding their identity as bi-racial, the disjuncture caused by others' perceptions can lead to a state of confusion (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). For bi-racial individuals, others' perceptions are typically the result of physical appearance. For working parents, this confusion results from constant impression management to conform to the environment while safeguarding one's internal identity. Individuals who attempt to uphold display rules that do not align with their internalized role are more apt to experience emotive dissonance and self-alienation—triggered because their behavior runs counter to their central, valued, and salient identity (Ashforth & Humphreys, 1993). For example, when open communication regarding work-life supports is frowned-upon, employees feel the need to protect their work image at the expense of the personal image at work. In these cases, working parents are also more likely to question their work-family identity and wonder if they can "do it all" (Ladge, 2016). In addition, working women report ensuing confusion and blows to their self-worth when downplaying their professional identity outside of work in order to emphasize humility and "be a better friend" (Drexler, 2013).

Men may also experience a confused work-family identity resulting from maintaining work-family image-identity asymmetry. Depending on the degree of image discrepancy, men

may emphasize work to show they align with gender norms or emphasize family to be considered a competent father, leaving many feeling "confused, wary and ambivalent" (Gerson, 1994: 262). Despite involved fathering being the expected standard for contemporary fathers (Ladge, Humberd & NcNett, 2016), there is little empirical evidence that men are able to incorporate these new expectations into their work-family identity (Coltrane, 1997; Gregory & Milner, 2011; LaRossa, 1988; Loscocco & Spitze, 2007), suggesting these men may be maintaining their work-family image-identity asymmetry. Thus, when working parents' internal identity do not match the image they project and they maintain this mismatch, it will result in a confused work-family identity. Given these dynamics, we expect the following:

Proposition 9: Maintaining a work-family image-identity asymmetry, will lead to a confused work-family identity such that the more severe work-family image-identity asymmetry, the more ambiguous the work-family identity will become.

Positive Distinctiveness Leads to an Integrated Work-Family Identity

Because positive distinctiveness involves emphasizing both work and family, we do not anticipate this strategy will create work-family image-identity asymmetry; however, we do anticipate it will positively relate to an integrated work-family identity. To understand this relationship, again, we draw from bi-cultural research, which investigates what happens to individuals' cultural identities when they have developed in one culture and attempt to live in another (Berry, 1997; Berry, Segall, & Kagitcibasi, 1997; Dona & Berry, 1994). This research shows that when individuals desire to maintain their original cultural identity while seeking to take on the dominant cultural image, their two cultural identities become integrated (Berry, 1992). Integration involves maintaining both identities and is thought to be beneficial because it involves two positive orientations (Berry, 1997). Similarly, research on biracial identities

indicates that some biracial individuals choose to conceptualize their racial identities as a blend, rather than a separation, of the two identities (Rockquemore, 1999). In doing so, they resist attempts to dichotomize or make one identity more salient than the other (Daniel, 1996; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). The integrated identity represents an "ability to hold, merge, and respect multiple perspectives simultaneously" (Root, 1996; cf. Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002: 337).

Positive distinctiveness communicates to others that both work and family domains are valuable and creates a positive social meaning that is attached to that identity (Roberts, 2005). Positive distinctiveness allows individuals to highlight the importance of both their work and family identities, creating an integrated view of both. As a result, working parents engaged in this strategy may be better able to connect disparate aspects of their lives together fostering a more coherent sense of self that promotes identity development (Dutton et al., 2010; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001) and "interactionally validated self-understanding" (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002: 337). Thus, we propose:

> *Proposition 10: Positive distinctiveness will lead to an integrated work-family identity such that the more one engages in positive distinctiveness strategies, the more integrated their identity will become.*

DISCUSSION

In this paper, we synthesize multiple streams of research to present a conceptual model explaining how work-family image management, derived from work-family norms, influence working parents' identity adaptation. We introduce the construct work-family image and explain how working parents strive to manage it amidst a barrage of expectations within and outside the

workplace. In addition, we elucidate the reasons behind the work-family impression management and identity adaptation choices working parents make.

Theoretical Contributions

Our theoretical framework complements and contributes to existing research in several ways. First, we suggest that work-family images are an integral component as to how individuals are assessed at work and in their personal lives and can have important consequences for working parents' identities. Employees' parental status is known in the workplace, and workers are often evaluated based on how well they can balance parental responsibilities with work responsibilities (e.g., Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). Similarly, in their personal lives, parents may be judged for how much time they devote to work over family (Buzzanell et al., 2005; Christopher, 2012; Hays, 1998). Our framework describes factors that influence work-family image discrepancies and highlight the differences between impression management related to a singular image (i.e., professional image) and impression management related to dualistic images. Work-family impression management involves navigating two interconnected images that are often perceived to naturally contradict each other. By specifying these differences, we expand upon Roberts (2005) conceptualization of professional image discrepancies and explain the differences between image discrepancies that involve a work deficit and those that involve a family deficit. Further, we explain how individuals may engage in either family-focused social recategorization, work-focused social recategorization or positive distinctiveness to reduce these work-family image discrepancies.

Second, our work also expands upon Meister et al., (2014) by further differentiating image and identity constructs. We focus solely on what Meister (2014) terms positive identity asymmetries—or perceptual asymmetries that include working parents' perceptions that others

think favorably upon their work-family image when this image does align with their internal work-family identity. As working parents manage others impression, they may create positive asymmetries. In turn, these asymmetries will create uneasiness and discomfort for working parents, which are then resolved or maintained. We synthesize and integrate SIM theory with Meister and colleagues work to suggest that SIM may result in positive image-identity asymmetry and, as a result, precede identity adaptation.

Third, we clarify the differences between and the relationship among images and identities. While there has been an abundance of management research investigating identity processes, few scholars have tackled the differences, as well as the dual causal linkages, between image and identity. Certainly, identity and image are interrelated (Gioia et al., 2000), yet in this paper, we contend that individuals may try out images to gain social approval without full consideration of their internal identity. Even when an identity is fully established, striving to embody an image often acts as a destabilizing force on identity (Gioia et al., 2000). While we have a strong understanding of how identity theory can be applied to the work-family interface, work-family research has largely ignored image. Here, we develop theory through a work-family lens and enhance our understanding of both work-family image and identity.

Fourth, we present three types of adapted work-family identities that result from work-family image management: restructured, confused and integrated. These adapted work-family identities can guide our understanding as to the reasons why some working parents thrive in their work and family roles, while others struggle, potentially leading to an imbalance. Each identity end-state may come with gains and losses, which we discuss in the section on future research. Finally, we present two moderators that influence a key decision point in our model to explain why working parents might choose one impression management strategy over another. We posit

that vicarious learning through role models within the organization and boundary management preferences can drive impression management behaviors—social recategorization or positive distinctiveness. In doing so, we suggest that there are many different avenues in which working parents and organizational constituencies can influence not only work-related but also non-work-related identities (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Strong preferences for integration along with role models who engage in positive distinctiveness can encourage working parents to adopt an integrated work-family identity even when there are high expectations inherent in work-family norms to which they ascribe. Thus, we contend that understanding these moderators is a key contribution of our study, as they inform how work-family image discrepancies can lead to different work-family identities.

Practical Implications

Our model has practical value for working parents, supervisors, and organizations. First, it calls attention to the power of work-family norms, which may lead to inequities in the workplace for parents. For example, the gender wage gap in the United States is largely due to motherhood and perceptions that when working women become mothers, they are less engaged at work (Goldin, Kerr, Olivetti & Barth, 2017). Yet, when married women break through the glass ceiling, rise to high ranking positions and take on breadwinning status in their households, they are labeled "ultramacho" (Brescoll & Uhlmann 2005) and are more likely to face marital strain (Byrne & Barling, 2017). These expectations can have detrimental consequences imparting a psychological burden that may inhibit parents from reaching their full potential as working professionals and parents. Working fathers face similar issues when others perceive that they take their level of involvement with their children too far (Miller, 2014). Also, men can also face high expectations regarding what kind of father they should be. They receive praise for ordinary

parenting tasks, yet, are stigmatized for taking time off from work or requesting a flexible work schedule (Coltrane et al., 2013; Rudman & Mescher, 2013). As noted in an article in the New York Times, "the power of expectations sheds light on why employers reward fatherhood—but only if they don't think men are spending too much time on it" (Miller, 2014).

Second, our model elucidates a potential self-fulfilling process starting with work-family norms and a desire to meet them and ending with an internalized identity that may embody gender and societal stereotypes. However, we also describe an alternative process whereby individuals who engage in positive distinctiveness, develop an integrated identity. In order to eliminate bias and stereotypes, organizations may need to avoid making employees feel as though they must choose between their work and family roles. Organizations and managers need to show a commitment to employees' caregiving needs providing structural support and making cultural shifts to counter unrealistic ideal worker expectations. These types of cultural shifts would prevent working parents from wasting their energy trying to embody outdated expectations about what it means to be a good, productive worker. To align cultural support for work-family needs with structural support, organizations should design policies with the assumption that both mothers and fathers, at any career and life stage, have work-family demands.

Research studies suggest that when senior level male executives champion work-family efforts and put their own integrated work-family identity on display in their organizations, biases facing working parents begin to dissipate (Burke, 2014). For example, senior male leaders who take parental leaves reduce the stigma of paternity leave and model for prospective fathers and colleagues that men can be both engaged parents and successful professionals (Litano, Myers, & Major, 2014). Organizational leaders should promote such efforts throughout all levels of their

organizations. Indeed, family-friendly policies and parenting affinity groups alone cannot change cultural norms and expectations. Changing the culture may involve changing deeply rooted behavioral and performance expectations that glorify ideal-worker standards (i.e., face time) to workplace ideals that better reflect evolving demographics and ways of working.

Agenda for Future Research

In this section, we discuss several ways in which scholars might advance our theorizing by suggesting additional antecedents, moderators and outcomes to be considered in future research. We also highlight the importance of studying identity-based gains and losses that may result from work-family identity adaptation. Drawing insights from extant research suggesting potential benefits and consequences of work-family engagement (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Powell & Greenhaus, 2006; Rothbard, 2001), we suggest avenues for future research that might explore how working parents can capitalize on the positive aspects of each work-family identity and avoid potential negative consequences.

Additional antecedents. Our model is both an integration of past research and a means to explore work-family issues from another perspective—one that focuses on the influence of societal, familial and organizational expectations. Future research should identify the extent to which these expectations make individuals more susceptible to image discrepancies. This research could explore how expectations of men and women differ and how these gender expectations influence the severity of image discrepancies experienced by mothers and fathers at work. We encourage scholars to also consider how work-family norms may vary based on race, class, ethnicity, and culture or job type (e.g., Bell, 1990). For example, the media tends to perpetuate negative connotations of mothers who choose to work; yet, this is a white, upper

middle-class phenomenon. In many cultures, parents must work, so the need to manage impressions or alter one's identity may not be as prevalent.

Additional moderators. Above, we include moderators that focus on understanding a key decision point in our model regarding why working parents choose one impression management strategy (i.e., path) over another. The choice of moderators was limited to variables that would influence this initial decision point. Future research should investigate factors that influence the use of impression management, in general. For example, future research could investigate the role of career status in these relationships. One's professional identity may be more malleable early in one's career, as it stabilizes over time through the adoption of knowledge, skills, and values (Schein, 1978). Longitudinal study designs can support understanding how work-family image and impression management may evolve over time. Such designs can also determine critical events in individuals' work and family lives that may influence the severity of perceived work-family image discrepancies. Similarly, one's tenure within the organization may influence impression management strategies. More time with an organization also might make employees less concerned about image discrepancies. Individuals with a higher hierarchical status in their organization may worry less about others' perceptions in comparison to those early in their careers or new to a particular role. As noted by Aquino and Douglas, "a high-status position and the symbolic and material affirmations that accompany it, provides the role occupant with a psychological buffer against self-invalidating events" (2003: 199). Thus, one's status in terms of power and hierarchy at work may reduce impression management behaviors.

Authenticity is likely a moderator influencing usage of impression management in general. The greater one's desire to be authentic, the more likely they will be to engage in

behaviors that represent their true self and the less likely they will be to engage in impression management in general (Cable & Kay, 2012). In addition, various moderators may influence the choice of strategy used to respond to a work-family image identity asymmetry. Individual differences, such as boundary management preferences mentioned earlier, may influence how one manages a work-family image-identity asymmetry. For example, working parents who prefer segmentation may be more adept at maintaining asymmetry. Further, organizational and family demands placed on parents may influence the identity adaptation process. For example, a family structure that places heavy demands on the mother for child-care may naturally contribute to resolving an asymmetry and result in a restructured identity that involves the family domain assuming a more prominent role. Even in situations when their personal work identity is strong, the discomfort associated with image-identity asymmetries coupled with high family demands and lower work demands may drive working mothers into reprioritizing their identities.

Distal outcomes. Future research should look at the downstream consequences of adapted identities. While prior research has focused on affective, development, and efficiency gains and losses associated with navigating work and family roles (Wayne et al., 2007), our theorizing points to several *identity-based gains and losses* that may result from work-family identity adaptation. Future research should disentangle the implications of each adapted work-family identity. For example, Meister and colleagues (2014) suggest that resolving an identity asymmetry—or adjusting one's internal identity to match an external image—has positive interpersonal and intrapersonal consequences. When asymmetry exists and one's image is positively received, resolution entails one incorporating "a more positive, desirable, or aspirational self into his or her actual work-related identities" (Meister et al., 2014: 500). However, we submit that resolving work-family image-identity asymmetry—because of its

dualistic nature—may be more complicated. Resolving a work-family image-identity asymmetry may mean giving up an important aspect of one's identity. Thus, despite a positive reception from those one is trying to impress, resolving a work-family image-identity asymmetry by altering one's internal work-family identity may reduce the salience of one's work or family identity. As with all types of image-identity asymmetry, there is often a basic cognitive, physical, and emotional conflict between the pressure to become the desired image and maintain consistency in self-presentation and a reluctance to give up one's true self (Baumeister et al., 1985). When working parents withdraw from their commitments in one domain, they may experience losses in the other. Still, not all working parents will experience negative consequences related to a restructured work-family identity. Experiencing an image-identity asymmetry is cognitively and emotionally taxing. Restructuring one's identity can reduce this tension and allow one to identify more strongly with one aspect of him or herself.

Identity-based losses may also occur because of a confused identity, which is rooted in the fragmentation of self or a lack of integrated "core" self (Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993). Individuals who maintain image-identity asymmetries may experience worry, depression, and anxiety about others learning their "true" identity (Langford & Clance, 1993; McGregor, Gee, & Posey, 2008). Conflict between identities can create confusion about commitments and values (Koerner, 2014), emotional exhaustion (Haines & Saba, 2012), tension (Slugoski, Marcia, & Koopman, 1984), and feelings of bewilderment and occasional discouragement (Schenkel & Marcia, 1972). Studies suggest if individuals pretend to be members of a more positively valued social category by denying or hiding their "true" selves, they are likely to experience more shame and guilt (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003). Downplaying or concealing salient aspects of one's personal identity at work can affect an employee's overall sense of self (Clair et al., 2005;

Ragins, 2008). A confused work-family identity may eventually lead to a restructured work or family identity, as maintaining both one's internal identity and one's image becomes too taxing and resolving the identity is not an option. We also suspect that a confused identity may lead to more severe work-family image discrepancies in that not knowing who one is may make it difficult to meet others' image expectations.

On the other hand, individuals with multiple identities may have various conceptions of themselves, which may surface in different contexts (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). They may not seek a singular identity but construct their identities in multiple ways to multiple audiences. Thus, in the right social contexts (i.e. when environments that require different images are possible to keep completely separate), some individuals may be more resilient and may manage a lack of identity coherence better than others may (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002).

Finally, research suggests that an integrated identity may be most likely to include identity-based gains. Projecting an image that highlights both domains can be beneficial to the employee and those around him or her (Pratt et al., 2006). When individuals seek to reconcile competing identities by reframing them as complementary, they may be able to achieve improved balance (Kreiner, et al., 2006). When employees feel as though they can commit to multiple roles (work and family), rather than feeling as though they must choose between them, they are more likely to experience positive effects such as increased life satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-acceptance (Ruderman et al., 2002). Greater centrality of multiple roles—such as employee and mother—relate to better psychological well-being (Martire, Stephens, & Townsend, 2000). When employees experience psychological gains from work, they are more likely to experience enhanced family functioning and engagement at home (Wayne et al., 2007).

In presenting a positive, integrated image of themselves at work, employees will generate greater acceptance from others through improved workplace relationships and will advance their overall reputations (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Ibarra, 1999; Leana & Van Buren, 1999). Positive distinctiveness and integrated work-family identity may also signal to others that the working parent identity is valued; this may encourage other working parents to communicate the value of competence in work and family domains and may promote inclusiveness (Ely, 1995; Milliken & Martins, 1996). On the other hand, those engaged in positive distinctiveness and experience an integrated work-family identity may continue to struggle with the high expectations inherent in their work-family norms and potential social disapproval associated with the emphasis on work and family. In addition to the gains described above, the potential for ongoing work-family image discrepancies may be cognitively and emotionally draining.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we introduce the construct *work-family image* and suggest that individuals are often evaluated on their competence in both their family and work roles. We focus on the dualistic work-family image, acknowledging that for working parents, judgments and expectations often represent assessments of competence in these intrinsically linked domains. This investigation of work-family images is timely and important as recent decades have seen a simultaneous increase in dual-earning parents and in intensive child-centered parenting (Hays, 1996; Shirani, et al, 2012). We present a conceptual model capturing the dynamic interplay between image and identity by elucidating how work-family norms influence work-family image discrepancies and impression management strategies and lead to identity adaptation.

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FOOTNOTE

Please note that research on bi-racial and bi-cultural images suggest that dissociation with both identities is a possible type of identity adaptation (Berry, 1997; Berry, Segall, & Kagitcibasi, 1997; Dona & Berry, 1994; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002); however, in our read of extant literature we do not believe that disassociation from both work and family would be a proximal outcome of our model. We suggest that future research should investigate whether or not dissociation from both identities could be a distal outcome for some working parents.

FIGURE 1: FACILITATING IDENTITY ADAPTATION AND WORK AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Work-Family Image Management

Work-Family Norms
Societal, organizational, and familial expectations related to what constitutes a favorable work-family image

P1

Work-Family Image Discrepancy
misalignment between one's desired work-family image and one's perceived work-family image

Work Deficit beliefs that others' perceptions of their competence in and commitment toward work are not meeting expectations

Family Deficit belief that others' perceptions of their competence in and commitment toward parenting are not meeting expectations

P3a, b

Moderators Influencing the Choice of Impression Management
- Boundary Management Preferences
- Vicarious Learning

P5

P4

P2a

P2b

Work-Family Impression Management Strategies

Work-focused Social Recategorization
attempts to emphasize one's work competence and commitment while downplaying one's family

Family-focused Social Recategorization
attempts to emphasize one's family competence and commitment while downplaying one's work

Positive Distinctiveness
attempts to meet disparate image expectations associated with the work-family image by emphasizing both work and family

Work-Family Identity Adaptation

P6a

P6b

Image-Identity Asymmetry
when one's work-family image does not match one's internal identity

P7

Image-Identity Asymmetry Responses

Resolve Asymmetry
attempts to adjust one's identity to align with one's work-family image

Maintain Asymmetry
attempts to maintain one's desirable work-family image while maintaining internal identity

P8

P9

P10

Adapted Work-Family Identities

Restructured Work-Family Identity
a more singularly focused identity state wherein the work or family identity is less valued.

Confused Work-Family Identity
an ambiguous identity state characterized by internal contradictions of the self

Integrated Work-Family Identity
a work-family identity state that simultaneously values work and family.

◇ Represents decision points in the model

63

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

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